

Lay Community of St. Benedict:

01. Safeguarding

Review cycle: 1 year	Last reviewed: March 2024	Next review: March 2025
Owner: Safeguarding Officer		

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Section 1: Contact Information

The Lay Community of Saint Benedict (LCSB) is an independent Christian, ecumenical community of lay and ordained members from the UK and beyond; dedicated to the Gospel and the spirituality of Saint Benedict. Regional meetings and gatherings ensure members have opportunities to meet face to face at local groups, Easter and Summer Celebrations and more regularly, the life of the community is underpinned by daily offices held online in zoom chapels.

The LCSB's registered address is: 2 Egdean Walk, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3UQ

General enquiries can be directed to: laybeneditines@gmail.com

Leader: Adam Simon

Leader Contact Email: abcej.simon@gmail.com

Safeguarding Officer: Emily Willetts

Safeguarding Contact: lbsbsafeguarding@gmail.com

Guest Master: Richard and Christine Watts

Registered Charity Number: 1100638

The Lay Community of Saint Benedict is incorporated in England and Wales as a company limited by guarantee number 04838564.

Accountability

The Council and Trustees of the LCSB are committed to the standards and policies set by the Charity Thirtyone:eight of which we hold full membership. Thirtyone:eight are the providers of all our advice and training on all aspects of safeguarding.

The Safeguarding and Compliance Group

The Safeguarding and Compliance group appointed by the Board of Trustees of the LCSB are responsible for providing authoritative and objective advice to the Leader, Council, or others on Safeguarding as well as Data Protection, and other statutory, regulatory and legal issues. This group is chaired by a Trustee and includes the Safeguarding Officer, the Data Protection Officer, a legal expert, and the Guest Master (responsible for much of the LCSB's online hosting). The Safeguarding Officer leads on safeguarding matters. It is the responsibility of the Leader, Council or others as appropriate to implement the guidance of this group.

~~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.~~

~~Chair (Trustee): Hugh Comerford
Safeguarding Officer: Emily Willetts
Data Protection Officer: Peter Agius
Deputy: Katharine McDevitt
Legal advisor: Andrew Campbell~~

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¹ This paragraph is subject to review

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 set out in this policy 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.

Section 2: Introduction and commitment to safeguarding

Good governance helps an organisation prevent abuse and means it can respond quickly and with integrity when concerns arise. Central to this is the Board of Trustees and the Lay Community of Saint Benedict Council. The Board of Trustees is appointed to have independent authority and legal responsibility for the community and has a critical role in decision making and compliance as well as setting the values, standards and behaviours of the organisation. Hugh Comerford is the designated Safeguarding Trustee for the LCSB and sits on the Safeguarding and Compliance Group.

The standards and behaviours may be referred to as the culture of the organisation or “the way we do things around here”. Culture can be shaped in both negative and positive ways. “The culture of a charity goes beyond mere compliance with legal and regulatory demands. Charity governance is most effective when it provides assurances not just that legal requirements are met, but that the behaviour of people working for the charity, and those who come into contact with it, is proper and ethical. Culture, alongside good governance, can be pivotal to whether a charity achieves its stated object” (ICSA The Governance Institute, 2017).

Positions of Trust

All adults working with children, young people and adults at risk of harm are in a position of trust. All those in positions of trust need to understand the power this can give them over those they care for and the responsibility they have because of this relationship.

It is vital that all members ensure they do not, even unknowingly, use their position of power and authority inappropriately. They should always maintain professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which could be misinterpreted.

As of April 2022 it is illegal (England and Wales)(Northern Ireland) for those in Positions of Trust in a faith setting to engage in sexual activity with a 16 or 17 year old under their care or supervision.

The following Safeguarding Policy and Statement aims to not only meet the requirements of ensuring a safe environment for those accessing activities in the Lay Community of Saint Benedict but to also build an open culture where:

- those who lead do so by example,
- the commitment to the safeguarding of all is clear and tangible
- those who work or volunteer are safely recruited and trained for their roles
- there are accountability structures
- there are clear codes of conduct
- the values of the community are embedded in its day to day actions and behaviours of its people
- there is open communication

Our commitment

The Lay Community of St Benedict is committed to the Safeguarding Policies of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, to protect children, young people and adults from any form of abuse or maltreatment and to promote a safe environment for them. We acknowledge that children, young people and adults can be the victims of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and neglect. We accept the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant of Human Rights, which states that everyone is entitled to “all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”. We also concur with the Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that children should be able to develop their full potential, free from hunger and want, neglect and abuse. They have a right to be protected from “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s), or any other person who has care of the child.” Our 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.

As Trustees and Council (henceforth known as Leadership), we have therefore adopted the procedures set out in this safeguarding policy in accordance with statutory guidance. We are committed to build constructive links with statutory and voluntary agencies involved in safeguarding.

Section 3 Prevention

Understanding abuse and neglect

Defining child abuse or abuse against an adult is a difficult and complex issue. A person may abuse by inflicting harm or failing to prevent harm. Children and adults in need of protection may be abused within a family, an institution or a community setting. Very often the abuser is known or in a trusted relationship with the child or adult.

To safeguard those in our places of worship and organisations we adhere to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and have as our starting point as a definition of abuse, Article 19 states:

- 1. Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.*
- 2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.*

Also for adults the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights with particular reference to Article 5:

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Detailed definitions, and signs and indicators of abuse, as well as how to respond to a disclosure of abuse, are included here in our policy. APPENDIX 2.

Safer recruitment for all people working with children and adults at risk

This guidance applies to all people with responsibility working with children or adults at risk, whether employed directly, or engaged as agency workers, volunteers, contractors etc.

The Leadership will ensure all such workers will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with government guidance on safe recruitment. This includes ensuring that:

- There is a written job description / person specification for the post
- There is a completed application form
- Those considered have been interviewed
- Safeguarding has been discussed at interview
- Written references have been obtained, and followed up where appropriate
- A self-declaration form and disclosure and barring check (DBS) has been completed where necessary (we will comply with Code of Practice requirements concerning the fair treatment of applicants and the handling of information)
- Qualifications where relevant have been verified
- A suitable training programme is provided for the successful applicant
- The applicant has completed a probationary period
- The applicant has been given a copy of the organisation's safeguarding policy and knows how to report concerns

Safeguarding training

The Leadership is committed to on-going safeguarding training and development opportunities for all workers, developing a culture of awareness of safeguarding issues to help protect everyone. All those who work or volunteer with us who work with children and adults at risk will receive appropriate induction training and undertake recognised safeguarding training on a regular basis.

