Responding to Domestic Abuse

Practice Guidance

The Catholic Diocese of
Nottingham

To be reviewed June 2025

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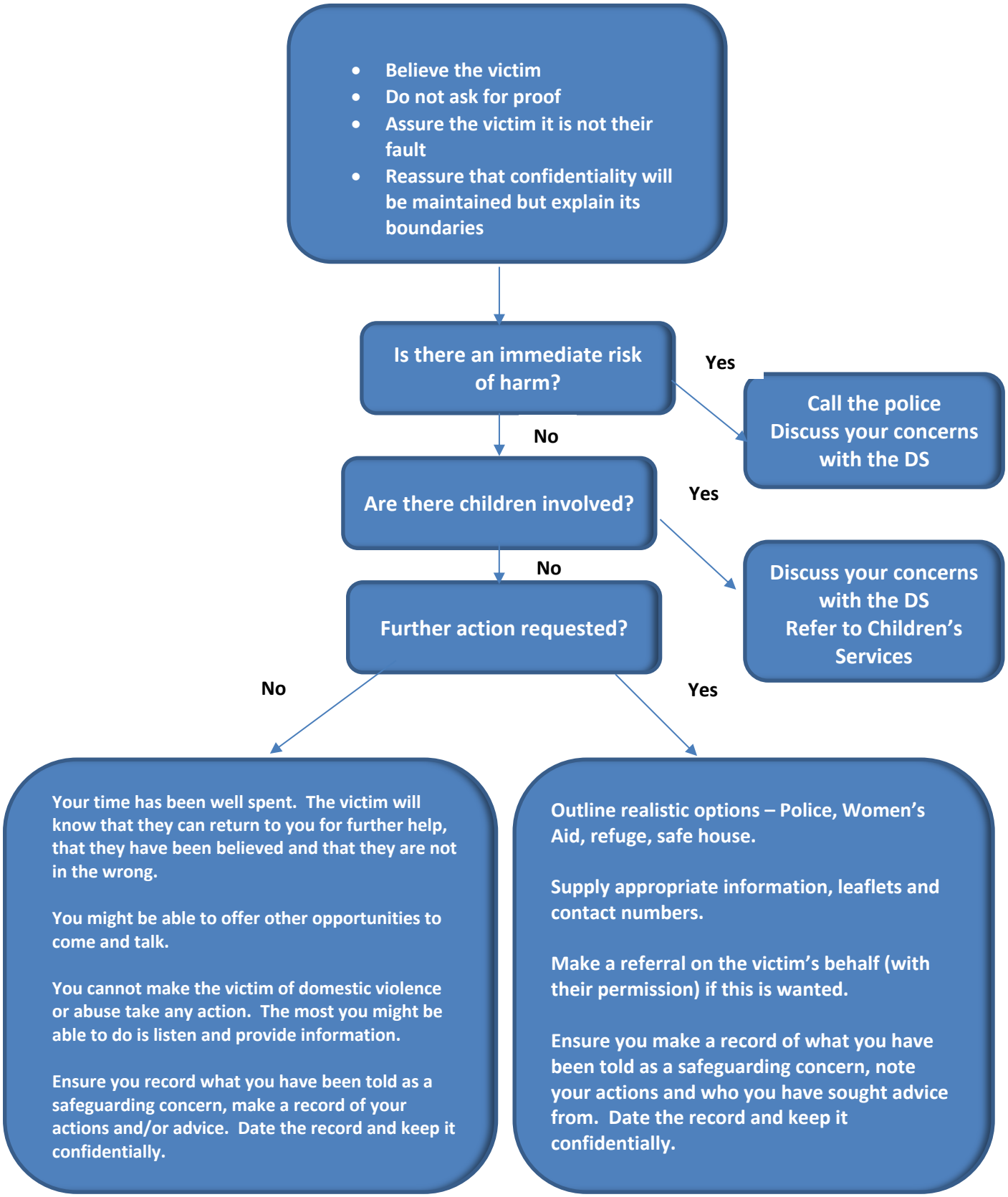
1.0 Domestic Abuse Disclosure Flowchart



2.0 Introduction

The Diocese of Nottingham sets out in this document its policy, practice and guidance in recognising, responding and supporting those who are at risk or have been harmed through domestic abuse. It supports the Diocese commitment to address and respond effectively to domestic abuse both within its own community and wider society.

It addresses the complexities of domestic abuse and the dynamics of where religion can be misinterpreted and used to create an imbalance in relationships in order for domestic abuse to manifest.

The practice guidance is intended to raise awareness and to highlight domestic abuse to enable making our church communities safer places. To encourage churches to become places of safety where domestic abuse is taken seriously, victims/survivors are believed and respected and alleged or known perpetrators are challenged.

Please note there is an additional document 'Domestic Abuse Information' that can be referred to in conjunction with this practice guidance.

2.1 Scope

This policy applies to all Trustees, Clergy, Employees, and volunteers on the Diocese of Nottingham.

2.2 Domestic Abuse Definition

Domestic abuse is defined by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as abusive behaviour between people aged 16 years or over who are personally connected to one another. Behaviour may consist of a single incident or a course of conduct and can include: Physical or sexual abuse, Violent or threatening behaviour, Controlling or coercive behaviour, Economic abuse,Psychological, emotional or other abuse.

Domestic abuse is a crime. It is never the fault of the person who is experiencing it. And it can happen to anyone – regardless of age, background, gender identity, sex, religion, sexual orientation or ethnicity. However, statistics show most domestic abuse is carried out by men and experienced by women.

2.3 Diocesan Domestic Abuse Policy Statement

All forms of domestic abuse are wrong and must stop. We are committed to promoting and supporting safer environments which:
ensure that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse;
work to protect those experiencing domestic abuse;
recognise equality amongst people and within relationships;
refuse to condone any form of abuse;
enable and encourage concerns to be raised and responded to openly and consistently.

