

High Downs Parish

Within the Benefice of Kingsdown, Creekside and High Downs



Policy Statement



Responding to Domestic Abuse

Within the Parish of High Downs, including the churches of St. Mary, Eastling; St. Mary, Stalisfield and St. Michael and All Angels, Throwley.

1. Foreword to this Statement.

Domestic abuse is a criminal offence; in all its forms it is an affront to human dignity and to God's love and purposes for every person.

At High Downs Parish our policy on domestic abuse is modelled on that of the National Church. Drawing upon the experience of professionals, it sets out firstly principles to prevent abuse and set a healthy culture in our communities.

Secondly, there are the protocols that must be followed should abuse be known, reported or suspected. It also signposts information, resources and contact details if further help is needed. This policy expresses our commitment in the Parish and Diocese to understand the prevalence of domestic abuse, to work steadfastly to create and protect healthy environments for children, young people and adults, within our communities, and to play our part in preventing, recognising, challenging and reporting abuse in its many forms; as well as supporting those who are victims and survivors of abuse.

2. Introduction

2.1 All forms of domestic abuse are wrong, unacceptable and must stop. We are committed to promoting and supporting safer environments.

2.2 We will:

- 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 appropriately and consistently in accordance with practice guidance.

Forms of Domestic Abuse

See Appendix 1 and 2

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional

3. Policy Statement

3.1 We recognise that:

- all forms of domestic abuse cause damage to the survivor;
- there are no stereotypical victims of abuse. Anyone can be a victim or a perpetrator; regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, or social position.
- all victims and survivors have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse;
- domestic abuse can occur in all communities, including church and faith based 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;

- working in partnership with children, adults and other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of any child or adult suffering abuse.

4. Response to Domestic Abuse

- 4.2 In all our activities we respond 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. We are committed to maintaining regular training and supervision for our safeguarding team.
- 4.3 In our publicity we respond by – raising awareness about other agencies, support services, resources and expertise, through providing information in public, and gender specific areas, of relevance to survivors, children and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- 4.4 When concerns are raised we respond by – ensuring that those who have experienced abuse can find safety and informed help; working with the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Team (DSAs) and appropriate statutory bodies during an investigation into domestic abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the church community.
- 4.5 In our care we respond 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.

5. Advice and Support by the Diocese

- 5.1 The Diocese of Canterbury Safeguarding Advisory Team will provide advice and support for individuals, Parishes and church bodies - Our Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA) contact is: Paul Brightwell.
- The DSA will provide advice and support to anyone experiencing or concerned about domestic abuse, for themselves or for others;
 - All concerns reported to the Diocese in respect of Church officers and domestic abuse will be monitored and recorded by the Diocese Safeguarding Team;
 - Support is available to all Parishes in implementing a Domestic Abuse policy and related practice Guidance;
 - Training is provided by the Diocese for those in leadership, safeguarding and pastoral positions in the Diocese and the Parishes, including High Downs;
 - The Diocese will work in support of parishes and partnership with specialist agencies including Police, Local Authorities, and Community Safety Partnerships to support victims and survivors of Domestic Abuse;
 - The Bishop of Dover seeks to support the spouses and partners of clergy whose relationships have broken down irretrievably and are separating. They are offered, by invitation, contact with and the support of a Bishop's Visitor. This offer is facilitated by the Bishop's Chaplain. Whilst there is no assumption that domestic abuse will have been a contributory factor in the break-up of the relationship, Bishop's Visitors will be cognisant of this policy and will respond appropriately to any disclosures of abuse.

6. Independent Advice and Support

6.1. The Diocesan Safeguarding team are available to provide independent unbiased sensitive and discrete advice and guidance within the Diocese. However, the Diocese of Canterbury supports and encourages anyone who may be experiencing, or are concerned about domestic abuse for themselves or others, to seek advice and support completely independent to the Diocese if they would prefer to speak with a specialist advisor outside of the Church.

If you have any concerns or need to talk to someone, please contact: The Parish Safeguarding Officer, Mark Harlow on 07979864000. Email: mark.harlow@kc-hd.org.uk

Alternatively, you can contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Paul Brightwell on 07398 009951.

