



The
OBLATES
ALWAYS CLOSE *to the* PEOPLE



**SAFEGUARDING
CHILDREN,
YOUNG PEOPLE
AND ADULTS AT RISK**



Foreword

In his time St Eugene preached the importance of recognising the dignity of each and every person. In his famous Sermon in the Madeline Church he declared, "Come now and learn from us what you are in the eyes of faith. You, the poor of Jesus Christ, the afflicted and wretched, the sick and suffering and covered with sores, etc., whom misery overwhelms, my brethren, my dear brethren, my dear respectable brethren, listen to me. You are the children of God, the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, the co-heirs of his eternal Kingdom, the cherished portion of his inheritance; you are, in the words of Saint Peter, the holy nation, you are kings, you are priests, you are, in some way, gods"

This emphasis on the importance of the dignity of all God's people found a particular and clear expression in the words of Pope Francis when he outlined the centrality of the protection of minors and vulnerable adults in the proclamation of the Gospel. He wrote: The protection of minors and vulnerable persons is an integral part of the Gospel message that the Church and all its members are called to proclaim throughout the world. Christ himself, in fact, has entrusted us with the care and protection of the weakest and defenceless: "whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me" (Mt 18:5). Therefore, we all have the duty to welcome openheartedly minors and vulnerable persons and to create a safe environment for them, with their interests as a priority. This requires a continuous and profound conversion, in which personal holiness and moral commitment come together to promote the credibility of the Gospel proclamation and to renew the educational mission of the Church.

I would like to thank Suzanne Phelan, our safeguarding lead, for her guidance and work in producing these policies. The policies and procedures contained in this revision are aimed at establishing and building up an Oblate community and family that is respectful and mindful of the rights and the needs of minors and vulnerable persons. The policies will I hope enable us to respond promptly and compassionately to victims of abuse. They also invite us to be aware of and vigilant to the ever present risks of exploitation, sexual abuse and ill-treatment of people particularly when they are in vulnerable positions.

Learning from the past let us we renew our commitment to offering all people respect, encouragement, protection and love for we are all made in the image and likeness of God and we believe in the preciousness, dignity and uniqueness of each and everyone of God's children.

Lorcán O'Reilly OMI
Provincial



CONTENT

4 INTRODUCTION

5 POLICY STATEMENT FOR SAFEGUARDING
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS AT RISK

6 PROVINCE AND NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING
STRUCTURE

8 DEVELOPING SAFEGUARDING AWARENESS

9 DEFINITIONS

18 GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN,
YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS AT RISK

28 MAINTAINING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

36 TRANSPORTING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE
AND ADULTS AT RISK

37 GUIDELINES FOR USE OF TECHNOLOGY &
SOCIAL MEDIA

44 SAFE RECRUITMENT

49 REFERENCE

50 SUPPORT SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

This is the Safeguarding Policy for the Anglo-Irish Province of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, staff and volunteers working across Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales.

In recent years the Church in Ireland and the UK has tried to act more pastorally, professionally and transparently as we, have sought to continue to make improvements in the area of Safeguarding. There is now a 'One Church' approach across the Province which has established national guidelines of policy and practice in Ireland, Scotland and now England and Wales. These developments have taken place through the joint offices of the Bishops' Conference in Ireland together with Association of Leaders of Religious and Missionaries in Ireland AMRI, the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and the Conference of Religious and the Bishops and Religious of Scotland.

In Ireland as constituent members of the Catholic Church we are associated with AMRI and National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland NSBCCCI. In England and Wales we are members of the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS) established to provide Religious Congregations with advice, training and case management in all safeguarding matters. In Scotland we are monitored and supported by the Scottish Catholic Standards Safeguarding Agency SCSSA, The Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service was established by the Bishops' Conference of Scotland to lead the Church's strategy for developing effective Safeguarding arrangements. Its primary role is to support the Safeguarding work of Dioceses, Religious Institutes and Catholic organisations that interact with vulnerable groups. The need for such background support, structures, policies and guidelines for good practice are more important than ever as we continue to respond to the needs of all people, especially the young and those who are vulnerable, with compassion and sensitivity.

It is essential that we are all committed to following these guidelines which will above all help us protect others from harm and ensure best practice is followed by members together with our employees and volunteers.



POLICY STATEMENT FOR SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS AT RISK

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate are committed to observing the Safeguarding Policies of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, England, Wales and Scotland in line with the standards, policies and procedures enunciated by; the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NSBCCCI); the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) and the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (SCSSA), believing that every child, young person and adult at risk has a right to expect the highest level of care, protection, love, encouragement and respect.

The Oblates are committed to promoting the safety, welfare and protection of children, young people and adults at risk and we will take all concerns, allegations, suspicions, and disclosures of abuse very seriously. Our Safeguarding Lead and Designated Liaison Person will remain in close contact with statutory and voluntary agencies to ensure that any allegations of abuse are promptly reported ensuring that the various relevant authorities are given the fullest cooperation.

We are committed to responding and supporting with compassion all those affected by abuse, survivors and their families and to providing those who have been abused with the necessary professional and pastoral support.





PROVINCE AND NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING STRUCTURE

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland NSBCCCI (registered as Coimirce) is a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital. It was incorporated in 2008 and its founding members comprise of the Archbishops and the Episcopal Secretary of the **Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference**, together with the Director General of the **Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI)**, a nominee of the executive of CORI, the Executive Secretary of the Irish Missionary Union (IMU) a nominee of the Executive Board of the IMU. The first Directors of the Company were appointed by the Members. The Directors of the Company automatically comprise the membership of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (The Board).

The main object of the company is to provide advice, services and assistance in the furtherance of the development of the safeguarding of children within the Roman Catholic Church on the island of Ireland and to monitor compliance with legislation, policy and best practice and to report on these activities annually, all as comprehensively set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association. The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland is funded through the Sponsoring Bodies: the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference and the **Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI)**.

A national **Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA)** has been established by the Bishops Conference with responsibility for standards, oversight and auditing of all Church safeguarding practice. In addition, Religious Congregations have established the **Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS)** to provide them with advice, training and case management in relation to all safeguarding matters. These new arrangements were implemented in 2021/22 as a result of the Elliott Review and the IICSA inquiry.

OMI SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE

The Oblates have a Provincial Safeguarding Committee chaired by the Provincial (or his designate). It's remit is to act on behalf of the OMI Trustees in relation to the provision of safeguarding policies, procedures and practice throughout the works of the Province and its associated charities, in line with Charity Commission guidance, national legislation and the requirements of the NSBCCCI and the CSSA.

OMI SAFEGUARDING LEAD

The OMI Safeguarding Lead /Designated Liaison Person is responsible for coordinating and leading the operational implementation of the safeguarding policy and practice of the Oblates. This includes the provision of training and contacts with the NSBCCCI, RLSS, CSSA and Diocesan Safeguarding Committees as required. The Safeguarding Lead is answerable to the Safeguarding Committee.

SAFEGUARDING REP

All parishes and other OMI facilities have a person appointed as the Safeguarding Rep. A Parish Safeguarding Representative (PSR) is a volunteer who works to ensure a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults within a parish community. They act as a point of contact for safeguarding concerns and promote awareness of policies and procedures within the parish.

Promoting Awareness and Disseminating Information :

PSRs raise awareness about safeguarding within the parish, ensuring everyone understands the importance of Safeguarding and the procedures to follow. They circulate policies and procedures, ensuring everyone has access to relevant information about safeguarding. They also help implement and promote best practices in safeguarding within the parish or OMI facility.

Supporting Groups:

They support parish and other groups working with children and vulnerable adults, ensuring they understand and adhere to safeguarding policies and procedures.

Ensuring Safe Practices:

Safeguarding Reps help ensure that activities and events involving children and vulnerable adults are conducted in a safe and appropriate manner.

Contact Point:

The Safeguarding Rep acts as a point of contact for reporting concerns and directing people to the appropriate OMI, Diocesan or statutory services.

In essence, the Safeguarding Rep is a vital volunteer who helps create a safe and welcoming environment for all members of the Church community, with a particular focus on protecting children and vulnerable adults.

NATIONAL POLICIES

For Ireland the NSBCCCI safeguarding children policy document is now available to download at www.safeguarding.ie/policy-guidance/policy-document. Further details of the national England and Wales safeguarding policies and procedures can be obtained from www.catholicssafeguarding.org.uk. A simplified Organisational Structure follows in the reference section.

The Catholic Church in Scotland has a parallel but separate set of national Policies and Procedures for Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk and established the **Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (SCSSA)**. For further details go to www.scottishcatholicssafeguarding.org.uk.

CONTACT DETAILS for OMI Safeguarding Lead and Designated Liaison Person are as follows:

Suzanne Phelan

Provincial Office, Oblates of Mary Immaculate,

House of Retreat, Tyrconnell Road, Dublin, D08P6K8, Ireland

Tel; 00 353 851146391 (mobile) Email; safeguarding@oblates.ie

DEVELOPING SAFEGUARDING AWARENESS

TRAINING

It is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Lead to ensure that training and development opportunities are made available to all working in the Province. Training days for all Province members will be conducted at least every three years, and at an appropriate level for all new employees and volunteers on induction after appointment, ensuring that all workers are up to date on Safeguarding matters and have the necessary confidence and skills in promoting a Culture of Safeguarding throughout the Province.





DEFINITIONS

Definition of a Child and young people:

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as any person under the age of eighteen years. (The fact that a child has reached the age of consent, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, in hospital, in prison or in a Young Offender's institution, does not change his or her status or entitlement to services or protection under the relevant jurisdiction legislation).

Definition of an Adult at Risk of Harm

An 'adult at risk of harm' is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their personal characteristics and/or life circumstances. Personal characteristics may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain. Life circumstances may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors and environmental living conditions.

