



# The Union of the Sisters of Mercy

## SAFEGUARDING POLICY

### 1. POLICY OVERVIEW

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

### 2. SCOPE

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

### 3. TRAINING

- 3.1 All Union members and employees will undergo Safeguarding Training relevant to their role.
- 3.2 The Trustees and members will undertake yearly refresher training. The Trustees also avail of supplementary year-round safeguarding training that supports their role.

### 4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

#### 4.1 The Congregational Leader & Trustees

The Congregational Leader and Trustees have a duty to maintain appropriate governance and oversight of safeguarding in line with this policy and national guidelines. They are also responsible for ensuring appropriate policy, procedures and best practice are in place for the effective delivery of safeguarding, including any related due diligence checks. The Congregational Leader and Trustees also have direct oversight of the Union’s safeguarding



policy and guidance. Certain functions of the Congregational Leader and Trustees will be delegated to members, as indicated below.

#### 4.2 The Safeguarding Lead

The Safeguarding Lead holds responsibility for renewing DBS certificates every 3 years and has oversight of the relationship with and input on the work of the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS).

#### 4.3 All other roles

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

#### 4.4 General

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

### 5 PRACTICE GUIDANCE

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

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

5.2 Action must also be taken in line with the Church's mandatory reporting policy. This means appropriate action must be taken if there are reasonable grounds to suspect or believe that someone who holds any role within the Church is going to or has committed a crime, is going to or has caused harm, poses a risk or is otherwise unsuitable to work in their role.

### 6 PROCEDURE

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

6.2 If any member of the Union becomes aware of a concern detailed in Section 5 or any other safeguarding issue, they should contact the Congregational Leader and/or Safeguarding Lead who will immediately inform the RLSS Safeguarding Team, and pass to them the concern and all associated records of it. Ensure the person who made you aware of the concern knows you are doing this.

6.2.1 The RLSS will:

- Ensure the victim/survivor or individual has been informed of the next steps
- Explain what will happen, give them options if possible and an indicative timescale
- Contact any relevant bodies within 24 hours (see point 6.3 below)
- Complete the safeguarding paperwork and ensure appropriate record keeping of all communications including phone calls, meetings and discussions in relation to the case are documented.



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

### **6.3 Safeguarding Bodies (not exhaustive)**

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

6.4 In the event of a safeguarding referral, the Union will contact the Charity Commission and their Insurer.

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

## **7 WHISTLEBLOWING**

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

7.1.1 If that concern is regarding malpractice, illegal acts, or omissions at the Union or other religious institution in relation to safeguarding, then the RLSS should be made aware.

7.2 The action taken by the RLSS will depend upon the nature of the concern referred. However, an investigation will be undertaken if appropriate, followed by appropriate action and written feedback will be provided, including a rationale documenting the reasons why identified actions have been taken. This will be delegated to RLSS.

## **8 RECORDING AND STORAGE OF SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS AND CASE FILES**

8.1 The Union has a responsibility to ensure that all case files held are accurate, up to date and stored securely.

8.2 Where RLSS is responsible for the management of a case, RLSS will ensure records are accurate, auditable, and secure and all records of any safeguarding concern or allegation referred are properly maintained.



## **9 SAFER RECRUITMENT PRACTICE GUIDANCE**

- 9.1 The Union will ensure that congregation members, lay staff and volunteers are subject to the appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks (including enhanced DBS) in line with both statutory and Catholic Church requirements.
- 9.2 Appointments will be based on the person's experience, skills and ability to meet the set criteria and job specification for the specific role. It is essential to ensure that all documentation relating to the applicants are kept in a secure place and remain confidential.
- 9.3 Appointment to a role will not be confirmed until a satisfactory DBS Disclosure check has been received and previous employment references confirmed as being acceptable.
- 9.4 On appointment, all new employees should be provided with and sign to say they understand all relevant policies and procedures, including a copy of this document and their responsibilities within it highlighted.
- 9.5 Anyone who is seeking to work with children or adults whether in a paid or unpaid capacity must be provided with the opportunity to self-disclose relevant conviction information. This is a DBS Code of Practice requirement and applies to anyone being asked to have an Enhanced Disclosure.

## **10 POLICY REVIEW**

- 10.1 This policy is approved by the Trustees and will be subject to an initial review in July 2025 and then annually or sooner where there is a significant change or need.

Policy last updated: July 2024

Date of next review: July 2025

Name: Sister Geraldine Lawlor,  
Congregational Leader  
Date: 31 July 2024