We recognise that:
all forms of domestic abuse cause damage to the survivor and express an imbalance of power in the relationship;
all survivors (regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity) have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse;
domestic abuse can occur in all communities;
domestic abuse may be a single incident, but is usually a systematic repeated pattern which escalates in severity and frequency;
domestic abuse, if witnessed or overheard by a child, is a form of abuse by the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour;
working in partnership with children, adults and other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of any child or adult suffering abuse.

We will respond to domestic abuse:

In all our activities by –
valuing, listening to and respecting both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse, whilst appreciating the need to ensure a distance is kept between the two and refusing to condone the perpetration or continuation of any form of abuse.

In our publicity by –
raising awareness about other agencies, support services, resources and expertise, through providing information in public and women-only areas of relevance to survivors, children and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

When concerns are raised by –
ensuring that those who have experienced abuse can find safety and informed help;
working with the appropriate statutory bodies during an investigation into domestic abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the church community.

In our care by –
ensuring that informed and appropriate pastoral care is offered to any child, young person or adult who has suffered abuse;
identifying and outlining the appropriate relationship of those with pastoral care responsibilities with both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and procedures regularly.

3.0 The Diocese

The Diocese will work to ensure that:
That safety of individuals is paramount and offer support and guidance for those who are in need, to be aware of the need for confidentiality within the bounds of good safeguarding practice.

Raise awareness of domestic abuse through theological teachings and training. Challenge inappropriate behaviour and in a way that does not place any individual including a victim at increased risk.

It is committed to:
Developing and publishing a Diocesan policy, practice and guidance on domestic abuse, including who to contact if there are concerns.

Having clear procedures in place to respond to concerns about domestic abuse.

Ensuring signage is in place in parishes and other Diocesan venues to demonstrate that we are willing to talk about domestic abuse and how to access support.

Have a safeguarding professional who has responsibility for domestic abuse and violence and who is a point of contact for any advice and support.

Training those in leadership positions, safeguarding roles and other relevant roles on domestic abuse;

Discussing domestic abuse and violence in appropriate contexts.

Provide training and awareness-raising sessions.

Working with Statutory agencies and other support bodies. Supporting and publicising their work.

3.1 What to do in the Parish

Inform the PCC of any Diocesan domestic abuse Policy, practice guidance and the proposed action to take in the parish to support this.

Appoint a named individual who is a point of contact for any advice and support. This may be the Parish Safeguarding representative (PSR);
Follow the process/ flow chart on how to respond to concerns about domestic abuse (*If parishes are in any doubt as to what action to take, they should refer to the Diocesan Director of Safeguarding).*

Encourage roles within the parish to attend domestic abuse training.

Display the domestic abuse statement including information about helplines and local services.

Discuss domestic abuse in appropriate contexts such as marriage preparation.

Challenge inappropriate comments and behaviour by church members.

3.2 Recognise - Respond - Record - Refer

Recognise

Domestic abuse is often hidden. It is perpetrated in many ways and may not be obvious or easy to identify. Some victims try to hide the abuse they are suffering and protect their abuser because of fear and/or embarrassment. Those who know the victim well are most likely to notice that something is wrong and in a position to help. It is important that we learn to identify possible warning signs that domestic abuse that may be taking place. These can include any of the following:

- The victim stops attending
- The perpetrator is always checking up on the victim
- The victim is never alone and is always accompanied by their partner
- The victim may justify the perpetrator's behaviour
- The victim seems very isolated from friends and family
- The perpetrator may talk for or over the victim
- The victim may look or act nervous or anxious in from of their partner
- The victim does not have access to money or other necessities
- The victim may be reluctant to give their home address and may discourage visitors
- The victim may have bruises or injuries with no plausible explanation
- The victim becomes withdrawn, loses confidence and changes in appearance
- The victim does not have any friends or gradually withdraws

Barriers to Disclosing Domestic Abuse

It is also important that we learn to recognise the barriers that may prevent people who experience abuse from speaking out about what is happening to them.

The person may:

- have tried to disclose before, but not been believed
- be dependent upon the perpetrator be prevented from speaking to others without the perpetrator present
- be fearful of the consequences, including involvement of police or child protection
- services
- feel ashamed/embarrassed/guilty
- fear not being listened to/understood/taken seriously/believed
- not realise their experience is abusive

- have problems communicating with others
- believe (or hope) that the abuse will not be repeated
- not never have been asked the right questions to lead them to open up.

You may be worried about someone at church who you fear may be a victim of domestic abuse. Alternatively, someone may come to you to raise their concerns about someone else.

It is important (except in cases of immediate risk) to try to speak to the person who may be the victim before taking action.

Try to create opportunities for individuals to speak, without the suspected abuser present. Be bold and ask direct questions like, “Has anyone close to you made you frightened?” or “Has anyone prevented you from getting the things you need, such as food or medicine?” However, be careful not to ask leading questions giving details about what may have been done and by whom. Should the situation ever come to court, there must be no grounds for claiming the evidence has been contaminated.

Be aware that domestic abuse can occur between people of any race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, class, gender or disability. Do not let perceived differences between you and the person at risk, or fear of offending due to cultural misunderstanding, put you off speaking to them.

It is important to note that people with care and support needs (such as people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health problems or some older people) are at higher risk of domestic abuse, though it can often be wrongfully assumed that they are less affected.

Domestic abuse can be missed where there is a caring relationship. Carers may be seen as ‘long-suffering saints’ and may not be recognised as abusers. People with disabilities can also abuse others.

Older people could be hugely underrepresented in domestic abuse services. Older people are more likely to experience domestic abuse from a perpetrator they are still in an intimate relationship with or from an adult family member (such as their adult child). Statistics are unclear since, until recently, the Crime Survey of England and Wales had only collected information on victims and survivors of domestic abuse aged 74 and under. Due to the campaigning of Age UK, the Office for National Statistics has now agreed to change this and include over 74s in their data.

