**SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

1. **POLICY OVERVIEW**

The English Province of the Order of Preachers (EPOP) is committed to safeguarding all children and adults. This commitment flows from our knowledge that we are all made in the image of God and the Church's common belief in the unique value and dignity of every human life. We start from the principle that each person has a right to expect the highest level of protection, care, encouragement and respect. 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 and survivors promptly and compassionately.

1. **SCOPE** 
   1. This policy and procedure applies to all friars, employees, and volunteers within the EPOP, regardless of their role or the activities they undertake.
   2. It is the responsibility of all friars, employees, and volunteers to prevent abuse whether it be by action or omission. The abuse referred to in this policy may be physical; sexual; emotional; spiritual or abuse by neglect. Additionally, behaviour which effectively results in modern day slavery or where there is evidence of discrimination or radicalisation, needs to be recognised and addressed as a safeguarding issue, in accordance with the procedures outlined in Section 6.
2. **TRAINING**

3.1 All friars, employees, and volunteers will undergo Safeguarding Training in relation to both Children and Vulnerable Adults relevant to their role. The list below outlines the minimum standards for training in England and Wales for each role, in Scotland all friars, employees, and volunteers will be trained to an equivalent level:

* + - Prior Provincial – RLG Lead Training (equivalent to Level 2)
    - Designated Safeguarding Lead – Safeguarding Lead Training (equivalent to Level 3)
    - Provincial Council – Trustee Training (equivalent to Level 2)
    - All other friars – Advanced Safeguarding Training (equivalent to Level 2)
    - Volunteers and employees will be trained to an appropriate level which will be specified in their job description.

3.2 Friars, employees, and volunteers will undertake yearly refresher training in a manner appropriate to their role.

1. **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

4.1 The Provincial Council

The Provincial Council, as corporate trustee, has a duty to maintain appropriate governance and oversight of safeguarding in accordance with this policy and national guidelines. Certain functions of the Provincial Council will be delegated to particular friars or employees, as indicated below.

* 1. The Prior Provincial

The Prior Provincial is responsible for ensuring appropriate policy, procedures and best practice are in place for the effective delivery of safeguarding, including any related due diligence checks. Certain functions of the Prior Provincial will be delegated to particular friars or employees, as indicated below.

4.2 The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL has direct oversight of the EPOP’s safeguarding policy and guidance, including management and oversight of documentation, case progression/management and the secure, legally compliant storage of safeguarding reports and related material as well as oversight of the relationship with and input in the work of the RLSS.

4.2.1 In England and Wales, the DSL may delegate some of this responsibility to the RLSS by referring the case to them but will remain as key contact for the case duration unless another individual is identified to assume responsibility.

4.4 All other roles

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

4.5 General

Everyone involved in the work of the EPOP has a duty to disclose to the Prior Provincial any safeguarding concerns that have been raised about them.

4.6 Scotland.

Brethren should undertake the required training as outlined under Standard 7 of *In God’s Image v.2*

1. **PRACTICE GUIDANCE** 
   1. In accordance with Article 19 of Pope Francis’ Apostolic Letter, “Vos Estis Lux Mundi”, 7 May 2019 [3], It is the policy of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, and in Scotland as agreed by the Bishops Conferences, to report to the statutory authorities, all allegations of abuse made against those working in the name of the Church, regardless of whether the allegations or concerns relate to a person’s behaviour in relation to their role within the Church or another setting. This policy must be applied in all situations where it is alleged, or there are reasonable grounds to believe, that a member of the Province or associated volunteer or employee, has acted in one of the following ways:

* Has behaved in a way that has harmed or is likely to have caused harm to a child or an adult at risk. This would include any adult at risk irrespective of the cause of that vulnerability or whether the vulnerability is temporary or permanent.
* Has or is suspected to have committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or an adult at risk.
* Has behaved towards a child or adult at risk in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children or adults at risk.
* Has behaved in a way or made statements indicating that they may not be suitable to work with children or adults at risk.
* Has behaved in such a way that, by actions or omissions, their conduct has been intended to interfere with, prejudice, undermine or avoid a criminal, civil or canonical investigation, against any person associated with or who is a member of the EPOP.
  1. The behaviours above are to be considered within the context of the different categories of abuse outlined above. Further detailed guidance for particular instances of abuse can be found on the CSSA website and advice can be sought from the RLSS or the Scottish equivalent.

5.3 If a competent adult explicitly refuses the making of a referral about abuse that occurred outside of the Church, consideration must be given to whether the accused person has access to children who may be at risk. In these circumstances, the name of the accused and details of the allegation must always be referred to the statutory authorities.  This can be done without disclosing the name of the victim/survivor where they have refused consent to do so, or where it is not possible to obtain consent.

5.4 It is the policy of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, and Scotland, to report to statutory authorities where a child or an adult is at immediate risk of harm, or there is concern that a child or adult is suffering or is likely to be suffering from significant harm or abuse, from somebody who does not hold a role within the Church. 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 adult at risk of harm from someone else
* Concerns over someone’s mental capacity
* In Scotland it is mandatory to disclose allegations of abuse to the statutory authorities.