The Leadership will also ensure that children and adults with care and support needs are provided with information on where to get help and advice in relation to abuse, discrimination, bullying or any other matter where they have a concern.

Practice Guidelines

As a community organisation whose work includes the formation and nurturing of children, young people and adults with care and support needs, we wish to operate and promote good working practice. This will enable our workers to run activities safely, develop good relationships and minimise the risk of false or unfounded accusations.

We have specific good practice guidelines for every activity, (including online activities) we are involved in and these are attached or in the appendices.

For some activities you will need specific forms, e.g. consent forms, risk assessments etc. The relevant forms can be found in appendix 7.

Management of Employees and Voluntary Leaders working with children and adults at risk– Codes of Conduct

As a Leadership we are committed to supporting all who work in a paid or voluntary capacity and ensuring they receive support and supervision. They have all been issued with a code of conduct towards children, young people and adults with care and support needs (Appendix 3), and will be given clear expectations about what is expected of them both within their job role and out. They will also receive further training as necessary.

Section 4: Partnership working

The diversity of organisations and settings means there can be great variation in practice when it comes to safeguarding children, young people and adults. This can be because of cultural tradition, belief and religious practice or understanding, for example, of what constitutes abuse.

In the event of partnership working, we would communicate our guidelines with regards to our expectations of those with whom we would work, whether in the UK or not. We would discuss with all partners our safeguarding expectations and have a partnership agreement for safeguarding.

We believe good communication is essential in promoting safeguarding, both to those we wish to protect, to everyone involved in working with children and adults and to all those with whom we may work in partnership with in the future. This safeguarding policy is just one means of promoting safeguarding.

Section 5: Responding to allegations of abuse

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

LISTEN

RECORD

REFER

LISTEN

Where a disclosure is made in person, listen and accept what is said seriously. Do not prejudge, 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 and appropriate support offered.

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 adult at risk of harm 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.' Under no circumstances should a volunteer or worker carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse. Follow procedures as below:

The employee, volunteer or other person should report concerns as soon as possible to:

Name: Emily Willetts (hereafter the "Safeguarding Officer")

Email: lcsbsafeguarding@gmail.com

The above is nominated by the Leadership to act on their behalf in dealing with the allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse, including referring the matter on to the statutory authorities.

In the absence of the Safeguarding Officer or, if the suspicions in any way involve the Safeguarding Officer, then the report should be made to:

Name: Katharine McDevitt (hereafter the "Deputy")

Email: lcsbsafeguardingdeputy@gmail.com

If the suspicions implicate both the Safeguarding Officer and the Deputy, then the report should be made in the first instance to:

thirtyone:eight PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ.

Tel: 0303 003 1111. Option 2

Alternatively contact Social Services or the police.

The Safeguarding Officer should contact the appropriate agency or they may first ring the thirtyone:eight helpline for advice. They should then contact social services in the area the child or adult lives. It is important that this action is taken as soon as possible, ideally within 24 hours.

The Safeguarding Officer may need to inform others depending on the circumstances and/or nature of the concern including; the Chair or trustee responsible for safeguarding who may need to liaise with the insurance company or the charity commission to report a serious incident; designated officer or LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) if the allegation concerns a worker or volunteer working with someone under 18.

Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above. A written record of the concerns should be made in accordance with these procedures and kept in a secure place.

Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the Safeguarding Officer, the absence of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or Deputy should not delay referral to Social Services, the Police or taking advice from Thirtyone:eight.

The Leadership will support the Safeguarding Officer/Deputy in their role and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need to know basis.

It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make a direct referral to the safeguarding agencies or seek advice from Thirtyone:eight, although the Leadership hope that members of the LCSB will use this procedure. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the Safeguarding Officer/Deputy has not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the Safeguarding Officer(s) as to the appropriateness of a referral they are free to contact an outside agency directly. By making this statement, the Leadership intends to demonstrate its commitment to effective safeguarding and the protection of all those who are vulnerable.

The role of the Safeguarding Officer/Deputy is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass this information on to statutory agencies who have a legal duty to investigate.

Detailed procedures where there is a concern about a child:

Allegations of physical injury, neglect or emotional abuse.

If a child has a physical injury, a symptom of neglect or where there are concerns about emotional abuse, the Safeguarding Officer/Deputy will:

Contact Children's Social Services (or Thirtyone:eight) for advice in cases of deliberate injury, if concerned about a child's safety or if a child is afraid to return home.

Not tell the parents or carers unless advised to do so, having contacted Children's Social Services.

Seek medical help if needed urgently, informing the doctor of any suspicions.

For lesser concerns, (e.g. poor parenting), encourage parent/carer to seek help, but not if this places the child at risk of significant harm.

Where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, offer to accompany them. In cases of real concern, if they still fail to act, contact Children's Social Services directly for advice.

Seek and follow advice given by Thirtyone:eight (who will confirm their advice in writing) if unsure whether or not to refer a case to Children's Social Services.

Allegations of sexual abuse

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the Safeguarding Officer/Deputy will:

Contact the Children's Social Services Department Duty Social Worker for children and families or Police Child Protection Team directly. They will NOT speak to the parent/carer or anyone else.

Seek and follow the advice given by Thirtyone:eight if for any reason they are unsure whether or not to contact Children's Social Services/Police. Thirtyone:eight will confirm its advice in writing for future reference.

Detailed procedures where there is a concern that an adult needs protection:

Suspensions or allegations of abuse or harm including; physical, sexual, organisational, financial, discriminatory, neglect, self-neglect, forced marriage, modern slavery, domestic abuse.

If there is concern about any of the above, Safeguarding Officer/Deputy will:

Contact the Adult Social Care Team who have responsibility under the Care Act 2014 to investigate allegations of abuse. Alternatively Thirtyone:eight can be contacted for advice.

If the adult is in immediate danger or has sustained a serious injury contact the Emergency Services, informing them of any suspicions.

If there is a concern regarding spiritual abuse, the Officer will:

Identify support services for the victim i.e., counselling or other pastoral support

Contact Thirtyone:eight and in discussion with them will consider appropriate action with regards to the scale of the concern.

Allegations of abuse against a person who works with children/young people

If an accusation is made against an employee or volunteer whilst following the procedure outlined above, the Safeguarding Officer, in accordance with Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures will:

Liaise with Children's Social Services regarding the suspension of the employee or volunteer

Make a referral to a designated officer formerly called a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) whose function is to handle all allegations against adults who work with children and young people whether in a paid or voluntary capacity.

Make a referral to Disclosure and Barring Service for consideration of the person being placed on the barred list for working with children or adults with additional care and support needs. This decision should be informed by the LADO if they are involved.