An adult can become an "adult at risk" at any time in their life and this is not necessarily permanent. This may be due to a permanent or temporary reduction in their physical, mental or emotional capacity brought about by life events, for example bereavement or previous abuse or trauma. An adult is a person aged 18 or over.

In the UK the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 defines an Adult at Risk as follows: An adult can be at risk in the context of the setting in which they are situated or the service they receive as follows:

- Those in residential accommodation provided in connection with care or nursing or in receipt of domiciliary care services.
- Those receiving health care.
- Those in lawful custody or under the supervision of a probation officer.
- Those receiving a welfare service of a prescribed description or direct payments from a social services authority.
- Those receiving services, or taking part in activities, aimed at people with disabilities or special needs because of their age or state of health.
- Those who need assistance in the conduct of their affairs.

Note: In December 2013, 'Adult at Risk' replaced 'Vulnerable Adult' in line with national developments of good practice and in line with the Law Commission Report into Adult Social Care (LAW/COM No 326) 2011; recommendation 40.

In addition to the above, there may be otherwise healthy adults who are vulnerable because of recent life experiences. These circumstances include, but are not limited to, those who are grieving because of the death of a loved one, those experiencing job loss, or career difficulties, those living with separation, divorce, or marital discord, if a person becomes a victim of abuse, stalking or harassment, those facing illness in themselves or others, and those facing other uncertainties. It is important to recognize that all of us are vulnerable to varying degrees at different stages of our lives.

DEFINITIONS IN CHURCH LAW (VOS ESTIS LUX MUNDI)

There are 3 categories. Minors, a minor is someone who was considered 18 or under, or anyone who is the equivalent to a minor. Many people had said those equivalent to a minor are vulnerable persons, and that caused a lot of confusion on the meaning of vulnerable persons. The revised Vos estis clarifies that a minor is anyone under 18, or an adult who habitually has imperfect use of reason, and the third category is vulnerable adults. Vulnerable adults are those who are situationally entrapped in a setting where they are vulnerable. They're not vulnerable because of imperfect use of reason, but they are situationally entrapped in a situation that makes them vulnerable.

CHILD ABUSE

Definition The term 'child' means a person under the age of 18 years, excluding a person who is or has been married.

Abuse or harm can be suffered by a child or young person by acts of abuse perpetrated upon them by others. Although the harm from the abuse might take a long time to be recognisable in the child or young person, professionals may be in a position to observe its indicators earlier, for example, in the way that a parent interacts with their child. Effective and ongoing information sharing is key between professionals.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. A reasonable concern exists where the child's health and/ or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

Examples

- Severe physical punishment
- Pushing, shaking, or throwing
- Observing violence
- Use of excessive force in handling
- Suffocation
- Fabricated/induced illness
- Beating, slapping, hitting, or kicking
- inching, biting, choking, or hair pulling
- Deliberate poisoning
- Female genital mutilation
- Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. Once off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency, and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Emotional abuse can also occur when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet their children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily seen. A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer. Emotional abuse may be seen in some of the following ways:

Examples

- Rejection, Lack of attachment
- Unresponsiveness of the parent/carer. Lack of comfort and love
- Conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his/her behaviour or actions
- Under or over protection of the child. Continuous lack of praise and encouragement
- Emotional unavailability of the child's parent/carer
- Use of unreasonable or harsh disciplinary measures
- Premature imposition of responsibility on the child. Lack of continuity of care (e.g.frequent moves, particularly unplanned)
- Exposure to domestic violence. Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child.

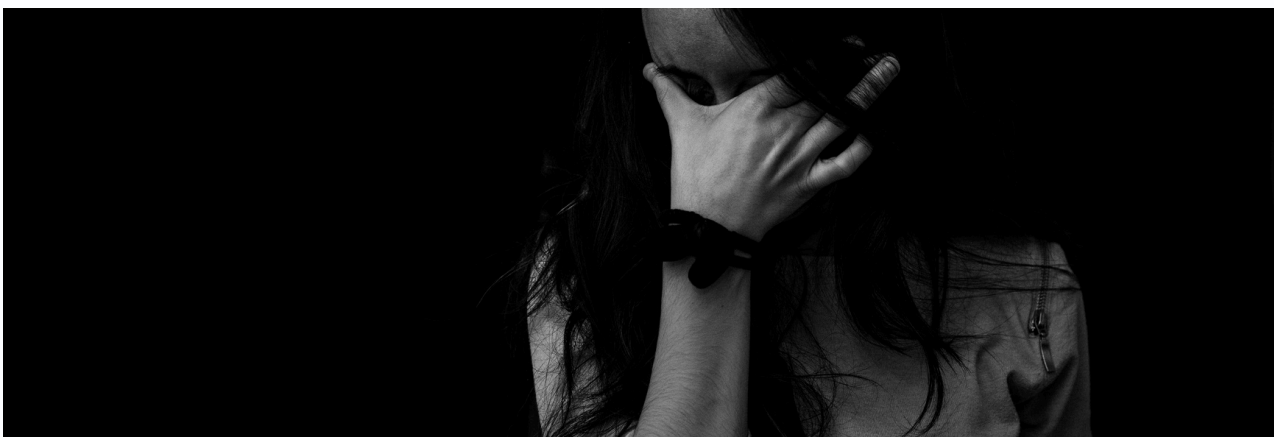
There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse. A child may show signs of emotional abuse through their actions or emotions in several ways. These include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, risk taking and aggressive behaviour. It should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive evidence of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography. Child sexual abuse may cover a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and, in some instances, occurs over a number of years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family, including older siblings and extended family members. Cases of sexual abuse mainly come to light through disclosure by the child or his or her siblings or friends, from the suspicions of an adult, and/or by physical symptoms. It should be remembered that sexual activity involving a young person may be sexual abuse even if the young person concerned does not recognise it as abusive.

Examples

- Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child.
- Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child.
- Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child for sexual arousal or gratification.
- Masturbation in the presence of the child or the involvement of the child in the act.
- Sexual intercourse (oral, vaginal, anal).
- An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body, whether by a person or object, for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification.
- Sexual exploitation of the child, including encouraging the child to solicit for sexual acts, recording images for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification.
- Inviting, inducing, or coercing a child to engage in prostitution or the production of child abuse images for example, exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, videotape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means.
- Canon law includes the possession of, or downloading from the internet of, paedophilic pornography as a grave delict.



NEGLECT

Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation, or supervision and safety.

Emotional neglect may also lead to the child having attachment difficulties. The extent of the damage to the child's health, development or welfare is influenced by a range of factors. These factors include the extent, if any, of positive influence in the child's life as well as the age of the child and the frequency and consistency of neglect. Neglect is associated with poverty but not necessarily caused by it. It is strongly linked to parental substance misuse, domestic violence, and parental mental illness and disability. A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when neglect becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer. This may become apparent where you see the child over a period of time, or the effects of neglect may be obvious based on having seen the child once.

Examples

- Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision
- Non organic failure to thrive, i.e a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation
- Unhygienic conditions
- Lack of protection, and exposure to danger, including moral danger, or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age
- Persistent failure to attend school
- Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food, or erratic feeding
- Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation
- Inadequate living conditions
- Inattention to basic hygiene
- Abandonment or desertion

EXPLOITATION

Is the intentional ill treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; taking selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms – such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud, or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

PEER ABUSE

In a situation where child abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, the child protection procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and the alleged abuser; that is, it should be considered a childcare and protection issue for both children. All abusers must be held accountable for their behaviour and work must be done to ensure that abusers take responsibility for their behaviour and acknowledge that the behaviour is unacceptable. If there is any conflict of interest between the welfare of the alleged abuser and the victim, the victim's welfare is of paramount importance. Abusive behaviour which is perpetrated by children must be taken seriously and it is important that such cases are reported.

BULLYING

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression, be it verbal, psychological or physical which is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour which is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting or extortion by one or more children against a victim. The more extreme forms of bullying behaviour, when perpetrated by adults rather than children, would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse.

Examples

- Name calling
- Fighting / kicking / punching / hair pulling
- Making suggestive / sarcastic comments
- Intimidation
- Threatening
- Ignoring / excluding
- Damaging property
- Spreading rumours
- Sending abusive text messages
- Making racial ethnic or cultural comments.



ADULTS AT RISK OF ABUSE

WHAT IS ADULT ABUSE?

Safeguarding means protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted including, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding any action. This must recognize that adults sometimes have complex interpersonal relationships and may be ambivalent, unclear or unrealistic about their personal circumstances.

Physical abuse is to inflict pain or physical injury, which is either caused deliberately, or through lack of care. Examples include hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, burning, hair pulling, misuse, or using inappropriate restraint or sanctions and the misuse of medication.

Sexual abuse is the involvement in sexual activities to which the person has not consented, or does not truly comprehend and so cannot give informed consent. It may occur where the other party is in a position of trust, power or authority and uses it to override or overcome lack of consent or to which they felt pressurised into consenting such as rape, or sexual assault, being made to watch pornography would also be within this definition.

Domestic Abuse Includes physical, sexual, psychological and financial abuse for those in family or close relationships as well as so called 'honour' based violence.

Psychological or emotional abuse are acts or behaviour which causes mental distress or anguish or negates the wishes of the adult. It is also behaviour that has a harmful effect on the adult's emotional health and development - or any other form of mental cruelty. This includes verbal abuse, humiliation, bullying, blaming, the use of threats of harm or abandonment, being deprived of social or any other form of contact, or being prevented from receiving services or support.

Financial or material abuse is the inappropriate use, misappropriation, embezzlement or theft of money, property or possessions including theft, fraud, exploitation, applying pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Modern slavery includes slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters using whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment. Discriminatory abuse is the inappropriate treatment of an adult because of their age, gender, race, religion, cultural background, sexuality, or disability.

Discriminatory abuse exists when values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that denies opportunity to some groups or individual.

Organisational abuse includes neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. It can occur through repeated acts of poor or inadequate care and neglect, or poor professional practice, or ill treatment.



