

LAY COMMUNITY
of
ST. BENEDICT

POLICY

for

**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN, YOUNG
PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS**

September 2022 for review September 2023.

Policy statement

The Lay Community of St Benedict (LCSB) is committed to the Safeguarding Policies of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from any form of abuse or maltreatment and to promote a safe environment for them.

This commitment flows from the fact that we are all made in the image of God and the Church's common belief in the dignity and uniqueness of every human life. Each person has a right to expect the highest level of care and protection, love, encouragement and respect that can be given.

The LCSB will liaise closely and openly with statutory agencies to ensure that any concerns or allegations of abuse that are raised are promptly reported, properly investigated, victims supported and perpetrators held to account

The LCSB recognises that all adults have a duty to act to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults and to respond promptly to concerns, listening to children with respect and most importantly, communicating effectively with one another within and between organisations and agencies.

This policy includes Internet safeguarding (appendix 3) and should be read in conjunction with the GDPR policy, intercessory prayer policy and guidance for companions to seekers and new members.

Accountability

The Council and Trustees of the LCSB are committed to the standards and policies set by the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency under the auspices of the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham who provide advice and training on all aspects of safeguarding.

The Safeguarding, Regulatory and Compliance Group

The Safeguarding, Regulatory and Compliance group appointed by the Board of Trustees of the LCSB are responsible for Safeguarding, Data Protection and other statutory compliance issues. This group is chaired by a Trustee and includes the Safeguarding Officer, the Data Protection Officer and the Guest Master (responsible for much of the LCSB's online hosting). This group is responsible for promoting good and safe practices in all community activities, ensuring compliance with all statutory obligations, is involved in the recruitment and training of people for roles within the community and is responsible for ensuring that Disclosure and Barring Service and any other checks are undertaken.

The policy will be reviewed annually.

General Guidance and Code of Conduct

Recruitment to all roles within the LCSB will follow the guidance and policies outlined on the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) website.

All members of LCSB MUST:

Treat everyone equally and with respect – show no favouritism. Avoid being drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour e.g. tantrums and crushes.

Engage and interact appropriately with children, young people and vulnerable adults and allow them to talk about any concerns they may have. Physical contact must be both age appropriate and touch related to the person's needs, not the worker's. Be aware that even caring physical contact may be misinterpreted

Challenge unacceptable behaviour and provide an example of good conduct - an environment which allows bullying, inappropriate shouting or any form of discrimination is unacceptable.

Ensure wherever possible that there is more than one person present during activities involving children, young people and vulnerable adults and that everyone is within sight or hearing of others.

Respect the sacred dignity of every individual and their right to personal privacy.

Recognise that particular care is required in moments when discussing sensitive issues or when caring for children, young people or vulnerable adults i.e. maintain appropriate boundaries.

LCSB members MUST NOT:

Engage in inappropriate behaviour or contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults – physical, verbal or sexual. (Avoid any physical activity which is, or can be construed as, sexual, aggressive or threatening.)

Discuss topics or use vocabulary with children and young people which could not be used comfortably in the presence of parents or another adult, whether writing, phoning, email or internet.

Make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures.

Exaggerate or trivialise abuse issues

Take a chance when common sense, policy and practice suggest another more prudent approach

Ignore the Safeguarding Guidelines and procedures.

Organisation of community events including children, young people and vulnerable adults

The primary responsibility for the welfare of children and young people under 18 years of age at community activities remains with their parents unless the parent has given consent for their child to participate in a specific activity and handed over responsibility to a designated leader for a specific period of time.

When informal supervision is arranged among and between parents at community gatherings, each parent must be satisfied about their own child's safety and welfare. In these situations the Lay Community of St Benedict cannot assume any responsibility.

A risk assessment, according to the guidance contained on the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) website, must be completed before all events and activities take place, including on-line or virtual events.

All on-line and virtual events must adhere to the CSSA **Internet Safeguarding Guidance** and should only take place in the virtual rooms accessed via our website.

Events **organisers** must –

- ensure that the event complies with the LCSB's Safeguarding Policy and procedures by forwarding a completed risk assessment form to the Safeguarding Officer and where necessary discuss the detail with the Safeguarding Officer.
- ensure that a **minimum** of two leaders are always present, maintaining the gender balance of the group. In larger groups the following supervision ratios should be adhered to:
 - 1 adult to every 3 children under 5
 - 1 adult to every 6 children aged 5-8
 - 1 adult to every 10 children aged 8 – 11
 - 1 adult to every 15-20 children aged over 11

obtain parental permission for all activities involving children or young people under the age of 18 years.