If you are concerned about a situation or not sure what to do, contact the Director of Safeguarding.

Respond – Initial Disclosure of Domestic Abuse

If a victim discloses abuse, the following factors are important:

- Wherever possible talk in a safe, private place where you will not be interrupted (but someone in distress may start talking anywhere).
- Explain confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, depending on the nature of what is disclosed. Whilst you might respect an individual's right to confidentiality this cannot be guaranteed i.e. when someone is being hurt and a criminal offence has been committed, someone is in danger, or when children are involved.
- Take plenty of time to listen and believe what they say.

Action
Dial 999 if there is a violent incident or if the person needs medical care. If the victim is in immediate danger, the Police should be called. Be aware that intervention may heighten risk, but it is important to ensure people are safe.

For any other required information call the National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 247 (see page 18 and 19 for further contacts).

The safety of children is paramount. If children are involved, a referral to children's services needs to be made in addition to calling the Police, if possible, encourage the victim to make the referral themselves, perhaps supporting them through the process. The Director of safeguarding needs to be informed.

Do affirm the strength and courage it takes to have survived the abuse and even more to talk about it.

Do encourage them to seek professional help from a local domestic abuse service who will be able to offer practical safety planning advice, even if they do not want to leave their home. In addition give information about national specialist helplines and websites.

Do express concern for their safety and immediate welfare. Do they have somewhere to stay?

Do ask about the children and their safety and welfare. You may need to persuade them to report any concerns to children's social care. You have no option but to do so if you have received information that a child is at risk.

Do encourage them to focus on their own needs, something they may not have been able to do since the abuse began but which is critical in helping them to change their situation.

Do reassure them that, whatever the circumstances, abuse is not justified and not their fault.

Do ask them what they want from you and the parish. Offer help which is in response to their needs and preferences and which lets them keep in control.

Do be sensitive to people's backgrounds and cultures and check your own and their understanding of how the cultural issues affect them. Ask them about what support is available to them from friends and family.

Mental capacity
If you think the person making the disclosure of abuse may lack mental capacity to make decisions affecting their safety, then it is very important to speak to the DS, who will inform Adult Safeguarding (Social Services). It is not your job to make an assessment about whether or not the person lacks capacity in this situation.

Children under 18
If children under 18 are under the care of the victim or perpetrator of alleged domestic violence, a referral will need to be made to Children's (Social) Services/ the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). In most situations, this should occur within one working day. Your DS must be informed and will be able to support you to action this. It is preferable for the DS to do this but, if the DS if not available, anyone can do it. It there is an immediate risk, you will need to make a 999 call. However, in most cases there will be time and opportunity to seek advice from, or pass the case on to the DS.

Record (and follow up)
Do check if it is all right to contact them at home before doing so. Ask them what their preferred means of contact is and confirm that this is safe.

Do keep information confidential and as a general rule only share with informed consent where appropriate and if possible, respect the wishes of those who do not give consent to share confidential information.

You should note that it may still be possible to share confidential information without consent if, in your judgement, it is necessary and proportionate to do so (i.e. there is a good reason), such as where the safety of the victim or (an) other(s) may be at risk.

Always keep a record of your decision and the reasons why you decided to share (or not). If in doubt contact the Director of Safeguarding.

Do make a brief objective note of date, facts and context of what you have been told but keep your opinions separate. This should be kept in strict confidence but could be useful in any future prosecution.

A guide to recording

- **Who** is it about? (Names of all key people, including any potential witnesses.)
- **What** happened? (Where possible, use exact quotes from the source of the information, using quotation marks.)

- **How** did it happen? (For example, if physical violence is alleged, was this done using an implement or with a kick or a hit?)
- **Where** did these events take place?
- **When** did this take place?
- **Why** did it happen? (This allows you to record any explanations offered to you by those involved. However, this is not the place for your own analysis. **Never *ask* a victim of abuse why they think the abuse occurred**. Quite apart from anything else, this could sound as if you are blaming them.)
- **What should happen next?** (What actions will follow? What will you do next? What is X going to do? Create a reminder to follow up in Y days' time.)
- Record **what did happen next** and the checks made to ensure effective follow up. (Did X do what they said they were going to do?)
- **Views/perspective of the person at risk** should be included.
- If you offer your **own analysis or opinion**, rather than fact, this should be made clear in the record.
- Records must always be dated and the author identified.

Refer

You must **share the incident with someone who is qualified within 24 hours** and can support you to help you to think through the issues and action. This may be the Director of safeguarding or an agency.

It can be difficult to make a referral, which can be with or without the permission of the victim. Social Care agencies and the police are aware of the issues and sensitivities in relation to domestic abuse and will ensure that they operate with professionalism and an awareness of the situation. Nevertheless, it is important that they are aware of the information concerning domestic abuse, so that they can act on it appropriately.

Do seek advice from the DS to review the safety and risk issues in relation to the alleged perpetrator if they are in the same Church. There may need to be a risk assessment and 'safeguarding agreement' put in place. This work needs be undertaken in consultation with the DS.

Victim safety planning should be conducted by a professional, ideally from a domestic abuse service or a statutory agency. There may be an occasion when a victim wishes to discuss their safety with you. It is essential that you seek advice from the DS before entering into detailed safety planning discussions. This planning would normally be guided by a safety planning format (see appendix C) and careful consideration should be given to where and how such information is provided and kept by the victim, to avoid being accessed by the perpetrator.

If the **alleged perpetrator is church personnel** you must talk to the DS to assess the most appropriate course of action to take, taking into consideration the Diocesan manging and responding to allegations and concerns practice guidance.

