

SAFEGUARDING HANDBOOK

**The Protection of Children
and Adults at Risk in the English
Province of the
Order of Preachers**

Volunteers' Version

2026



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FROM THE ACTS OF THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTER 2024

167. We declare that the English Province of the Order of Preachers is committed to maintaining a pastoral environment that is safe for all. Following the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, we do not tolerate abuse within our communities.

168. We ordain that the Provincial Safeguarding Policy of the English Province of the Order of Preachers shall apply to every friar, employee, and volunteer associated with the Province. The practical norms found in the Province Safeguarding Handbook, and the safeguarding guidance found on the CSSA website, shall also apply in England and Wales. In Scotland, the guidance found in In God's Image Version 2 and the Province Safeguarding Handbook shall apply.

CONTACT DETAILS OF THE RLSS

The RLSS can be contacted on:

TEL: 0151 5562311

safeguarding@religioussafeguarding.org

DEFINITIONS

A child is any person under the age of 18.

An 'at-risk adult' is any person aged 18 or over who has need for care and support and as a result of this need is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

Whilst university students and young adults are not children and cannot be assumed to be at risk as a norm, a particular sensitivity to safeguarding issues and vulnerabilities is also necessary when working with this age group.

1. THE FIVE 'R'S OF SAFEGUARDING:

1. **Recognise:** It is your responsibility to understand the different signs and symptoms of potential abuse, harm and neglect.
2. **Respond:** If you have a safeguarding concern, you must respond appropriately. Do not ignore the situation.
3. **Refer:** The RLSS will pass on safeguarding concerns to the relevant statutory authorities. But if you suspect somebody is under immediate or severe threat, you should immediately contact the relevant local authority or the police service on 999.
4. **Report:** Report Safeguarding concerns without delay. Confidentiality is important, so only share information with those who are part of the safeguarding process.
5. **Record:** At the time of disclosure, only make very brief notes if this is appropriate. Do not investigate. **Focus on who, what, when, and where.** Write up what was said as soon as possible. Remember to include **your name and role, the place, date, and time** of the disclosure as well as **who was present**. Use the actual words used by the person making the disclosure. Keep it factual: no interpretations or assumptions. If you have seen injuries, these should be recorded on a body map¹ that is dated and attached to your record. Do not destroy your original notes. Submit to the RLSS without delay.

¹ An example of a body map can be found at the end of this handbook.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- i. All friars, employees and volunteers in the Province must exercise prudence in their encounters with children and at-risk adults for the wellbeing of all concerned. Try to be sensitive and careful in the use of language, physical touch, and the way that your behaviour might be perceived by others.
- ii. The Dominicans working in England and Wales must abide by the requirements presented in *Caring Safely for Others: Pastoral Standards and Safe Conduct in Ministry* which has 'the full authority of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and therefore applies to every cleric, religious or diocesan, working in any parish or Church institutions within this territory'.²
- iii. Dominicans in Scotland should keep to the standards set out in the document *I God's Image v.2*, which is available online from the website of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland, bcos.org.uk.

The following is required of all those carrying out ministry in the name of the Province:

A. Behaviour

- i. Equal kindness should be showed to everyone: do not show any favouritism. Prudence should be exercised in giving gifts.
- ii. Maintain appropriate boundaries: Do not seek signs of affection or personal gifts from those to whom we minister.
- iii. People's boundaries and privacy must always be maintained.
- iv. Be aware that a power dynamic exists between a minister of religion and those he serves. Sacred acts, holy things and confidential or sensitive

² *Caring Safely for Others* p1.

information must not be abused in order to gain undue influence over another person.

- v. It is never right to manipulate another person psychologically or spiritually, or to make them feel dependent
- vi. Avoid Behaviour that can arouse feelings of shame, inadequacy, fear, and guilt in others.
- vii. No one should undertake any ministerial role while under the influence of alcohol or of any medication or substance which impairs judgement or capacity to safeguard children or at-risk adults.³

B. Language

- i. Do not make allusions or jokes of a sexual nature and do not behave in a way that might encourage such language.
- ii. Be aware of power dynamics in conversations and avoid jokes or comments about sensitive issues.
- iii. Pejorative or racist language is unacceptable.

C. Physical Contact

- i. Any gesture or touch that might appear romantic or sexual in its aim is forbidden.
- ii. Gestures of physical affection or consolation in a pastoral situation should not be initiated.
- iii. Physical violence is unacceptable.