Neglect or acts of omission are the repeated deprivation of help that an adult-needs which, if withdrawn, will cause them to suffer. This includes failing to intervene in behaviour which is dangerous to the adult, or to others.

Self-Neglect includes a wide range of behaviour neglecting to one's personal hygiene, health or surrounding and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

WHO MIGHT BE AT RISK?

Some adults might be more at risk than others. The following factors could increase the risk of abuse:

- Learning, sensory or physical disability
- Old age and frailty, especially if creates dependency on or needing help from others
- Mental health problems
- Dementia or confusion
- Severe illness
- Alcohol or illegal substance dependency who may abuse?
- A partner, child, relative or friend
- A paid or volunteer carer
- A health, social care or other worker
- A church worker, or minister of religion

WHERE MAY ABUSE OCCUR?

Abuse can happen anywhere, and can be caused by anyone in our communities, for example:

- In the home
- In supported housing
- At a carer's home
- Within a nursing home, hospital, residential care or day care
- At work or in educational establishments
- In places of worship, such as churches

In addition adults may be made vulnerable by means of a permanent or temporary reduction in physical, mental or emotional capacity brought about by life events - for example an illness, bereavement, past abuse or trauma.

SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Spiritual Abuse is not covered by the statutory definitions but is of concern both within the church and in other faith communities. Aspects of spiritual abuse can be recognised under the four categories of abuse such as emotional or physical abuse.

Harm can be caused by the inappropriate use of religious belief or practice. This can include the misuse of authority or leadership or oppressive teaching or rituals, any of which may result in children experiencing physical, emotional or even sexual harm. Leaders working with youth groups may come across children or young people who have been affected by so called deliverance rituals which occur in some churches of other traditions. See reference Section.

THE IMBALANCE OF POWER AND THE POTENTIAL FOR ABUSE

Abuse can occur when a person in a position of trust or authority intentionally or unintentionally misuses his or her position to further his or her own desires or fails to act in the best interest of the person to whom he or she is ministering. This abuse can take the following forms:

- Physical abuse (causing bodily harm)
- Emotional abuse (causing a person to feel badly for their thoughts or feelings)
- Sexual abuse and harassment (through inappropriate speech, gestures, innuendo, touch, or explicit sexual contact),
- Financial abuse (the use of undue influence or coercion to solicit funds for personal gain or as contributions to the Church),
- Spiritual abuse (unduly imposing ones' own values or morals on another).

Where one individual holds power over another, due to position, age, size, gender or other reason, the potential for abuse is greater. An imbalance of power may be real or perceived, but where such an imbalance exists, the person in the position of power must be responsible for ensuring that abuse does not occur. It is therefore necessary for all people within the church to be familiar with actions that constitute abuse and avoid both behaviour and situations where abuse or potential abuse may occur.

Further, it needs to be recognized that by agreeing to specific ministries, staff and volunteers can also become vulnerable to manipulation and abuse by others. As much as possible, people in positions of trust must take necessary precautions to avoid compromising situations. People who supply ministries must protect others from abuse and should protect themselves from misunderstandings that may lead to allegations of abuse.

Also, because of the intimate nature of ministries, people in positions of trust may suspect or become aware of situations of abuse or neglect by third parties against people to whom they minister. Where these situations involve children, a person is required by law and in line with the OMI policy to advise the Safeguarding Lead immediately.

In all of the above, any concerns should be referred immediately to the Safeguarding Lead.

Guidelines For Working With Children, Young People And Adults At Risk

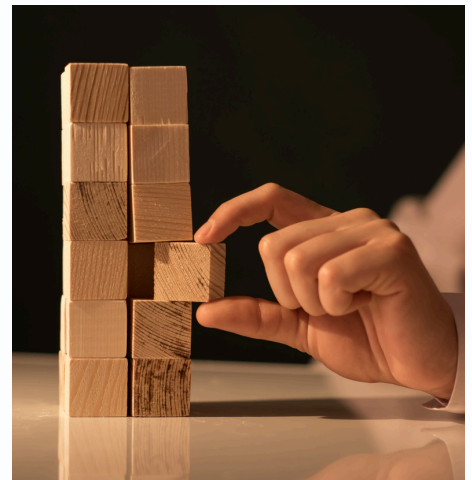
RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

- Imminent risk
- What to do if you suspect a child, young person or vulnerable adult is at risk or has been abused

GUIDELINES FOR WORKERS

Good practice guidelines for activities with children, young people and adults at risk

- Special needs
- Consent
- Registration
- Recommended staffing levels
- E-safety
- Transportation
- Important telephone numbers



RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

(a) Imminent Risk

If a child, young person or vulnerable adult is deemed at immediate risk:

- **For Province work**, activity or context the Safeguarding Lead must be informed immediately and he/she will make a referral to the Police/Garda for that region
- **For an Oblate in Parish, work, activity or context** the Diocesan Safeguarding Lead must be informed immediately and also the Oblate Safeguarding Lead. The Parish and Diocesan safeguarding personnel will have responsibility for the case.
- **In case of emergency the Police/Garda should be contacted on 999 or 112** The OMI Safeguarding Lead should be kept informed.

**What to do if you receive information about a concern or allegation.
Your duty is to listen, report and to refer.**

(b) If another adult informs you that a child, young person or adult at risk has disclosed that they have been abused, advise that adult to write the information down immediately, including date, time and place. Advise them to sign this and refer them to the relevant Safeguarding Lead or Representative (as described above) or statutory agencies. It is important that you follow up this advice with the person concerned in case the referral is not made. The OMI Safeguarding Lead should be contacted and kept informed of the process and outcome.

When someone discusses with you their suspicions or experiences remember they may be surrounded by fear and confusion. Both the persons telling their story and those receiving it will experience some of these feelings.

Do not dismiss your concern. Contact the OMI Safeguarding Lead for advice and support. If your concern is related to a parish you will be advised to contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Lead. If in a school, you must follow the school's procedure.

(c) If a child, young person or adult at risk discloses abuse to you, or a colleague appears to be behaving suspiciously, the guidelines for dealing with abuse must be followed. You must contact the relevant Safeguarding Lead or within 24 hours of becoming aware of any concern.

You must never confront or question the person against whom an allegation is made. Only Social Service Departments, Police/Garda or NSPCC staff may do this, because of the rules of evidence. Failure to comply with this instruction could lead to a potential legal case being thwarted.

If you suspect that another adult is abusing, or if you have been informed by another that they have suspicions of another adult abusing, share these suspicions with the OMI Safeguarding Lead who will advise and support you.

If you are contacted by the media, do not discuss the matter, but refer the caller to the Provincial Office.

YOU SHOULD:

- Listen with care to give the person time to talk to you.
- Take and treat what is said by them seriously.
- Re-assure them that they have the right to disclose.
- Affirm the feelings as expressed by the child, young person or adult at risk.
- Do not give a guarantee of confidentiality or secrecy.
- Do not ask any leading questions and/or push for information.
- Ask only open-ended questions that will seek to clarify the information given.
- Do not prejudge, dismiss, minimise or express an opinion.
- Remain neutral.

- Avoid displaying emotions as this may hinder the person from giving further information.
- Do not introduce any personal or third party experiences of abuse.
- Let the child, young person or adult at risk know what you are going to do next and that you need to tell someone.
- Explain to them that you will only share this information with the person and people who have responsibility to ensure that children, young people and adults at risk are kept safe from harm.

(D) THE LIMITS OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Do not promise confidentiality. We can never commit ourselves to 'keep a secret'. Withholding information about alleged abuse may place children, young people or adults at risk in danger. Such information must be shared with the competent authorities: Social Services, Police/Garda, Safeguarding Lead, RLSS, who will advise. Anyone wanting to share information 'in confidence' should be advised on the limits of confidentiality. An informant will need to know that the abuse will stop. This can only be assured if the information is correctly passed on to appropriate authorities.



(E) ACTIONS FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF ABUSE ALLEGATIONS.

When an allegation is made to the Province, the Safeguarding Lead will inform the Provincial and ensure that the Police, Garda and Social Services are informed, the RLSS (Eng & Wales).

The Provincial will be made aware of any concerns, allegations, or action taken. The person who provided the information or made the allegation will be kept informed by the RLSS or the Safeguarding Lead as appropriate. The pace of these actions will depend on the perceived danger of further abuse to the original alleged victims or to others.

Following referral of cases to the RLSS recommendations may be made to the Provincial, usually via the Safeguarding Lead, about appropriate courses of action or to give advice on how to manage particular situations or individuals.



In the event of an allegation against one who is currently a novice or professed or ordained, the Provincial will ensure, with the advice of his Council, that appropriate legal support is available. The Province will pay for appropriate legal advice following arrest and during any police interviews. In addition, should charges follow, the accused person will receive legal representation which may be the services of a solicitor under the Legal Aid scheme. If an accused person is not a professed member of the Province the person will be advised to obtain legal guidance which will not normally be at the expense of the Province. Should any member of the Province or an employee or volunteer working within the Province be arrested, they must advise the Safeguarding Lead at the earliest opportunity.

Subject to consultation with the statutory authorities the NSBCCCI, or the RLSS, the person who has been accused will be withdrawn from contact with any children, young people or adults at risk within the Church's responsibility. This removes any risk to children, young people or adults at risk, allows the investigation to proceed and also safeguards the rights of the person accused.

Where a priest or brother is the subject of any allegation the canonical process will begin immediately, and the Provincial will consult with his Council as to where the person is to reside pending the outcome of the investigations. The Provincial will appoint another appropriate person to provide pastoral care for the accused member of the Province. The Provincial may consider it appropriate to appoint the Safeguarding Lead or another member of the Province to deal with the allegations on the part of the accused. This would help to ensure that the Provincial is not overly involved in any particular aspect of the case. It is the responsibility of the Provincial to implement any removal from ministry recommended by the NSBCCCI/RLSS or requested by diocesan authorities, in consultation with the statutory authorities. This action does not imply guilt or innocence; it is the recommended procedure. If lay persons, who are employed by the OMI, are the subject of any allegations they will be required to take paid leave until the investigations are complete. In the case of volunteers they will be required to withdraw from work with children, young people or adults at risk for the duration of the investigation. During and after the investigation, full pastoral care must be readily available to the person against whom allegations have been made.