Do not give information about the victim's whereabouts to the perpetrator or to others who might pass information on to the perpetrator.
Do not discuss with the parish council/other members of a congregation who might inadvertently pass information on to the perpetrator.

When victims are leaving a controlling perpetrator, they often have to leave with nothing and have access to very limited financial support. Consider how your church can provide practical support to survivors.

3.3 Confidentiality

It is very important to understand principles of confidentiality but also to recognise when specialist help may be required and when to speak with other authorities. In pastoral conversations, you should maintain confidentiality unless:

The person disclosing gives you their consent to share specific information (clarify with whom).
You believe the person or someone else, especially a child, is at risk of serious harm.
The person indicates that they have been involved in or are likely to become involved in a criminal offence.

If they decide they do not want to report abuse to the police, they should receive a response that respects their right to privacy. However, if you are concerned that they or someone else is at serious risk of harm or at risk to life, explain that you must discuss this with your DS.

3.4 Responding to Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

If an allegation of domestic abuse is made about someone within the life of the church, the Director of Safeguarding may have to carry of a risk assessment. Recommendations from this may result in a safeguarding plan. If the perpetrator is in a Clergy or leadership role within the Church, their position will need to be reviewed as part of the risk assessment process.

It is not safe to 'check the story' with the perpetrator or to challenge them directly. Do not pass on messages or letters from the perpetrator – the survivor will know how to contact the perpetrator if they wish to do so.

Where it has already been established that the perpetrator is responsible for the abuse, and they attend the same church as the victim/survivor, both parties should not continue to attend and be supported by the same church, unless this is a clearly expressed wish by both parties. If someone has to leave the church, it should be the perpetrator and not the survivor.

Perpetrators (and alleged perpetrators) of domestic abuse should also be offered pastoral support by a parish priest or other member of their church, especially when going through a risk assessment process. It is important that this is provided by a different person to the one offering support to the survivor.

If someone connected to the church discloses to you that they are currently, or have been, a perpetrator of domestic abuse, you should listen carefully and explain to the person that you will have to inform the Diocesan director of safeguarding. You should be respectfully uncertain in all interactions with the perpetrator. A profession of remorse and repentance does not mean all risk has gone. Remember that in-depth work with perpetrators of domestic abuse should only be done by those who have undergone appropriate training.

Safety and wellbeing of the person offering support
It is important that those supporting victims/ survivors or perpetrators are mindful of their own and others' safety and wellbeing, and that they themselves receive support.
Ensure a third person is available on the premises when you meet with a survivor, to provide a level of protection and support for both the listener and the person seeking help. Ensure, if possible, that someone else is aware of where you are. When offering long-term, ongoing support to a survivor of abuse, you should be mindful of the need to avoid the person becoming dependent on you.

Know your own limitations
It is important to make the survivor aware that while you support them and want to help, you are not an expert. Be open and honest in explaining to the person the limitations of what you can do. Don't promise to keep their secret. Be clear that you will need to involve Diocesan safeguarding, but that they can choose to remain anonymous (provided there is no immediate danger to their life and children are not involved).

Recognise the work of other agencies and work with them where appropriate. Signpost
people to services that can help and encourage them to use support that is available.

Pastoral Issues
There are real issues for parishes where both parties continue to attend church. Parishes need to be aware of any legal restrictions around those perpetrating abuse and ensure these are not undermined.

They need to consider how to support both parties safely, noting that the parish Priest cannot support both individuals.

If they need further advice in relation to providing support they should contact the

DS. If the victim/survivor or perpetrator is a member of the clergy, please talk urgently to the Director of safeguarding to review the action required to ensure safety and the appropriate response.

There may be a long-term need to provide pastoral support for survivors of domestic abuse, including support to couples when one or both parties have experienced abuse in a previous relationship.

4.0 Domestic Abuse in the Context of the Church

The Diocese of Nottingham recognises that violence and other forms of abuse does occur within relationships. The wider Church family should be prepared to support those in need and to exercise its healing ministry.

Certain scriptural texts, which refer to marriage and relationships between spouses, are open to misinterpretation. It is important to emphasise that both scripture and the teaching of the church on which it is based, proclaim that marriage is based on love, trust, mutual respect and support between spouses, and that all forms of abuse are excluded and constitute a violation of the essential nature of marriage. The Church needs to continue to make this clear and encourage clergy to use appropriate opportunities to counter any suggestion that scripture can be exploited to justify domestic violence or other more subtle forms of abuse.

4.1 Additional Guidance for Clergy

Domestic Violence and the Permanence of Marriage

Some abused women believe that Catholic Church teaching on the permanence of marriage requires them to stay in an abusive relationship. They may hesitate to seek a separation or divorce. They may fear that they cannot re-marry in the Catholic Church however no person is expected to stay in an abusive marriage.

Violence and abuse, not divorce, break up a marriage. The abuser has already broken the marriage covenant through his or her abusive behaviour. Abused persons who have divorced may want to investigate the possibility of seeking an annulment.

Abusive men may take a text from the Bible and distort it to support their right to abuse. They may use Ephesians 5:22 (“Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord”) to justify their behaviour. This passage (v. 21-33), however, refers to the mutual submission of husband and wife out of love for Christ. It means that husbands should love their wives as they love their own body, as Christ loves the Church. (See appendix B for further

examples).

Men and women are created in God's image. They are to treat each other with dignity and respect. Men who abuse also cite the Bible to insist that their victims forgive them (see, for example, Matthew 6:9-15). A victim then feels guilty if they cannot do so. Forgiveness, however, does not mean forgetting the abuse or pretending that it didn't happen. Forgiveness is not permission to repeat the abuse. Rather, forgiveness means that the victim decides to let go of the experience, to move on with life and not to tolerate abuse of any kind again, however the choice of forgiveness is the individuals, and they should never feel pressured to do so.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation offers an opportunity to address these issues. While there are limitations to dealing with issues of abuse in the confessional due to the seal of confession and the absolute confidentiality that it implies, issues of time and place for a lengthy conversation, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is an important place to where domestic violence can be addressed.