³ *Caring Safely for Others 3.3*

D. Pastoral Spaces

- i. Each Priory should be zoned: red zones are spaces that children and at-risk adults may never enter. Orange zones are spaces that children and at-risk adults may enter with permission under certain conditions defined by the Priory's Local Safeguarding Implementation Plan. Green zones are spaces that are used to minister to children and adults at risk. White zones are public spaces.
- ii. A confessional should have a physical barrier between the penitent and the priest and the priest should be visible from the outside. If such a confessional is not available, a child's confession should be heard in view of the child's parent or guardian.⁴
- iii. One-to-one pastoral meetings should take place in rooms which have windows in the doors so that the encounter is in principle visible to others. This is for the safety of both the brethren and the people that we serve.
- iv. No one should be alone with a child in an enclosed space such as a car or a room. If this happens accidentally or unavoidably then the doors to rooms should be opened and another adult summoned as soon as possible. If a brother, employee or volunteer is obliged to be alone with a child in a car or room this should be recorded as soon as possible.⁵
- v. Residential retreats and transport to events should be organised in accordance with the guidelines on the CSSA website.

E. Electronic Communication

- i. All communication, including online, between an adult and a child or young person should take place via the most public means of

⁴ *Creating a Safe Environment* 12.

⁵ *Creating a Safe Environment* 10.

communication appropriate without jeopardising the prevailing data protection legislation.

- ii. If it is deemed that the most effective way of communicating with children is via a social networking site or email, it is advisable to set up a custom account in the name of that group, parish or body that multiple people have access to.
- iii. How the Priory intends to communicate with children should be made explicit to both the children in question and their parent or guardian. The explicit permission of a parent or guardian must be obtained before these means of communication are used.
- iv. The social media channels of the Province should be moderated by at least two DBS checked adults.
- v. For matters that are sensitive or private, online communication should be avoided due to the possibility of misunderstanding and, if used, parents should be included.⁶
- vi. All pastoral communication via email while undertaking a ministry on behalf of the Province should take place via a province email account.
- vii. For guidance on pastoral communication via electronic messaging systems please refer to the Province's social media policy.
- viii. If a child initiates contact with a friar, employee or volunteer by email, message, or social media, they may send one brief, polite response explaining that further communication is not possible without copying the child's parent or guardian into any such communication.

⁶ *Creating a Safe Environment* 8.

F. Communicating safeguarding information.

- i. Sufficient information must be available in an easily accessible manner for both children and adults to make safeguarding concerns known. The brethren are encouraged to make use of the CSSA poster in the resource section on the CSSA website.
- ii. The following paragraph should be included in any newsletters of publications:

The [Insert entity name here] operates in accordance with Statutory Safeguarding Guidance and the Safeguarding Policies of the Catholic Church in England and Wales [or Scotland] at all times. Our Parish/Lay Safeguarding Representative[s] is/are He/She/They can be contacted at [Do not use personal emails or telephone numbers]. The Local Safeguarding Friar is.....He can be contacted onAlternatively the Religious Life Safeguarding Service can be contacted on 0151 5562311or safeguarding@religioussafeguarding.org if you have any concerns.

- iii. The following safeguarding statement should be in a prominent place on the websites and noticeboards of the Province and all our communities:

The English Province of the Order of Preachers [Or the name of the Community] is firmly committed to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of children, young people, and at-risk adults. We adhere strictly to the safeguarding norms established by the Catholic Church in England and Wales and maintain a zero-tolerance stance towards all forms of abuse and maltreatment.

This commitment is rooted in the Christian belief that every individual is made in the image of God and possesses inherent dignity and worth. Each person has the right to receive care,

protection, respect, and encouragement within a safe and supportive environment.

If you have any safeguarding concerns, we strongly encourage you to come forward. Should you suspect or become aware of abuse, please do not hesitate to report immediately to the statutory authorities, contacting the police directly via 999 if someone is in immediate danger. Safeguarding concerns can also be reported to the Religious Life Safeguarding Service at 0151 556 2311 or safeguarding@religioussafeguarding.org.

We pledge full cooperation and transparency with statutory agencies to ensure allegations are promptly reported, thoroughly investigated, victims and survivors supported compassionately, and perpetrators held accountable. Together, we strive to create and sustain an environment where everyone feels safe, respected, and valued.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead for the English Province of the Order of Preachers is Fr. John Patrick Kenrick OP, who can be contacted directly at safeguarding@english.op.org.