(F) OFFER OF PASTORAL CARE AND SUPPORT TO COMPLAINANTS AND VICTIMS

Concerns about potential premature acknowledgement of liability must not hinder the offer of pastoral support to anyone who reports that they have been the victim of abuse in an Oblate context. When reports of abuse are received the initial response will include the offer of pastoral support. In England and Wales the offer of support may be via the Safe Spaces service. Additional pastoral support may be provided in accordance to need.

In Ireland personal and pastoral support is provided by two Church funded organisations **Towards Healing and Towards Peace**. Further information is available in the Reference Section



RESPONDING TO CONCERNS DIAGRAM 1

STAGE ONE CONCERNS COME TO YOUR ATTENTION

Do not investigate yourself. Listen, record your actions and notify the OMI Safeguarding Lead and where appropriate the Diocesan Safeguarding Lead

EMERGENCY ACTION

If the child(ren) are in need of medical attention or protection from harm, you must contact your local Safeguarding Representative and/or the Province Safeguarding Lead. If the child(ren) are in immediate danger, the emergency services e.g. Police, ambulance, social services must be informed.

TIMESCALE: Immediately

NON EMERGENCY ACTION

If the child(ren) are not in risk of immediate harm or do not require urgent medical attention, record your observations, concerns or any allegations and contact the Province Safeguarding Lead.

TIMESCALE: Within 24 hours

STAGE TWO

REFERRAL TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES &/OR THE POLICE/Garda

REFERRAL TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES OR THE POLICE and the LADO

The Province Safeguarding Lead will make a referral to the Children's Services/Tusla or the Police and contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). When making the referral. It will be necessary to provide full information about the child(ren) and circumstances.

TIMESCALE: Immediately



STAGE THREE

POSSIBLE CHILD PROTECTION ENQUIRY

ASSESSMENT AND ENQUIRIES

The Children's Services / Tusla together with Police/ Garda are responsible for the assessment and investigation of all allegations. They are responsible for decisions regarding Initial Assessment and may instigate a Strategy Discussion & Child Protection Enquiry. While undertaking these assessments and enquiries, they will usually keep the Safeguarding Lead informed and may wish to interview the Referrer or others with relevant information.

TIMESCALE: Immediately

STAGE FOUR

OUTCOMES FROM THE ASSESSMENTS AND ENQUIRIES

NO FURTHER ACTION

No further action, if it is judged that the concerns are unfounded. In these circumstances the child or family may still receive support from Children's Services or other Agencies.

INITIAL CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE

An initial Child Protection Conference is convened; this may lead to the child being made subject to a Child Protection Plan.

The Safeguarding Lead, Referrer or others may be invited to attend the Initial Child Protection Conference, but should always be kept informed of actions/decisions taken.



STAGE FIVE RECORDING AND MONITORING

The Safeguarding Lead must keep in touch with Children's Services until the assessments and enquiries are concluded.

The following people must be kept informed of actions/decisions throughout:

- The Referrer
- The Diocesan or Congregational Insurers
- The Charity Commission

A full record must be kept.

TIMESCALE: Immediately

NOTE: In parishes all safeguarding concerns and allegations must be reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding Office. In all other OMI locations the Designated Liaison Person is responsible for the management and coordination of the response.

MANDATED PERSONS (IRELAND)

Mandated persons are people who have contact with children and/or families and who, because of their qualifications, training and/or employment role, are in a key position to help protect children from harm. Mandated persons include professionals working with children in the education, health, justice, youth and childcare sectors. Certain professionals who may not work directly with children, such as those in adult counselling or psychiatry, are also mandated persons. The list also includes registered foster carers and **members of the clergy or pastoral care workers of a church or other religious community.**

CRITERIA FOR REPORTING: DEFINITIONS AND THRESHOLDS

As a mandated person, under the legislation you are required to report any knowledge, belief or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed. The Act defines harm as assault, ill-treatment, neglect or sexual abuse, and covers single and multiple instances.

All Mandated Persons including members and staff are required to Mandated Reports jointly with the Safeguarding Lead who also acts as Designated Liaison Person DLP as per Children First National Guidance. A mandated person may also report independently and provide a copy of the mandated report to the DLP.



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

This whistleblowing policy is intended to encourage and enable anyone with a serious concern, to raise concerns without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage.

The scope of this policy covers any workers making qualifying disclosures about safeguarding matters within the Oblates.

DEFINITION

Whistleblowing is a term used to refer to the internal or external disclosure of malpractice as well as illegal acts, or omissions, at work.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Oblates are committed to:

- conducting themselves ethically, with honesty and integrity
- the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability;
- good practice and high standards regardless of role within the Church,
- want to be supportive of employees, office holders and Volunteers.

It is recognised that this might not always be achieved, and that genuine and serious concerns might need to be raised through this whistleblowing policy.

In line with these commitments, employees, office holders, volunteers and others who have serious concerns are encouraged to come forward and voice concerns about safeguarding practice or any other serious concerns. It is recognised that some cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis. The Oblates recognise that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of repercussion from those responsible for the failure or malpractice.

It is not necessary to have proof that such an act is being, has been or is likely to be committed. However, the worker must have a reasonable belief that the information shows that one of the categories of wrongdoing listed in the legislation has occurred or is likely to occur, and the concern must be raised in the correct way.

If a protected disclosure is made, the person making the disclosure has the right not to be dismissed, subjected to any other detriment, or victimised. This is the case even if it became evident that the person making the disclosure was genuinely mistaken.

HOW TO RAISE A WHISTLEBLOWING CONCERN

In the event that someone has reason to believe that underhand or illegal practices are taking place in the OMI, he/she is encouraged to disclose them immediately to their manager, as follows:

- 1.**The Whistleblower should start by raising the concerns with his/her manager, either face-to-face or in writing.
- 2.**The Whistleblower should communicate verbally or in writing that concerns are being raised under this policy and explain what those concerns are, including all the key facts, dates and names of the people involved.
- 3.**Anonymous disclosures will be considered but are discouraged because anonymity can make it difficult to investigate, protect those concerned, or provide feedback on outcomes.
- 4.**The Whistleblower will be invited to a meeting to discuss his/her concerns and is entitled to be accompanied at this and any subsequent meetings by a colleague or Trade Union representative. Any disclosures between the Whistleblower and representative should be kept confidential before and after the meeting(s) and during any investigation that may follow.
- 5.**After the initial meeting, the OMI will investigate the Whistleblower's concerns and may ask him/her to attend further meetings. To investigate properly, we may involve specialists with particular knowledge or experience of the issues raised.
- 6.**The Whistleblower will be kept informed about how the investigation is progressing and how long is it likely to take. He/she may not be given details about the investigation (or any action it leads to) as we may need to protect confidentiality and comply with legal obligations.
- 7.**The Whistleblower's concerns will be addressed fairly by the OMI but we cannot guarantee the outcome of our investigation will be the one the Whistleblower wants. If he/she is not satisfied with how we have conducted the investigation, there is scope to take the matter to the Trustees for further consideration.

Should the Whistleblower feel uncomfortable about raising concerns in this way, he/she should approach any individual Trustee. If the Whistleblower is still unsure whether this is the appropriate route for raising a concern (or is dissatisfied with the final outcome of any investigation), he/she should contact an external body for advice such as:

- The Charity Commission
- The Police
- The Social Services
- The Health & Safety Regulators

While the Whistleblower is not expected to have absolute proof of malpractice, he/she needs to be able to demonstrate the reasons behind any concerns. Most concerns are raised with good intentions but occasionally someone makes a false allegation out of malice or because they believe they have something to gain. Anyone found doing this will face action under the OMI Disciplinary Policy and is at risk of being dismissed for gross misconduct.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

The OMI will always endeavour to keep a Whistleblower's identity confidential where asked to do so, although we cannot guarantee this and we may need to disclose the Whistleblower's identity to:

- the police, fraud prevention agencies or other law enforcement agencies (to investigate or prevent crime, including fraud)
- the courts (in connection with court proceedings)
- another person to whom we are required by law to disclose your identity.

In such instances, the OMI will inform the Whistleblower at the earliest opportunity. In the interests of confidentiality and fairness, the Whistleblower must not discuss the matter further.

HOW THE OMI PROTECTS WHISTLEBLOWERS

If you raise a genuine concern under this policy, we will support you fully even if we find through our investigations that you made a mistake or that there has been no breach of policy or legal obligation. However, if you feel you have been treated badly as a result of raising a concern, you must tell us straightaway. First, you must inform your manager and if the matter remains unresolved, you must follow the formal process in our Grievance Policy.

All Whistleblowers are given the same protection, so the OMI must not threaten or otherwise badly treat others who have raised concerns under this policy. To do so may result in disciplinary action which could include dismissal for gross misconduct. The Whistleblower may also be able to bring legal action against the OMI.



MAINTAINING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

CREATING A SAFE WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

Churches and faith communities should be safe places for all, both children and adults, where everyone is made to feel welcome, are valued, respected and cared for. We can promote this by ensuring that our buildings are accessible, recognising the limitations that the design of some buildings cause and addressing them, together with the acoustics and lighting. It should be borne in mind that negative and uncaring attitudes are also a major barrier to access. We should also be careful to use appropriate language and suitable vocabulary, which can often reflect people's attitudes towards others.

CODES OF BEHAVIOUR & GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR MEMBERS, STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS.