Further support can be obtained from:

<https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/>

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/>

High Downs PCC represents the three Churches of St. Mary, Eastling, St. Mary, Stalisfield and St. Michael and All Angels, Throwley

Approved at a PCC Meeting on 22nd September 2025

Signed by the PCC Chair:

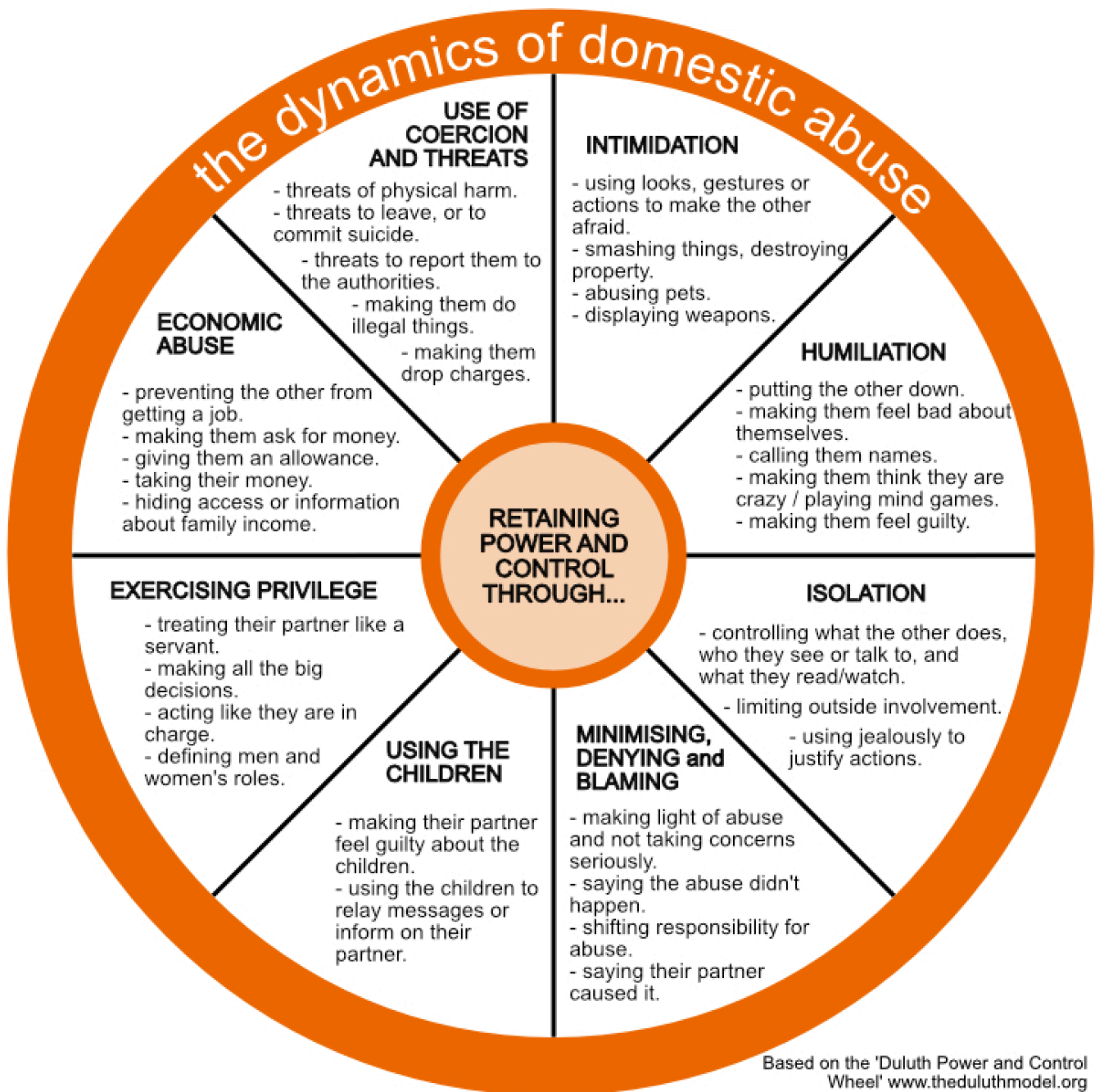
Date issued: 22nd September 2025

Review Date: September 2026 or before.

Updates to this policy will be added as an addendum.

Appendix 1

The Dynamics of Domestic Abuse (Illustrative)



Appendix 2

The Dynamics of healthy Domestic Relationships (Illustrative)