[The name and contact of the LSF should also be included and the lay safeguarding representatives]

- iv. The names and contact details of diocesan safeguarding officers as well as independent contacts such as Child Line or the NSPCC may also be displayed.
- v. A 'Safe Spaces' poster should be displayed on the public noticeboard.
- vi. The safeguarding norms of the Priory must be communicated in such a manner that low-level concerns can be readily identified and reported by those to whom we minister.

G. Mandatory Reporting

- i. It is the Province's policy to refer all allegations of abuse to the RLSS or to an equivalent safeguarding agency in Scotland. Where appropriate, the RLSS or equivalent Scottish agency will refer information on to the relevant statutory authorities on our behalf.
- ii. If a person is in immediate danger, contact 999 before making a report to the RLSS.

3. DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE

A. What to do if someone makes a disclosure of abuse

- i. Remember that for many people, disclosing abuse for the first time is a frightening experience that requires great courage. They may have chosen to make this disclosure to you because there is something about you that they trust. It is important to honour this trust by responding with empathy and generosity.
- ii. At the time of the disclosure **only make very brief notes *if this does not interfere*** with the intimacy or flow of the disclosure. Allow the person to tell the story in their own way. Do not investigate or ask leading questions that could later compromise the evidence. Try to focus on **who, what, where, when**.
- iii. Write up your notes as soon as possible after the disclosure. **Remember to identify yourself and your role**. Ensure you **record the time, place and date** of the conversation and **who was present**.
- iv. Do not destroy your original notes.
- v. Record the actual words used; including any swear words or slang.
- vi. Depending on the age of the person disclosing, you might want to go through your written record with them afterwards to ensure that you have captured everything correctly. They may or may not wish to do this, they may wish to add their own written notes. Be led by the wishes of the person disclosing.
- vii. You can record observations but not your own interpretations or assumptions. Keep it factual.
- viii. If you have seen an injury, use a body map to record the details. Ensure that the map is dated and attached to the person's comments relating to

the injury. An example of a body map can be found at the end of this handbook.

- ix. Save and date any artwork that formed part of the disclosure. Ensure these are submitted with the written report.
- x. Submit the written record to the RLSS without delay. If you suspect someone is in imminent danger contact the police and write the report afterwards.⁷
- xi. The RLSS or the relevant bodies in Scotland will advise on how to proceed and contact the relevant statutory bodies on behalf of the Province.
- xii. Local Safeguarding Friars should consider having a stock of properly filled out 'Isaiah Journey' leaflets printed out to help those making a disclosure to understand the process that begins once a disclosure is made.

THE RLSS CAN BE CONTACTED ON:

0151 5562311 or via e mail safeguarding@religioussafeguarding.org.

B. Low-level concerns.

- i. If anyone associated with the mission of the English Province of the Order of Preachers has any concerns about behaviour that they have witnessed, or has been brought to their attention, including breaches of these safeguarding norms and the Safeguarding Policy of the Province, they should communicate their concern to the Local Safeguarding Friar, the Lay Safeguarding Representative, or to the Provincial Designated Safeguarding Lead.

⁷ Taken from the RLSS training for Safeguarding Leads.

4. PLANNING AND MANAGING EVENTS

For further information about planning and organising activities, see the ['Creating a Safer Environment'](#) Guidance and 'A brief guide to planning and organising parish or diocesan events and groups' on the CSSA website. The following principles are drawn from these documents unless otherwise indicated, the brethren in England and Wales are advised to familiarise themselves thoroughly with the CSSA's practice guidance. Brethren in Scotland should be familiar with *In God's Image* v.2.

A. Planning and risk assessment

- i. For all events and groups safeguarding risk assessment should be conducted for each event using templates provided by the Local Safeguarding Friar or Lay Safeguarding Representative. Attention should be paid to transitions from one space to another and how this might be safely managed. The impact that time and place will have on the nature of the group and its operation must also be considered. For example, transport to and from the event, and access for people with disabilities.
- ii. Regular events in the same location may be assessed for risk once and the conclusions reviewed annually.
- iii. Contingency plans should be prepared, for example, if a child is not collected because of transport disruption or another unforeseen event.

B. Leaders and helpers for running the event or group

- i. There must always be at least two adults present at every children's group for all activities. A general guide for minimum supervision ratios provided by the DfE is:

One adult leader for every 3 children under 5;

One adult leader for every 6 children aged 5-7;

One adult leader for every 10-15 children aged 8-11;

One adult leader for every 15-20 children aged over 11.

