

PASTORAL SUPPORT IN PARISHES

With the closure of Churches from today and Government advice to stay inside our own homes where absolutely possible (if not self-isolate) we are all looking for new ways to be and do church.

A 'call to arms', to respond to the stressed, isolated, poorly or at risk amongst us is a welcome response from those in our local communities and church members.

We are here to support you in continuing to deliver the sometimes vital, and always helpful, pastoral support to those in your communities that you know to be in need of support, and to those who may newly find themselves in such a situation.

However, churches with pastoral teams will find that they are no longer able to visit, different support needs are emerging and new volunteers stepping forward. We hope that this information sheet will provide some ideas and inspiration on how to offer the highest standards of safe pastoral support over the coming months as well as highlighting some areas that will need more thought.

As things seem to change on a daily basis please make sure that you keep up to date with the latest [Government guidance](#).

BEFORE YOU START

It is important to know what resources and initiatives there are available in your local community, so that there is a streamlining of services and some working together to best meet need. It might be sensible to ask about volunteering for a charity who are already set up to support various groups of vulnerable people, for example [Volunteer Cornwall](#) are organising a central register.

Where there are gaps in resources or services that you feel your PCC might be able to fill, please pause and carefully consider what you are able to do and how to do it in a way that is safe for the worker, the person in need and of course would not reflect badly on the church or your PCC.

We are here to help you reach out to those in need, and will encourage you to do so, especially whilst there is such uncertainty around us all at the moment. To do that we need to acknowledge the temptation to ‘just get on with it’, potentially cutting important corners, or feeling in some way that the safeguarding principles and boundaries can and should be relaxed.

In actual fact, the reality is that whilst communities are in such a state of unknowing, and are thus providing a much needed reactive service, anyone who wishes to take advantage of a vulnerable person could in fact slip more easily through the net (financial impropriety- debit card pin numbers/contactless payments, keys to houses perhaps). Equally, it is likely that someone with the best of intentions might do ‘the wrong thing’ and inadvertently cause harm. (Wanting to bake or cook meals for frail, ill or vulnerable people is kind but really risky).

Vulnerable people are thus even more vulnerable now and require our highest standards of care.

Being clear, formal and transparent with those we hope to be able to help is the first point to address. Therefore identifying yourself (working on behalf of the PCC), have a system of recording encounters and ensuring each worker has a person to report to for accountability purposes. Explain a code of conduct and leave contact details.

We must also be led by what the person we are hoping to support wants... not by what you might think they need. Please be aware that you might not know who is vulnerable at this time, so make any service you offer as widely known as you can. Assuming that a person is ok because they are self-isolating with other family members for example might not be sound. Some people find going to work or school a lifeline from stresses, pressure or even abuse at home.

It is essential to work out what support you will be offering ‘from the church’ and what support will be offered by individuals as a neighbour or friend. Support offered by a PCC is subject to different boundaries in order to ensure that the Parish Insurance Policy will cover the work. This includes volunteers being safely recruited, trained and completing DBS Checks. Parishes with existing pastoral teams will be used to working in this way, but others will be volunteering who have not completed this process.

As you will appreciate, we do not want to stop you doing all you can to ensure that those people who are in most need get the help they need but we would ask you all just to step back slightly for a minute and take stock of the implications.

We know the police are already concerned the level of financial scamming by phone and online is likely to rise now that so many older people are in effective isolation and without direct family support. Our concern is that unscrupulous people may also come forward to ‘volunteer’ if they think we are not paying

sufficient attention to doing some basic checks. So this is to offer some simple advice to make sure that the help given and received is safe and sustainable for everyone.

1. If possible, only ask those people who have already been safely recruited and DBS cleared to visit people on their own e.g. Pastoral Visitors, people with PtO (if under 70), clergy. This is not exhaustive but gives an idea - you will know who you have locally.
2. If volunteers you do not know well or who have not already been safely recruited by the Church come forward to help don't turn them away but ensure that they complete a simple application form.
3. Take up references - even verbally is better than nothing.
4. Ensure people you do not know visit in pairs.
5. Do not send the same people back again and again to visit the same people.
6. If volunteers are going to be handling money for people they MUST have a DBS check at enhanced and barred level, the Disclosure and Barring Service have been very clear that there is no change to their rules on this.
7. Ensure visitors report back to you or someone for a debrief after each visit.
8. Make sure they all complete the Basic Online Safeguarding Module so they can recognise if someone is being abused. The link to that is here: <https://safeguardingtraining.cofeportal.org/>

WAYS TO SUPPORT

Practical Support (dependent on the specific government guidance on the day, some of these suggestions may not be permitted)

Shopping is an obvious way to support people who are unable to get out. However, this comes with risks and we strongly advise that you look at all the alternatives before handling money/debit cards. For example, many local shops are offering to take orders and payment on the telephone so a volunteer will only need to pick it up and deliver it (though some are offering delivery too). If someone cannot get a home delivery slot from a supermarket, can they place an order using 'click and collect', and a volunteer collect from the supermarket? Are there other family members who could do the online ordering and the local volunteer collect?