TERMINOLOGY USED IN THESE GUIDELINES:

- The word 'child' refers to any child or young person under the age of 18.
- The term 'group leader' is used to refer to the person with overall responsibility for a group or activity.
- The term 'worker' refers to any member of the OMI and any employee or volunteer engaged in activities on behalf of the OMI.
- The term 'Regulated Activity' is defined on the Disclosure & Barring Service website – reference should be made to this site to ascertain if an activity falls into this category. There are also definitions available on the Garda website www.garda.ie

YOU SHOULD NOT:

- Initiate physical contact.
- Invade a child's, young person's or adult at risk's privacy whilst washing or toileting.
- Play rough physical or sexually provocative games.
- Use any form of physical punishment.
- Be sexually suggestive about or to a child, young person or adult at risk.
- Touch a child, young person or vulnerable adult inappropriately or obtrusively.
- Scapegoat, ridicule or reject a child, young person, adult at risk or group.
- Permit abusive peer activities, e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying.
- Use inappropriate language.
- Show favouritism to any child, young person or adult at risk.



- Allow a child, young person or adult at risk to involve you in excessive attention seeking that is overtly physical or sexual in nature.
- Give lifts to children, young people or adults at risk on their own or on your own.
- Smoke in the presence of children or young people.
- Drink alcohol or use illegal drugs when responsible for children, young people or adults at risk.
- Share sleeping accommodation with children, young people or adults at risk.
- Invite a child, young person or adult at risk to your home alone.
- Arrange social occasions with children, young people or adults at risk (other than family members) outside organised group occasions.
- Allow unknown adults access to children, young people and adults at risk. Visitors should always be accompanied by a known person.
- Allow strangers to give lifts to children, young people or adults at risk.

Very occasionally it may be necessary to restrain a child, young person or adult at risk who is harming her/himself or others. Use the least possible force and inform the parents/carers as soon as possible. All such incidents must be recorded and the information given to the Safeguarding Lead, and in the case of a parish activity to both the Parish Safeguarding Representative.

All physical contact should be an appropriate response to the child, young person or adult at risk's needs not the needs of the worker. Colleagues must be prepared to support each other and act or speak out if they think any adult is behaving inappropriately.

WORKERS MUST:

- Ensure health & safety requirements are adhered to.
- Undertake risk assessments with appropriate action taken and records kept.
- Keep registers and consent forms up to date.
- Have an awareness, at all times, of what is taking place and who is present.
- Create space for children, young people and adults at risk to talk – either formally or informally.
- Keep up to date with safeguarding training.



SPECIAL NEEDS

Advice from parents/carers should be sought when any activity involves work with children, young people or adults at risk with special needs. Staffing ratios may need to be raised in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all in the group, including the leaders. It may be necessary to provide special equipment or aids and this should be done in consultation with parents/carers.

CONSENT

Consent from parents/carers should be obtained for one-off events and activities, e.g. swimming, and also for outings, residential activities, etc.

REGISTRATION

A registration form should be completed for every child, young person or adult at risk who attends groups or activities, mindful of the requirements of GDPR. The form should be updated annually and include the following:

- Name and address
- Date of birth
- Emergency contact details
- Medical information
- Any special needs – including activities where the person is unable to take part
- Consent for emergency medical treatment
- Consent for photographs/videos if relevant



RECOMMENDED STAFFING LEVELS

The recommended minimum staffing levels for children's groups are given below. More help may be required if children are being taken out, are undertaking physical activities or have special needs.

0-2 years	1 person for every 3 children	1 : 3
2-3 years	1 person for every 4 children	1 : 4
3-8 years	1 person for every 8 children	1 : 8
Over 8 years	1 person for the first 8 children then 1 extra person for every extra 12 children	

Each group should have at least 2 adults and it is recommended that there should be at least one male and one female.

RECRUITMENT PROCEDURE FOR LEADERS (Working with children and young people)

Application:

All potential leaders are required to fill out a leader application form.

Declaration:

All potential leaders are required to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be unsuitable to work with children and declaring any past criminal convictions or pending case.

Police Vetting and References:

All potential leaders are required to complete the online Garda Vetting process. All potential leaders are required to provide the names of two referees.

Interview:

All potential leaders are required to attend an interview.

TRAINING AND INDUCTION

All leaders will receive the relevant training in safeguarding vulnerable groups at least every 3 years. All new leaders must complete the training in advance.

All new leaders should be met in advance to provide clarity on the role and to provide relevant information. All leaders, new and experienced, are given an induction session prior to the beginning of a camp. This is in the format of a briefing and includes highlighting any children with specific needs e.g. food allergies, medical conditions.

All leaders will be supervised and given support through-out the week in which they are on the camp.

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR LEADERS

- Leaders shall be sensitive to the risks involved in contact sports or other activities. While physical contact is a valid way of comforting, reassuring and showing concern for children, it shall only take place when it is acceptable to all persons concerned.
- Leaders shall never physically punish or be in any way verbally abusive to a child.



- Leaders shall never tell jokes of a sexual or inappropriate nature in the presence of a child.
- Leaders shall avoid developing favourites by not becoming over involved or spending a great deal of their time with one child.
- Children shall be encouraged to report cases of bullying to a leader of their choice.
- Leaders shall not put themselves in situations where they are on their own with a child.
- Leaders shall always let another leader know if they leave the camp with a group of children
- Everyone involved in the holiday shall respect the personal space, safety and privacy of individuals.
- If a leader takes time off during a camp this should only be with the agreement of the Camp Director. This time may be spent away from the camp. If during this time alcohol is consumed, a leader may under no circumstances interact with the children.
- Leaders have a responsibility to protect and promote children's rights (see the next section).
- Leaders shall not communicate or connect with children on social media and any necessary communication outside of the camp setting shall be done with or via the Director of the OYS.

PROTECTING AND PROMOTING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

- Treat them with dignity, sensitivity and respect
- Make time to listen, to talk and to get to know the children
- Make sure that children know the camp rules
- Help children to be safe, happy and have as much fun as possible
- Encourage the children to become involved in activities and to interact with other the other children
- Enable children to regard their bodies as their own property
- Give written information about the camp to parents or guardians
- Respect children's privacy in the dormitories, toilet, washing and shower facilities
- Always respond to complaints or allegations
- Be sensitive to the fact that some children are more vulnerable and have special needs
- Know the principles and practices of child protection



MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

As per good practice the children are involved in developing a Code of Behaviour for their own participation. This is done at the start of the week, when the children and leaders arrive on camp. Everyone is gathered together and camp rules and mutual respect is discussed. It helps to explain to the children their rights and responsibilities as a camper.

Refer to the separate policy and procedure on Anti-Bullying.

Should a child who may be vulnerable, at risk, or in need of protection display challenging or disruptive behaviour, it should be dealt with as follows:

- More than one leader should be involved
- A record should be made describing what happened, the circumstances of the incident, who was involved, if any injury was sustained or property damaged and how the situation was resolved
- The incident and how it was resolved should be shared with other leaders as appropriate, to ensure context and consistency if similar behaviour is repeated
- The situation should be monitored in case of repeated incidents
- In some situations, for instance repeated patterns of behaviour, or where behaviour which poses a risk to a vulnerable participant or others, further measures may need to be taken and working in partnership with parents, guardians or carers is essential

If the situation does require further measures it will be followed up with the Director OYS and the Safeguarding Lead.

PROCEDURE FOR THE REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE/CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS DURING A CAMP

Any concerns that the abuse of a child is taking place (whether during the holiday or as may be disclosed by a child having taken place elsewhere) must be reported. The following are the steps to be used in that situation.

Report the concern to the Director OYS or the Safeguarding Lead.

It is important that it is explained to the child that what they tell you is not a secret and that you must tell the Leader in charge.

Where there is concern about a leader on the team or an allegation or complaint made the Director OYS and the Safeguarding Lead have two responsibilities:

- Towards the child, in respect of promoting their welfare and protecting them from any harm.
- Towards the leader against whom the allegation or complaint is made.

If any leader is alleged to have abused or mistreated a child on the holiday, then in the interest of the child in question that leader will be removed from contact with the children. This will only be until the Director OYS and the Safeguarding Lead are sure that the concern or alleged incident has no basis. If it is felt that there is reason for concern or evidence of the allegation or complaint then the above steps regarding the reporting of abuse will be taken. The leader in question will be removed from the camp.

Where an allegation or complaint against a leader is found to be untrue:

If after investigation an allegation or complaint is found to be untrue, the leader in charge will follow it up to ensure that all parties involved are satisfied with the investigation. Continued support will be offered to the leader during the rest of the week and for as long as needed.

If the allegation or complaint was made by a child, then the leader in charge will speak with them to explain the seriousness of the situation and to try to establish the reason for the allegation or complaint.

SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT

In a prominent place, where children, young people and adults at risk can see it, display either an OMI or Diocesan Safeguarding poster giving contact details of Safeguarding Representatives and statutory bodies.

Insurance, First Aid and Fire precautions should be checked and a regular Health & Safety check should be undertaken with particular regard to the following points:

- Electric sockets should be covered.
- Groups should have access to a phone in order to call for help if necessary.
- Adults should be aware of fire drills.
- Fire extinguishers should be regularly maintained and smoke detectors must be fitted throughout the premises and must be checked regularly.
- A First Aid kit should be available on the premises and its contents should be regularly checked.
- An Accident Book should be accessible and all accidents must be recorded.
- A list of qualified First Aiders should be displayed.

E-SAFETY

- Ensure all electronic communications are appropriate and professional.
- If using e-technology as a group activity, ensure that an adult worker knows and understands that is happening within the group.
- Do not make any relationship with a child, young person or adult at risk (other than family members) through a social networking site.
- Copies of all electronic contacts with individuals or groups, including messaging and texting, should be kept or forwarded to a designated worker.



POLICY FOR GROUPS USING CHURCH PROPERTY

It is a requirement that all groups working with children or adults at risk of abuse on OMI property and/or using facilities owned by the OMI are insured and that they have a Safeguarding Policy in place. The general principle is that there is an obligation to comply with the statutory requirements relating to safeguarding and insurance rests with the group using Church property, and with the Church body.



