

## **Guidance – Safeguarding and The Ministry of Healing**

*“Being loved and kept safe go to the very heart of the Church’s ministry to children & vulnerable adults”* (Safeguarding with Confidence – The Cumberlege Commission Report, 2007).

Every human being has a value and dignity which we as Catholics recognise as coming directly from God’s creation of male and female in his own image and likeness. Our parishes and communities must be a place of welcome, where each person is respected and loved, and in which we receive and share our unique gifts. Parishes must be communities where we support and protect each other. We must take particular care of those who may be vulnerable because of age, illness or disability or who may be vulnerable because of current or past life experiences.

Everyone in our church has a responsibility to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of those who worship there or who join us for any activity facilitated by church members.

### **Terminology – Catholic Charismatic Renewal**

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal as one of the new ecclesial movements is widely present in the Catholic Church since 1967. Among many other things, it encourages the use of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, the charisms which are acknowledged in Scripture (1 Cor 12 & 14). Among the diverse gifts are those simply called “gifts of healing.” There is also reference to gifts for working miracles and for speaking words of knowledge and wisdom given directly by God, “Speaking in tongues.”

Catholic Charismatic Renewal is not a single organised movement, but a shared understanding and expectation among some Catholics that God will act in the Church today, in ways consistent with 1 Cor 12 & 14 including through works of healing. Many Catholics involved in Charismatic Renewal seek to pray with other people, in the hope that a healing will be given, or that God’s power will touch that person’s life in some way.

### **Healing Ministry**

“Healing Ministry” can sometimes be referred to as “Prayer ministry.” This is for two reasons: first, that prayer might be offered for a reason other than seeking healing (e.g. praying that a person might receive a deeper experience of the Holy Spirit); second, to avoid any impression of appearing to guarantee “healing” in response to prayer offered. Prayer ministry is typically offered by people praying in pairs, but could be offered by a team of three or four. In addition to those leading the ministry, there *may* be “catchers” standing behind in the expectation that some of those receiving prayer may fall to the floor.

Some people receiving prayer ministry may fall to the floor and experience a prolonged period of conscious relaxation. This phenomenon is variously referred to as “resting in the Holy Spirit” or “being slain in the Spirit”. In some circumstances it may be seen as more appropriate to pray with people who are seated. This would be best if the person was especially frail, if the physical environment was judged to be too dangerous (see below). It may also be adopted to avoid confusion or anxiety where people present may be unfamiliar with “resting in the Spirit.”

## **General Guidelines for Prayer Ministry**

- Treat all with respect and care.
- Be wise and prudent in all decisions and choices.
- All involved should subject to safer recruitment checks by Parish or Diocese.
- Avoid being drawn into attention seeking practices.
- All physical contact should be age appropriate.
- All touch should be appropriate to the person's need.
- Minimum of two persons taking into account gender balance.
- Work in public view, never alone.
- Do not pray with under aged children alone, pray along with family members- always within view of others.

Sometimes healing prayer may not be sufficient for a person's needs. Where this is the case, a minor or major exorcism may be considered. These will be rare occurrences. (See below – Exorcism)

## **General Risk Assessment**

### ***Principle***

- Whilst it is not possible to reduce all risks when working with the young or vulnerable it is possible to do all we can to minimise the risks.
- A risk assessment is a written record of the thought processes that have been invested in the planning and preparation of any activity, whatever the perceived risks may be.
- Risk assessments should be completed well before the event/activity and should be approved by the event leader. If in doubt, advice should be sought from the Safeguarding Office.

### ***General***

Risk assessments should: -

- Identify risks and hazards both indoors and outdoors, including equipment, materials and procedures.
- Evaluate the risk or hazard and identify who might be put at risk.
- Identify the action to eliminate or minimise the risk.
- Identify the person responsible for taking that action.

The following factors should be taken into consideration: -

- The nature of the event/activity taking place.
- The location, routes and modes of transport.
- The competence and experience of event leaders and helpers.
- Safer recruitment practice has been followed for all event leaders and helpers.
- The ratio of event/activity leaders and helpers to participants.
- The group members age, ability, fitness, temperament and the suitability of the activity.
- Any specific medical or health needs of participants.
- Any specific needs of event/activity leaders and helpers.
- Contingency and emergency planning.

Frequent visits or regularly repeated activities may not require a full, comprehensive risk assessment on each occasion.

### **Specific factors for consideration during the exercise of Prayer Ministry**

- Risks associated with falling:
  - Consequences of the person receiving prayer, falling heavily.
  - Consequences of any kind of fall for anyone frail, pregnant, or with a babe-in-arms etc.
  - Nature of the material covering the floor.
  - Risk of injury from sharp objects being worn by the recipient, prayer team or “catcher” (e.g. jewellery, rings, bracelets, bangles, brooches etc.).
  - Fixed objects nearby which can obstruct a fall.
  - Risk of strain to those acting as “catchers.”
- Awareness of emotional, physical and psychological health of recipient or effect of prayer ministry on their health.
- The medical needs of those attending a service, especially if advertised explicitly as a service of prayer for healing (NB: access to toilet facilities and First Aid; issues of disabled access).
- The communication needs of those whose sight, speech or hearing is impaired.
- Consideration must be given prior to all events and activities as to whether all those active in the ministry in whatever role, understand that role and are capable of carrying it out.
- Use of restraint is inappropriate.
- All are trained re appropriate touch, including catching.

### **Touch.**

There are many ways of touching and many reasons to touch, even by accident as we brush past someone. Touch is sacred and involves trust, when it is abused it is the cause of great hurt. To enter another’s world is a privilege and should be done with care and clear signals of respect.

- Always ask permission to touch- “Is it ok if I pray with you? Can I put my hand on your head? Have you been prayed with before? This is what will happen is that ok? etc.
- Never touch intimate areas.
- An alternative is to ask the recipient to place their own hand on the body part and to rest your own hand on the back of theirs. Team members of the opposite gender to the recipient should be wary of offering any touch beyond a hand on the head or shoulder.

### **Overview**

- We can abuse people’s rights by adding pressure on them to claim healing or by pushing them to indicate a need to fall.

- We cannot guarantee confidentiality in the case of a disclosure of abuse. This must be passed on to the relevant body. This is done with an assurance of getting them help.
- People should receive training in safeguarding so that they understand the dangers and needs of the healing ministry.

## **Exorcism**

The Diocesan Exorcist is the Bishop. He delegates this ministry to one or more priests in his Diocese. Much discernment is needed in the area of exorcism. There are no definite criteria to determine whether we are dealing with possession itself, which is why alongside prayer, good discernment is essential either in the exorcist or safeguarding partner, or both.

In all cases, and before any exorcism takes place, the Bishop's approval and authority is required.

Where approval is granted, the person's local Parish Priest must be made aware of all circumstances in order to provide confirmation that the person is who they say they are and that their immediate and longer term pastoral care is addressed.

Consideration should be given as to whether seeking professional medical assistance should be encouraged.

Special caution needs to be taken where the request is for a vulnerable adult or child (18 years old or younger). Parents need to have full involvement with the exorcism process unless the child can justify otherwise and the Safeguarding Office should be contacted in order to discuss specific concerns and safety practice for all involved, especially the child and Clergy.

Ongoing support is necessary to ensure that the child receives adequate pastoral support after such an event.

**National Action Plan to Tackle Child Abuse linked to Faith or Belief (Department for Education, August 2012)**

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00094-2012>