

## **Policy Statement Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in England and Wales**

Every human being has a value which we acknowledge as coming directly from God's creation of male and female in his own image and likeness. We believe therefore that all people should be valued, supported and protected from harm. We recognise the personal dignity and rights of vulnerable people towards whom the Church has a special responsibility.

The Catholic Church and its individual members will undertake appropriate steps to maintain a safe environment for all and to practise fully and positively Christ's Ministry towards children, young people and adults at risk and to respond sensitively and compassionately to their needs in order to help keep them safe from harm. This is demonstrated by the provision of carefully planned activities for children, young people and adults, caring for those hurt by abuse and ministering to and robustly managing those who have caused harm.

The Catholic Church of England and Wales, the Bishops and Religious Congregational Leaders are committed to safeguarding as an integral part of the life and ministry of the Church and affirm a 'One Church' approach<sup>1</sup> to safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk through the promotion of a sustained culture of constant vigilance. The 'best interests' or 'paramount chief principle' which underpins and is enshrined in child and adult protection legislation shall be the primary consideration in all matters of safeguarding.

The Catholic Church has in place a National Catholic Safeguarding Commission (NCSC), which is an independent body working within the framework of the Church in England and Wales. It is mandated by the Conference of Bishops and Conference of Religious Congregations and has accountability across Dioceses and Religious Congregations to ensure that standards are met and policies are implemented.

Established in 2008, the NCSC sets the strategic direction of the Church's safeguarding policy for children, young people and adults at risk. It also monitors and audits the compliance of the Church with safeguarding procedures.

The Church authorities always report allegations of abuse to the statutory agencies to ensure that they are dealt with promptly and properly, and where appropriate, perpetrators are held to account. The Church will act in an open, transparent and accountable way in working in partnership with social care services, the Police, health agencies, probation services and other relevant agencies to safeguard children and adults at risk and assist in bringing to justice anyone who has committed an offence against a child or adult.

The Church seeks to ensure that its parishes and Religious Congregations have the confidence to enable vulnerable people to have peace of mind, knowing they will be cared

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<sup>1</sup> The One Church approach refers to the commitment by the Church in England and Wales to using the same policies, procedures, standards and systems in relation to safeguarding.

for and loved by their Christian community. All churches and faith communities are expected to have in place arrangements which include:

- procedures to respond to and report concerns and allegations
- codes of conduct
- safe recruitment procedures
- information sharing arrangements
- support and supervision of staff and volunteers
- training on safeguarding

(February 2016)



## Order of Friars Minor Conventual UK:

### Policy for Safeguarding 2025 - UK

#### **Introduction**

In line with The Catholic Church of England and Wales, the Order of Friars Minor Conventual is committed to safeguarding as an integral part of the life and ministry of the Church. We recognise that the welfare of children, young people and Adults at Risk is paramount and that all children, young people and Adults at Risk, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.

This Policy is part of the overall Safeguarding Policy of the Greyfriars and is in line with the Local Safeguarding Partnerships where the friars minister. This Policy is designed to assist friars, volunteers, staff, Parishes, and other Catholic groups, to understand their responsibilities towards safeguarding the welfare of any person who worships or is involved in activities organised in the name of the Catholic Church; to ensure everyone has a clear understanding about their safeguarding responsibility.

The Order of Friars Minor understands that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and must remain a priority across our friaries and ministries. The Trustees have responsibility for ensuring the implementation of Safeguarding procedures and policies. It is the responsibility of all friars and staff working for the Order to ensure that their behaviour is appropriate at all times.

It is the responsibility of all friars, volunteers, parishioners and staff to:

Promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children, young people alongside Adults at Risk. They need to:

- Ensure that all reports of suspected or alleged abuse are taken seriously and are responded to and reported appropriately in line with this Safeguarding Policy.
- Ensure children & adults are provided with opportunities to disclose any relevant details
- about their circumstances and that this information will be treated appropriately.
- Ensure that everyone is clear about their roles and responsibilities in respect of
- safeguarding and will be provided with appropriate learning opportunities to recognise,
- identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating

- to children & Adults at Risk.
- Securely maintain the confidentiality of any records in accordance with GDPR in line with UK law.
- Ensure that all adults undertaking roles and responsibilities with children & Adults at Risk are appropriately vetted including where they are engaged in Regulated Activity with children or with adults & undertaken the relevant disclosure check.
- Prevent the participation of unsuitable individuals through the robust use of disclosure
- checking and the application of best practice in the safe recruitment for staff and volunteers working with children, young people and Adults at Risk.
- Ensure that robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation and
- address any failure to comply with this Policy.

