

Policy Statement

Every human being has a value which we acknowledge as coming directly from God's creation of male and female in his own image and likeness. We believe therefore that all people should be valued, supported and protected from harm. We recognise the personal dignity and rights of vulnerable people towards whom the Church has a special responsibility.

The Catholic Church and its individual members will undertake appropriate steps to maintain a safe environment for all, by practising fully and positively Christ's Ministry towards children, young people and adults and responding sensitively and compassionately to their needs in order to help keep them safe from harm. This is demonstrated by the provision of carefully planned activities for children, young people and adults, caring for those hurt by abuse and ministering to and robustly managing those who have caused harm.

The Catholic Church of England and Wales, the Bishops and Religious Congregational Leaders are committed to safeguarding as an integral part of the life and ministry of the Church and affirm a 'One Church' approach¹ to safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk through the promotion of a sustained culture of constant vigilance. The 'best interests' or 'paramount chief principle', which underpins and is enshrined in child and adult protection legislation, shall be the primary consideration in all matters of safeguarding. This 'One Church' approach should also be adopted by lay associations of the faithful ministering to children and adults at risk in the name of the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church has in place a National Catholic Safeguarding Commission (NCSC), which is an independent body working within the framework of the Church in England and Wales. It is mandated by the Conference of Bishops and Conference of Religious Congregations and has accountability across Dioceses and Religious Congregations to ensure that standards are met and policies are implemented. Established in 2008, the NCSC sets the strategic direction of the Church's safeguarding policy for children, young people and adults at risk. It is also responsible for developing quality assurance processes which includes monitoring and auditing the compliance of the Church with safeguarding procedures. The NCSC is leading on the development of pastoral support services on a national basis and is informed by the Survivor Advisory Panel which it has established to ensure that the voices of survivors and victims of abuse informs the work of the NCSC.

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The One Church approach refers to the commitment by the Church in England and Wales to using the same policies, procedures, standards and systems in relation to safeguarding.

The Church authorities always report allegations of abuse to the statutory agencies in accordance with national procedures to ensure that they are dealt with promptly and properly, and where appropriate, perpetrators are held to account. The Church will act in an open, transparent and accountable way in working in partnership with social care services, the Police, health agencies, probation services and other relevant agencies to safeguard children and adults at risk and assist in bringing to justice anyone who has committed an offence against a child or adult.

The Church seeks to ensure that its parishes, religious congregations and lay associations of the faithful acting in the name of the Church have the confidence to enable vulnerable people to have peace of mind, knowing they will be cared for and loved by their Christian community. All churches, faith communities and lay associations that are working in the name of the Church with children and adults at risk are expected to have in place arrangements which include:

- Procedures to respond to and report concerns and allegations
- Codes of conduct
- Safer recruitment procedures
- Information sharing arrangements
- Support and supervision of staff and volunteers
- Training on safeguarding