Abuse and violence can and does happen in "good Catholic families". It is an equal opportunity destroyer across faiths, race, and socioeconomic classes.

It is not "Catholic" to be abusive and violent nor is it "Catholic" to accept abuse and violence in the family. Abuse is based on an erroneous set of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours, all of which can be changed.

Those who have been abused by an intimate partner or family member often battle with spiritual issues related to the abuse, their role in the relationship, the importance of forgiveness, the meaning of suffering, and their relationship with God. These issues may affect the individual's understanding of sin—the victim's or the abuser's—and the need for reconciliation.

Violence can destroy a person's faith in God or their sense that God loves or cares about them. At the same time, it leads victims to wonder how someone who loves them can be abusive towards them. Those who live with abuse are often filled with guilt or anger toward their partner or toward God who allows these things to happen.

Religious beliefs can be a reason victims stay in abusive relationships. They may feel that the church or their faith requires them to remain with an abusive partner regardless of the level of violence.

They may also be embarrassed or ashamed of what is happening to them or fear the negative judgments of others in their church if they bring the abuse to light or decide to separate themselves from their abuser.

Domestic violence is not an issue of anger. It is about the use of force or fear to control and intimidate another person in a relationship. Those who have been abused have lived with someone who has used different methods to control their life. It is important for the priest to be sensitive to this issue of control; the priest must resist the temptation to tell the victim what she must do or to insist that she act in a way she may not choose or before she is ready. This may be interpreted as another form of control.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation offers an important opportunity to address these issues.

There are *limits* to dealing with issues of abuse in the confessional:

- There are limitations due to the seal of confession and the absolute confidentiality that it implies.
- There are limits of time and circumstance. During normal parish hours for confession, there may not be adequate time to address everything that should be addressed with the penitent at places of confession.
- There are limits of opportunity that do not allow an individual in confession a chance to thoroughly examine the risks they face and the options available to them.

At the same time, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is an important place to address domestic violence:

- It provides a safe, confidential place for victims to talk about the abuse.
- It presents an opportunity for them to hear a moral voice clearly condemn domestic violence and assure them that they do not have to live in fear.
- It offers a context where spiritual issues related to abuse can be addressed. These include: the meaning of suffering, the obligation of marriage vows, the duty to forgive, why God allows abuse to continue, anger toward the abuser, guilt, the effects of abuse on children, and the sense of misplaced responsibility for the actions of the abuser.
- It is an important place to raise the issue of safety with someone who is at risk and to help a victim consider what she can do to stay safe, even if she chooses to remain with the abuser.
- It is not uncommon for those who are abused to be careful about disclosing their abuse. It is important for the priest to ask direct questions to clarify their situation at home (What happens? How often does it happen? Does your spouse do other things that make you afraid?)
- It will be easier for Priests to be truly helpful to those who are abused if they keep in mind several points.

First, the person who chooses to reveal their abuse in the Sacrament of Reconciliation does so for a reason. It may be because of the security the

seal of confession provides. It may be because they are not ready to address the issue in a more public forum yet. It may be because they are wrestling with a misplaced guilt or belief that God is punishing them or has abandoned them. As these issues are addressed and they feel the priest is sensitive and trustworthy, they may be more receptive to addressing these concerns outside of confession.

Second, the limits of the sacrament should be respected. It is not intended to be a counselling session or crisis intervention. The sacrament is an experience of the healing, hope-filled presence of God. What may better be addressed outside the sacrament should be. Encouraging a victim of domestic violence to bring these issues to another forum will be helped if the following things are done first in confession.

- For the Priest to be sensitive, demonstrates understanding of the issue of domestic abuse, and is encouraging to the victim.
- If the Priest demonstrates that he is trustworthy. This becomes evident if he believes the victim, does not minimize the abuse or excuse the abuser, does not blame the victim, and does not push the victim to act before she is ready
- If the Priest clearly condemns violence as unacceptable and reassures the victim that no one has to live in fear.
- If the Priest respects the spiritual struggles the victim faces, reassures the victim that God does not abandon those in need, and offers hope and encouragement.
- Reassures the victim that dealing with domestic violence is not done quickly and that he and the church will help her, with practical assistance and for as long as it takes.

Third, after the crisis passes, there will still be a role for the Priest in assisting victims and family members to deal with spiritual issues and residual guilt. Long-term spiritual issues often include addressing grief and mourning over the loss of innocence, a sense of safety, and perhaps the relationship itself.

Responding to victims

- Do help the victim/survivor with any religious concerns.
- Do emphasise that the marriage covenant is broken by the violence from their partner.
- Do not pursue couples' counselling/mediation with them and their partner if you are aware that there is violence in the relationship.
- Do assure them of God's love and presence.
- Do pray with them.
- Don't encourage them to forgive the alleged perpetrator and/or take them back.

Responding to perpetrators

- Do address any religious rationalisations they may offer or questions they may have. Do not allow them to use religious excuses for their behaviour.
- Do name the abuse as their problem, not the victim's/survivor's. Tell them that only they can stop it and seek assistance.
- Do not be taken in by his 'conversion' experience. If it is genuine, it will be a tremendous resource as they proceed with accountability. If it is phony, it is only another way to manipulate you and the system and maintain control of the process to avoid accountability.
- Do pray with them.
- Do assure them of your support in this endeavour.

4.2 How Can the Church Help to Prevent Domestic Abuse?

Raising awareness through teaching and worship
Leaders of worship can use the information in this policy to make clear statements that domestic abuse is wrong and to challenge the myths that allow domestic abuse to continue.