Allegations of abuse against a person who works with adults with care and support needs

The Safeguarding Officer will:

- Liaise with Adult Social Services in regards the suspension of the worker
- Make a referral to the DBS following the advice of Adult Social Services

The Care Act places the duty upon Adult Services to investigate situations of harm to adults with care and support needs. This may result in a range of options including action against the person or organisation causing the harm, increasing the support for the carers or no further action if the 'victim' chooses for no further action and they have the capacity to communicate their decision. However, this is a decision for Adult Services to decide not the LCSB.

Section 6 Pastoral Care

Supporting those affected by abuse

The Lay Community of Saint Benedict is committed to offering pastoral care, working with statutory agencies as appropriate, and support to all those who have been affected by abuse who have contact with or are part of the Lay Community of Saint Benedict.

Working with offenders and those who may pose a risk

When someone attending an activity under the banner of the Lay Community of Saint Benedict is known to have abused children, is under investigation, or is known to be a risk to adults with care and support needs; the Leadership will supervise the individual concerned and offer pastoral care, but in its safeguarding commitment to the protection of children and adults with care and support needs, set boundaries for that person, which they will be expected to keep. These boundaries will be based on a risk assessment and through consultation with appropriate parties.

Adoption of the policy

This policy was agreed by the leadership and will be reviewed annually on:

Signed by:

Position:

Signed by:

Position

Date:

A copy of this policy is also held within the members only section of the LCSB website.

APPENDIX 1:

Safeguarding statement to be displayed on website

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS POLICY STATEMENT

LAY COMMUNITY OF SAINT BENEDICT

The following statement was agreed by the Board of Trustees and Council on:

- The Lay Community of Saint Benedict is committed to the safeguarding of children and adults with care and support needs and ensuring their well-being.

We recognise that we all have a responsibility to help prevent harm or abuse to children and adults with care and support needs in all their recognised forms.

- We recognise the personal dignity and rights of adults and children and will ensure all our policies and procedures will reflect this.
- We believe all people should enjoy and have access to every aspect of the life of The Lay Community of Saint Benedict subject to legal obligations such as safety and safeguarding which must be maintained.
- We undertake to exercise proper care in the appointment and selection of those who will work with children and adults with care and support needs.
- We believe every child and adult should be valued, safe and happy. We want to make sure that all those we have contact with know this and are empowered to tell us if they are experiencing significant harm.

We are committed to:

- Following statutory denominational and specialist guidelines in relation to safeguarding children and adults and will ensure that as an organisation all employees, contractors and volunteers with responsibility will work within the agreed procedure of our safeguarding policy.
- Implementing the requirements of all relevant legislation including, but not limited to; Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005, Equality Act 2010 and referring concerns about adults with care and support needs to the local authority under the Care Act 2014.
- Supporting, resourcing and training those who undertake this work.
- Ensuring that we are keeping up to date with national and local developments relating to safeguarding.
- Ensuring that everyone agrees to abide by these recommendations and the guidelines established by this place of worship/organisation.
- Supporting all in the Lay Community of Saint Benedict affected by abuse.

We recognise:

- Children’s Social Services has the lead responsibility for investigating all allegations or suspicions of abuse where there are concerns about a child. Adult Social Care has the lead responsibility for investigating all allegations or suspicions of abuse where there are concerns about an adult with care and support needs.
- Where an allegation suggests that a criminal offence may have been committed then the police should be contacted as a matter of urgency.
- Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.

We will review this statement and our policy annually.

If you have any concerns for a child or adult, then contact one of the following who have been approved as safeguarding officers for this place of worship/organisation via the following email:

lcsbsafeguarding@gmail.com

Emily Willetts: Safeguarding Officer

Katharine McDevitt: Deputy Safeguarding Officer

A copy of this statement can be seen on The Lay Community of Saint Benedict’s website homepage.

Signed by leadership

Signed _____

Date _____

APPENDIX 2

Definitions of abuse together with signs and indicators

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is the deliberate use of physical force by one person against another to cause harm. It may result in physical harm or injury to the other person or it may not, and may be a one-off act of ongoing. Physical abuse can include:

- Hitting, slapping, biting or pinching.
- Rough handling, shaking, pushing or throwing.
- Burning or scalding. Drowning, or suffocating
- Poisoning, misuse of medication or the denial of treatment.
- Intentional exposure to extreme heat or cold, or force feeding.
- Misuse or illegal restraint, inappropriate physical punishment, or depriving someone of their liberty.

Physical harm may also be caused when a child's Parent/Carer fakes the symptoms of, or deliberately causes illness or ill health in a child. Injuries caused by accidents such as trips and falls are not uncommon, especially in children, but these usually occur on bony or prominent areas such as knees, shins and elbows. Abusive injuries tend to involve softer areas that are harder to damage accidentally e.g. upper arms, forearms, chest, back, abdomen and thighs.

Possible signs and indicators:

- Visible injuries and bruising.
- Unexplained cuts, marks or scars.
- Injuries that don't match the explanation given.
- Getting injured often
- Unexplained falls
- Subdued or changed behaviour
- Changes in weight, being excessively under or overweight or malnourished.
- Failing to get medical treatment or changing Doctors often.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse (or psychological abuse) involves harming a person emotionally and includes persistent emotional ill-treatment that causes severe and long-lasting adverse effects on a person's emotional development. Some level of emotional abuse is present in all types of abuse and ill treatment of one person by another, but it can also occur on its own. Emotional abuse can include:

- Consistently telling someone that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate.
- Using intimidation, coercion, and harassment.
- Having inappropriate expectations for a person's age or development.
- Seeing or hearing another person being mistreated, such as in domestic abuse.
- Not giving someone opportunity to express their views, or to take part in normal social interaction.

- Bullying, including online bullying.
- Causing someone to frequently feel frightened or in danger.

Possible signs and indicators:

Low self-esteem, attachment issues, depression, self-harm, and eating disorders.

Signs of distress, tearfulness or anger.

Reluctance to be alone with a particular person.

Neglect

Neglect (or acts of omission) is the failure to meet a person's basic physical or emotional needs which is likely to have a serious negative impact on their health or development. It happens when a person deliberately withholds, or fails to provide an appropriate level of care and support which is needed by another person. It can involve a Parent/Carer and can also happen during pregnancy e.g. as a result of maternal substance abuse. Neglect may happen because of a lack of knowledge or awareness, or through a failure to take reasonable action whether deliberate or not. In its extreme form, neglect can be a significant risk as it can lead to serious long-term effects and even be life-threatening. Neglect is the most common form of child abuse in the UK. Neglect can include:

- Not providing adequate food, clothing, or assistance with personal hygiene.
- Not providing adequate shelter and heating.
- Failing to protect someone from harm or danger.
- Not ensuring appropriate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
- Failing to give prescribed medication or provide access to appropriate health care or treatment.
- Failing to provide access to educational services.
- Ignoring a person's basic emotional needs.
- Failing to take action when a person is taking unnecessary risk (especially when the person lacks capacity to properly assess risk).