If there really is no option, please do as above and make an agreement that can be shared with the family. Only those who have an up to date DBS check that covers Regulated Activity with adults are legally able to handle money or finances. For accountability make sure that there are two of you, one of whom has the relevant DBS check. Have a shopping list, keep receipts and sign that change etc has been handed over. If using a Debit Card keep transactions under £30 to avoid handing out pin numbers. If you have any doubts please get in touch with the diocesan safeguarding team (see below).

Other practical support could include prescription collection, dog-walking etc. Look at how to do these safely and how to keep your distance. Unless

it is absolutely necessary, do not go into someone's home or pass items across that are not strictly necessary. Do not offer to cook food for people unless your church is already set up to do this and holds the relevant hygiene certificates. Instead, look to support local pubs/cafes/restaurants many of whom are now offering take away meals, again a volunteer can pick up a meal and take it over. If someone needs support that you cannot offer, do help by linking them up with other agencies in the voluntary sector.

Hygiene - Currently there is a lot of research going on about how long the Coronavirus lasts on different surfaces. The early results suggest that it lasts longer on hard surfaces than soft and can take up to a week to disappear. If you are supporting people showing signs of infection do take precautions to protect yourself, likewise take precautions to protect the vulnerable self-isolaters from the virus entering their house.

Combating Social Isolation

Physical contact is clearly potentially dangerous, and must obviously be avoided in all but extreme circumstances. Social contact however can be virtual e.g. [WhatsApp](#) (group texts) or a Facebook Group. Inventive ways to keep people connected will be very valuable, but think about those who might not be entirely comfortable with social media for example. Might it be possible to post a weekly briefing/newsheet through the door of individuals, thus letting them know they are in people's thoughts? The telephone might also be a lifeline for some. Setting up a regular arrangement to call a person, or providing a phone number, which is staffed for a couple of hours each day, may be a great help. Telephone contact can also be a great way to involve existing members of pastoral teams who are themselves in isolation but otherwise quite well.

Prayer

When our church buildings open for prayer again explore how this can be facilitated and whether there are prayer stations that people can use. [Prayer Spaces in Schools](#) has a number of prayer stations that can be easily put together. Is there a way that people can leave a message with specific prayer requests? There are some prayer cards on the [diocesan website](#) that you might like to print off to help in this. Do let the wider community know that this is available for them too.

Live streaming of services is more important than ever and is still permissible from homes. We encourage us all to consider how we can be as creative as possible with streaming services and other resources. There are many, many fantastic examples of churches and clergy using technology to reach and engage communities. Read more guidance here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/church-resources/digital-labs/labs-learning-blog/beginners-guide-going-live-your-service-or>

For a Sunday, is there a liturgy that can be used by those at home? The Church of England have a lot of resources to help this including links to churches that broadcast their services. In addition, the BBC will be broadcasting services on the

radio and on BBC One.

Mental Well Being

Both [MIND](#) and the [BBC](#) have articles and suggestions about maintaining your mental health when in isolation.

Current guidelines (18/03/2020) suggest that those in isolation without any symptoms of illness are able to go for a walk as long as they keep 2m apart from others. Other suggestions for exercise to improve well-being can be found on the [NHS Website](#).

The [National Trust](#) are opening the parkland and gardens of many of their properties for free but do check with individual properties before setting out!

Mutual Support

Please do remember to stay accountable. If there is an existing pastoral team they should be used to doing this but remember to include any new volunteers. Try and have a central co-ordinator to feed back all activity to and individuals should keep a confidential record of all that they do. In this way, no one will be missed out, and people can be kept safe. Depending on how technologically minded your pastoral team is you might want to look at ways of keeping in touch as a group using apps like [WhatsApp](#) (group texts) or [Zoom](#) (group meetings).

And remember if you start to show any signs of illness please step back and notify anyone that you have been supporting.

IMPORTANTLY IF YOU COME ACROSS A SAFEGUARDING CONCERN, YOU MUST MAKE A DECISION REGARDING MAINTAINING DISTANCE OR ATTENDING TO AN APPARENT PHYSICAL NEED. All Safeguarding concerns must be responded to in line with our safeguarding guidance which can be found here

<https://www.trurodiocese.org.uk/resources/safeguarding/helpsupport/>

So, what can you do differently, or to coin a phrase what will “business as unusual” look like for you? Do let us know so that we can share ideas with others.

And remember that you should be caring for one another, not forgetting your priest.

SAFEGUARDING TEAM CONTACT

The diocesan safeguarding team are still working, so it is business as usual albeit from home. Safeguarding casework will continue, however we will be limiting face-to-face meetings and travel to those that are considered by us to be essential. Other meetings will be conducted over the phone, email, virtually (webcam based media for example) or we might also use the postal service. The best way to get in touch with the Safeguarding team is on email:

- If you wish to **raise a safeguarding concern** you should email [Sarah Acraman](mailto:sarah.acraman@truro.anglican.org) (Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor).
- For out of hours & emergencies please phone 01208 251300 for an urgent safeguarding response from Social Care, or if you believe somebody is at immediate risk of harm please phone the police on 999.
- The safeguarding@truro.anglican.org should be used (rather than individual mailboxes) for **general safeguarding queries** as this mailbox is monitored daily. The exception to this is for safeguarding training, which is explained below.
- If your query is about **safeguarding training** please contact mandy.wells@truro.anglican.org