It is the responsibility of any group using Church property to run activities involving children or adults at risk to ensure that they comply with all applicable relevant safeguarding and protection legislation and guidelines.

The group are required to have a Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. The group is also responsible for liaising with the relevant authorities to ensure that the policy and procedures meet the statutory requirements.

The group should also have appropriate insurance for the activity they are running.

The local Superior, Manager or Administrator must ensure that the group complete the Annual User Information Form a copy must be retained securely in the location. It is not the role of the manager to validate the adequacy of the policy; that is the responsibility of the statutory authorities.

The local manager must have confirmation on the Annual User Information Form from the group that they have appropriate insurance in place, which includes the following:

- The Name of the Insurers
- The policy number
- The period of cover of the policy
- Limit of Indemnity

It is not the role of manager to validate the adequacy of this insurance policy.



Each location will be required to complete an annual inventory of all the groups using OMI Property where children or adults at risk are present.

Parish Groups (such as choir, Alter Servers and preparation for the Sacraments) using OMI premises are Diocesan activities and are subject to the Diocesan Guidelines.



TRANSPORTING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS AT RISK

DRIVERS

- All those who drive children, young people or adults at risk on activities must have held a full driving licence for 5 years.
- Any driver who has more than 6 penalty points on their licence must not transport children or young people or adults at risk.
- It is the responsibility of the leader of the activity requiring transport to check the licence of all drivers.
- Children, young people or adults at risk must not be transported in a private car without the consent of their parents/carers. This also applies to formally arranged lifts to and from any activity.
- All cars that carry children, young people or adults at risk must be comprehensively insured.
- The insured person should ensure that their insurance covers the giving of lifts relating to OMI activities.
- All cars that carry children, young people or adults at risk must be in a roadworthy condition.
- All passengers must wear suitable seat belts and children must use appropriate child car seats or booster seats.
- At no time should the number of passengers in a car exceed the usual passenger number.
- There must be a non-driving adult escort as well as the driver. If in an emergency a driver has to transport a child, young person or adult at risk on his or her own, that person must sit in the back of the car and this should be reported to the appropriate Safeguarding Representative as soon as possible after the event.

MINIBUS/COACH

- Workers/helpers should sit amongst the group and not together.
- If noise or behaviour appears to be getting out of control, stop the vehicle until calm is restored.
- Before using a minibus, ensure you know the up to date regulations for its use and have had a trial drive.
- Drivers are required to have undergone appropriate minibus driver training.

GUIDELINES FOR USE OF TECHNOLOGY & SOCIAL MEDIA

SAFE COMMUNICATION

Those working with children, young people and adults at risk often communicate with them using email and message apps. It is therefore important to adopt, alongside our 'Safeguarding Policy', good practice in these areas to ensure that these modern technologies are used safely and responsibly by all, thereby protecting children, young people and adults at risk and safeguarding the integrity of all who work with them.

Social Media and IT policies and Staff Job Descriptions where relevant should include an acknowledgement and approval of these technologies as a legitimate means of communicating with children, young people and adults at risk, but also the expectations with regards to their use.

A rider should be included in any general consent form that parents/carers sign when a child or young person joins in any OMI activity, that the leadership endorses this mode of communication and that a parent/carer agrees to this.



COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS AT RISK

All children, young people and adults at risk need to be aware of the protocols that teachers/leaders follow in relation to email, social networking and mobile technology including texting. It is important to remember that as well as the parent/carer, children, young people and adults at risk have the right to decide whether they want us to have their contact details and should not be pressurised into divulging information they would rather keep to themselves.

We should be careful not to show any favouritism to children, young people and adults at risk in relation to communication technologies that might be mutually available to the leader, but perhaps only to a few of the children, young people and adults at risk. A leader should not normally offer to top up a child's phone credits.

The internet, mobile phones, social networking and other interactive services have transformed the way in which we live. The new technologies offer tremendous opportunities to reach, communicate, evangelise and engage with those involved in the Catholic Church including clergy, youth workers, parishioners and those in our communities who may have an interest in the church.

The Catholic Church in England and Wales is keen to promote the safe, and responsible, use of interactive communication technologies within all church activities. These guidelines seek to ensure the message of safe and responsible use of communication and interactive technologies is understood and guidelines are followed. The CSSA provides detailed guidance on these matters on its website www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk in its Practice Guidance – Creating a Safer Environment. All are encouraged to consult the full CSSA guidance. What follows are extracts from this guidance.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

New technologies offer tremendous opportunities to reach, communicate, evangelize and engage with those involved in the Catholic Church and those in our communities who may have an interest in the church. The internet, mobile phones, social networking and other interactive services have transformed the way in which we live.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES, NEW RISKS

Along with the many benefits of modern communication technologies, there are risks. The anonymity and sense of distance inherent in online communication can make it easier for people to say things they would perhaps not say in the presence of somebody, and to feel less remorseful about online harm caused. The online world makes it easier to engage in criminal offences and abuse. It enables easy creation of, access to, use and dissemination of pornographic and abusive images and videos, easy access to children and adults who are vulnerable for the purposes of grooming ease of presenting as someone else and greater potential for online bullying and abuse.

CREATING AND MANAGING CHURCH-RELATED WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES

Websites or social media profile pages are useful means to engage large groups of young people. The following are recommended guidelines to promote safety online. The development of websites should be in accordance with any province policy and procedure. In the absence of such local guidance, the following good practice guidance can be followed:

- community or province activity websites and social media profiles should be approved by the province social communications office;
- where there is user-generated content, the site should be moderated/ administered by a minimum of two adults;
- personal sites should not be used for community or province programs; separate sites should be created for these;
- passwords and names of sites should be registered in an encrypted document in a central location as appropriate. More than one adult should have access to this information.

ACCESS TO THE INTERNET

Where children, young people and adults have access to the internet using OMI computers, other electronic devices and WIFI as part of OMI activities, the activity leader has a duty to ensure that:

- use of the equipment and WIFI is supervised and/or monitored;
- measures are in place to ensure that the likelihood of accessing inappropriate materials is reduced e.g. firewalls, parental controls and software to filter out internet material.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL NETWORKING


The internet has evolved to become an increasingly dynamic and interactive medium led by social networking services. The convergence of technical and communication platforms means that users can now interact with each other across multiple platforms and devices, such as mobile phones, games consoles, watches and PCs (laptops, notebooks, tablets etc.).


Social media includes any site or forum that enables sharing of any user-generated content. These services are very popular with children and young people and bring together pre-existing interactive technologies and tools (e.g. email, messaging, chat, blogs, photographs, music, videos, gaming, discussion forums) in a single service through for example Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat and live messaging services such as Facetime, Duo and Skype, and so on. It is the way in which these different technologies are used that makes them 'social'.


GOOD PRACTICE IN RELATION TO SOCIAL NETWORKING:


- Most government guidelines recommend children should be at least 13 years before using social media;
- all users should be made aware that their personal details e.g. last name, address, school, passwords, e-mail address and telephone numbers are private and should not be disclosed unless approval is given by the activity leader;
- all users should be made aware that they should never send images of themselves or others and should be wary of people misrepresenting themselves in chat rooms;
- all users should be aware that they should advise a leader about anything on-line that makes them feel uncomfortable or concerns them;
- children and young people should be advised to always tell an adult they trust about communications that make them feel uncomfortable or where they have been asked to keep communication secret;
- children and young people should be made aware that they should advise a leader and their parent or carer of a request to meet up with someone they have met on-line, not to make plans to do so without alerting an adult and never to go alone to such planned meetings;
- children and young people should be advised of a code of conduct for using chat rooms.

'CHAT' is a simple code that can be used for remembering some rules around the use of the internet and social media.

 = **Careful** - People online might not always be who they say they are.

 = **Hang** - Hang on to your personal information.
Never give out your home address or other information.

 = **Arranging** - Arranging to meet can be dangerous.
Never arrange to meet someone unless you are sure who they are.

 = **Tell** - Tell your friends or an adult if you find something that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Personal social networking accounts

The following good practice guidance should be followed.

Many Oblates and others engaged in our province works and ministry may now have a personal online social networking presence via social media platforms, personal blogs and websites. The use of such platforms [e.g. X (formerly known as Twitter) or Facebook, TikTok, Instagram] should always contain content that is universally appropriate to any possible user. All individuals connected to the work of the province should understand that their use of social media, whether public or private, needs to reflect the values for which we stand.

Although there may be reasonable overlap between the personal and spiritual realms in communications between adults (with full capacity) within the Church, this is never the case with children, young people or adults at risk. It is never appropriate to use personal social media accounts, phone numbers or email addresses to contact children and young people without parental consent, or with adults who lack capacity to give their consent. It is not appropriate to send or accept 'friend requests' from children, young people or adults who lack capacity to consent from personal social media accounts. The strictest of privacy settings should be activated on all personal social media accounts and individuals must take personal responsibility to ensure that their content is appropriate to those that can see it e.g. language, jokes, opinions. Ensure your settings prohibit others from 'Tagging' you in their posts without your permission.