When children and young people have additional needs, an appropriate level of support must be established in a dialogue with the child's parents.

- ii. In the planning stage the roles required to run the event or group should be considered in order to establish whether a sufficient number of appropriately skilled and trained leaders have been recruited.
- iii. Leaders and volunteers should be recruited according to the safer recruitment guidelines on the CSSA website.
- iv. Leaders must be made aware of the Provincial and national safeguarding standards and respond to safeguarding situations accordingly.
- v. All adults working with children, young people and adults should understand how to respond in the event of an allegation. The 'Quick Guide -responding to allegations', 'Children – management of allegations and concerns', and 'Adults – management of allegations and concerns' are all available on the CSSA website and are useful in this regard.
- vi. Any safety incidents must be recorded.

C. Advertising, Photography and filming

- i. People should be told if filming or photography may be taking place during an event.
- ii. People should also be told what will happen to the images.
- iii. Form PHOTO1 on the CSSA website can be used to gain consent for their picture to be taken at an event.
- iv. Without the consent of a parent or guardian photographs may not be taken of children in such a way that they are identifiable.

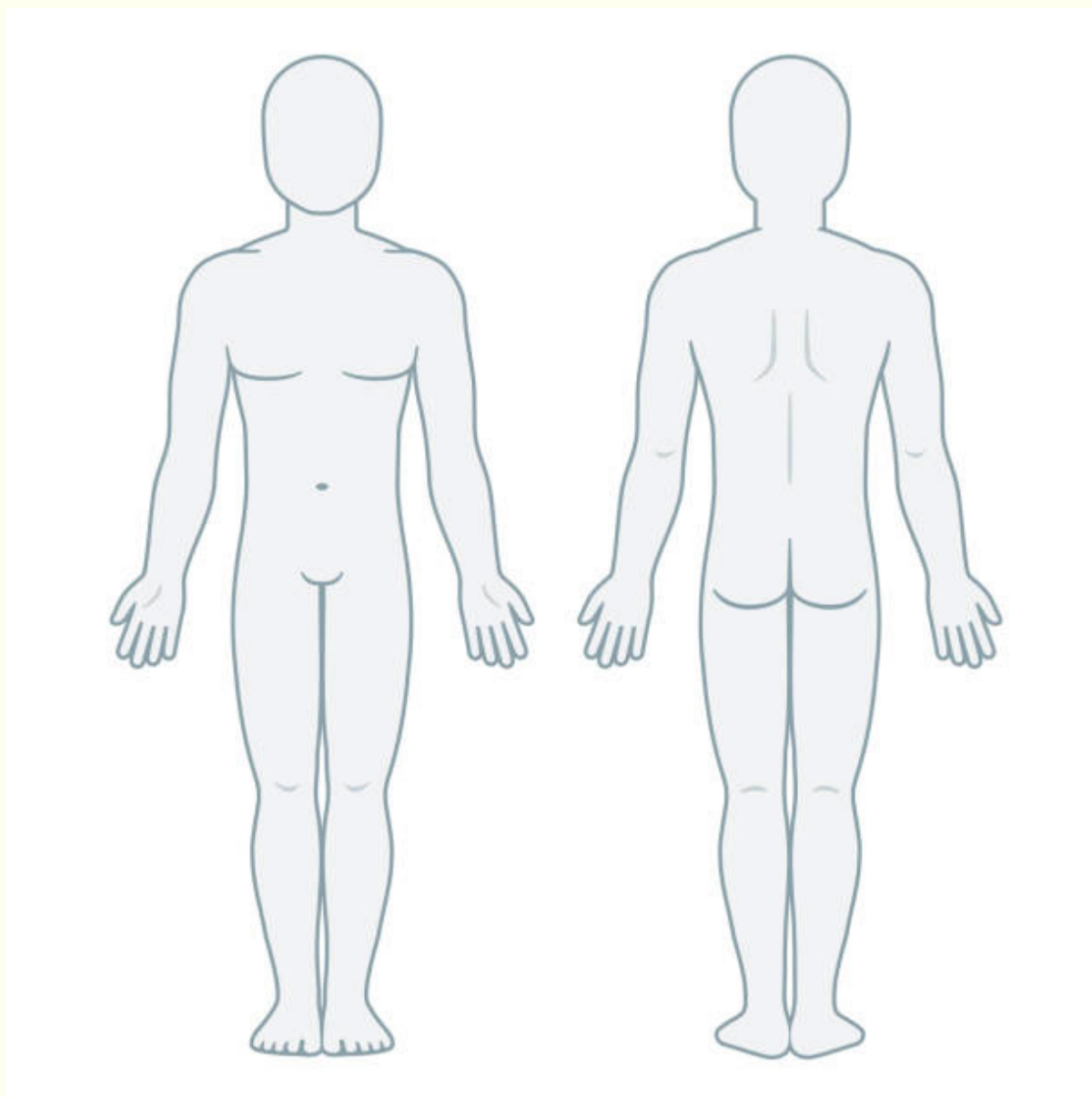
D. Consent

- i. A child may only attend events and groups organised for children if a parent or guardian has given their consent. Form CASE4 from the CSSA website is used for this purpose.
- ii. Care should be taken to ensure that any sensitive information on the consent forms is shared on a need-to-know basis only.

