Catholic **Safeguarding Standards** Agency



What is Safeguarding?

The Catholic Church, and all those with a role within it, have a duty of care to ensure that children and adults are safe from harm. This duty spans from ensuring people are safe within our premises and care to protecting those who may be at risk of harm or abuse within their home, community, or other settings.

If harm is suspected the Church must work with other services to protect and support those affected. As a valued volunteer you share this responsibility and play an important part in the safeguarding process. You may see or hear something which could suggest someone is vulnerable or at risk. Telling the right people means they can then take appropriate actions so that person can be supported and protected from further harm.

Understanding spiritual abuse

Spiritual abuse is understood as the coercion and control of one individual by another in a spiritual context. The target experiences spiritual abuse as a deeply personal attack. This may include manipulation and exploitation; enforced accountability; censorship of decision-making; requirements for secrecy and silence; pressure to conform misuse of Scripture or the pulpit to control behaviour; requirement of obedience to the abuser; the suggestion that the abuser has a 'divine' position; isolation from others, especially those external to the abusive context (Oakley and Kimmond, 2014).

This type of abuse is against the Church's teachings, and it can be very difficult for someone who has suffered or is suffering abuse to be able tell someone else as this might be confounded with a form of institutional abuse. This includes neglect and poor practice within an institution or specific care setting, or in relation to care provided in someone's home.

This may range from one-off incidents to ongoing ill treatment. It can be through neglect or poor practice or a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation (Care and Support Statutory Guidance, 2014).

When speaking to a victim of abuse, please be aware of your own reactions and body language as it is important that you remain calm, listen carefully without interrupting and do not ask questions but allow them to tell their story

Make it clear that you are taking them seriously and acknowledge their courage. Reassure them that they are right to tell. Let them know you are going to do everything that you can do to help by informing the safeguarding coordinators as you can't do this on your own.

Support will also be available to you as this can be a distressing situation for all involved. You are not responsible for investigating an allegation and must not approach or tell the person the allegation has been made against or discuss it with anyone else

You must contact the safeguarding office directly. An investigation process will take place which may involve a multiagency approach. For more information, please contact your safeguarding coordinator.

Responding to a victim of abuse

Respond to a person telling you they've experienced abuse by listening to their story, pay attention to what they say about their needs and their concerns. Make it clear that you believe them, focus on offering them support.

Validate their decision to share their story with you, showing that you are listening attentively, that you understand what they are saying, and that you believe them. Emphasise that abuse is never acceptable, and that the victim is not to blame. Let them know that their feelings are normal and that it is safe to express them with you.

Do not put the person under any pressure to tell you about their experiences. Provide them with information about how to access to support services and offer help to make contact with these services



If you are concerned about the welfare of a child or adult at risk, do not delay in contacting the police, using 999 if a child or adult is believed to be in immediate danger

Safe Spaces is a free and independent support service, providing a confidential, personal and safe space for anyone who has been abused by someone in the Church. You can contact them on
0300 303 1056

Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you. You can speak to them on 116 123.

What kinds of abuse or harm are there?

There are several types of harm or abuse. Unfortunately, some adults and children may be suffering more than one. Types of abuse include:

Physical Abuse: Hurting an adult or child physically by using force or violence for example hitting, shaking, burning, poisoning.

Sexual abuse, including sexual exploitation: Forcing, encouraging, or misleading an adult or child into sexual activity whether, or not, they understand what is happening. This can include grooming, physical contact or exposure to sexual material in person or on-line.



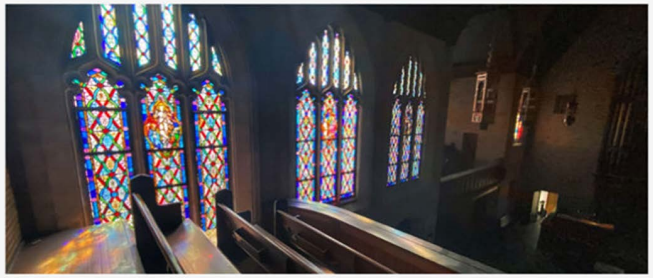
Neglect and omissions of care: Failing to meet an adult or child's basic needs including physical, emotional, safety, educational and medical needs.

Emotional or psychological abuse: Persistently making an adult or child feel worthless and unloved. This can include deliberately ridiculing, frightening, isolating or bullying them but can also be a result of seeing or hearing others being illtreated.

Financial and material abuse: Can include theft, fraud, scamming, pressure and intimidation regarding wills, property or inheritance and misuse or stealing of property or possessions.

Types of abuse

Domestic Abuse: Abusive behaviour of a person towards another person aged over 16 years who they are or have been personally connected to including family members. The behaviours include physical and sexual abuse, threatening behaviour, economic abuse, and emotional and psychological abuse. Men and women and children can be victims of domestic abuse.



Modern Slavery and Criminal Exploitation: Modern slavery is a crime that covers all forms of slavery, trafficking and exploitation of children and adults for example forced labour, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and criminal exploitation.

Self-neglect: When a person fails to care for their own basic needs including personal hygiene, surroundings, health, and safety. This includes hoarding.

Discriminatory abuse: Someone is treated unfairly or harassed because of their age, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender or gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity or race

What should I do if I have a concern?

If you are concerned about the welfare of a child, young person or adult please contact your Diocese Safeguarding Coordinator without delay. Their contact details are:.

If they are not available you can contact Social Services directly on:

If there is an allegation of abuse which has occurred recently or in the past, even if the accused person has died, please contact the safeguarding office directly.

If you are concerned that they might be in immediate danger please do not delay contacting the police by calling 999 and then inform the Diocesan safeguarding office.