Possible signs and indicators:

- Poor appearance or hygiene e.g. being smelly or dirty
- Living in an unsuitable home environment e.g. having no heating
- Inappropriate or inadequate clothing
- Signs of malnutrition or not being given enough food
- Having frequent and untreated medical issues or an accumulation of untaken medication
- Body issues such as sores, skin complaints, poor muscle tone or prominent joints.
- Poor language or social skills
- Being left alone for a long time
- Being withdrawn, depressed or anxious
- Tiredness or finding it hard to concentrate or take part in activities
- Self-soothing behaviours such as drug or alcohol misuse and self-harm.
- Poor school attendance or performance

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse (or Sexual violence) is any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature which is unwanted or takes place without consent or understanding. The abuse may involve physical contact and touching or non-contact activities. Sexual abuse is found across all sections of society, irrelevant of gender, age, ability, religion, race, ethnicity, personal circumstances, financial background or sexual orientation. It can be perpetrated by family or non-family members, women, men and other children.

Children and young people

The sexual abuse of children or young people - also called Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) - is involving a child or young person in an activity for the sexual gratification or gain of another person, whether or not it is claimed they have consented or agreed. Sexual abuse of a child can include:

- Forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts, whether they are aware of what is happening or not.
- Including children in looking at adult sexual content or activities, or having their photo taken or being filmed for the production of indecent images.
- Using sexual language towards a child or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- Grooming a child in preparation for abuse, either in person or online.

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse where a child is sexually exploited for money, power or status. Sexual abuse may awaken premature sexual feelings in a child that they find hard to deal with and feel guilty about and they may need reassurance that they are not to blame for the abuse. Penetrative sex with a child under 13 years by an adult or another child is classed as rape. One of the ongoing effects of childhood sexual abuse may be that adult survivors experience difficulties forming meaningful relationships with other adults.

Sexual abuse of Adults

The sexual abuse of adults involves sexual acts to which the person has not consented or has been pressured into consenting to. Sexual abuse of a adults can include:

- Penetrative or non-penetrative sexual acts, whether they aware of what is happening or not eg. sexual assault, oral sex, rape, attempted rape, and date rape.
- Indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, groping, sexual teasing or innuendo,
- Being made to look at or be involved in the production of sexually abusive material, or being made to watch sexual activities.
- Stalking and grooming.

Possible signs and indicators:

- Physical injuries and bruising, particularly to the thighs, buttocks, upper arms and neck.
- Bleeding, pain or itching in the genital area or when walking or sitting.
- Sexually transmitted diseases or infections.
- Pregnancy in a woman who is unable to consent to sex.
- Uncharacteristic or age-inappropriate use of sexual language or significant changes in sexual behaviour or attitude.
- Self-harming.
- Poor concentration, withdrawal, sleep disturbance.
- Excessive fear/apprehension of, or withdrawal from, relationships or being alone with a particular person.

Further definitions for children and adults together with signs and indicators

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse (or Domestic Violence) is any incident, or pattern of incidents, of controlling coercive or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse by one adult against another where they are or have been intimate partners or family members.

It can include violence by a son, daughter, mother, father, husband, wife, life-partner, sibling, grandparent or by an extended family member, whether they are directly related, in-laws or step-family. It happens across all sections of society, regardless of gender, age, ability, religion, race, ethnicity, financial background or sexual orientation.

Both men and women can be victims, although a greater number of women experience domestic abuse and are more likely to be seriously injured or killed because of it. Children and Young People can suffer this form of abuse and are considered victims if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse and they are related to the victim or the offender. It is usually frequent and persistent, can happen inside and outside the home, and can continue even after a relationship has ended.

Coercive control

Coercive control is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse used to harm, punish, or frighten another person. It is designed to make a person subordinate or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting them and their resources, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape, and regulating their everyday behaviour. Domestic abuse can include:

- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Financial abuse
- Forced marriage
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Honour crimes

Possible signs and indicators:

Low self-esteem, attachment issues, depression, self-harm, and eating disorders.

Signs of distress, tearfulness or anger.

Reluctance to be alone with a particular person.

Visible injuries and bruising.

Injuries that don't match the explanation given.

Unexplained falls.

Subdued or changed behaviour.

Changes in weight, being excessively under or overweight or malnourished.

Signs of coercive control.

Feeling that the abuse is their fault when it is not.

Isolation – not seeing friends and family.

Limited access to money.

Financial abuse

Financial abuse (or Material abuse) is the attempted or actual misappropriation or misuse of a person's money, property, benefits, or other assets, by means of intimidation, coercion, deception, or other ways to which the person does not or can not consent to. Financial abuse includes having money or other property stolen, being defrauded or put under pressure in relation to money or other property, and having money or other property misused. Financial abuse can include:

- Theft, burglary, or fraud (including internet scamming).
- Exploitation and embezzlement.
- Coercion or being put under pressure concerning a person's finances (including wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions).
- Misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- Withholding pension or other benefits.

Possible signs and indicators:

- Unusual financial activity such as making an unexpected change to a will, a sudden sale or transfer of a property, or unusual activity in a bank account.
- Sudden inclusion of additional names on a bank account or where a signature does not resemble the person's normal signature.
- Reluctance or anxiety by a person when discussing their finances.
- A substantial gift to a carer or other third party.
- A sudden interest by a relative or other third party in the welfare of the person.
- Bills remaining unpaid.
- Complaints that personal property is missing.
- Signs of coercive control or neglect.

Self-neglect

Self-neglect is when an adult lives in a way that puts their own health, safety or well-being at risk. It is an extreme lack of self-care that is often related to deteriorating health and ability in older age, poor mental health, or other issues such as addictions, however not everyone who self-neglects needs to be safeguarded. Incidents of abuse may be one-off or multiple, and affect one person or more. People who self-neglect will often decline help from others. There are limitations to what help can be offered if the adult has the mental capacity to make their own decisions about how they live, even if they may suffer significant harm or death as a result of their own action or inaction. Any action taken should seek to minimise any risks while respecting the person's choices, trying to engage with the person to offer as much support as possible without causing distress. It is important that all efforts to engage with and support the person are clearly recorded. Self-neglect can include:

- Neglecting to care for personal hygiene, health or surroundings to the extent that it threatens personal health and safety.
- Inability to avoid self-harm
- Failure to seek help or access services to meet health and social care needs
- Inability or unwillingness to manage one's personal affairs
- Behaviours such as hoarding.

