



**St Vincent de Paul Society
(England & Wales)**

Safeguarding Policy

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a safe environment for children, young persons, adults at risk and everyone who encounters the SVP and to allow appropriate healthy and supportive relationships to flourish across all Society activities without fear.

Scope

This policy and associated procedures govern all Conferences, District and Central Councils, the National Council and National Board of Trustees, as well as any SVP staff, external organisations with whom we partner or collaborate locally or overseas to deliver services whether under the direct or indirect control of the Society in England and Wales.

Its remit includes both auxiliary and full members as well as volunteers in Community Support Projects, Special Projects, Special Works and National Special Works including children's camps.

All of the preceding individuals are known collectively as "our representatives".

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Board

While safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, the Board of Trustees is ultimately responsible for all safeguarding matters and for providing adequate resources throughout the Society for effective safeguarding.

Named Trustee

A named Trustee with the experience, training and aptitude for safeguarding will take the lead in relation to the Board's safeguarding responsibilities.

The named Trustee will chair the Safeguarding Committee which meets at least 6 times per year in order to oversee all safeguarding matters including the Society's Safeguarding Strategic Plan.

The named Trustee will review the Society's safeguarding policy and submit an annual written report to the Board with recommendations. This review will form part of the annual review undertaken by the Governing Body to ensure that all policies, procedures, and training provided by the Society are effective and comply with the law.

Safeguarding Committee

Supporting the work of the Safeguarding Trustee, the Safeguarding Committee is responsible for providing expert advice, driving, and supporting improvements in safeguarding policy and practice as well as reviewing all safeguarding cases and concerns which arise.

National Safeguarding Manager

The National Safeguarding Manager reports to the Safeguarding Committee and -reports into the Director of Governance and Compliance. He or she is responsible for the development and updating of safeguarding policy and procedures, safeguarding awareness training and operationally, implementation of best practice in line with policies and procedures by all representatives of the Society on a day to day basis.

The Safeguarding Manager is also responsible for the management of all safeguarding concerns and allegations raised as well as referrals to statutory agencies as required by law and policy.

Executive and Management

The Executive and SVP management teams shall be aware of and endorse the safeguarding policy and procedures set out in this document. They must also ensure that all staff, volunteers are always aware of and abide by the safeguarding policy and procedures.

Society Representatives

All Society representatives including staff, Conference members, volunteers, those we partner or collaborate with to deliver services and contractors must be aware of and abide by the policy set out herein and any associated procedures.

1.0 Definitions

1.1 Staff - A paid employee, contractor, placement, or non-member volunteer.

1.2 Members - Members of the St Vincent de Paul Society (England & Wales) including all categories of membership.

1.3 Society Representatives – Collectively, all staff, conference members, volunteers, contractors, and those with whom we partner or collaborate.

1.4 The Society – The St Vincent de Paul Society (England & Wales)

1.5 Child - anyone under the age of 18 years of age

1.6 Adult at Risk/Vulnerable Adult – any person 18 or over who is or may be in need of community care or services by reason of mental health issues, learning or physical disabilities, sensory impairment, age, illness or other vulnerabilities including aspects of identity, the impact of previous experiences and dependencies and who is or may be unable to take care of him/herself or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or serious exploitation. The range of people considered to be vulnerable includes but is not limited to people encountering domestic violence, substance misusers and asylum seekers.

1.7 Abuse - Abuse can take place in person, remotely, on-line, or over social media. Types of abuse include but are not limited to: sexual abuse including sexual harassment, exploitation, grooming and child on child abuse; emotional or psychological abuse including bullying; neglect and self-neglect; institutional abuse; exploitation of all kinds including financial and material, trafficking, and modern slavery; domestic abuse including coercive control and witnessing domestic violence; honour-based violence including FGM and forced marriage as well as faith-based abuse and radicalisation.

2.0 Policy Statement

2.1 The Society's safeguarding policy is values driven from the trustees down and throughout the organisation.

2.2 It reflects theological, moral, and ethical values which flow from the fact that we are all made in the image of God and the SVP's belief in the dignity and uniqueness of every human life. We start from the principle that each person has a right to expect the highest level of care, protection, love, encouragement, and respect that we can give.