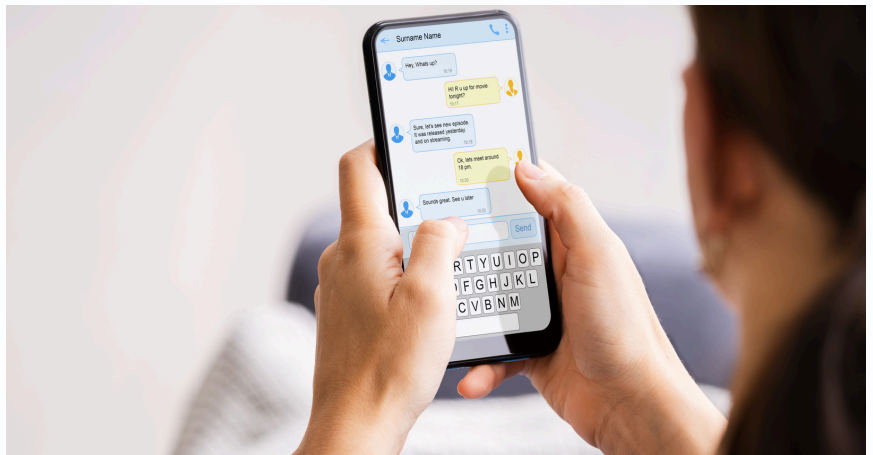
SEXTING

In Ireland and the UK It is illegal to take, store or disseminate sexually explicit images and videos of a child under the age of 18 (UK Sexual Offences Act, 2003). In Ireland, the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 (also known as Coco's Law) addresses the sharing of intimate images without consent. A young person or an adult is breaking the law if they:

- take an explicit image or video of a child (anyone under 18) - this could be a young person's self-image or their friend;
- share an explicit image or video of a child (anyone under 18), even if it is shared between children of the same age;
- possess, download or store an explicit image or video of a child (anyone under 18), even if the child gave their permission for it to be created.

It is also an offence where a person above the age of 18 intentionally communicates a sexual communication with an individual they do not reasonably believe to be over the age of consent, for the purposes of sexual gratification, or, alternatively, where the communication is intended to elicit a sexual communication from the recipient. There are many reasons why a young person might share a nude or semi-nude picture of themselves. They may want to 'belong' to a social group, interact with others and explore sexual feelings and get attention on social media. They may also find it difficult to refuse if someone asks them to send them one.

Once images are passed on electronically, control is lost over what happens to them, where they are posted and who sees them. Other people may use sexually explicit images of a minor to bully them, to blackmail them and to cause harm to them.



RESPONSE TO SEXTING

If you become aware that children or young people may be engaged in sexting, seek to ensure that the behaviour ceases immediately, inform the young people involved and their parents of the legal status of the activity and refer to the relevant Safeguarding Representative to assess whether it ought to be reported to the police and children's social care. If an adult is involved in sexting with a young person, the matter must be immediately reported to the police.

If someone sends an unsolicited and unwanted sext, whatever their age, report it to the relevant Safeguarding Representative in the first instance so that consideration can be given as to whether the matter should be reported to the police

Photographs, Filming and Video Recordings

Parental/carer consent in writing is required for the taking of, distribution and publishing of any still images or video recordings of children, young people or adults at risk. Such material constitutes 'personal data' and is therefore subject to the 1998 Data Protection Act (DPA). Names should not be displayed with individual images, but a list placed beside the display, or preferably a simple label or heading with general, not specific, information should be used. If engaging an external photographer it is essential that a clear brief is provided as part of a signed agreement, that he/she does not have unsupervised access to children, young people or adults at risk and there is agreement as to the use of all the photographs taken. For the Church to use images of people that enable those people to be identified, they need a lawful basis - see Article 6 of the General Data protection Regulations (GDPR):

- the person (or parent) has provided their consent to the processing of his or her personal data for one or more specific purpose;
- the processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller (e.g. preventing or detecting a crime or catching an offender (this is relevant when using CCTV cameras);
- the photographs are necessary for the purposes of the legitimate interests pursued by the controller (e.g. educational purposes) or by a third party, except where such interests are overridden by the interests or fundamental rights and freedoms of the person which require protection of personal data, in particular where the data subject is a child or vulnerable adult.



USE OF CCTV AND WEBCAMS

Proper care must be exercised in the installation of any necessary CCTV or webcam systems to ensure that no individual's 'private space' is being unreasonably invaded or eroded. Data Protection legislation and GDPR apply to the use of CCTV where the images identify individuals. The use of CCTV must be appropriate and fit for a specific purpose. Safety and security of premises may require such systems.

Cameras placed so as to record external areas should be positioned in such a way as to prevent or minimise recording of passers-by, or of another person's private property and signs should be placed indicating that CCTV surveillance is in operation. Tapes and/or files should be stored in a secure environment, along with a log of access to tapes by authorised personnel.

LIVE STREAMING OF CHURCH SERVICES

The live streaming of Mass and other services allows the Church to reach a congregation that is not able to attend Church in person. In addition to being able to reach a wider audience than that in a physical location, live streaming can give people support and companionship and help them feel more connected to their church community. To address potential safeguarding issues, the following steps should be taken:



- congregations should be told in advance (notice board, announcements, pew sheets) which services are streamed and which parts of the church of building are visible on the streaming;
- children and adults at risk should only be filmed with their consent and/or the consent of parents (for children);
- parents should be informed in writing of the intention to stream including what will be filmed, why the filming is taking place and how it will be used. This should include any intention to retain a copy of the filming for future editing or use;
- parents should be given the option of withholding consent to their child participating in parts of a service where they will be filmed;
- where consent is withheld, every effort should be made for the child or adult at risk to participate and be out of the view of the cameras.

Where a recording is made and kept, there is need to consider how it is intended to be used and the purpose; recordings will need to be stored and retained in accordance with a record retention schedule.

COMPUTERS AND WIRELESS NETWORKS

We need to ensure that all computers and wireless networks have proper password protection to guard against their inappropriate access and use. Internet accountability software packages that monitor and log internet use and relay this information to the worker's line manager are now available and can be installed on computers which are in common use throughout the offices used for the work of the Province.

ONLINE MEETING GROUP 1 TO 1

Always conduct yourself in all forms of online communication as you would face to face. Be aware of what you say and how you say it, as well as how it could be interpreted. Never provide personal details of yourself, young persons or volunteers. In the case of online video meetings, such as on Zoom or TEAMS or Skype, guidelines should be given and boundaries explained and agreed at each contact when facilitating virtual groups. These should include suitable attire during visual group meetings and consideration to the environment i.e. there are no personal or intimate items in view. If you are taking part from a private venue the background should be concealed or blurred.

SAFE RECRUITMENT

Safer recruitment is a set of practices to help make sure your staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children and young people. It's a vital part of creating a safe and positive environment and making a commitment to keep children safe from harm. Anybody who might come into contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults should go through safer recruitment practices. You must carry out the necessary checks on anyone who will be around children, young people or vulnerable adults. A role might not be eligible for a criminal records check if it does not involve regular contact with these vulnerable groups but you should still carry out other appropriate checks such as having interviews and checking references. Anyone who will be coming into contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults should undertake training so they know how to recognise and respond to safeguarding concerns.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION (BY REGION)

Ireland NSBCCCI procedures apply equally to all employees, clergy (with a current Ceibret) and religious and volunteers working with children, young people and adults at risk in the Catholic Church.

England and Wales CSSA National Safeguarding Policies and Procedures apply equally to all employees, office holders (clergy and religious) and volunteers working with children, young people and adults at risk in the Catholic Church.

Detailed safer recruitment and selection policies and procedures are available in the Practice Guidance section of the CSSA website www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk. All involved in OMI staff recruitment in the Province are asked to follow this guidance as well as that provided by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>. In Ireland the guidance on www.garda.ie must be followed. All the staff and volunteers working with children, young people and adults at risk will be selected in accordance with these policies and procedures

ALL REGIONS

PRACTICAL STEPS WHEN APPOINTING EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

It is not easy to identify those who are likely to abuse children, young people or adults at risk. Any procedure that helps to clarify details of a person's background and experience can help with identification and can raise awareness levels in the organisation generally. The same procedures should be applied regardless of the level of responsibility or the duration of appointment of a role involving contact with children, young people and adults at risk.

Safer Recruitment procedures, including verifying identity and eligibility to work, apply to all applicants including clergy, religious and those who are well known to the Church for many years. This approach ensures fairness and consistency and avoids potential breaches of the Disclosure and Barring Service Code of Practice.

Appointments must be made on the basis of a person's experience and ability to perform the role rather than on the urgency of the need, or the availability of the applicant.

It is essential to treat all documentation relating to these application processes in strict confidence.

CLEAR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR VOLUNTEERS AND EMPLOYEES

A lack of clarity about the role of an individual, and about accountability to ensure people are operating according to their role, allows those who are abusive to create the conditions where abuse can occur without others becoming aware that something is wrong.

The Oblates are committed to the good practice of giving all employees and volunteers a clear description of their specific roles in their contact with children, young people and adults at risk. Every employee or volunteer who works with children, young people or adults at risk will have a role description.

As a minimum a role description should include:

- a detailed description of the work;
- a list of responsibilities, including the responsibility to become familiar with the Policy Statement for Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk in the Province;
- clear and detailed content that reflects the specific nature of the role or the specific aspect of the role that justifies the requirement for a DBS Disclosure (where appropriate);
- the duty to promote safe practice and minimise all risks of abuse.

Formal and extensive job descriptions will always be drawn up for paid appointments. Employees and volunteers will be required to sign a document to indicate that they have received, read and understood the job/role description and that they have received, and read and understood the OMI Policy Statement for Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk. This should be retained in their personnel file in the relevant or Provincial Office.

Any contact that an employee or volunteer has with a child or adult at risk in a particular role must be within the confines and responsibilities of that role. Every job description should be reviewed annually to ensure it still adequately represents the role.

Those appointed to work with children and adults at risk will receive appropriate training in awareness and best practice. They will be expected to have a good knowledge of the Safeguarding policies and procedures.

DBS CHECKS

DBS checks in the Catholic Church in England and Wales are a mandatory part of the "safer recruitment" process for all staff and volunteers in roles that involve direct contact with children, young people, or vulnerable adults. The Church, in cooperation with the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS) and Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS), mandates enhanced DBS checks for these positions to ensure that individuals posing a risk are not placed in positions of trust.

Key points regarding DBS checks in the Catholic Church:

- Renewal Policy: It is the policy of the Catholic Church in England and Wales to renew DBS checks for eligible roles every 3 years.