Possible signs and indicators:

- Very poor personal hygiene.
- Unkempt appearance.
- Lack of essential food, clothing or shelter.
- Malnutrition and/or dehydration.
- Living in squalid or unsanitary conditions.
- Neglecting household maintenance.
- Hoarding.
- Collecting a large number of animals in inappropriate conditions.
- Non-compliance with health or care services.
- Inability or unwillingness to take medication or treat illness or injury.

Modern slavery

Modern slavery (or Human Trafficking) is the recruitment, movement, and holding of a person by improper means, such as force, threat or deception, for the purposes of exploitation or abuse.

Victims of human trafficking can be male or female, children or adults, and may come from migrant or indigenous communities. Modern slavery is different from illegal immigration as people who are trafficked are tricked, coerced, lured or forced by criminals to work for them or others in their criminal networks around the world. People are forced into and held by threats of violence and intimidation against them or their family, fear, debt bondage, isolation and the removal of identification or travel documents, or imprisonment and torture. Children living in the UK can also be targeted and trafficked internally. Modern slavery can include:

- Forced labour
- Domestic servitude
- Sexual exploitation such as prostitution and pornography
- Bonded labour (forcing someone to pay a debt that can't be paid).
- Criminal activity
- Private fostering
- Forced marriage

Possible signs and indicators:

- Signs of physical abuse or emotional abuse
- Signs of neglect
- Isolation from the community
- Seeming under the control or influence of others
- Lack of personal effects or identification documents
- Avoidance of eye contact, appearing frightened or hesitant to talk to strangers
- Fear of law enforcers

Discriminatory abuse

Discriminatory abuse is when a person is treated unfairly, bullied, or abused because of a particular characteristic. It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

These are called protected characteristics. Discriminatory abuse links to other forms of abuse and may have similar effects e.g. Physical abuse motivated by racism would be classified as Discriminatory abuse. Discriminatory abuse can include:

- Unequal treatment
- Verbal abuse, derogatory remarks or inappropriate use of language related to a protected characteristic
- Physical abuse and emotional abuse
- Denying access to communication aids, not allowing access to an interpreter, signer or lip-reader
- Harassment or deliberate exclusion on the grounds of a protected characteristic
- Denying basic rights to healthcare, education, employment and criminal justice relating to a protected characteristic
- Substandard service provision relating to a protected characteristic
- Hate crime

Hate crime is any incident which constitutes a criminal offence perceived by the victim or any other person as being motivated by prejudice, discrimination or hate towards a person's actual or perceived race, religious belief, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion or gender identity.

Possible signs and indicators:

- Low self-esteem, attachment issues, depression, self-harm, and eating disorders.
- Signs of distress, tearfulness, anger or anxiety
- The person appears withdrawn and isolated
- The support on offer does not take account of the person's individual needs in terms of a protected characteristic

Organisational abuse

Organisational abuse (or Institutional abuse) is when a person is abused or mistreated within an institution such as a care home or hospital, or by an organisation providing care in the person's own home. It can include one-off incidents or long-term mistreatment, and can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of inadequate resources, structures, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

The abuse may happen because of a culture that denies or restricts privacy, dignity, choice and independence, and involves the collective failure of a service provider or an organisation to provide safe and appropriate services, and to ensure that the necessary preventative and protective measures are in place. Organisational abuse can include:

- A run-down or overcrowded environment
- Insufficient staff or high staff turnover resulting in poor quality care
- Abusive and disrespectful attitudes towards people using the service
- Not offering choice or promoting independence.

Possible signs and indicators:

- Signs of neglect
- Inadequate staffing levels
- Poor standards of care
- Lack of adequate procedures
- Absence of visitors
- Few social, recreational and educational activities
- Unnecessary exposure during bathing or using the toilet
- Lack of management overview and support
- Signs of physical abuse or emotional abuse

Spiritual Abuse

Spiritual abuse is coercion and control of a person by another in a spiritual context.

The victim experiences the abuse as a deeply emotional personal attack.

This abuse 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

Linked with emotional abuse, spiritual abuse could be defined as an abuse of power, often done in the name of God or religion, which involves manipulating or coercing someone into thinking, saying or doing things without respecting their right to choose for themselves.

Some indicators of spiritual abuse might be a leader who is intimidating and imposes his/her will on other people, perhaps threatening dire consequences or the wrath of God if disobeyed.

The leader may say that God has revealed certain things to them and so they know what is right. Those under their leadership are fearful to challenge or disagree, believing they will lose the leader's (or God's) acceptance and approval.

APPENDIX 3

Lay Community of Saint Benedict Code of Conduct

General Guidance and Code of Conduct

All members of LCSB and anyone working with the community 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 adults at risk of harm 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 adults at risk of harm 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 adults at risk of harm i.e. maintain appropriate boundaries.

LCSB members and anyone working with the community MUST NOT:

- Engage in inappropriate behaviour or contact with children, young people or adults at risk of harm – 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.

APPENDIX 4

Organisation of Community events including children, young people and adults at risk

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 thorough risk assessment 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 **LCSB 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 a Safeguarding Officer and where necessary discuss the detail with a 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.

APPENDIX 5
Intercessory prayer policy

Lay Community of St. Benedict:
08. Office Prayer Policy

Review cycle: 1 year	Last reviewed: Feb 2023	Next review: Feb 2024
Owner	Guestmaster	

The opportunity to pray together using Zoom is a precious gift to the community. It allows us as a community to follow a regular cycle of daily prayer and it gives individual participants a chance to take part in some or all of that prayer pattern according to their circumstances.

St Benedict in his Rule lays down guidance as to how that prayer should be conducted and also acknowledges that problems can arise when individual monks fail to follow the norms set down by the Rule and the abbot. The Lay Community of St Benedict recognises that it too has a particular way in which it prays and that sometimes individuals can inadvertently step outside of the boundaries set.

The Lay Community of St Benedict holds to principles of welcome and toleration for all those who attend; and when the community comes together to prayer, it does so in awareness of three points.

