## **Responding to alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse**

**1** The Church has an important role in challenging inappropriate behaviour. This can, however, lead to increased risks for both the victim and the person who challenges the alleged or known perpetrator. This needs to be done in an extremely careful way, i.e. one that does not place a victim at increased risk. Factors to consider include:

* Ensuring that the victim is at the highest priority in terms of safety and wellbeing, and that any action is victim/survivor centred.
* If the alleged perpetrator is to be met, ensuring that it is in a public place, and that there are others in the meeting.
* Maintaining an awareness of the danger that the alleged perpetrator may pose to you, and ensuring that you and others are safe.
* You must **share the incident with a properly trained professional within 24 hours** who can support you to help you to think through the issues and actions. This may be the DSA or local safeguarding officer/lead. There may need to be a risk assessment and ‘safeguarding agreement’ put in place in line with House of Bishops practice guidance1. This work needs be undertaken in consultation with the DSA.
* If the **alleged perpetrator is a church officer** you must talk to the DSA and follow the House of Bishops practice guidance on responding to serious safeguarding concerns in relation to Church Officers2.
* Co-operating and working with the statutory authorities ensuring that information is only given to them and not to the alleged perpetrator concerning the victim.
* Sharing information about helplines and services.

#### 2 Record keeping and follow up

Please see the previous section on ‘recording keeping and follow up’ above. Additional guidance in relation to responding to alleged or known perpetrators is as follows.

Do try to make it clear that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Whilst you might respect an individual’s right to confidentiality this cannot be guaranteed. Information has to be shared without consent when someone is being hurt, a criminal offence has been committed and/or a child or adult is at risk. If you are unsure whether or not to share information contact your Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

Do seek advice from a DSA or local safeguarding officer/lead if the alleged perpetrator threatens self-harm, as they may require urgent support.

These are some actions to avoid in responding to alleged or known alleged or known perpetrators:

* + Do not collude with, excuse or minimise their behaviour.
  + Do not meet with them alone and in private. Meet in a public place or in the church with several other people around.
  + Do not try to investigate or offer/provide treatment. Only those professionally trained should discuss any issues formally with them.
  + Do not provide a character witness in any proceedings and be involved in any processes which may seem as if the Church supports their position. Do not advocate for the perpetrator.

## **3 Additional guidance for clergy and licensed lay ministers**

#### Responding to perpetrators

* Do address any religious rationalizations 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 victims/survivors. Tell them that only they can stop it and seek assistance.

#### Do not pursue couples’ counseling/mediation with them and their partner if you are aware that there is violence in the relationship.

* 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.

Please see the FAOC paper on ‘Forgiveness and Reconciliation’ for further information

**Perpetrator programmes**

The attitudes that underpin domestic abuse are often deeply-rooted and difficult to change. Some success has been achieved through Domestic Violence Intervention Programmes for alleged or known perpetrators. These are extended (often six to nine months) one to one or group-based sessions which challenge the attitudes and behaviours of alleged or known perpetrators. Parallel groups may be organised for their partners to ensure that they are held to account.

1 [Safeguarding Policy Statements & Practice Guidance](https://www.churchofengland.org/clergy-office-holders/safeguarding-children-vulnerable-adults/national-policy-practice-guidance.aspx)

2 [Safeguarding Policy Statements & Practice Guidance](https://www.churchofengland.org/clergy-office-holders/safeguarding-children-vulnerable-adults/national-policy-practice-guidance.aspx)

GKJ/DSA May 5th 2017

Taken from the Church of England Guidance:  **Responding Well to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Practice Guidance March 2017**