



The Union of the Sisters of Mercy of Great Britain

Safeguarding Policy

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The Union of the Sisters of Mercy SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. POLICY OVERVIEW

The Union of the Sisters of Mercy (hereafter “the Union”) is committed to safeguarding all children and adults. For the Union this commitment directly relates to the fact that we are all made in the image of God and the Church's common belief in the preciousness, dignity and uniqueness of every human life. We start from the principle that each person has a right to expect the highest level of protection, love, encouragement and respect. The Leadership Team (also referred to herein as the Trustees) and Safeguarding Lead of the Union work together to ensure that safeguarding is central to the activities of all its members in England, Wales and Scotland (please see “In God’s Image V2” at <https://www.bcos.org.uk/InGodsImageV2/tabid/131/Default.aspx> for our commitment to safeguarding as one with the Catholic Church in Scotland). Following on from the safeguarding reviews in 2020, we are committed to the One Church Approach to safeguarding by implementing the changes needed and ensuring we respond to victims/survivors promptly and compassionately.

2. SCOPE

This policy and procedure apply to all within the Union regardless of their role or the activities they undertake.

It is the responsibility of all within the Union to prevent abuse, whether by action or omission. Abuse in this policy refers to physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, neglect, self-neglect, organisational, material, psychological, financial, domestic, or verbal abuse. Additionally, behaviour that effectively results in modern-day slavery or where there is evidence of discrimination or radicalisation needs to be recognised by all at the Union and addressed as a safeguarding issue in accordance with the procedures outlined in Section 6.



3.0 TRAINING

All Union members and employees will undergo Safeguarding Training relevant to their role.

The Trustees and members will undertake refresher training every two years. The Trustees also avail of supplementary year-round safeguarding training that supports their role.

4.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Congregational Leader & Trustees

The Congregational Leader and Trustees have a duty to maintain appropriate governance and oversight of safeguarding in line with this policy and national guidelines. They are also responsible for ensuring appropriate policies, procedures, and best practices are in place for the effective delivery of safeguarding, including any related due diligence checks. The Congregational Leader and Trustees also have direct oversight of the Union's safeguarding policy and guidance. Certain functions of the Congregational Leader and Trustees will be delegated to members, as indicated below.

The Safeguarding Lead

The Safeguarding Lead has direct management and oversight of documentation, case progression/management and the secure, legally compliant storage of safeguarding reports and related material, as well as oversight of the relationship with and input on the work of the RLSS (Religious Life Safeguarding Service), Edinburgh and Glasgow Archdioceses Safeguarding Teams.

The Safeguarding Lead may delegate some of this responsibility to the RLSS, Edinburgh or Glasgow Archdiocese Safeguarding Teams by passing the case to them but will remain as key contact for the case duration unless another individual is identified to assume case responsibility.



The Safeguarding Lead is responsible for coordinating PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) applications in Scotland.

The DBS Co-ordinator for England and Wales

The DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) Co-ordinator for England and Wales holds responsibility for renewing DBS certificates every 3 years and has oversight of the relationship with and input on the work of the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS).

All other roles

All members, staff, and volunteers have an obligation to ensure they know how to respond to safeguarding concerns by familiarising themselves with the content of this policy, the procedure contained within it, and any other associated policies/procedures.

General

Everyone involved in the work of the Union has a duty to disclose to the Congregational Leader or the Safeguarding Lead any safeguarding concerns that have been raised about them.

5.0 PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Action must be taken if a concern is raised that a child or adult is suffering or is likely to be suffering from significant harm. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Someone who is at serious risk of harm from self or others
- Someone who poses a serious risk of harm to someone else
- A concern about a child or vulnerable adult at risk of harm from someone else
- Concerns over someone's mental capacity

Action must also be taken in line with the Church's mandatory reporting policy. This means appropriate action must be taken if there are reasonable grounds to suspect or believe that



someone who holds any role within the Church is going to or has committed a crime, is going to or has caused harm, poses a risk or is otherwise unsuitable to work in their role.