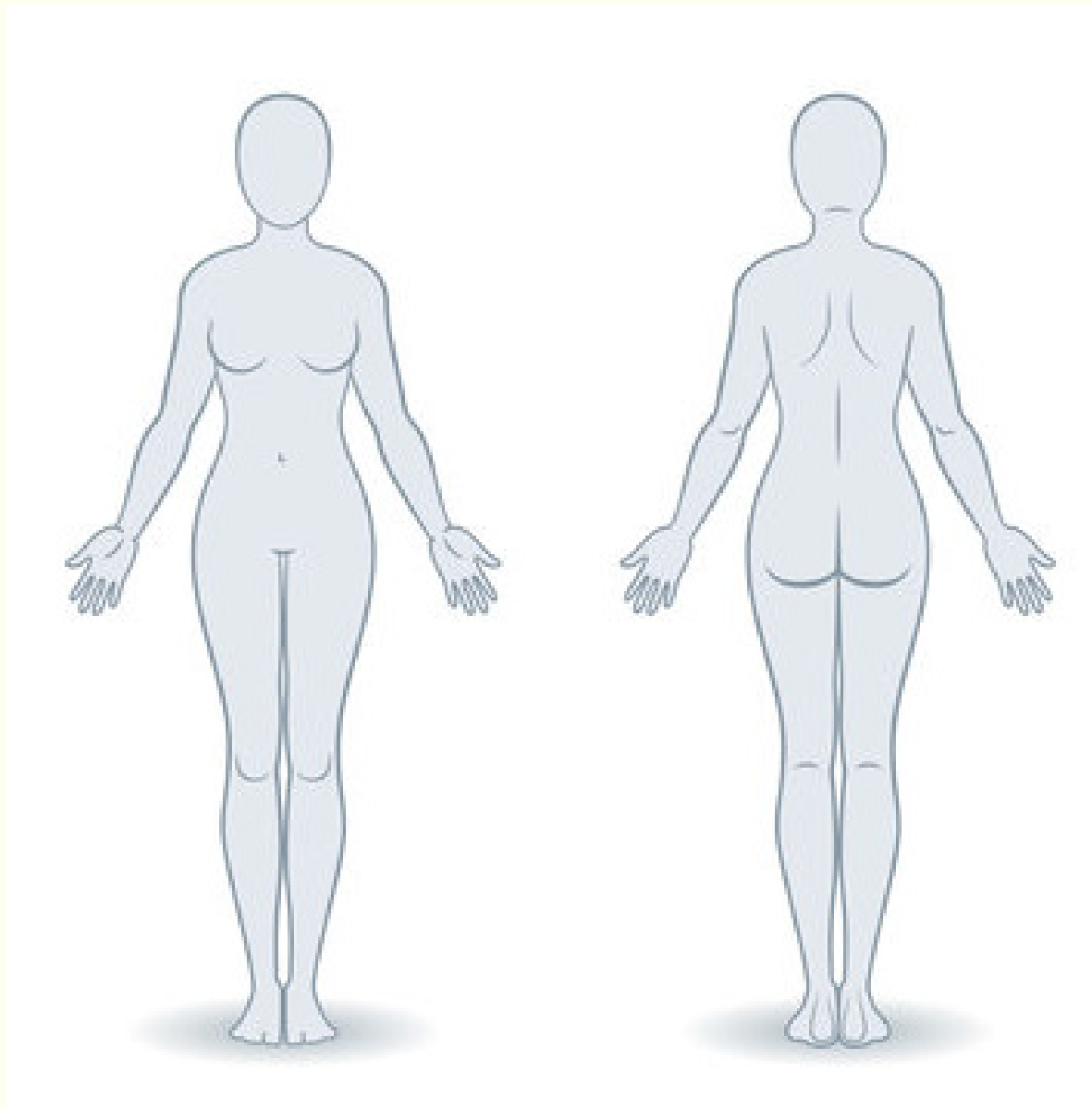
5. LONE WORKING

- i. Friars or volunteers who make pastoral visits alone, for example, a communion round or a visit to the sick, will be given particular safeguarding training in advance.
- ii. If a brother or volunteer makes a pastoral visit to someone's place of residence, the dates and times of the visit will be recorded in a manner established by each Priory.
- iii. It is encouraged that pastoral visits to people's homes to be made in pairs where possible and appropriate.
- iv. In order to protect the personal safety of all concerned, the brethren and volunteers are advised to inform another person either in person or electronically when they are making a pastoral visit and to message again when the visit is over.

APPENDIX 1: AN EXAMPLE OF A MALE BODY MAP



APPENDIX 2: AN EXAMPLE OF A FEMALE BODY MAP



APPENDIX 3: 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.

2. 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.

3. TRAINING

3.1 All friars, employees, and volunteers will undergo Safeguarding Training in relation to both Children and At-risk 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.

4. 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.

2. 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*

5. **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 at-risk adult 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 at-risk adult 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 at-risk adults.
 - 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.
2. 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 at-risk adult 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.

6. **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.

2. 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 at-risk 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 at-risk 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.

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

7. 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.

2. 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.

8. 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.
2. 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.

9. **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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.

10. **POLICY REVIEW**

1. This policy is approved by the Provincial Council of the EPOP and will be subject to review at least annually, or sooner where there is a significant change to the organisational infrastructure, processes or to relevant legislation.

Policy last updated: 22nd April 2026

Name: Nicholas Crowe OP

Date of next review: April 2027

Date: 22nd April 2026

APPENDIX 4: COMPLAINTS POLICY FOR SAFEGUARDING MATTERS

INTRODUCTION

