



CONGREGATION OF OUR LADY OF THE MISSIONS

POLICY & GUIDELINES FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS IN UK

INTRODUCTION

This policy and guidelines are for the provincial leadership team, the sisters of the province, and where applicable, home managers, paid and voluntary members of staff involved in the care, welfare and safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The policy has two main sections:

- Safeguarding of children
- Safeguarding of vulnerable adults

Our aim is to make sure that, in partnership with other agencies, we protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse and get them help and support when they need it.

We recognise that, as circumstances change, it may be necessary to update or amend this document to reflect such changes.

POLICY STATEMENT

We, the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, recognise the personal dignity and rights of children and vulnerable adults towards whom we have a special responsibility and duty of care. We undertake to do all in our power to create a safe environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults and to safeguard from any form of neglect or abuse, be it physical, sexual, psychological or emotional, spiritual, discriminatory, institutional, financial or material. WE will liaise closely with church and statutory agencies to ensure that any allegations of abuse are promptly and properly dealt with, alleged victims supported and alleged perpetrators reported to the appropriate statutory services.

This policy will be handed to and be brought to the attention of all existing and new workers and it will be clearly displayed in our community houses. A signed and dated acknowledgement slip will be attached to the file of each worker.

SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENTIVE STRUCTURES FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK

- Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
- Conference of Religious of England and Wales. (CoR)
- Congregational Leadership Team.
- Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS) /Southwark Diocesan Safeguarding Commission.
- Home Manager.

We have a Safeguarding Policy that applies throughout the province. All sisters employed in outside ministries will follow the guidelines laid down by their respective ministry, department, school, parish, hospital etc.

All sisters involved in active ministry are subject to an enhanced DBS check (Disclosure & Barring Service) for children and adults at risk. This is processed through CSAS and Southwark Diocesan Safeguarding Commission.

Sisters from abroad and those returning from working abroad will need clearance from their previous Provincial Leader and will be subject to an enhanced DBS check if they are to remain in active ministry in this country.

We have in place clear, consistent procedures for responding to specific allegations and concerns or any suspicions of abuse.

We have designated Religious Safeguarding Representatives who are actively involved with the Provincial Team in the continuing development and updating of the Province's structures and systems for safeguarding.

A member of the Provincial Team and the Religious Safeguarding Representative attend CSAS/Southwark Commission training days, conferences, and other relevant sessions or meetings.

Keeping children and vulnerable adults safe is about being aware of and minimising risk. It is everyone's responsibility to assist in creating a safe environment and making sure that health and safety regulations are given priority.

RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE OF CHILDREN & VULNERABLE ADULTS GUIDING PRINCIPLES

LISTEN

- Allow the person to state the case in his/her own words, without attitude or judgement. Explain confidentiality and the need to share appropriate information with the relevant people. Do not make promises about future events.
- Do not interrupt. Allow silences for the person to find their words. Do not ask questions other than to clarify your understanding, otherwise you risk “contaminating” the evidence.
- Never arrange to interview a child or an adult. If notified that a child or adult may have information about abuse, refer the matter to the safeguarding officer for that area and to the statutory authorities. The statutory authority will conduct the interview.
- Do not investigate: Leave that to the professionals who will advise.

Disclosure from an Adult or a Child who was or who says that they have abused: Such information cannot be kept confidential. Be supportive but do not seek further detail, you have duty to pass on the information to the police or statutory services and inform the person that this will be done.

RECORD

- Consider making notes during the conversation. Ask permission to do this, and as far as possible, use the complainant’s actual words explain why you are making notes. Inform the person that he/she may have a copy of your notes if they wish. The initial recording will form the first entry in the file of information about the case and will be retained by the appropriate safeguarding Representative for the Congregation or the Diocese.
- Record direct speech when possible with actual words used, including details; do not be selective.
- Commence log of actions, record times, dates, names of persons spoken to and persons present, and any advice/agreement reached. Include full details of referrals to police or social services. If it is possible use the suggested pro-forma for this record. Sign the record and date it with the time (this may be relevant at a later stage).

REFER

- If a child is at risk of immediate harm, is injured or states the abuse happened recently, contact police or social services at once, giving full information and request a case number: Seek medical help where necessary.
- When abuse within the child’s household or family member is suspected, refer immediately to police or social services. Await advice from police or social services and request a case number. The police or social services will advise about whether

to inform a member of the child's household or family or arrange the child to return home.

- Where an adult has given information, encourage them to share this with statutory authorities, offer support to do this. If refused, explain you will have to inform the authorities on their behalf.
- Ensure prompt referral to the appropriate Safeguarding Representative.
- Referral to Statutory Authorities in all but emergency situations. When swift action is to be taken, the first priority is to ensure the child or vulnerable adult is protected from any immediate danger. It will be the responsibility of the appropriate Safeguarding Representative to inform the statutory services (requesting a case number) A record of events should be carried out before the end of the day. It is important to ensure that the police intend to refer to social services and vice versa.
- The record is to be passed to the appropriate safeguarding person as soon as possible.
- You may have reason to feel an allegation is unfounded or exaggerated. However, it remains your responsibility to report the allegation or suspicion, without bias, as outlined above including your concerns, with your record.