Leaders of events or activities must have -

- a good understanding of the safeguarding policy and guidelines
- the skills to pass this understanding on to others
- the skills to offer appropriate support and supervision for participants.

Leaders should keep a written record of any accident or incident involving a group member, whether or not abuse has occurred or is suspected at the time.

All **helpers** must -

- comply with the Code of Conduct of the LCSB
- have their roles and responsibilities clearly defined and reinforced through appropriate training
- ensure they are not alone when providing intimate care eg washing, dressing and babysitting
- report any incidents or concerns to the event leader immediately.

Procedures

RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS

Where information about an allegation or a concern becomes known to a person within the Community, then action must be taken to inform the Police or Social Services as appropriate so that children, young people and vulnerable adults are not put at continued risk and a proper investigation may take place.

Advice is immediately available by phone from the LCSB's Safeguarding Officer or a member of the Safeguarding team by mobile phone or email

lcsbsafeguarding@gmail.com or the Safeguarding Co-ordinator in the Archdiocese safeguarding@rc-birmingham.org (0121 230 6240).

KEY PRINCIPLES

If any person reasonably suspects that a child, young person or vulnerable adult is being, has been or is likely to be abused, they must take action. To do nothing is not an option.

The actions of those who first handle allegations and concerns are most important. They could dictate the effectiveness of a subsequent enquiry.

Under no circumstances should the alleged abuser be alerted at this stage, either directly or indirectly. Important evidence may be lost.

The aim of the process which follows is to reach a point where the fullest possible information has been gathered. Formal investigations will be carried out by the Police or Social Services. It is only with the benefit of complete information that vulnerable people may be protected through careful assessment of risk, based on fact and professional judgement.

The guiding principles for any person in receipt of information about a concern or an allegation should be:

LISTEN RECORD REFER

Sometimes information will be in the form of observations made by the person recording the allegation or concern.

LISTEN

Where information is given in person, listen and accept what is said seriously. Do not pre-judge, rationalise, dismiss or minimise. Do not make judgemental statements about any person involved.

Be aware that a person's ability to recount his or her concern or allegation will depend on age, culture, nationality and upon any disability which may affect use of language and range of vocabulary. Do not suggest words, but use theirs.

Adopt a listening style which is compassionate, calm and reassuring. If the information given to you shocks, disgusts or distresses you, do not allow these feelings to show. If you do, you may inadvertently dissuade the person from giving any further information.

Do not promise total confidentiality. If this is proposed as a condition of giving information about possible abuse, such confidence must be refused but you may say you will only tell those who need to know to keep the individual safe.

Do not make promises about future events.

Explain what will happen next if possible. Indicate who will be made aware of the information which has been given by them. Leave contact details of yourself and any other appropriate person in case the referrer needs to ask questions later.

An adult who provides information should be encouraged to share their information, where appropriate with the Statutory Authorities. Support should be offered in doing so.

RECORD

Whenever possible and practical, take notes during the conversation. Always ask permission to do this and explain the importance of recording all information. If it is not appropriate, make a written record as soon as possible afterwards and certainly by the end of the day.

The record should be signed and dated by the author. Wherever possible the speaker's own words should be used. It is important to include full details of referrals to Police or Social Services.

All original records, including rough notes, should be passed to the Safeguarding Officer or a member of the Safeguarding Team as soon as possible.

REFER

The overriding principle of referral is as follows: 'If somebody believes that a child, young person or vulnerable adult may be suffering, or may be at risk of suffering significant harm, then s/he should always refer his or her concerns to the local authority social services department. In addition to the social services department, the Police have powers to intervene in these circumstances.' The Safeguarding Team will give advice on how to refer email: lcsbsafeguarding@gmail.com and further advice is available from the safeguarding co-ordinator in the Archdiocese on 0121 230 6240 or safeguarding@rc-birmingham.org

CONCERN OR ALLEGATION

Where a concern exists that a child, young person or vulnerable adult may be being abused, may have been abused or be at risk of abuse, such a concern must initially be treated in the same way as an allegation.