- We need to be sensitive to others. Those who come together are a diverse group of individuals. They come from different Christian denominations with a variety of doctrinal beliefs and prayer traditions. They have a variety of political beliefs and have different economic and social priorities. They are of different ages and different backgrounds. The majority are likely to be Members of the community but there will also be Seekers, Friends and those who have no formal ties with the LCSB. Sensitivity to this diversity is therefore needed at all times by participants in prayer. It is not acceptable for those with strongly-held views of one persuasion to insist on a right to pray for their cause, or to pray in a particular way, regardless of the discomfort or offence caused to other participants.
- We need to create a safe space in which prayer can take place. Safeguarding is therefore essential in what we do. For example, we avoid behaviours where people feel pressurised into revealing information which they would prefer to keep private. We need to be mindful that when we use a medium such as Zoom, we are using a social media platform which is in the public arena and a virtual, not a private, space. We, therefore, have a duty to know who is in the Zoom room and retain the right to exclude those unknown to the community from community prayer and meetings.
- In addition to the duty we owe in complying with Data Protection legislation, it is the responsibility of everyone to show respect for people's private lives. This means that

we should not share information in prayer, or outside of the formal prayer time as we gather and leave, about others who can be identified unless we have their permission to do so.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Statement on Toleration and Mutual Respect policy; the Social Media Use Policy and the LCSB Safeguarding Policy.

Specific Guidance on intercessory prayer is set out in the Appendix.

Before and after prayer time at Office

Welcoming newcomers and those from all traditions is a key part of all that we do in Office. As we gather before and leave after praying the Office, the same considerations apply. We need to be sensitive to others, and be mindful of safeguarding and comply with data protection requirements. In particular, we should not:

- monopolise the conversation
- dominate the room by talking loudly and at length
- place undue pressure on another participant into revealing information about themselves
- ask for names, addresses, telephone numbers or any private information to be read out in front of the whole group
- belittle another participant or their views.

What is acceptable in conversations held in private may not be acceptable in conversations held in the public space of LCSB Zoom meetings. Understanding that difference is key to providing a safe space in which we can come together and pray. We need also to be aware that not everyone in the room is an LCSB Member or knows the other participants.

Formal Responsibilities and Required Actions

The LCSB is committed to fulfilling all its legal and regulatory obligations as regards Safeguarding and Data Protection, at all levels. For this reason

- Everyone in the Zoom room is responsible for ensuring that the guidelines discussed in this policy are adhered to.
- Participants will be reminded verbally as well as onscreen of the need to observe confidentiality.
- Leaders from the hosting team, as well as those with official positions in the community, are expected to deal with any breaches of the policy.
 - This may require a direct intervention to prevent a Safeguarding or Data Protection breach occurring, or to limit the extent of a breach in progress.
 - It may more simply require a kind and measured word to remind participants of their responsibilities.

- If a breach does occur, or if one appeared likely, there will also be a conversation between a leader and the individual concerned after Office has ended, to ensure they understand their responsibilities and avoid any risk of repetition. This conversation will be initiated by the LCSB Guest Master or by another responsible person agreed by the Guest Master.

It is required that breaches are officially recorded and appropriate corrective actions taken by the Community Leader together with the LCSB Safeguarding Officer and Data Protection Officer. The Chair of Trustees must also be informed. This process will generally include formal self-reporting by LCSB to its insurers, as well as formal consideration of whether the event has to be reported to the legal authorities.

Ultimately, the LCSB reserves the right to suspend or remove an individual from coming to Office. This would follow the procedure set down in the LCSB Policy for Serious Situations and Sanctions.

Conclusion

The aim of this policy is to foster a welcoming and hospitable environment as we gather via media such as Zoom. The policy seeks to promote the responsibility we all have to look after and care for each other, avoid causing upset and freely enjoy praying and being together in community; it also records formal responsibilities for Data Protection and Safeguarding purposes.

End of main text: Annex follows

ANNEX: Specific guidance on how intercessory prayer can be expressed

Most of our Offices and services of worship offer participants a short opportunity to make their own prayers and petitions out loud. Those prayers and petitions need to be expressed sensitively. Our prayers should not break our safeguarding and data protection obligations, nor infringe upon others' rights for confidentiality. We need to be aware that when we pray as a community using an online app, we are praying using a public platform.

Naming individuals People should only be named if they have given permission for the prayer request. Otherwise, do not give any First name or surname in the prayer request.

I would like to pray for a friend of mine who is going into hospital for an operation tomorrow.

This is an example of good practice assuming the friend has not given permission for this prayer request. It does not break any obligation for confidentiality as the friend cannot be identified from the information given.

I would like to pray for John, a friend of mine who is going into hospital for an operation tomorrow.

This is only acceptable if John has given permission for us to pray for him but it breaches safeguarding requirements if John has not asked for our prayers. If John has given permission, it would be better to rephrase the petition to

John, a friend of mine, has asked for our prayers as he goes into hospital for an operation tomorrow.

Even if someone has asked for our prayers, it is not LCSB practice to give surnames. So

John Flint, a friend of mine, has asked for our prayers as he goes into hospital for an operation tomorrow.

is not acceptable.

The only exception is:

if the person we want to pray for is a public figure or has a public role and the information is in the public domain. That person can then be named without asking his or her permission if the information is in the public domain. For example:

I would like to pray for John Flint who is to be ordained a priest in the Birmingham Archdiocese this weekend.

Or

I would like to pray for Jennie Flint, our new Prime Minister, that she may have the wisdom to govern our country for the good of all.

would both be acceptable.

Too much detail can show a lack of sensitivity and can breach safeguarding and data protection and general confidentiality requirements. For example, the following is not acceptable.

I would like to pray for a friend of mine who is going into the QE Hospital in Birmingham for a heart operation tomorrow. It's likely to be a two-hour operation and I know her family are very worried about the outcome. It comes on top of her husband just losing his job.

In this prayer, there are five pieces of information and it is not clear that the friend, her husband or her family have given permission for us to pray about their worries or their loss. However, it would be acceptable to pray:

I would like pray for a friend of mine who is about to have an operation. Comfort and protect her and her family.

Family Just as we need to be sensitive towards our neighbours, our friends and our work colleagues, so we need to be sensitive to the wishes of members of our families. In most families there is a divergence of opinion about faith and prayer. Some family members may not want their life events being prayed about in the public forum of an Office on Zoom. For example

I would like to pray for my daughter on her 18th birthday

is acceptable if your daughter has given permission for this to be shared. It is not acceptable if you have any doubts about whether your daughter would want to be prayed for.

I would like to pray for my son Oliver who is starting school today for the first time and for all children starting school

is acceptable assuming that Oliver is 5 years old.

I would like to pray for the birth of my grandson Harry

is acceptable but

I would like to pray for the birth of my grandson Harry, and his mum Laura

is only acceptable so long as Laura has given permission for her name to be mentioned. Similarly

I want to pray for John...who is also worried about his depressed daughter Anna

Is unacceptable unless Anna (as well as John) has given permission to be mentioned.