2.3 These values commit us to honour the intrinsic dignity of every person and to create relationships of mutual respect regardless of race, gender, nationality, ethnic group, religion, sexual orientation, age, ability, beliefs, or any other differences. This includes listening to those we serve when they tell us what they need from the Society, how and when.

2.4 While our commitment to safeguarding extends to everyone we meet; it also recognises the need for special attention to ensure the welfare of children and adults with specific vulnerabilities and to ensure that action is taken to support them if they are at risk of significant harm from anyone.

2.5 This commitment also explicitly recognises the additional needs and barriers met by beneficiaries from minority ethnic groups and by disabled persons. These beneficiaries include individuals who are reliant on humanitarian aid, or members of marginalised groups who face exclusion due to one or more aspects of their identity and whose voices may not be heard.

2.6 The best interests of children and adults at risk will always be of paramount importance.

2.7 All of our representatives have a responsibility to act and intervene when it appears that children and/or adults at risk need to be made safe from harm whether the risk of harm is neglect, sexual, physical, psychological, emotional, financial or any other kind of abuse.

2.8 Reflecting a 'One Church' approach, the SVP's safeguarding policies and procedures reflect those of the Catholic Church in England and Wales as encapsulated in the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency safeguarding policy.

<https://www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/national-safeguarding-standards/national-safeguarding-policy>

2.9 We recognise that the nature of our work with some of the most vulnerable and marginalised communities and the resources we have access to may create unequal power dynamics and we must guard against a risk no matter how small that some of our representatives might exploit their position of trust.

2.9.1 Therefore, our Codes of Conduct which should be read in conjunction with this policy make explicit commitments that the personal and professional conduct of anyone who represents the SVP is and is seen to be of the highest standard. Our Codes of Conduct strongly condemn all kinds of abuse and exploitation, including sexual exploitation and abuse, and make clear that the SVP will not tolerate any form of such behaviour and will act swiftly and decisively to stop such behaviour.

2.9.2 This policy also makes explicit the organisation's commitment to the development of best practice and sound internal procedures. This ensures all safeguarding referrals will be handled sensitively, professionally and in ways which support the needs of all those involved.

2.9.3. All those acting in the name of the Society in any capacity have the responsibility to act and intervene when it appears that children or adults at risk need to be made safe from risk of abuse or maltreatment.

2.9.4. Anyone who brings concerns or allegations to the notice of the Society will be responded to sensitively, respectfully, and seriously in a timely manner.

2.9.5 While the Society safeguards both children and adults at risk, these groups have different needs and may face different types of safeguarding challenges. For example,

the safeguarding definitions and terms used with each group sometimes differ, procedures for reporting abuse and handling concerns are not the same, different legislation and policy apply. Therefore, the Society has separate safeguarding procedures for children and adults at risk which ensure that everyone we safeguard is protected in the best way possible for them.

3.0 Policy

Reporting Abuse

3.1 Guided by victim-centred principals, allegations of serious abuse of adults at risk shall be reported to relevant statutory agencies in keeping with the Care Act and all other related legislation to ensure that they are dealt with promptly and properly.

3.2 With regard to safeguarding children, our policies and procedures including a low-level concerns policy will be guided by The Children's Acts 1989 and 2004 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and current guidance.

Even where no statutory obligation exists, we will report all allegations of abuse of children to the appropriate services and statutory agencies.

In all instances, concerns regarding the suspected or actual abuse of children and/or adults at risk must be raised with the Society's National Safeguarding manager and/or statutory authorities immediately, within 24 hours, or at the earliest possible opportunity depending on all of the facts and whether or not a crime may have been committed or personal safety may be at risk.

Where it is believed that a criminal offence may have taken place, mandatory referrals will be made whether or not the person suspected of the abuse is living or deceased.