The alleged abuser should under no circumstances be contacted either directly or indirectly. This is the role of the police or statutory services.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

The legal definition of a child is a young person under the age of 18 years. (Children Act 1989)

GUIDELINES FOR THE RELIGIOUS SAFEGUARDING REPRESENTATIVE

1. Upon receipt of information of current alleged abuse or any concerns about safeguarding involving a member of our religious congregation, inform the Province Leader or a member of the provincial team. Immediately refer the matter to the Statutory Authorities (requesting a case number). All allegations of abuse must be reported before the end of the day to the Social Services or police without any process of filtering. All information including written records should be passed on. Keep a copy for the file. It is important to ensure that the police intend to refer information to Social services and vice versa.
2. In cases of current suspected abuse by a member of our religious congregation normal interagency procedures will be followed in addition to informing:
 - Bishop of the Diocese in which the parties concerned reside.
 - Southwark Diocesan Safeguarding Commission.

Ensure that the appropriate person informs the insurance company and legal representative that there has been an allegation or disclosure of abuse.

3. A file is created for the case, and a log of actions, events and information received will be recorded. Take possession of any written records made by any person in connection with the case and place them in the file. All files will be kept securely and confidentially in an identifiable and retrievable form in a system controlled by the Religious Safeguarding Representative (RSR), separate from any personnel file.
4. Contact is also made with the Child Safeguarding Representative (CSR) for the Diocese in which the parties concerned reside or work. The information is shared and maintained until the conclusion of the case.

In cases of suspected abuse within the family:

- Inform the appropriate Safeguarding Officer.
- Do not alert alleged abuser either directly or indirectly.
- Allow the statutory authorities to conduct their enquiries; do not visit the family or contact family members without prior permission from investigators.
- Social Services involvement with the family may continue, so contact should be made only after consultation with them.

SAFEGUARDING: RECRUITMENT OF STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

We have clear and consistent employment procedures for all employed staff and volunteers, which include:

- Advertising with a clear job description and personal specification.
- Application forms.
- Personal references.
- Interviews.
- Documentation from the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service i.e. The Self Declaration Form, the Catholic Church Identity Form, other relevant documentation associated with the Disclosure & Barring Service including the application form for this.
- The above are processed through Southwark safeguarding Commission and CSAS and the information is entered on the catholic Church national Data Base.

We aim to promote equality of opportunity for all with a balanced mix of talents, skills, experience, and potential to develop personally and professionally. We welcome applications from people of diverse backgrounds, cultures and abilities.

Applicants are informed that they are not allowed to commence work until the necessary recruitment processes and procedures are completed.

They are informed that any employment is subject to an agreed probation period with supervision.

Employees and volunteers should be appropriately skilled and competent in caring for Vulnerable Adults.

Employees and volunteers will have regular in-service training in the care of and respect for vulnerable adults.

Employees and volunteers of the Congregation working with vulnerable adults will receive support, guidance, supervision and monitoring of their work. This is to ensure that their work is of a high standard and appropriate to the care of the elderly and vulnerable adults.

Note: as stated previously this Policy and Guidelines may be subject to change in the future and will be revised accordingly.

DEALING WITH A SISTER ACCUSED OF ABUSE

A Sister should not be notified of an allegation made against her, whether historic or more recent, until the Statutory Authorities have been alerted and there must be communication with them before the Sister is notified.

The Legal representative and Insurers for the Congregation should be notified of any alleged abuse and it is their responsibility to inform the Charity Commission.

Where an allegation of abuse against a Sister has been made, it is generally necessary to remove her from her ministry while an investigation takes place. **This does not imply guilt and is without prejudice.**

Advice should be sought before any discussion takes place with the sister. This will be from the Statutory Services and or (CSAS) the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service depending on the nature and source of the allegation and whether it is associated with something in the past or in the present.

The Congregation's Religious Safeguarding Representative, the Coordinator of Southwark Safeguarding Commission and the Catholic Advisory Service (CSAS) will be informed.

If it is necessary for the sister to be moved from her present accommodation the Congregational Leadership Team will make this decision. This cannot be anyone involved in the case.

The Provincial leader in the presence of the Provincial Team or the Religious Safeguarding Representative must communicate any decisions to the sister in person and in writing. A copy of this communication will be given to the RSR for inclusion in the Safeguarding File.

The RSR will arrange for an independent support person to be made available to the Sister. This may be a colleague with appropriate skills but not connected to the case. Support will be offered re accommodation, financial provisions and legal advice. A legal advisor to the Congregation must not be offered as legal advisor to the Sister but support should be offered in obtaining the services of an independent solicitor when required.

The Religious Safeguarding Representative should be informed of any decisions, negotiations or plans in order that they are fully recorded for the file. RSR also ensures that the Safeguarding Coordinator on the regional Religious Commission is kept up to date with the case.

Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions – August 2008

Reviewed June 2009

April 2014

July 2018