Careful thought should be given to the way the Bible is used and how theological interpretations can affirm or damage those caught up in abusive relationships.

The language used in worship and teaching should reflect the Church's affirmation that all are made in the image of God, and not marginalise those who may already feel unvalued.

Work with children and young people
Disclosures of domestic abuse by children and young people must be taken seriously. It is important to listen and make clear that what they have experienced is wrong and not their fault. You should let them know that to make sure they (and others) are safe you will have to tell someone else who can help. The Parish safeguarding representative or Director of safeguarding should be contacted for advice.

Leaders should affirm and model positive relationships in their work with children and young people.

Youth leaders should be encouraged to invite a guest speaker on domestic abuse (from the police, local domestic abuse agency/charity or Women's Aid) to inform and encourage discussion and awareness about the impact of domestic abuse and sources of support.

5.0 Local Domestic Abuse Contacts

DERBYSHIRE

Crossroads Derbyshire (Harmony Project) *(High Peak, Derbyshire)*
Derbyshire WISH *(Derbyshire)*
Hadhari Nari Advice Centre *(Derby City)*
Refuge - Derby *(Derby City)*
Derbyshire IDVA Service *(Multiple Areas)*
Elm Foundation *(Derbyshire)*The No Woman Turned Away Project *(Multiple Areas)*

LEICESTERSHIRE

Bridge House - Leicester *(Leicestershire)*
Panahghar - Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland *(Multiple Areas)*
Women's Aid Leicestershire Ltd *(Multiple Areas)*

LINCOLNSHIRE

Boston Women's Aid (SoLDAS) *(Lincolnshire)*
EDAN Lincs (East Midlands) *(Lincolnshire)*
EDAN Lincs (Gainsborough) *(Lincolnshire)*
EDAN Lincs (Lincoln) *(Lincolnshire)*
Lincolnshire Rape Crisis *(Lincolnshire)*
Victim Support - East Midlands Children's ISVA Service *(Lincolnshire)*

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Amber House *(Nottingham)*
Broxtowe Women's Project Ltd *(Broxtowe, Nottinghamshire)*
Juno Women's Aid - Serenity Refuge *(Nottinghamshire)*
Juno Women's Aid - Zola BMER Refuge *(Nottingham)*
Midlands Women's Aid *(Nottinghamshire)*
Newark Women's Aid *(Nottinghamshire)*
NIDAS *(Nottinghamshire)*
Nottingham Central Women's Aid *(Nottingham)*
Nottinghamshire Women's Aid Ltd *(Nottinghamshire)*Umuada Refuge *(Nottingham)*
VA Housing Provider (Jericho Refuge) *(Nottinghamshire)*

MULTIPLE AREAS

Juno Women's Aid *(Multiple Areas)*
Karma Nirvana *(Multiple Areas)*
Living Without Abuse *(Multiple Areas)*
National Domestic Abuse Helpline *(Multiple Areas)*
National LGBT Domestic Violence Helpline *(Multiple Areas)*
Opoka - National Helpline in Polish Language *(Multiple Areas)*
Safe Partnership *(Multiple Areas)*
SignHealth Deaf Domestic Abuse Service - Remote Support *(Multiple Areas)*
Unseen's Modern Slavery and Exploitation Helpline *(Multiple Areas)*
The Salvation Army Modern Slavery Adult Victim Care Service *(Multiple Areas)*
Women's Aid Live Chat *(Multiple Areas)*

6.0 National Domestic Abuse Contacts and Resources

Action for Children
Helping children across the UK to grow up safe and happy. For campaigns and articles, enter the search term 'Domestic Abuse'.
www.actionforchildren.org.uk

Age UK advice line: 0800 678 1602
www.ageuk.org.uk

Forced Marriage Unit helpline: 020 7008 0151
A joint Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and Home Office unit,
which leads on the Government's forced marriage policy and supports British nationals in the
UK and overseas.
www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage

Galop National LGBT+ domestic abuse helpline: 0800 999 5428
www.galop.org.uk

Hourglass (formerly Action on Elder Abuse) helpline: 0808 808 8141
Ending the harm, abuse and exploitation of older people in the UK.
www.wearehourglass

Karma Nirvana helpline: 0800 5999 247
Support for victims of honour-based abuse and forced marriage. Skype calling and contact
form available.
www.karmanirvana.org.uk

ManKind Initiative: 01823 334244
Support for male victims of domestic abuse across the UK, their friends, family, neighbours,
colleagues and employers.
www.mankind.org.uk

Men's Advice Line: 0808 8010327
UK-wide helpline for male victims of domestic abuse.
www.mensadviceline.org.uk

National Domestic Abuse helpline: 0808 2000 247
Supporting women
www.refuge.org.uk

Rape Crisis (England and Wales) helpline: 0808 802 9999
Live chat, text-based service.
www.rapecrisis.org.uk/get-help/live-chat-helpline

Respect helpline: 0808 802 4040
For anyone concerned they may be harming someone else.
www.respect.uk.net

Restored
Equipping the Church to support survivors, advocate on their behalf and engage men in the
conversation.
www.restored-uk.org

Safe Lives
Dedicated to ending domestic abuse. Offering training and resources.
www.safelives.org.uk

The Survivors Trust helpline: 08088 010818
Umbrella agency for specialist rape and sexual abuse services in the UK.
www.thesurvivorstrust.org

Survivors UK
Support for men experiencing rape and sexual abuse, and for their friends and family.
www.survivorsuk.org/ways-we-can-help/online-helpline

Victim Support: 0808 1689 111
Offers free, confidential support for people affected by crime or traumatic events in England
and Wales.
www.victimsupport.org.uk

White Ribbon:
Men working to end violence against women.
www.whiteribbon.org.uk

Women's Aid Live Chat
Providing services in England to protect women and children, as well as shaping and
coordinating responses to domestic abuse.
www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support

Alcohol and Drugs Support

Alcohol Concern: their website contains a wide range of information about alcohol, and a number of Factsheets which can be downloaded free (including
one on domestic violence written by Sarah Galvani of the University if Birmingham.) www.alcoholconcern.org.uk

Drinkline **0800 917 8282** 24 hours including bank holidays .
Information for people with alcohol problems or anyone concerned about alcohol misuse.