Composite prayers: In some traditions it is the norm for individual intercessory prayers to be long. St Benedict, says in the Rule that prayer should be 'short and pure'. We have a limited amount of time at our Offices and very long prayers can overrun and exclude others from saying their own prayers out loud. Long prayers are often a composite of different prayer requests intermixed with theological statements which sometimes are contentious. Our norm is that prayer is short and focussed – typically no more than just a few sentences, rather than a lengthy explanation or a string of different thoughts. This shows sensitivity to all those at the Office and leaves space for others to make their own prayers.

Religious differences: We come to Office from a variety of different traditions. Within each tradition, participants will hold different theological views. We need to be sensitive to those differences in how we pray. For example

Today is the feast day of St Ignatius of Loyola. I would like to thank you Lord for the wonderful Ignatian retreat I went on last week and pray for the work of the Jesuits at St Beuno's.

is acceptable.

Today is the feast day of St Ignatius of Loyola. I would like to thank you Lord for the work of St Ignatius and all Jesuits in upholding the true faith which can only be found in the Roman Catholic Church.

shows a lack of sensitivity to others from different faith traditions to the Roman Catholic Church.

Society and politics: There will be a variety of views about society and politics amongst participants at Office. This does not mean that we cannot pray about issues but we do it in a way which is not divisive and where all can share in that prayer. For example

We pray for all those who will be sleeping on the streets tonight. May they soon find accommodation and a place to call home.

expresses Christian values about the homeless which may well be shared by all the participants. Similarly

Let us pray for God's will to be done in the forthcoming General Election

does not prescribe a particular outcome and is something in which all can join; but

We pray that the current government may be re-elected.

is unlikely to be a prayer that all those present would offer and is therefore unacceptable. However

We pray for the success of the climate change talks in Glasgow

may be acceptable.

These are relatively easy examples; but some societal and political issues can be very divisive indeed. Any prayers on such subjects must be offered with respect and special sensitivity. People with strongly-held views of one persuasion do not have a right to pray for their cause, without regard to the in-conscience beliefs of other participants.

End of Annex

APPENDIX 6

Internet Safeguarding Guidance

Lay Community of St. Benedict:

13. Social Media Use

Review cycle: 1 year	Last reviewed: Feb 2024	Next review: Feb 2025
Owner	Guestmaster	

What this policy covers

This policy document sets out the LCSB's best practice guide to using social media - in particular Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Context

The LCSB uses social media to communicate its messages and to maintain contact with members of the community and people seeking to know more about the community. All LCSB's communications are subject to relevant statutory guidelines and regulations as detailed in our policy documents: see especially the LCSB Data Protection Policy and Safeguarding Policy, also the LCSB policies on Zoom Etiquette, Prayer Requests, and Photography.

Code of Conduct

Everything you say on social media is public and permanent.

Even those parts of social media which you believe to be private (eg private messages and notifications) can be recorded and taken out of context.

*You are liable for what you say but the LCSB is implicated if **you are using their platforms.***

Members of the LCSB should recognise that their use of social media can be of great benefit to the community. However, it also carries risks for vulnerable members and risks of misrepresenting LCSB values. Members should understand the implications of using social media when communicating for or on behalf of the LCSB.

We are a community dedicated to the Gospel and the spirituality of St Benedict as lived out by lay people. This should govern the way the community communicates and inform all its actions.

- All use of LCSB social media must be consistent with the community's values and promise.
- All use of LCSB social media must pay due heed to privacy, safeguarding, data protection, code of conduct and ethics and GDPR.
- When promoting LCSB events using your personal social media accounts, you should also follow the above rules, as you may be seen as speaking 'on behalf of' the community.

Personally expressed views

Social media (such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) create significant opportunities for the community to communicate its vision and mission and for members to keep in contact with each other.

However, using social media requires everyone to exercise good judgement. There is a big difference between speaking **about** the LCSB and speaking **on behalf of** the LCSB.

There are three areas where we need to be aware of what we say about the LCSB in the public arena:

- The LCSB's **outward-facing** social media platforms, such as its public Facebook page and Twitter & Instagram account.
- The LCSB's **inward-facing** social media platforms, such as its private Members' Only Facebook groups (or other private LCSB groups on social media)
- Our own personal social media platforms (be aware that people outside your friends list may see what you write about).

The same safeguards and awareness applies to all of these.

Access to the LCSB Facebook Group and other LCSB Social Media

Members can invite people to the Members-only Facebook group but they have to be approved by an administrator who should check to see that they are LC members.

The same principles apply for inviting access to other LCSB social media groups.

Membership of the LCSB does not give automatic right to use the LCSB media, nor an automatic right to membership of the LCSB Facebook Group or any other LCSB media.

If you suspect that your Facebook account has been hacked then you must inform one of the administrators at the earliest opportunity, so that they can restrict your access to LCSB Social media in order to protect other members of the community. Do not use Facebook to contact an administrator; instead, try to use an email account that is not linked to your Facebook account.

Indicators that your account may have been hacked may include, but are not limited to:

- You have been denied access to your account
- Your account has been used to send messages to others without your knowledge, especially messages containing links.

Considerations when using social media to interact with content produced by the LCSB

Members should be conscious that comments or posts that they make as individuals on their own social media channels, as well as on LCSB channels, may be misinterpreted as representing the official position of LCSB, and could be damaging to its reputation.

Specifically, Members must not use LCSB social media channels as a platform for inciting hatred, violence or intolerance. Individual posts or comments that infringe this will be removed at the discretion of the admin team, and if repeated after a warning, users may be barred from future access.

It is a given that LCSB social media channels are subject to moderation and are not obligated to retain user interactions verbatim.

Specific Guidelines

Since social media networks are highly public, recommended Community practice for Members posting on LCSB pages/groups is therefore:

- No personal views on the public outward-facing platforms
- Be mindful what personal views or criticisms you post on the private platforms (how would you feel if someone else or a stranger read what you had posted?)
- No referral to Members' or non-Members' life events, unless you have permission from that person, or are replying to them posting about it (e.g. health, new babies, marriages)
- No information about the specifics of regional or local events (e.g. Zoom links, or physical location) – it's best to refer people to the organiser for details.
- No prayer requests without permission. Personal details should not be disclosed (e.g. names, medical conditions).
- No disclosure of contact or personal details of other Members or non-Members
- No sharing of LCSB photos without the permission of people in the photos (specifically, written permission is needed if you want to share photos of children or vulnerable adults).
- No personal criticisms of individuals
- Respect people's differences of views

In addition, Community practice for Members posting on their personal social media accounts is therefore:

- No views purporting to be the views of the LCSB
- No referral to personal information about LCSB Members or their life events (e.g. things like weddings or bereavements, that may have been mentioned in a private group or event); unless you are replying to something they have posted online themselves.
- No referral to LCSB articles in the members' magazine, Listen; however it is ok to refer to articles in the public domain.
- No sharing of specifics about LCSB events (e.g. Zoom links, or physical location) – it's best to refer people to the organiser for details. It's ok to give general information, such as the date, whether it's online or in-person, and the general location.
- When speaking about the LCSB, or sharing information about LCSB events, be aware that you may be seen to be speaking 'on behalf' of the community.