The English Province of the Order of Preachers is firmly committed to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of children and adults at risk. We adhere strictly to the safeguarding norms established by the Catholic Church in England and Wales and maintain a zero-tolerance stance towards all forms of abuse and maltreatment.

This commitment is rooted in the Christian belief that every individual is made in the image of God and possesses inherent dignity and worth. Each person has the right to receive care, protection, respect, and encouragement within a safe and supportive environment.

This Safeguarding Complaints Policy sets out how individuals may raise concerns or complaints about the way safeguarding matters have been handled by the Province, and how those complaints will be responded to fairly, promptly, and compassionately.

1. Policy Purpose

The RLG English Province of the Order of Preachers views complaints—particularly safeguarding complaints—as an opportunity to listen carefully, learn responsibly, and improve practice, while seeking, wherever possible, to put things right for those affected.

This policy aims:

- To provide a fair, transparent, and accessible safeguarding complaints procedure
- To ensure people know how to raise a safeguarding complaint
- To ensure all staff, friars, and volunteers understand what to do when a safeguarding complaint is received

- To ensure safeguarding complaints are handled independently, fairly, and without undue delay
- To ensure that complainants are treated with respect, seriousness, and pastoral sensitivity
- To identify learning and improvement in safeguarding culture, governance, and practice
- To ensure compliance with CSSA standards, data protection law, and relevant legislation

Raising a safeguarding complaint will not prejudice anyone's standing, formation, pastoral care, or support within the organisation or Province.

2. Scope of This Policy

This policy applies to:

- Complaints **about the handling of safeguarding concerns**, including:
 - delays,
 - failures in process,
 - decision-making,
 - communication,
 - conduct of those responsible for safeguarding;
- Complaints about **safeguarding-related behaviour** where the safeguarding process itself is being challenged.

This policy **does not replace** the Safeguarding Policy. Safeguarding concerns themselves will always be managed under the Safeguarding Policy.

This policy applies where a person believes:

- a safeguarding concern was **not handled appropriately**, or
- the safeguarding process caused **additional harm or injustice**.

Complaints from staff should be directed to the **Grievance Policy**, unless they concern safeguarding process failures.

3. Definition of a Safeguarding Complaint

A safeguarding complaint is:

Any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about the way safeguarding matters have been handled.