Records and Data Protection

3.3 As with all records, we will ensure that safeguarding records are fair, accurate, balanced, fact neutral and complete. Where possible, they will be shared with the person who is the subject of the concern to ensure fairness and accuracy.

3.4 Collecting, retention and destruction of safeguarding information will be undertaken in strict compliance with the Data Protection Act, 2018 as amended and all other relevant guidance.

Working Together

3.5 The Society will act in an open and transparent and accountable way in working in partnership with social care services, the Police, Local Authority Designated Officers, health agencies, probation services and other relevant agencies and assist in bringing to justice anyone acting in the name of the Society who has committed an offence against a child or an adult at risk. There may be occasions where the initial safeguarding referral

indicates a multi layered social issue related to the person affected, in these circumstances we will do everything we can to assist on a basic level, but will aim to always refer these to the appropriate social services or local authorities. The safeguarding team cannot be responsible for following up in cases where the issue is purely social in nature due to capacity and infrastructure.

3.6 Where allegations or concerns have been investigated by any statutory agency including police and/or social services and there is an acquittal, a decision not to prosecute or no further action to be taken by those agencies but there remains a concern, or, following a conviction, or in any context or set of circumstances where there is uncertainty about the level of risk which may be posed to children or adults at risk, or whether there is a concern that behaviours may be inconsistent with the Vincentian ethos, the Society will consider what further actions need to be taken to protect people from potential harm.

3.7 Individual procedures may vary depending on the facts and circumstances outlined in the Society's Managing Concerns procedures.

Safer Recruitment

3.8 The Society recognises the importance of operating recruitment and selection procedures and other human resources management processes that help deter, reject, or identify people who might abuse children and adults at risk or who are otherwise unsuited to work with these groups. Therefore, in accordance with statutory guidance and the Safer Recruitment Policy of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, the Society employs safer recruitment practices in all its areas of operation. This includes:

- A successful DBS application or submission depending on the activity being undertaken
- Specified questions on the application forms
- 2 acceptable references in advance of any offer being made

Mandatory and Ongoing Awareness Training

3.9 Training and raising awareness of safeguarding issues, policies and procedures is fundamental to the development and maintenance of a safe environment and safer organisation and we embrace a culture of continuous improvement. All members of the Society who have "full" membership meaning that they carry out some level of befriending or visiting to those in need, must upon joining the Society take part in Board approved mandatory safeguarding training or provide proof that they have attended Educare training or other approved safeguarding sector training. Inhouse training can be provided by various mediums including online training, classroom training or Conference based group training through the provision of a workbook.

Training will not be regarded as a 'once only' activity, but as an on-going development of skills and knowledge of safeguarding.

3.9.1 All members, volunteers and staff will receive induction training and/or information in safeguarding awareness, policy, and procedures, sufficient and commensurate to the role that is being performed and the level of responsibility of the individual. This training will take place as soon as possible during the probationary period.

3.9.2 Further and/or refresher training will cover emerging issues as well as policies, procedures, awareness, and skills in safeguarding, creating safe environments, safe recruitment, and recognising, responding to, and reporting concerns and allegations of maltreatment.

Low-Level Concerns

3.9.3 In order to maintain a safer environment for all children and young people we encounter, the Society has adopted a Low-Level Concerns policy (see separate policy).

3.9.4 A low-level concern is any disquieting behaviour towards children which falls below the threshold of an allegation or is otherwise not serious enough on its own to merit a referral to a statutory agency. Regardless of the circumstances if a situation does not look or feel right the National Safeguarding manager should be informed initially to aid further discussion and/or appropriate action.

3.9.5 Such concerns include behaviours inconsistent with Society Codes of Conduct on a spectrum from the inadvertent or inappropriate to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse even where occurring outside of activities carried out on behalf of the Society. All concerns will be responded to proportionately which may include the provision of guidance, supervision, further training, management guidance, disciplinary action, or referral to authorities.

3.9.6 This policy enables the early sharing of any genuine concern about a child. It ensures that no opportunities are missed to identify and effectively and proportionately respond to any such concerning behaviour. It also ensures that adults working on or on behalf of the Society are clear about professional boundaries and act within them in accordance with the SVP ethos at all times.