Drugscope: their website has information and research on drugs and includes a directory of drug treatment services.
www.drugcope.org.uk

Frank (formerly the National Drugs Helpline) **0800 776600**; textphone **0800 917 8765;** email: frank@talktofrank.com
Offers information, support and counselling to drug users and their families, partners, friends and children, and will give local referrals where appropriate.
Website: www.talktofrank.com

Release: Legal helpline providing confidential information to drug users, their
families, friends, professionals. Telephone: **0845 450 0215**
Website: www.release.org.uk; email ask@release.org.uk

Responsible Person	Rachael Campion
Date first approved by Trustees	September 2022
First Review Date	February 2024
Second Review Date	February 2025
Next Review Date	February 2026
Author	Rachael Campion

Appendix A

Parish Statement on Domestic Abuse

Parish of ……

Policy for Responding to Domestic Abuse

All forms of domestic abuse are wrong and must stop. We are committed to promoting and supporting environments which:

- ensure that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse;
- protect those vulnerable to domestic abuse from actual or potential harm;
- recognise equality amongst people and within relationships;
- enable and encourage concerns to be raised and responded to appropriately and consistently.

We recognise that:

- all forms of domestic abuse cause damage to the survivor and express an imbalance of power in the relationship;
- all survivors (regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity) have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse;
- domestic abuse can occur in all communities;
- domestic abuse may be a single incident, but is usually a systematic, repeated pattern which escalates in severity and frequency;
- domestic abuse, if witnessed or overheard by a child, is a form of abuse by the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour;
- working in partnership with children, adults and other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of any child or adult suffering abuse.

We will endeavour to respond to domestic abuse by:
In all our activities –

- valuing, listening to and respecting both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

In our publicity –

- raising awareness about other agencies, support services, resources and expertise, through providing information in public and women-only areas of relevance to survivors, children and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

When concerns are raised –

- ensuring that those who have experienced abuse can find safety and informed help;
- working with the appropriate statutory bodies during an investigation into domestic abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the church community.

In our care –

- ensuring that informed and appropriate pastoral care is offered to any child, young person or adult who has suffered abuse;
- identifying and outlining the appropriate relationship of those with pastoral care responsibilities with both survivors and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

If you have any concerns or need to talk to anyone, please contact ……

Appendix B

Theology

The table below lists some scriptures that have been used unhelpfully with regard to victims of domestic abuse together with how the same scriptures could be applied helpfully.

SCRIPTURE	UNHELPFUL APPLICATION	HELPFUL APPLICATION
Original Sin **"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it."** *Genesis 3.6*	**Sin: Women and weaker** Eve took the fruit, and gave some to her husband; this shows women are weaker and more likely to be sinful.	**Sin: Equal responsibility** Man and woman were both participants in the Fall: Adam was no less to blame than Eve. Romans 5.12-21 "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned."
Forgiveness **"And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors."** *Matthew 6.12*	**Disregard** Forgiving someone should mean disregarding what they have done and maintaining the same relationship with them regardless of whether they change.	**Consequences** Sin has consequences and forgiving does not remove those consequences. Forgiveness is a process and must not nullify the consequences of abuse or mean that the situation must continue as it always has. Women should not have to stay in an abusive situation in order to forgive their partner.
Divorce **"But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, causes her to become an adulteress …"** *Matthew 5.32*	**Contract** Marriage is a contract and the person who cancels the contract, i.e. files for divorce is the one who is responsible. Therefore if a woman divorces a man for abusing her, she is at fault, not him.	**Covenant** Marriage is a covenant; divorce is the breaking of that covenant. When a man chooses to be abusive, he breaks the covenant. If his wife chooses to divorce him, she is making public his breaking of the covenant, not going against what the Bible says about divorce.
Suffering **"In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials."** *1 Peter 1.6*	**Accept** Women should accept abuse and use the suffering as an opportunity to grow their faith.	**Refute** By staying in a relationship where she is subject to abuse a woman is risking being murdered. When Jesus was tempted to risk his life, he said "it is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test'" (Matthew 4.7). God wanted abused women to be safe and protected.

SCRIPTURE	UNHELPFUL APPLICATION	HELPFUL APPLICATION
Creation of Woman **"The Lord God said, "it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."** *Genesis 2.18*	**Inferior** To help means to serve, this verse shows that God created women to serve men and suggests they are inferior to them.	**Equal** The word "helper" here referring to women, most often refers to God in the Old Testament usage (e.g. 1 Samuel 7.12; Ps 121.1-2). Therefore there is no suggestion of female inferiority.
Submission **"Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord"** *Ephesians 5.22*	**Obedience** The woman must obey her partner **Not submitting causes abuse** If a man abuses his partner it is because she is not being submissive enough	**Mutual submission** The previous verse 5.21 says "submit to one another" and 5.22 must be read in light of the mutual submission we should be giving to one another. To submit does not mean to obey, it means to choose to place oneself under another. **Submission is a choice** Submission cannot be forced, it must be chosen. Not submitting can never justify abuse.
Headship **"For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body of which he is the Saviour"** *Ephesians 5.23*	**The asserting of power** The man is the head; therefore he has all the power and the right to assert it. **Superiority** Headship means being superior and having the right to take more than give.	**The laying down of power** The example given of headship is of Christ's headship of the Church. When Christ came to earth, he gave up all his heavenly power for his bride, the Church. The original Greek word used for head in this passage is Kephale. This word means the head of a river or the source of the river. It does not imply superiority.
Rulership **To the woman he said, "… Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you."** *Genesis 3.16*	**Rulership: a Right** God determined men should rule their wives, therefore that is how it should be,	**Rulership: a Result** A consequence of sin is that a man will rule over his wife, it is not God's best plan for humanity, before the fall men and women were equal.