**Abuse and Exploitation** (defined by Legislation or relevant Guidance)

Abuse is a form of maltreatment and can either be inflicted by others or self-inflicted. Abuse can take place at home, education or within any physical environment. It can also happen in an online or virtual environment such as social media or gaming apps. An abuser can be anyone, but they are often known by the child, young person or Adult at Risk. An abuser may make every effort to build a trusting relationship with the child, young person or Adult at Risk and will often befriend or seek to maintain the respect of family, friends and colleagues. This is grooming behaviour. Abuse can occur in any relationship at any time. It can occur within any community, culture or religion. It may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of the person subjected to abuse.

Although children, young people and Adults at Risk can experience the same types of abuse and the causes are often similar, Adults at Risk may have a right to make a choice in regard to the action taken and may not wish for statutory agencies to be informed. Therefore, concerns in regard to Adults at Risk that reach the safeguarding threshold must be referred into the Safeguarding leads of the order and the relevant Safeguarding teams in each diocese in which they work to assess the concern, liaise and take appropriate action. It is the policy of the Catholic Church in England and Wales to report all allegations of abuse to statutory authorities, regardless of whether the abuse occurred recently or in the past, or whether the accused person is living or deceased. Where a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm, statutory agencies will be informed, whether the parents/carers are in agreement or not, in-line with UK legislation.

**Treating the victims, survivors of abuse and those reporting other safeguarding concerns, with respect, care and dignity**

The Order recognises that abuse has a significant impact on an individual and their family. Whenever an allegation of abuse, a safeguarding concern or a report of poor practice is raised, the Order will offer support to those that have been affected. People will receive a compassionate response, be listened to and be taken seriously. The Safeguarding representatives of the Order will respond in accordance with legislation and where appropriate this will be done in collaboration with the relevant statutory agencies. It is the policy of the Catholic Church in England and Wales to report all allegations of abuse to statutory authorities, regardless of whether the abuse occurred recently or in the past, or whether the accused person is living or deceased. The Order acknowledges the potential distress and emotional effect when dealing with, witnessing or referring safeguarding matter for friars, volunteers or

staff. Making a referral can be difficult, but everyone involved within the Church has a duty to report concerns or suspicions and has a right to do so in confidence and free from harassment. The Safeguarding Team will offer support, guidance and appropriate signposting to any individual who may have been impacted or raises a concern.

### **Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility**

Treating those that are subject of concerns or allegations, with care, dignity and due consideration. In responding to safeguarding concerns or allegations of abuse, the Order will endeavour to respect the rights under criminal and civil law of any accused person. In addition, the Safeguarding Team recognises people who are subject to safeguarding concerns are vulnerable during any internal or statutory agency process. The Order will take all reasonable steps to offer a support person through this process.

### **Concerns raised regarding those that are not defined as "Adults at Risk"**

In addition to accepting the statutory threshold for determining that an individual is considered to be an 'Adult at Risk', the Church recognises that at different times and in different contexts, adults can be vulnerable because of the conduct of individuals acting in the name of the Church. Where allegations are made in relation to adults who are considered vulnerable, but do not meet the statutory threshold for an "Adult at Risk", the matter will be referred to the local diocesan Safeguarding office for consideration as to whether it is appropriate to implement the safeguarding procedures to address the matter.

### **Process for the management of a concern or allegation**

The Order is committed to a robust, compassionate and transparent response to all concerns or allegations raised. All allegations or concerns will be taken seriously and managed as set out in the national guidance. The Order's Safeguarding Team will manage any matter that involves an individual who represents or represented the Order in any role, whether current or non-recent. Where appropriate, the matter will be reported to statutory agencies. Once statutory involvement is complete, with permission of statutory agencies or where the matter does not reach that threshold, an assessment may take place to establish any risk and to ascertain the Order's response. This will be overseen by the local diocesan safeguarding team. Matters that relate to another Religious order, will be transferred to the appropriate team and the Safeguarding Team will ensure communication is established before withdrawing from the process.

### **Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility**

All friars, volunteers, staff and parishioners will respect children, young people and Adults at Risk. They will establish a culture where they prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and Adults at Risk to provide supportive and safe spaces for everyone involved.

Creating safer spaces / Planning events involving children / Adults at Risk

The Order is committed to:

- Promoting and prioritising safety and wellbeing.
- Recognising the position of trust in which individuals have been placed.