The Safeguarding Officer or a member of the Safeguarding Team will refer the concern/allegation to the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator promptly so that further action may be considered. If a child, young person or vulnerable adult is at immediate risk, a referral must be made to the Statutory Authorities and then the Safeguarding Coordinator(Archdiocese) and the Safeguarding Officer (LCSB) must be informed.

Do not alert the alleged abuser, either directly or indirectly.

Where a referral is made to the Statutory Authorities by a person other than the Safeguarding Coordinator of the Archdiocese or a member of the Safeguarding Team, all information must be passed to the Safeguarding Coordinator/Safeguarding Officer by noon the next working day and followed up in writing.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING

The LCSB has a GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) policy to ensure compliance with the law. Information may need to be shared in order to safeguard a child, young person or vulnerable adult. All information connected with a safeguarding enquiry is confidential within the multi-agency network. No information should be shared with any person who does not need to know for the purposes of protecting children, young people or vulnerable adults and facilitating the conducting of an effective investigation.

Consider:

Does the person **NEED** to know the information?

Does the person need to know **ALL** the information?

Does the person need to know the information **NOW**?

Record what information has been provided and to whom, with reasons.

ROLE OF the LCSB Safeguarding Regulatory and compliance Group WHERE A CONCERN OR ALLEGATION HAS BEEN MADE

The LCSB Safeguarding Team will follow the procedures above whenever they receive information about a concern or allegation.

Safeguarding Team members must not take on the role of support person to a victim or survivor of abuse, to his or her family or to an alleged abuser. The role of support person is independent of the Safeguarding structure.

Further guidance for specific situations is contained within the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) website.

Definitions

Child The term “child” is used to include all children and young people up to the age of 18. Someone who has not yet had their 18th birthday.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:

Protecting children from maltreatment;

Preventing impairment of children’s health and development;

Ensuring that children are growing up with safe and effective care;

Enabling children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully.

Child Protection Is a part of safeguarding and refers to the activities undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or are at risk of suffering Significant Harm.

Significant Harm ‘Harm’ means ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development, including for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another;

‘Development’ means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development;

‘Health’ means physical or mental health

‘Ill-treatment’ includes physical abuse, sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical ie emotional abuse and neglect.

Child Abuse and Neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Vulnerable Adult A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 or over, *‘who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.’* (*‘Who decides’*)
Section 2 ‘No Secrets’, Department of Health and the Home Office (2000).

A person’s level of vulnerability may increase or decrease according to the circumstances they experience at any given time. Vulnerable adults could include people with:

learning or physical disabilities;

a sensory impairment;

developmental or health needs

who are HIV positive;

substance misuse needs;

dementia.

Archdiocese of Birmingham

Things that everyone with a role in the LCSB must know about Safeguarding

Before taking on a role which means that you have significant regular contact with, or take responsibility for children or vulnerable adults you must go through an appointment procedure including a check from the Disclosure and Barring Service.

If you work with children:

There must always be a minimum of two adults present at any activity for children. Although we would encourage young people to help they must do so under the supervision of an adult whilst they are under the age of 18.

If an issue arises:

If you notice something or are told something which disturbs you about a child or a vulnerable adult you must act. In an emergency contact the Police but remember that the Safeguarding Team will always offer advice and support whenever it is needed.

Should you see or be told about an abusive situation please try to keep calm and to listen without asking questions. Never promise to keep things secret but explain that you must pass the information to someone who can help. Make an immediate written record of the facts. Include name of anyone else who was present and give as much information about those involved as you can obtain without asking intrusive questions. Sign, date and keep this original record.

If an issue arises outside office hours please contact the Safeguarding Officer by email lcsbsafeguarding@gmail.com.

Vulnerable Adults or Adults at Risk of Harm

Practical information and guidance

Everyone is vulnerable at some point in their lives but for safeguarding purposes the definition is fairly specific.

A vulnerable adult is defined as a person who: ***“may be in need of services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness: and who may not be able to take care of him or herself, or is unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.”*** (Who Decides, Lord Chancellor’s Department - 1997).

The decision about whether a person meets the criteria outlined above is not ours to make but we do have a responsibility to protect the whole worshipping community from harm. It is, however, very important that individuals who may have difficulties are not excluded from participation in the life of the Church or made to feel that they are different.