Appendix C

Safety and Exit Plan Guidance

Step 1: Choose what you could use:

A. If I decide to leave, I will_____. (Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, stairwells or fire escapes would you use?)

B. I can keep my purse and car keys ready and put them _____ (place) in order to leave quickly.

C. I can tell_____about the violence and request they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.

D. I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police and the fire department.

E. I will use_____as my code for my children or my friends so they can call for help.

F. If I have to leave my home, I will go _____(Decide this even if you don't think there will be a next time). If I cannot go to the location above, then I can go to _____or _____.

G. I can also teach some of these strategies to some/all of my children.

H. When I expect we are going to have an argument, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as _____ _____. (Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons or in rooms without access to an outside door).

I. I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I can give my partner what he/she wants to calm him/her down. I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.

Step 2: Safety when preparing to leave

Leaving must be done with a careful plan in order to increase safety. Perpetrators often strike back when they believe that the person they are abusing is leaving the relationship.

I can use some or all the following safety strategies:

A. I will leave money and an extra set of keys with_____so that I can leave quickly.

B. I will keep copies of important papers and documents or an extra set of keys at _____

C. I will open a savings account by_____, to increase my independence.

D. Other things I can do to increase my independence include:

_____

E. The domestic violence program's hot line telephone number is _____and I can seek shelter by calling this hot line.

F. I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times. I understand that if I use my mobile, the following month the telephone bill will tell my perpetrator the numbers that I called after I left. I could get a 'pay as you go' phone. There are no bills and all communication would be confidential.

G. I will check with_____and _____to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money in an emergency.

H. I can leave extra clothes with_____.

I. I will sit down and review my safety plan every_____in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence. _____(domestic violence advocate or friend) has agreed to help me review this plan.

J. I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children.

Step 3: SAFETY IN MY OWN RESIDENCE

There are many things that a person can do to increase her safety in her own residence. It may be impossible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step.

Safety measures I can use include:

A. I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.

B. I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.

C. I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.

D. I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.

E. I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment.

F. I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house.

G. I will teach my children how to use the telephone to make a reverse charge call to me and to_ (friend/ other) or get them a mobile phone in the event that my partner takes the children.

H. I will tell people who take care of my children which people have permission to pick up my children and that my partner is not permitted to do so. The people I will inform about pick- up permission include:

_____(school)
_____(day care staff)
_____(Sunday School teacher)

Appendix D

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Confidentiality

If in doubt about whether to disclose information please contact the Diocesan Director of Safeguarding.

Although information relating to domestic abuse may be given in confidence, it should be made clear from the outset, to the person providing the information, that in certain situations such information may be passed to a third party, (e.g. the police).

If domestic abuse information has been received in confidence, the provider of the information should be encouraged, in the first instance, to disclose it to the relevant authorities him or herself or alternatively, consent should be sought to make a disclosure.

Seeking consent or encouraging a person to make a disclosure should always be the first option but there may be circumstances where consent is refused or cannot otherwise be obtained or is just inappropriate because it places a person at increased risk or might prejudice an ongoing investigation. In such cases, a recipient of the information may still be able to share the information without consent if it can be justified in the public interest. Such a public interest can arise in a wide number of situations, for instance, to protect a person, notably a child, from significant harm or prevent, help detect or prosecute a criminal offence.

The key factors in deciding whether or not to share confidential information without consent are necessity and proportionality, i.e. whether the proposed sharing is likely to make an effective contribution to preventing any risk and whether the public interest in sharing the information overrides the confidentiality. In making the decision, a person should weigh up what are the risks if the information is shared against what are the risks if it is not shared and make a decision based on his or her professional judgement, or by seeking advice from the DS. It may be necessary to make a disclosure without consent, for example, when a disclosure would be likely to assist in the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime, especially a crime of violence. Indeed, when a victim of domestic abuse refuses to contact the police, disclosure will be justified if children remain at risk, for example.

Data Protection

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, sensitive personal data includes information which relates to a person's physical or mental health, sexual life or to the commission or alleged commission of an offence. The 1998 Act restricts the use of such information, including disclosure to third parties, without the explicit consent of the data subject, (i.e. the individual to whom the information relates). Nevertheless, there are certain instances, under data protection legislation, where such information can be shared without a data subject's consent provided that it is in the substantial public interest, for instance this includes:

- if it is necessary for the purposes of the prevention or detection of any unlawful act; or
- to protect members of the public against dishonesty, malpractice or other seriously improper conduct; or
- it is necessary for the discharge of any function which is designed for the provision of confidential counselling, advice, support or any other service.
- and seeking consent would prejudice the purposes for which the information is sought.

If you are unsure whether or not you can disclose personal and/or confidential information to a relevant third party you should speak to the DS.

APPENDIX E

Toilet Poster

Love should not hurt

Is someone tracking you on your phone?

Are you being put down all of the time?

Is someone trying to stop you seeing your friends and family?

Is someone making you think you're going mad?

Are you being told what to wear and how to act?

Are you being made to do sexual acts that you don't want to do?

Is someone stopping you from working, or having access to money?

Are you afraid?

Domestic abuse isn't just physical violence. There are lots of ways that abusers control the people they're meant to love and it might not happen all the time.

If this is happening to you, or you are worried about someone, then the National Domestic Abuse helpline is a free confidential service that can help.

0808 2000 247

Your local services are:

The Catholic Diocese of
Nottingham