Community members should also consider these guidelines when interacting with posts in the following ways: liking, commenting, sharing, retweeting.

NB: Whilst private chat rooms and messages operate under the discretion of users, LCSB members need to be aware that what they say and share there may be seen by others and may reflect badly on them and on the community.

Examples of bad practice:

1. A Member shares the news (on the LCSB Members' Facebook page) that another Member's parent/spouse has died. The person mentioned might not be ready to share this news – let them tell the news in their own time.
2. There is an upcoming event in a Members' house, and someone shares the details of the event (either on the private LCSB Facebook, or on their own personal account), including the exact location, or Zoom link, for the event. It would be better to point people in the direction of the organiser, so they are in control of who knows the full details.
3. A Member likes something another Member has posted on the private LCSB Facebook group – they can't share it directly, so they take a screenshot and share it on their personal Facebook page without asking for permission.

Examples of good practice:

1. A Member sees another Member has had a new baby, and asks them if it's ok to share this news on the LCSB Facebook page – they say yes, but ask them not to share a photo.
2. A Member creates a public Facebook Event page to publicise an LCSB event. They make the Guest list private, so that only the organiser can see who is coming; and they don't give out any Zoom links, or personal contact details on the Event page.
3. A Member shares their experience of an LCSB event on their personal Facebook page, mentioning some general views that were expressed, without giving any specifics of who was present, or any facts that would identify who was there, or who said what.

When you disagree with a view expressed in LCSB social media channels

Best practice is to respect the viewpoint that is being put forward and respond courteously if you feel you need to.

If you become aware of potentially damaging information relating to the community posted on the internet, you should let an LCSB trustee or a member of the Council know immediately.

Enquirers should be signposted to contact the LCSB Administrator.

Risk Register

The risk of “reputation damage or liabilities through inappropriate online activity” is liable to be reviewed annually by both Council and Trustees as part of the LCSB’s statutory Risk Register. This Social Media policy forms a key part controlling this risk and will itself be subject to regular and frequent review.

Annex 1 – Twitter

Set-up

Twitter handle	@LCStBen
Name of the account	LCSB
Description in 160 characters	The Lay Community of St Benedict is dedicated to the Gospel and the spirituality of St. Benedict as lived out by lay people across the UK and abroad

Objective of the account:

- To promote a buzz of awareness about the LCSB, St Benedict and the Rule
- To drive traffic to our website
- To increase membership, and attendance at LCSB events

Types of activity

To do

The Twitter account is like a window and invitation into the life of the Community. It points to LCSB membership and events which are open to all, the Rule, and St Benedict.

By using the inspiration of the quotes network, we may include tweets which edify and help people to lead their Christian lives without naming the source if this comes from an LCSB member (unlike the private Facebook group where the quotes are attributed). But we keep the focus specific – there are many generalists who tweet about everything to do with the church, this account will be focused on our Benedictine charism.

In the same way as we promote certain events in Circle, we may use the Twitter account to promote other Church events. Typically this involves retweeting information about an event. This would be restricted to bona fide organisations that we know eg dioceses, Wellspring, other Benedictine communities. The spirit of Twitter is that such retweeting is an engagement with others which then encourages them to publicise your events

We can retweet the tweets of members and others who have the same objectives as those of our Twitter account eg Mike Woodward tweets about the Rule and the Office of Readings – this is a way of bringing people into the life of the community.

We will promote enquirers to contact the LCSB Administrator. The account can also be used to say that we have job vacancies.

To avoid

As this is a Twitter account in the name of the LCSB, and open to anyone, we will avoid certain types of activity

- No political views
- No views which are not in line with mainstream Church teaching
- No views purporting to be the views of the LCSB
- No referral to LCSB articles in the members' magazine of Listen, but articles in the public domain by members would be ok, as long as they relate to the objectives of the Twitter account
- No referral to life events in the LCSB e.g. new babies, marriages
- No information about the specifics of regional or local events – the focus will be to encourage enquirers, so that we can then treat them through the normal enquiry process, and not have people turn up to LCSB meetings
- No LCSB photos other than to encourage publicity about events and only with the permission of people in the photos
- No prayer requests

Best practice

Should a person take issue with anything expressed on the account – there can be some people who post controversial messages using the handle - the best practice is to ignore and not to respond. We will never get into a fractious debate on Twitter. Private messaging can be used for clarification where there is a mutual following relationship.

There will not be a disclaimer on the account saying that “this does not represent the views of the LCSB but those of individual members” as per the Listen disclaimer. This would not work as it is an LCSB account. Therefore, the protection for the LCSB comes from the establishment of and adherence to these guidelines.

Currently we have a wealth of experience and insight which is reflected in Listen but no publicity outside of the community. It would be good to establish a blog which sits on the web and which acts as a window into the community. These blogs should not exceed 350 words, would be subject to editorial control, and would be referenced by the Twitter account as a way of driving people to the website. This should be discussed with the Listen editorial team and the Webmaster.

Following/followers

We will follow a broad cross-section of churches, parishes, communities, schools, dioceses, church leaders, catholic chaplaincies and interesting Twitter handles. If we see that anyone we are following expresses extreme views (very unlikely) we will unfollow them. We will seek out and follow all LCSB members who are on Twitter. It may be worthwhile including personal Twitter handles in future editions of the Address list.

We will accept any followers who appear to be genuine people. Anyone who is evidently looking for twitter followers for unsavoury reasons will be blocked immediately. They are easy to identify.

In the beginning we will follow a large number of accounts (around 500) so that we can start to get known, and gradually over time we will gain followers.

Frequency of tweeting

We should tweet consistently and at a rhythm of around 2 tweets per day. We will not institute any automatic retweeting of other accounts, but may program tweets in advance in order to build up a regular flow. In this way we build a presence online. Quality, focus and engagement are the bywords, not quantity.

Members of the LCSB who are on Twitter should be encouraged to retweet LCSB tweets