Low Level Concern

Low-level concerns are behaviours, actions, or situations that do not meet the threshold for formal safeguarding intervention but may indicate a need for early support, monitoring, or guidance. These concerns might include minor breaches of professional boundaries, patterns of behaviour that could cause discomfort, or early signs of potential risk to an adult's wellbeing.

All low-level concerns should be recorded promptly, reported to the safeguarding lead, and addressed in a proportionate and supportive manner. This approach promotes a culture of openness, ensures early intervention, and helps prevent issues from escalating into more serious safeguarding matters.

6.0 PROCEDURE

If someone is in immediate danger or there is a safeguarding emergency, call 999.

If any member of the Union becomes aware of a concern detailed in Section 5 or any other safeguarding issue, they should contact the Safeguarding Lead, who will immediately inform the RLSS Safeguarding Team, Edinburgh or Glasgow Archdiocese Safeguarding Teams, and pass to them the concern and all associated records, ensuring the person who raised the concern is aware of the next steps.

The RLSS, Edinburgh or Glasgow Archdiocese Safeguarding Teams will:

- Ensure the victim/survivor or individual has been informed of the next steps
- Explain what will happen, give them options if possible and an indicative timescale
- Contact any relevant bodies.
- Complete the safeguarding paperwork and ensure appropriate record keeping of all communications, including phone calls, meetings and discussions in relation to the case, are documented.



- Inform the Congregational Leader of the new safeguarding referral and offer any support needed.

Safeguarding Bodies (not exhaustive)

- Internal Safeguarding Structures within the Catholic Church
- Local authority Safeguarding team – Adults
- Local authority Safeguarding team – Children
- Police 999
- Police 101
- GP
- Crisis Team
- RLSS Out of Hours Team
- Community Psychiatric Nurse
- Charity Commission
- CSSA
- SCSSA
- Local Safeguarding Commission
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- NSPCC
- DBS

In the event of a safeguarding referral, the Union will contact supporting partners for England, Wales, and Scotland. These may include the Charity Commission and/or OSCR, the Scottish Charity Regulator, and their Insurer.

Care Home and Convent with a Care Manager should alert the Local Authority directly of any safeguarding concerns within 24 hours. The Manager should follow the directions given from the Safeguarding Team within their local authority. They must also let the Safeguarding Lead and Congregational Leader at the Union know and keep them updated with any developments as and when they occur.

7.0 WHISTLEBLOWING

The Union will encourage and enable anyone with a safeguarding concern to refer the concern without fear of victimisation or disadvantage.



If that concern is regarding malpractice, illegal acts, or omissions at the Union or other Religious institution in relation to safeguarding, then the RLSS, Edinburgh or Glasgow Archdiocese Safeguarding Teams should be made aware.

The action taken by RLSS, Edinburgh or Glasgow Archdiocese Safeguarding Teams depend upon the nature of the concern referred.

8.0 RECORDING AND STORAGE OF SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS AND CASE FILES

The Union is responsible for ensuring that all case files are accurate, up to date, and stored securely.

Where the RLSS, Edinburgh, or Glasgow Archdiocese Safeguarding Teams are responsible for managing a case, they will ensure records are accurate, auditable, and secure, and that all records of any safeguarding concern or allegation referred are properly maintained.

9.0 SAFER RECRUITMENT PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The Union will ensure that congregation members, lay staff, and volunteers are subject to the appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks (including enhanced DBS) or Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) in line with both statutory and Catholic Church requirements.

Appointments will be based on the person's experience, skills, and ability to meet the set criteria and job specifications for the specific role. It is essential to ensure that all documentation relating to the applicants is kept in a secure place and remains confidential.

An appointment to a role will not be confirmed until a satisfactory DBS or PVG Disclosure check has been received, and previous employment references have been confirmed as acceptable.



On appointment, all new employees should be provided with and sign to say they understand all relevant policies and procedures, including a copy of this document and their responsibilities within it highlighted.

Anyone seeking to work with children or adults, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity, must be provided with the opportunity to self-disclose relevant conviction information. This DBS Code of Practice requirement and PVG scheme applies to anyone asked to have an Enhanced Disclosure.