1. **PROCEDURE** 
   1. If any friar, employee or volunteer associated with the EPOP in England and Wales becomes aware of a safeguarding issue, they should contact the RLSS Safeguarding Team and pass on the concern and all associated documentation within twenty-four hours. You should ensure the person who made you aware of the concern knows you are doing this. Do not undertake any investigation yourself. If any friar, employee or volunteer associated with the EPOP in Scotland becomes aware of a safeguarding issue they should contact the Province’s Safeguarding lead for Scotland, or the local Diocesan adviser, or the local Statutory authority.

6.1.1 The RLSS or Scottish equivalent should:

* 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.
* Complete the safeguarding paperwork and ensure appropriate record keeping of all communications including phone calls, meetings and discussions in relation to the case.
* Inform the Prior Provincial that there has been a new safeguarding referral.
* All onward referrals / reports made by the RLSS or Scottish equivalent should be made within 24 hours of receiving the information, unless there are exceptional circumstances to postpone making this referral/report. The decision that the RLSS delay making an onward referral/report must be authorised by the Prior Provincial.

6.1.2 When the concern needs to be reported to a statutory agency, the individual reporting the issue must be informed that the information will not be kept confidential, and that the details will be passed on to the police and any other appropriate statutory body.

6.1.3 All friars, employees and volunteers should be supportive of the individual making the disclosure but should not seek more details than necessary for an initial statutory referral.

6.1.4 All friars, employees and volunteers should be alert and sensitive to the courage needed to come forward with an allegation of abuse, and the pain associated with experiencing and/or witnessing abusive behaviour. All friars, employees and volunteers should be aware of the support offered to those coming forward with an allegation offered by the RLSS and other institutions. Advice can be sought from the RLSS or Scottish equivalent.

6.1.5 The EPOP recognises that receiving allegations of abuse may be difficult for some friars, employees and volunteers because they themselves have experienced abuse. The EPOP is committed to the wellbeing of all associated with the Province and warmly encourages those in need of support to make use of the resources that the Province has at its disposal either directly or through related agencies.

* 1. When to report:

**6.2.1 Allegations or safeguarding concerns –** When abuse is suspected, witnessed or a disclosure of abuse is received by the EPOP there is a requirement to report these allegations of abuse, and other relevant safeguarding concerns to the appropriate statutory authority including social services/the police within one working day. The EPOP will fulfil its responsibility in this regard in England and Wales by referring all allegations to the RLSS who will contact the relevant statutory authorities on our behalf.

**6.2.2 In case of emergency** – If a child or adult is in immediate danger, at imminent risk or requires medical attention, the relevant emergency service must be contacted via 999. Local Social Services should also be contacted at the earliest opportunity in the case of a child or vulnerable adult. The RLSS should then be contacted as soon as possible and provided with a detailed written account of the concerns/allegations/account given by the person.

**6.2.3 In case of non-emergency** – In a situation when there is no immediate risk to a child or vulnerable adult and no requirement to make a statutory report, in England and Wales the EPOP will nevertheless refer the matter to the RLSS and the RLSS, working on behalf of the EPOP, will work with the individual to agree desirable outcomes in line with this policy.

* 1. The RLSS will make a referral to the statutory authorities in accordance with the contract between the EPOP and the RLSS.

1. **WHISTLEBLOWING**
   1. The EPOP will encourage and enable anyone with a serious concern, to raise that issue without fear of victimisation, or disadvantage.

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

* 1. In England and Wales, 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. In England and Wales this investigation can be delegated to the RLSS.

1. **RECORDING AND STORAGE OF SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS AND CASE FILES** 
   1. Primary responsibility for the management of documents and safeguarding case files lies with the Prior Provincial. The RLSS will also ensure an accurate, auditable, and secure record of any safeguarding concerns or allegations referred to the EPOP are maintained and accessible to the Prior Provincial.

8.1.1 This record will include:

* Relevant contact details.
* Details of how/when the concern or allegation was received.
* Details of the concern itself.
* Relevant historical information.
* Identified past and present risk factors.
* Any actions or investigation undertaken including those by the English Province of the Order of Preachers and/or the RLSS and by statutory agencies.
* Rationale for actions and/or outcome of case.
  1. All records are potential evidence in a criminal proceeding, civil case or statutory/public inquiry and must be stored in a suitable and retrievable format with an auditable record of provenance and integrity.

1. **SAFER RECRUITMENT PRACTICE GUIDANCE**

* 1. The EPOP will ensure that friars, employees, and volunteers in England and Wales are subject to the appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks (including enhanced DBS) in line with both statutory and Catholic Church requirements. In Scotland, all friars, employees and volunteers will have PVG membership in line with both statutory and Catholic Church requirements.
  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 applicant is stored in a secure place and remains confidential.

* 1. Appointment to a role will not be confirmed until a satisfactory DBS Disclosure check or PVG membership, if sought, has been received, and previous employment references confirmed as being acceptable.
  2. On appointment, all new employees should be provided with all relevant policies and procedures. They should sign to say they understand all these documents, including this document.

* 1. All persons 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.

1. **POLICY REVIEW** 
   1. This policy is approved by the Provincial Council of the EPOP and will be subject to an initial review in June 2024 and then annually or sooner, where there is a significant change to the organisational infrastructure, processes or to relevant legislation.

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| Policy last updated: April 2024 | Name: |
| Date of next review: April 2025 | Date: |