

## **MCC NEWCASTLE PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY**

The Metropolitan Community Church Newcastle has a duty of care through our board of directors, members, friends and visitors to protect from abuse, vulnerable adults who they come into contact with.

Vulnerable adults may be defined as people over 18 who are or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability (including sensory impairment, physical impairment, learning difficulties, etc.) and who are or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

Abuse is the violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons and may be the result of action or inaction by a carer or any other person.

### **1. Six categories of abuse have been identified as follows:**

Physical abuse  
Sexual abuse  
Emotional/psychological abuse  
Neglect  
Discriminatory abuse  
Financial or material abuse

#### **Physical Abuse – acts of commission**

Actual or likely physical injury or failure to prevent physical injury, including hitting, slapping, burning, restraining, inappropriate use of medication, inappropriate manual handling.

#### **Sexual Abuse**

Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a vulnerable adult who may be dependent or developmentally immature, including the involvement of a person in sexual activities which they do not want or truly comprehend, or to which they are unable to give informed consent.

#### **Emotional/psychological Abuse**

Severe or persistent emotional ill-treatment or rejection likely to cause adverse effects on the emotional and behavioural development of a vulnerable adult resulting from acts of omission or commission on the part of others and producing mental anguish in the victim (e.g. denial of basic rights, deprivation of normal social contacts, episodes of bullying, threats of harm or abandonment, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawing from services or supportive networks).

#### **Neglect – acts of omission**

Persistent or severe neglect, or the failure to protect a vulnerable adult from exposure to any kind of danger, resulting in the significant impairment of health or development. Including non organic failure to thrive, neglect of personal hygiene, malnutrition, dehydration, ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication.

#### **Discriminatory abuse**

Including racist, sexist, homophobic or any abuse that is based on a person's disability, including other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

#### **Financial or material abuse**

Including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions or the misuse or misappropriation of property.

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More than one type of abuse may be happening at any time. The above definitions of types of abuse are not exclusive.

### 2. **Historical Abuse**

There may be occasions when an adult will disclose abuse (either sexual or physical) which occurred in the past. This information needs to be treated in exactly the same way as a disclosure or suspicion of current abuse. The reason for this is that the abuser may still represent a risk to vulnerable adults now.

### 3. **Awareness**

As a church official, member, friend or visitor, you are not responsible for diagnosing abuse. However, you have a responsibility to be aware and alert to signs that all is not well with a vulnerable adult. Not all concerns relate to abuse, there may well be other explanations. It is important to keep an open mind and consider what you know about the vulnerable adult and his or her circumstances.

MCC's "**multi agency procedures for working with children in need (including those in need of protection), vulnerable adults and their families**" are the guidelines Social Services, the Police, Education, Health and other agencies work to.

### 4 **What to do**

As someone in a caring role as well as a citizen, when abuse is disclosed or observed you should take the following action:

*(See Confidentiality Policy)*

4.1 Inform the vulnerable adult that the information cannot be kept confidential and will have to be passed on to the appropriate agencies.

Be respectful of the wishes of the vulnerable adult and ensure his or her involvement as fully as possible with policy guidelines, including exploring whether they have an existing worker or agency responsible for their care. This would be the first point of contact in the referral procedure.

4.2 Inform a member of the board of directors about the disclosure immediately. S/he will treat as top priority and seek advice urgently.

4.3 A decision will then be made as to the most appropriate first contact to make, e.g. social worker, mental health worker, or the social services adult duty team.  
Direct calls to the police are reserved for incidents of assault and violence where an element of urgency applies.

4.4 The vulnerable adult to be kept informed about what will happen next, so they can be reassured about what to expect and encouraged to maintain contact with MCC Newcastle.

### 5. **Support to Members and Friends**

As a result of reporting concerns, you may find the person who disclosed the information is upset or angry. The board of directors will support you. If Social Services need further information or involvement from you, a member of the board will talk with them and you about how this will happen.

Members and Friends may also be subject to allegations of abuse. While support will be offered, MCC Newcastle will ensure that Social Services are given all assistance in pursuing any investigation. Suspension may be implemented (*See Direct Dealing Policy*).

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### 6. **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is crucial to all our relationships – but the welfare of the vulnerable adult is paramount. The law does not allow anyone to keep concerns relating to abuse to themselves.

Confidentiality may not be maintained if the withholding of the information will prejudice the welfare of the vulnerable adult.

### 7. **Recruitment**

MCC Newcastle will ensure that, prior to their engagement, paid/unpaid staff, board directors and volunteers whose role will bring them into positions of trust within the church, make “disclosure applications” to the Criminal Records Bureau for Background/Reference Checks.

8. The appointment of Board Directors (as trustees of the Church), the recruitment of Church staff and the selection of volunteers to work with vulnerable people can expose the Church to risk. This is an extremely complex and difficult issue for Churches because of the tension between protecting the rights and privacy of the individual, and at the same time providing for the safety of others. The important goal is to exercise reasonable care in finding the balance between these competing needs.

9. Reasonable care begins with careful screening of all Church leaders and staff, with special provisions for those who will have pastoral counseling responsibilities or who will be taking on children's and youth activities. Such screening begins with a written employment application. The application should include a signed authorisation for the release of information and for a criminal records check. Reference contacts should be made and a written record of all contacts maintained. Churches often have difficulty in obtaining reference information from former employers, because many employers today have a "neutral reference policy," that is, they will not release either positive or negative information on the employee. In such cases ask for a written confirmation of the dates of employment, the employee's position, and a statement that the employer has a "neutral reference policy."

10. Maintain an individual file for each employee. The files should be marked "CONFIDENTIAL," and should be securely stored so that only those responsible for personnel placement have access to them. Failure to ensure the privacy and security of such files presents another serious legal risk.

11. Criminal background checks at different levels are carried out using the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), a statutory agency of the Home Office. A basic check should be adequate for most individuals, but any whose responsibilities include pastoral care or work with children, young people or vulnerable adults will need the Enhanced Disclosure check.

12. Those people for whom we will make such applications are those in any position with contact or access to children and vulnerable adults, including those in “positions of trust” and the board of directors. (See the Home Office’s guide to definitions of “regulated positions” when working with children and vulnerable adults).

### 13. **Other Measures**

The Metropolitan Community Church Newcastle is committed to minimising risks to vulnerable adults. Concerns about the welfare of vulnerable adults will always be taken seriously.

Cases of misconduct towards vulnerable adults involving staff, the board of directors, members and volunteers, are reportable to the Department of Health for possible inclusion on the list of unsuitable people to work with vulnerable adults.