Key principles are:

- Those undertaking home visits to people who are ill or disabled must go through the Church’s recruitment procedures.
- Adults with special needs must always be treated as adults. If they have a role in Church they should go through the same checks as any other adult.
- Those who visit people at home must always be mindful of their own safety. Someone else should know where they have gone and how long they expect to be.
- It is always good practice to make sure that there is a clear exit route.
- If the person being visited gives the impression that they are starting to lose their grip on present reality then it is advisable that two people visit together.
- If anything unusual happens or if the person being visited says that they are being taken advantage of in anyway: listen; ask if they would like to speak to someone who may be able to help; reassure them; make a brief factual note and speak to the Safeguarding Team straight away.

Adults who may be at risk of harm could fall into a number of different categories; they may be victims of domestic violence, trafficked and subject to exploitation or causing a problem because they are mentally ill. If you are faced with any situation like this please contact the Safeguarding Team for advice and support.

The LCSB Safeguarding Officer: lcsbsafeguarding@gmail.com
Birmingham Archdiocese Safeguarding Team: 0121 230 6240 [Office hours]

Appendix 3

Internet Safeguarding Guidance

Online platforms and new technologies offer tremendous opportunities to reach, communicate, evangelize and engage with those involved in the Catholic Church. The use of technology and social media platforms has the potential to transform the way in which we can communicate and continue with some forms of ministry at this difficult time. Keeping everyone safe whilst using these platforms is essential, and as it is a new experience for many, it is important to understand how to implement some simple steps that can contribute towards keeping people safe online.

All platforms that bring people together have the potential to present a risk to users, especially children, and adults at risk, or who are otherwise vulnerable. As users of these platforms, we have a responsibility to ensure that our communications are as secure and private as they can be. This general guidance is designed to help the Catholic community across England and Wales safeguard the welfare of any person involved in activities organised in the name of the Catholic Church whilst using online platforms and social media.

Where dioceses, religious congregations and other Catholic organisations have their own policy and procedure in relation to online communication and networking this must be followed. In the absence of a local policy and procedure this good practice guidance can be followed.

General considerations when using online platforms for ministry

- It is recommended that research is undertaken in relation to safety and security concerns for the platform you choose, to enable you to consider any issues and possible alternatives;
- Be aware that different platforms have different restrictions in relation to age so ensure you take account of age restrictions within the terms and conditions of use of your chosen platform;
- Once the platform is selected, it is advisable to set up a custom account in the name of that group, parish or body, accessible to more than one person who can act as 'administrator', using a strong password.
- Ensure that the administrator/host is aware of the settings that will maximise security and that they are confident and competent in using them.
- Communication should always be via an organisational account and organisational equipment. A generic email address or telephone number associated with the group, accessible to more than one person who can act as administrator, maintains appropriate boundaries. The benefits of this are that:
 - communications can be easily reviewed by other leaders or helpers in the event of enquiries;
 - the need for action on any matter can be easily shared and delegated;
 - communications can be picked up in the event of sickness or other absence;
 - all correspondence and data is stored securely in one place.
- It is not appropriate to use personal social media accounts, phone numbers or email addresses to contact participants, without the consent of those legally able to give it;
- Permission for communicating directly with children and young people aged under 16 years via social media must be sought from parents;
- For young people aged 16-18 years and adults who lack capacity to consent, consent must be given by a person who has the legal authority e.g. lasting power of attorney for health and welfare, to make the decision on the person's behalf;

- Communication via social media should not be for any other reason other than the specific ministry for which consent was obtained;
 - For matters that are sensitive or private, online communication should be avoided due to the possibility of misunderstanding and, if used, two adults should be present and where appropriate, parents or carers should be included where to do so would not cause harm to the individual concerned;
 - Information should be circulated to parents and carers about the platform being used, including how to download the application and any key issues they need to be aware of.
 - Clear information should be provided to parents and carers about the purpose of any online activity, the range of people participating e.g. children, adults, mixed, and the names and contact details of those responsible for the activity.
 - Parents and carers should be encouraged to ensure that participation takes place in a place visible to others within the household and not within bedrooms or other closed spaces.
- There should be two adult facilitators during online ministry to children, adults at risk or who are otherwise vulnerable, one of whom must be familiar with safeguarding policies and procedures.