This may include concerns that the organisation or Province has:

- failed to act in a timely or appropriate safeguarding manner;
- failed to follow safeguarding policy or CSSA standards;
- acted unfairly, insensitively, or without due process;
- failed to communicate clearly or respectfully;
- mishandled information or confidentiality;
- failed to manage conflicts of interest appropriately.

4. Concerns and Complaints

Where possible, informal concerns should be raised as soon as possible so that if there are any shortcomings or problems these may be resolved quickly. However, individuals are not required to raise concerns informally and may proceed directly to a formal safeguarding complaint.

Safeguarding complaints will always be treated seriously, regardless of the complainant's role or relationship to the organisation.

5. Confidentiality

All safeguarding complaints will be handled sensitively and confidentially.

Complainants will normally be asked to provide their name and contact details to allow proper investigation. Anonymous complaints will be considered where possible.

We aim to protect whistleblowers' identities, but confidentiality **cannot be guaranteed** where disclosure is required by law or safeguarding duty, including disclosure to:

- statutory authorities or police;
- courts or legal proceedings;
- safeguarding bodies or inspectors (including CSSA);
- regulators or relevant professional bodies.

6. How to Make a Safeguarding Complaint

Safeguarding complaints may be made to the Designated Safeguarding Lead of the Province Fr. John Patrick Kenrick by:

1. Email: safeguarding@english.op.org
2. Post: The Designated Safeguarding Lead, Holy Cross Priory, 45 Wellington Street, LE1 6HW.

Alternatively complaints can be made to the Religious Life Safeguarding Service by:

1. Telephone: 0151 5562311
2. Email: safeguarding@religioussafeguarding.org

Within **5 working days**, the complainant will receive acknowledgement confirming:

- receipt of the complaint,

- who is handling it,
- the expected timescale,
- a copy of this policy if you have contacted the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The RLSS have their own policy.

7. Complaints Procedure

Stage One – Initial Review and Investigation

- The complaint will be recorded
- A reviewer will be appointed who has not been involved in the safeguarding decisions being complained about.
- The relationship of the complainant to the organisation (e.g. survivor, friar, safeguarding lead) will be recorded.
- Where appropriate, further clarification or information may be requested.
- Relevant individuals may be informed and given an opportunity to respond.

A written response will normally be provided within **30 working days**, setting out:

- findings,
- decisions reached,
- actions taken or proposed,
- learning identified,
- reasons for outcomes.

Stage Two – Appeal

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can escalate their complaint to the Prior Provincial Fr. Nicholas Crowe OP for further review. The Prior Provincial can be contacted by:

1. email: prior.provincial@english.op.org
2. Post: The Prior Provincial, St. Dominic's Priory, Southampton Road, London, NW5 4LB.

The review will be conducted by:

- the Prior Provincial, **or**
- a delegated senior friar or suitably independent person not previously involved.
- The reviewer may uphold, vary, or overturn the original outcome, or recommend further action.
- A written outcome will normally be provided within **30 working days**.

Stage Three – External Review (CSSA)

If dissatisfaction remains, the complainant may escalate the matter to the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA).

- The CSSA does not re-investigate safeguarding matters,
- but may review how safeguarding and complaints procedures were followed.

Information on what a review by the CSSA involves can be found here:

https://catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/contact-us-and-other-information/complaints-against-the-church/#tab_2

The CSSA can be contacted by:

1. Telephone: 0207 901 1920

2. Email: qualityassurance@catholicsafeguarding.org.uk

3. Post : Quality Assurance Team, Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency, c/o 39 Eccleston Square, London, SW1V 1BX

8. Independence and Conflicts of Interest

Where safeguarding complaints involve:

- senior friars,
- those in authority over the complainant,
- or situations giving rise to conflicts of interest,

the organisation or Province will ensure independent or external oversight, which may include commissioning an independent reviewer.

9. Withdrawal of a Complaint

A complaint may be withdrawn in writing at any stage. However, the organisation or Province may continue to consider the matter where:

- there is ongoing safeguarding risk, or
- failure to do so may cause harm.

10. Data Protection and Records

All safeguarding complaints will be handled in accordance with:

- data protection legislation,
- CSSA requirements,
- the organisation's or Province's records retention policy.

Records will be:

- stored securely,
- accessed only on a need-to-know basis,
- shared only where lawful, necessary, and proportionate.

11. Learning, Accountability, and Oversight

The organisation or Province will:

- review safeguarding complaints regularly at senior level;
- identify themes, risks, and learning;
- implement improvements to safeguarding policy, formation, and practice;
- report appropriately to governance bodies and inspectors.