Twinning

3.9.7 With reference to the Society's Twinning work, this policy also reflects international safeguarding standards such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant Human Rights Conventions, the UN Secretary General's Bulletin for Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, IASC (Inter-Agency Standing Committee) Minimum Operating Standards for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS).

3.9.8 As each Twinned country has its own specific legislative requirements relating to safeguarding such as criminal law, recruitment vetting processes, data protection and reporting protocols, if circumstances arise where SVP policy contravenes or contradicts local legislation, local legislation must be followed with guidance from the National Safeguarding Manager and Safeguarding Committee in accordance with SVP International Policies.

Support for Victims and Survivors of Abuse

3.9.9 The SVP is committed to challenging abusive behaviour and encouraging people to accept responsibility for their harmful actions.

3.9.10 Support will be offered to those seeking in so far as is reasonably practicable, considering an assessment of needs, the availability of resources and all other circumstances.

Whistle Blowing

3.9.11 In line with the Public Disclosure Act 1998, SVP members, volunteers or staff are encouraged to report any safeguarding concerns about fellow members, volunteers, or staff, made in good faith, without fear of repercussion.

4.0 References

This document should be read in conjunction with the following individual SVP safeguarding procedures, handbooks, and codes of conduct:

- Camp Safeguarding Procedures
- Camp Helpers' Handbook
- Camp Junior Helpers' Handbook
- Young Volunteers in Community Shops Procedures and Handbook
- Conference Safeguarding Procedures
- Safer Recruitment Procedures
- Member's Code of Conduct
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Volunteer's Code of Conduct
- Managing Concerns Procedures
- Working with Children Procedures
- Relevant HR policies and procedures
- Low Level Concerns Policy

5.0 Legislative Framework and Guidance (All as Amended)

Children

- The Children's Acts 1989 and 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and guidance 2022
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Child Sexual Exploitation: Definition and Guide for Practitioners
- Safeguarding Children who may have been trafficked 2011
- Safeguarding Children in Whom Illness is Fabricated or Induced 2008
- What to Do If You Are Worried a Child is being Abused 2015

- Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People in Education 2015
- Keeping Children Safe in Education – Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges, September 2022
- Safeguarding Children from Abuse Linked to a Belief in Spirit Possession 2007
- The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime Policing Act 2014
- General Data Protection Regulation 2016
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- Draft Guidance: Out-of-school Settings: Voluntary Code of Practice, 2018
- Section 26, Counterterrorism and Security Act, 2015

Adults

- Protection of Vulnerable Groups Act
- The Care Act 2014
- Care and Support Statutory Guidance issued under the Care Act 2014
- Local Authority Responsibility for Sharing Information under the Care Act 2014
- The Common Law Duty of Confidentiality
- The Human Rights Act 1998, Article 8 (the right to respect for private life)
- The General Data Protection Regulation 2016
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Action on Elder Abuse Report 2005
- The Mental Capacity Act 2005
- The Modern-Day Slavery Act
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- The Public Disclosures Act, 1998
- The Rehabilitation of Offender’s Act, 1974
- DBS Code of Conduct

Legislation and Guidance in Wales

- The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- Care and Support in Wales
- All Wales Child Protection Procedures

6.0 Key Roles and Contacts

Position	Name	Phone	Email	Reports To
National Safeguarding Manager (DSL)	Catherine Kerr	020 7703 3030 07796 140897	Catherinek@svp.org.uk	Director of Culture and Compliance

Director of Governance and Compliance	Beverley Whittaker	020 7703 3030	Beverleyw@svp.org.uk	Chief Executive Officer
Chief Executive Officer	Elizabeth Palmer	020 7703 3030	Elizabethp@svp.org.uk	Board of Trustees
Trustee for Safeguarding	Dr. Monica Chidgey	020 7703 3030	Monicac@svp.org.uk	Board of Trustees

January 31, 2023



Elaine Heyworth, Chair, Board of Trustees
St. Vincent de Paul Society, England and Wales