- **Mandatory Checks:** Roles requiring a check typically include Altar Server chaperones, catechists, children's liturgists, parish safeguarding reps, sacristans, youth ministry workers, and Eucharistic Ministers who perform home visits.
- **Procedures:** Parishes are responsible for carrying out these checks, using the diocesan "umbrella arrangement". Centres of Mission where there are no Diocesan arrangements must liaise with the Director for Safeguarding for the checks.
- **Volunteers:** Volunteers must complete a confidential declaration form and undergo identity verification (usually requiring three original, in-date documents).
- **Handling Blemished Disclosures:** If a DBS check comes back with a conviction or caution ("blemished"), the parish must not automatically discard the applicant. Instead, they must contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team or Director for Safeguarding to conduct a risk assessment.
- **Overseas Checks:** DBS checks cannot access international records. Therefore, if an applicant has lived outside the UK, foreign police checks may be required.
- **Update Service:** Volunteers are encouraged to register their DBS certificate with the government's Update Service within 30 days of issue, which can simplify the 3-year renewal process.

REFERENCE CHECKS

Checking references are an essential part of the recruitment process. Vetting gives you a picture of an applicant on a particular date whereas references provide essential information with regard to the person's suitability for the role and how they have performed previously.

- Do not accept open references
- Do ensure references are from the current employer and have been completed by a person with appropriate authority.
- Do Obtain verification of the individual's most recent relevant period of employment where the applicant is not currently employed.
- Verify information with the person who provided the reference.
- Ensure electronic references originate from a legitimate source.
- Contact referees to clarify content where information is vague or insufficient.
- Compare the information on the application form with that in the reference and take up any discrepancies with the candidate.
- Establish the reason for the candidate leaving their current or most recent post.
- Ensure any concerns are resolved satisfactorily before the appointment is confirmed.

VETTING

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate are committed to the highest standards in relation to recruitment of members, staff and volunteers an essential part of this process is ensuring adherence to the legal requirements in all parts of the Province in relation to police checks. **As part of this commitment to maintain standards all personnel are required to undergo vetting/police check every 3 years.**

IRELAND

Garda Vetting Information

The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016 make it mandatory for people carrying out relevant work with children or vulnerable adults to be vetted. The Compliance Unit in the Garda National Vetting Bureau ensure that relevant organisations are adhering to their statutory obligations. One of these obligations is to only vet people who carry out relevant work. The roles for which vetting is required are described below;

An individual cannot make a vetting application on their own behalf. Vetting is always carried out by the relevant organisation for which you work.

PROCESS VETTING APPLICATIONS

Applications for vetting are submitted electronically in a process known as E-Vetting. The National Vetting Bureau (NVB) no longer accepts paper applications. Please see Vetting Invitation Form (NVB 1 Form or Parish NVB 1 Form) You should give this to the applicant and ask him or her to complete Section 1 and 2. Section 3 is to be completed on behalf of the organisation requesting the vetting (parish/school/diocesan agency/etc.). At this point in the process you must validate the identity of the applicant. Roles that require vetting in parishes and religious setting

The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 states that all those who engage in 'relevant work or activities' with children or vulnerable persons must be vetted. Included in the definition of 'relevant work or activities' is **"Any work or activity as a priest or minister or any other person engaged in the advancement of any religious beliefs to children or vulnerable persons unless such work is incidental to the advancement of religious beliefs to persons who are not children or vulnerable persons"** (Schedule 1, Part 1, Section 7 and Schedule 1, Part 2, Section 7).

The applicant must provide a valid email address. If the applicant does not have their own email address they can use the email address of a family member or friend, if they are happy to do so, or use an email address provided by the organisation for whom they wish to be vetted.

ENGLAND & WALES

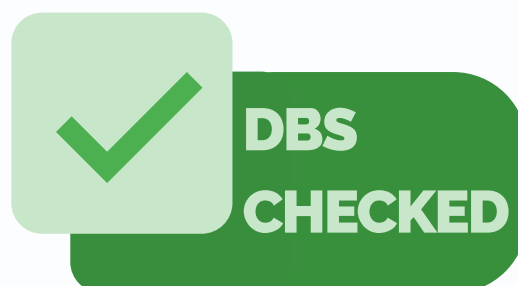
Vetting DBS checks are carried out by the Disclosure and Barring Service, also known as DBS. A DBS check is a record of a person's criminal convictions and cautions. Outside of Parishes DBS checks are completed through the RLSS. The RLSS use a system called Ucheck to process Disclosure and Barring checks (DBS). It is fast, easy to use and reasonably priced. The majority of checks are returned to RLSS in just 3 days.

SCOTLAND

The Catholic Church uses the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme for vetting individuals who work with or have contact with vulnerable groups, including children. The PVG scheme, managed by Disclosure Scotland, checks an individual's criminal record to ensure they are not unsuitable for working with vulnerable people.

Key aspects of the PVG scheme in the Scottish Catholic Church context:

- Application: Individuals who work with vulnerable groups in a church setting, whether paid or unpaid, are required to apply for a PVG check.
- Disclosure Scotland: The application is processed by Disclosure Scotland, which checks the individual's criminal record.
- Vetting Service: The Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service (or similar diocesan office) typically manages the application process and receives the disclosure from Disclosure Scotland.
- Purpose: The PVG scheme aims to protect vulnerable individuals by excluding those who are unsuitable from working with them.
- Not limited to employees: The PVG scheme applies to volunteers, including those who are not employees of the church.
- Vetting for children: Individuals who are 18 years or older and involved in ministry with children are required to be vetted.
- Vetting for adults: The same vetting procedures apply to individuals working with adults in need of safeguarding.
- Barred from work: A person who has been barred by the PVG scheme may be restricted from working with vulnerable groups in the church setting.



REFERENCES

- Working Together to Safeguard Children UK Statutory Guidance 2025
- Children First 2017
- A Safe and Welcoming Church Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024
- In God's Image (version 2) Scotland
- Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service CSSA standards/national safeguarding policy
- **Safeguarding Children from Abuse Linked to a Belief in Spirit Possession**, Department of Education and Skills, 2007. Further guidance is given in the **National action plan to tackle child abuse linked to faith or belief** by The National Working Group on Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief, Department for Education, 2012.
- Safeguarding Adults Leaflet – Thirtyone:eight
- UNIVERSAL GUIDELINES FRAMEWORK Tutela Minorum, Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors





SUPPORT SERVICES

IRELAND

TOWARDS HEALING

Towards Healing is an independent organisation providing professional support for people who have experienced institutional, clerical or religious abuse (Types of Abuse physical, sexual, emotional, and neglect) in Ireland. The primary client group are adult men and women who have experienced physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect in childhood, perpetrated by a priest, brother, religious sister, or volunteer or employee of the Catholic Church. The secondary group are relatives of survivors of abuse*, specifically spouses, partners, and children. In addition, siblings of survivors may be referred for therapy in order to come to terms with disclosure.

Towards Healing offers a range of counselling and support services:

- Face-to-Face Counselling
- Friendly Call
- Structured Telephone
- Counselling
- Family Counselling

The contact details; phone line is open: Tuesday to Friday 10am -4pm
Freephone [1800 303416](tel:1800303416) (Rep of Ireland) Hearing-impaired Text Line Number: [089-4556422](tel:0894556422).
Website www.towardshealing.ie

TOWARDS PEACE

The vision of Towards Peace is to provide a safe supportive space, where people who have been affected by abuse in a Church context can be accompanied as they seek their own experience of spiritual peace, one step at a time. Safe spaces to connect with your own spirituality, with your sense of God and your journey Towards Peace.

Phone: + 353 (0) 1 5053028 Mobile: + 353 (0) 86 7710533

The service is available on Monday and Tuesday from 9am – 4pm and on Wednesday from 9am -12 noon.

Email: towardspeace@jecon.ie Website: www.towardspeace.ie



ENGLAND AND WALES

Safe Spaces is a joint Catholic and Anglican Church initiative to provide a vital support service for survivors of church-related abuse. Although the churches fund the service, it is run by First Light which is one of the leading charities providing specialist support to survivors of domestic and sexual abuse in England and Wales.

Safe Spaces is a free and independent support service, providing a confidential, personal and safe space for anyone who has been abused through their relationship with either the Church of England or the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Safe Spaces comprises a team of trained support advocates who have undergone specialist training in supporting survivors of sexual violence with specific additional training in how the churches respond to abuse cases, the way in which faith and church-related settings have been used to carry out abuse, and the particular issues affecting people who have had or still have, a relationship with the church.

Safe Spaces is a national service providing remote support through its helpline, live chat service and website. Remote support is provided for as long as the survivor needs this. This can be advocating for the survivor, giving them support, providing information (including information on church and police procedures), understanding individual needs and jointly working on individual support plans. If face-to-face support is also required, contact and referrals will be made with appropriate local organisations depending on need.

Safe Spaces is for anyone who feels they have experienced church related abuse of any form in England or Wales. It is for people aged 18 or over, but the abuse can have happened at any time in the past. The Safe Spaces team are available through their helpline.

Support Advisors and Survivor Advocates can provide emotional and practical support Mon-Fri 0900-1700. An Out of Hours Helpline can provide further emotional support and discuss needs Mon-Fri 1700-2100 and Sat 0900-1300 and Sunday 1300-1700.

Contact: Tel: 0300 303 1056 (answerphone outside of opening times).

Email: safespaces@firstlight.org.uk **Website:** www.safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk

SCOTLAND

Safe Spaces see above is also available to those living in Scotland.

RAPHAEL COUNSELLING SERVICE

Opening doors to healing The Raphael Counselling Service has been established to offer support to anyone who has suffered abuse in the Catholic Church in Scotland. Counselling is provided by *Health in Mind*, an independent professional Counselling service, and is funded by the Catholic Church in Scotland.

Contact can be made through the local Diocesan Safeguarding Team



THANK YOU

FROM THE OBLATE
SAFEGUARDING TEAM

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