



SECTION 3: CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS

Definition

People who are or may be vulnerable include:

- a) The frail and elderly.
- b) Refugees.
- c) An adult who has suffered bereavement, marriage or relationship breakdown or other adversity which puts them in particular need of pastoral support.
- d) A person who has an intellectual disability, mental illness or an impairment that makes it difficult for them to protect themselves from abuse or exploitation.
- e) A person under the effects of drugs or alcohol.
- f) A person for whom English is not their first language.

INTRODUCTION

30. Caring for the vulnerable is a privileged position. The work can make such a positive difference to the life of a vulnerable person if it is conducted with integrity and respect and with clearly defined boundaries. This is achieved if we acknowledge each persons' intrinsic value as a human being, allow others to maintain their dignity and acknowledge each person's personal autonomy.
31. This Code of Conduct will help establish a sense of equality which is important and which ensures that nobody feels overly responsible for another person or taken for granted or exhausted by a relationship where the boundaries are blurred.
32. Parish pastoral activities that involve contact with adults who are or may be vulnerable include, for example;
 - a) Visitation of the sick and elderly,
 - b) Support for refugees,
 - c) Provision of the Eucharist in the home,
 - d) Counselling and support of the bereaved, or
 - e) Counselling those who have undergone a relationship breakdown or other adversity.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 13:34-3



CREATING AN APPROPRIATE RELATIONSHIP

33. In providing pastoral care you have a particular task or job description. This defines your role and gives you boundaries. You do not want to cause emotional or physical dependence in the vulnerable by becoming overly involved in their lives.
- a) You are not expected to be on call as you have your own life, so in normal circumstances do not give out your personal details such as your phone number or address.
 - b) Ensure that the arrangements to visit a vulnerable person are clear so that the person knows when to expect your visit.
 - c) Don't assume that the vulnerable person wants you to visit. Uncertainty can be a problem in circumstances where the worker has a personal relationship with the vulnerable person. In these circumstances, be completely clear that the vulnerable person wants you to visit and remember that it will be hard for the vulnerable person to say no to your visit.
 - d) Do not call on a vulnerable person unannounced or outside the designated visiting times without prior agreement as vulnerable people also have a need for their own personal space and the right to say no to extra visits.
 - e) It is generally inappropriate to contact a vulnerable person through social networking sites or by mobile phone (such as texting). Do not accept or offer friend status on social network sites from a vulnerable person for whom you have a duty of care.
 - f) Keep the focus on the vulnerable person rather than your own personal needs or concerns.
 - g) Respect the vulnerable person's right to hold beliefs and values that may be different to yours without imposing your ideas on them.

RESPECT OF PERSONAL SPACE

34. We all have our own personal space. This may differ from one person to another and from one culture to another. Personal space is one's own safety zone within which there are invisible boundary lines which must be respected.
- a) Other than for personal care or therapeutic purposes touching a vulnerable person needs to be approached with extreme care and caution as it can easily be misinterpreted and create discomfort even when well intentioned.
 - b) Kissing and hugging is generally inappropriate but on some occasions, may be an accepted form of greeting. If this is the case always allow the vulnerable person to take the initiative and respond appropriately.
 - c) Always be very sensitive to the individual needs and expectations of the vulnerable person.
 - d) When at a person's home you are a guest and it is not appropriate to go through cupboards or touch their possessions or help yourself to a cup of coffee without permission. This gives esteem to the vulnerable person by showing respect for their personal boundaries and identity



RESPECTING PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

35. The terms 'privacy' and 'confidentiality' are commonly used interchangeably. However, they are related but not identical concepts. Privacy includes physical privacy, confidentiality relates to information only. This Code requires that you be sensitive to and protective of the physical privacy and private information of those in their care.
- a) Personal and sensitive information relating to the vulnerable person is to be kept confidential.
 - b) Information regarding the vulnerable and their circumstances must never be used or passed onto others for personal or business reasons as their vulnerability places them at risk.
 - c) Respect the vulnerable person's privacy. Always knock before entering the person's home or room if at an aged care facility. Wait outside if they are dressing or receiving personal care.
 - d) A carer's role does not permit him/her to have access to a vulnerable person's bank details or personal identification number (PIN). This also includes telephone and internet banking on behalf of a vulnerable person.
 - e) Under no circumstances should carers or their family or friends give financial advice to a vulnerable person.
 - f) Privacy also involves respecting the person's right not to discuss issues they do not wish to.

AWARENESS OF VULNERABLE ADULT GROOMING BEHAVIOUR

36. Grooming of vulnerable adults is the predatory act of manoeuvring the vulnerable adult into a position that makes them more isolated, dependent, likely to trust, and more susceptible to abusive behaviour. Adult grooming resembles child grooming and applies to any situation where an adult is primed to allow themselves to be exploited or abused. On-line grooming is especially prevalent.
37. Many of the inappropriate behaviours listed in this Code of Conduct could be seen as instigating grooming especially when multiple violations occur. Staff and volunteers should always be sensitive to such perceptions and conduct their relationships with vulnerable adults in a transparent and open manner so that there can be no misconception that grooming is a possibility.

"Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are anger and courage; anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are".

St Augustine