Setting up a meeting

- Set up a registration system to log the details of those who want to attend so that they can be sent a private message, securely by email or other closed group correspondence, with a randomly generated link and the password. Ensure that this is copied to parents and carers as well;
- If using meeting ID's instead of links to host public events ensure you use the randomly generated ID at the time of scheduling the meeting, rather than your personal meeting ID which is given when you create an account with the chosen platform;
- Ensure that your joining instructions provide information on the 'rules of engagement' which include:
 - when and how participants can speak/contribute;
 - how they should present themselves on screen (ie dressed appropriately, backgrounds);
 - how to interact with others
 - how and when participants can leave the meeting;
 - what to do in respect of rejoining if internet connections fail;
 - that communication must be respectful and individuals must take personal responsibility to ensure that their content is appropriate to those participating e.g. language, jokes, opinions;
 - how to report anything of concern or anything that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Obtain in advance any agreement to audio or visual recording of the meeting. For children or individuals who lack capacity, consent must be obtained from the person legally able to provide this. Those giving consent must be informed of the purpose the recording will be used for and for how long it will be retained. If images are being captured, this must be in line with GDPR (2016)¹;

¹ Whenever a person's image is captured, be it by camera, video, web camera, mobile phone, or CCTV, and that person can be identified, the image is likely to be considered personal data. This means that the image must be processed in line with the data protection principles. Processing means anything that is done to the image for example recording it, using it or sharing it. For the Church to use images of people that enable those people to be identified, they need a lawful basis

- If material is going to be used for a different purpose than the original intention, the new purpose must be explained and consent obtained;

Conducting the meeting

- Set up a 'waiting room' so that the meeting host chooses when to admit people and can restrict entry to only those who are invited;
- Lock the meeting once it has started;
- Where possible position yourself in front of a neutral background;
- Remind participants of the agreed rules of engagement;
- Mute attendees and ask them to hold their hand up if they want to speak so that you can unmute them;
- Keep sharing screens restricted to the host and limit chat to the host only if necessary to avoid separate conversations taking place during the session;
- If you have consent to share screen-shots during the meeting, ensure that the meeting ID is not visible to an external audience;
- Do not post or request personal information that is unrelated to the purpose of the meeting e.g. private email addresses, birthday, phone numbers;
- Never accept or open files, or reply to any instant messages or contacts, phone calls, video call or screen-sharing request from someone that you do not know or have not invited into the online meeting;
- Ensure any incident involving inappropriate behaviour is recorded and responded to in line with policies and procedures;
- When meetings close, the platform should be closed to all. Nobody, other than the meeting facilitators should be asked to remain on-line for a one-to-one conversation without others being present.

For more information about safer electronic communication see

<https://www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk>

Useful links and resources for internet safety

The UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) is a voluntary organisation chaired by Ministers from the Department for Education and the Home Office. UKCCIS brings together over 180 organisations and individuals from government, industry, law enforcement, academia, charities and parenting groups. Some of the organisations UKCCIS works with include: Cisco, Apple, Sony, Research in Motion, the four largest internet service providers, Facebook and Microsoft.

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) has numerous resources for parents and carers and children using the internet; there are several video tutorials on the THINKUKNOW site which is part of CEOP.

Lucy Faithful Foundation is a registered child protection charity which works to prevent child sexual abuse. It runs 'Stop It Now!' and 'Parents Protect'.

Stop It Now! reaches out to adults concerned about their own behaviour towards children, or that of someone they know, as well as professionals, survivors and protective adults. Stop It Now! runs a Freephone confidential helpline.

'Parents Protect' is a site to help parents, carers and other protective adults with information and advice to help them prevent child sexual abuse.

Catholic Youth Work has detailed guidelines on the use of social networking sites.

Internet Matters gives advice on parental controls and is a great way of preventing children accessing unsuitable content online.

Childnet International is a multi-lingual resource site which has a guide on protecting your privacy on 'Facebook'.

The NSPCC has useful resources for keeping children safe online including sections on Cyberbullying and Sexting. Reporting and Monitoring.

Useful information about privacy settings for online platforms

Zoom - <https://zoom.us/security>

Microsoft Teams - <https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/security>

Skype - <https://support.skype.com/en/skype/all/privacy-security/privacy-settings/>