- Referring all significant concerns about an individual's suitability to work with children, young people or Adults at Risk, or if we have had to remove an individual from their role within the Order to statutory agencies.
- Being aware of appropriate use of electronic communication between adults and young people, so that we do not place anyone at risk of harm.
- There must be no individual electronic/Social Media communication between an adult and a young person. All such communication should be within a group, age appropriate and with more than one adult engaged within the communication.
- Ensuring that children, young people and Adults at Risk, have access to adults that they trust and are clear on how to report their concerns.
- Ensuring that all children, young people, Adults at Risk and parents/carers have all the information they need to make an informed decision before participating in any event and activity.

### **Internet/Social Media use**

The internet and social media have many benefits for evangelisation and communication across the Order but this must be utilised with responsibility and prudence. All contents and/or posts on a Parish or shrine site remain the responsibility of the Parish Priest, or Guardian of the shrine and therefore if administrative rights have been delegated to a third party, a protocol must be agreed. All websites related to the Order and as well as friars' personal websites and social media sites must be lawful. abide at all times to the guidance set out in the document "Integrity In Ministry" issued by the Conference of Religious of England and Wales, and in-line with the responsibility of the position of trust beholden on all ordained Ministers and Religious.

It is the policy of the Order that:

- Personal social media accounts of any friars within the Order in Great Britain, must be properly moderated to ensure any inappropriate content posted by a third party is removed and anything potentially illegal or of concern referred to the Safeguarding representatives.
- That all reasonable efforts are made to ensure that the internet or social media is not used for the viewing or transmission of inappropriate images on Church property or in friaries.
- Any possession, distribution or manufacturing of indecent images of children, will be immediately reported to the Police and the Safeguarding representatives.
- The taking of and/or posting/display of photographs of children must only occur with the written consent of parents/carers.
- Children should not be identified by their full name in photographs and all must be mindful of the "Jigsaw" effect in regards to children's identity. This is the method for identifying a piece of information from two or more different (often unrelated) sources where the information's release was not intentional.
- An individual's home address must not be posted.
- If anyone replies or posts on any Parish/Shrine social media account and indicates that they are at risk of harm or if someone appears to be at risk, this must be reported immediately to the Safeguarding representatives. If it is believed that they may be in/or at risk of immediate harm, this must be reported immediately to the Police dialling 999 and subsequently to the Safeguarding representatives.

When “Live streaming” parish services, it is critical that agreed procedures are followed with regard to permissions and notifications, in particular parental permission if any child’s face may be visible (see- [Using video-conferencing platforms within Ministry](https://www.csas.uk.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Guidance-on-safeguardingwhilst-using-videoconferencing-platforms-for-ministry.pdf) <https://www.csas.uk.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Guidance-on-safeguardingwhilst-using-videoconferencing-platforms-for-ministry.pdf>)

### **Code of Conduct**

It is imperative that all adults who minister or represent the Catholic Church, paid or volunteer, understand the position of trust that they have been placed. Therefore, all behaviour when ministering or working with children and Adults at Risk, must be of the highest standard. The Catholic Bishops Conference of England & Wales (CBCEW) have set “Caring Safely for Others: Pastoral Standards and Safe Practices in the Conduct of Ministry” for all ordained Ministers. While these guidelines have been written specifically for ordained Ministers, the guidance can be followed by all friars and indeed all adults who represent the Catholic Church in any other role whether as a volunteer or paid role.

“Integrity in Ministry”, a document of principles and standards for Religious in England and Wales”. This document can be found on the internet <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/04/Caring-SafelyFor-Others.pdf>

The CSSA have a code of conduct for leaders and helpers that should be utilised by all adults volunteering or working with young people within any context of the Catholic Church. (See -<https://www.csas.uk.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Sample-Code-of-Conduct-Leadersand-Helpers.pdf>)

All adults, both friars and others, who carry out Regulated Activity with children must have an in date DBS in the UK.

Regulated Activity comprises;

- Unsupervised activities: teaching, training, instruction, care or supervision of children, provision of advice/guidance on well-being or driving a vehicle only for children.
- Work for a limited range of establishments (‘specified establishments’) with an opportunity for contact with children e.g., schools, children’s homes, childcare premises. This does not include work by supervised volunteers. Those who are in paid posts working ‘frequently’ in a specified establishment are still deemed to be in regulated activity.
  - Frequency is defined as work carried out by the same person more than 3 times a month with children or overnight between 2am and 6am, where there may be face to face contact with children and the work involves teaching, training, supervising, advising, guiding or caring for children. Supervision means “day to day supervision as is reasonable in all the circumstances for the purpose of protecting any children concerned”.
  - Relevant unsupervised work is only considered Regulated Activity if it is carried out ‘frequently’.
- Regulated Activity with adults comprises of 6 specific categories:

- The provision of health care by any health care professional to an adult, or the provision of health care to an adult under the direction or supervision of a health care professional.
- The provision of personal care, which is defined as physical assistance with eating, drinking, toileting, washing, dressing, oral care or care of skin, nails or hair (but excludes hair cutting) because of the individual's age, illness or disability. This also extends to those training, instructing or providing advice on personal care provision and those who supervise the adult to do so.
- The provision of social work (meaning a social care worker under the Care Standards Act 2000).
- Assisting with general household matters for example assisting with managing a person's cash, paying a bill on someone's behalf or shopping due to the adult's age, illness or disability.
- Assisting in the conduct of a person's own affairs by virtue of a lasting power of attorney.
- Conveying adults to, from or between places where they would receive the above categories of service. There are no 'frequency' criteria in respect of working with adults (people aged 18 years and over). The first time any of the above activities are engaged in it becomes "Regulated Activity" and the barred status of the person undertaking such activities must be checked before they provide the activity/service. Those who provide the day to day management or supervision of a person engaging in "Regulated Activity" with adults are also in "Regulated Activity". For further details please see <https://www.csas.uk.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Policy-and-procedure-for-SaferRecruitment.pdf>

### **The Sacrament of Reconciliation**

Everyone should be able to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation in a way that affords both protection and privacy for both the individual and the confessor. There is a variety of means that can be adopted to achieve this goal, including:

- Use of the traditional confessional box where there is a fixed grill or a separate entrance for the Priest and penitent.
- An area where either the penitent or the Priest is within sight, although not within hearing of others.
- Behind a "frosted" screen, in a location where other adults are present.
- When a deaf child is celebrating the Sacrament, no screen for the penitent and the Priest can be in place. Therefore, other measures should be in place to ensure the integrity of the sacrament and satisfy safeguarding.

Any priest friar hearing a Confession must take care that he does not exacerbate the sense of shame in an individual who has experienced abuse or the sense of complicity that abuse victims experience. In line with canon 979, the confessor should act with prudence and discretion when asking questions. He must consider the age and the condition of the penitent.

The Priest should also be aware that if the disclosure of maltreatment and/or abuse during the Sacrament of Reconciliation raises safeguarding issues, any child is not confessing a sin

and should be encouraged to speak outside of the confessional so that appropriate help can be sought. Similar action should be taken if an individual confesses to perpetrating abuse during confession.

### **Reporting concerning behaviour towards Ordained Ministers and Religious**

The Order recognises that the public platform and position of Religious, may make them vulnerable to behaviours or attack that is unwarranted and harmful. If any individual subjects friars to any harmful or sustained inappropriate behaviours or any act which is or may be unlawful, the Safeguarding representatives would encourage the matter to be reported into the DLP, so they can assist in the reporting or management of the behaviour. All reports will be dealt with in full collaboration with the complainant and managed sensitively and considerately.

### **Promoting a culture of safeguarding**

All friars, volunteers, staff and parishioners will respect children, young people and Adults at Risk. They will establish a culture where the safety and wellbeing of young people and Adults at Risk is prioritised and provide supportive and safe spaces for everyone involved. The Order will strive to create and maintain environments which are safe for everyone who has dealings with them.

This will be achieved in part by the following commitments.

- **Training:** All friars are required to complete safeguarding training. This is mandatory and must be updated on a regular basis and at least every three years depending on their individual role. All staff members must also attend mandatory safeguarding training and this also should be updated every five years. The Order is committed to ensuring that safeguarding training remains updated and relevant so that all friars, volunteers and staff members understand their individual commitment to ensuring that the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and Adults at Risk remains a priority. The Order will take all measures to strengthen and improve practice, and the Safeguarding Policy & Procedures will be subject to a regular review.
- **Handling of Data:** All information in the UK will be managed under the Data Protection Act 1998. However, these laws and human rights laws are not barriers to justified information sharing, but are a framework to ensure that personal information about living individuals is shared and stored appropriately. Where necessary, the Order's Safeguarding representatives will share information with other organisations about individuals or an incident, even though there is no concern about abuse or harm. If this happens, the Order will only share information with the explicit consent of the individuals concerned OR if there is a duty to refer.
- **Confidentiality:** Sharing information is vital to protect children, young people and Adults at Risk from suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. However, information will only be shared with the relevant people and otherwise will be treated with the strictest of confidence to ensure that all individuals involved have trust in the handling of any allegation or concerns.

If you are in any role within the Catholic Church in England and Wales, you must refer allegations directly to the safeguarding representatives for the order and to the local Diocese or directly to the Police.