12. External Advice

If internal stages are exhausted, complainants may seek independent advice from:

- a solicitor
- Citizens Advice,
- the Charity Commission.

This should normally be done within **one month** of the final internal outcome.

13. Review of This Policy

This policy will be reviewed:

- every **two years** at the Provincial Chapter and Interchapter;

- following serious safeguarding incidents;
- in response to changes in law or CSSA standards.

Final Statement

Safeguarding complaints are often raised at great personal cost. The organisation and Province commit themselves to responding with seriousness, humility, integrity, and pastoral responsibility.

Approved by: Provincial Council

Date of Approval: 22nd April 2026

Review Date: April 2028

APPENDIX 5: WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY – SAFEGUARDING MATTERS

1. Introduction

Members of the English Province of the Order of Preachers (EPOP) and employees, associates, volunteers and all who collaborate in our mission—are often the first to become aware of situations where safeguarding practice or conduct may fall short of the standards expected in the Church and in our Order. They may feel reluctant to speak up because they fear disloyalty to the brethren, disruption to community life, or possible repercussions.

The EPOP is committed to fostering a culture of truth, justice, and accountability consonant with the traditions of our Order. Silence in the face of wrongdoing is contrary to our mission as preachers of Truth. For this reason, this whistleblowing policy exists to encourage and enable any person with a serious safeguarding concern to come forward without fear of victimisation or disadvantage.

This policy applies to **safeguarding-related whistleblowing concerns** within the EPOP and its associated apostolates.

2. Defining Whistleblowing

“Whistleblowing” refers to raising a concern—internally or externally—about malpractice, wrongdoing, or illegal acts related to safeguarding within the life or ministry of the Order. This includes acts or omissions that endanger or compromise the safety and dignity of children or adults at risk.

3. Policy Statement

The EPOP is committed to:

- conducting its mission with integrity, transparency, and accountability;
- maintaining the highest possible safeguarding standards in every ministry;

- promoting good practice among friars, employees, volunteers, and collaborators;
- fostering an environment in which people can raise safeguarding concerns freely and responsibly.

The Province recognises that there may be occasions where serious concerns arise. Individuals who raise concerns in good faith will be supported, and their disclosures handled with appropriate sensitivity and confidentiality.

No one who raises a safeguarding concern in good faith will suffer harassment, victimisation, or any detrimental treatment. Any attempt to penalise or silence a whistleblower contradicts the spirit of the Order and will be treated seriously.

Investigations arising from whistleblowing concerns stand apart from any concurrent internal processes (e.g. disciplinary, grievance procedures) unless otherwise required.

4. Purpose of this Policy

This policy aims to:

- encourage confidence in raising safeguarding concerns, and to ensure that concerns are promptly acted upon;
- provide a clear procedure for reporting such concerns;
- ensure that individuals raising concerns receive appropriate feedback, subject to legal and confidentiality limits;
- reassure friars, employees, and volunteers that they will be protected from reprisals when acting in good faith.

5. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all:

- Dominican friars (solemnly professed, simply professed, novices, and students),
- employees of the Province,
- volunteers and pastoral collaborators,
- members of Dominican apostolates (e.g., chaplaincies, parishes, retreat centres, schools).

It covers safeguarding concerns relating to children and adults at risk, and other forms of malpractice relevant to safeguarding practice within the Dominican apostolate.

6. Protection for Individuals Using This Policy

The Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) protects employees making “qualifying disclosures.” While volunteers and religious do not fall under all provisions of PIDA, the Province undertakes to treat all disclosures **in the spirit of the Act**.

A qualifying disclosure is one made in good faith where the person reasonably believes that malpractice has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur, including:

- criminal offences (e.g., abuse, financial fraud related to safeguarding matters);
- breaches of safeguarding policy or statutory duties;
- negligence or behaviour placing children or adults at risk;
- concealment of any such wrongdoing.

The whistleblower does **not** need to produce proof; reasonable belief is sufficient.

Anyone making a disclosure in good faith is entitled to protection from dismissal, detriment, or retaliation. Mistaken disclosures, made honestly and responsibly, will not result in disciplinary action.

7. Untrue or Malicious Allegations

If an allegation is made in good faith but is not substantiated, no action will be taken against the whistleblower. However, deliberately false, malicious, or frivolous allegations may lead to disciplinary action according to the LCO, employees handbook or MOU.

8. Non-Whistleblowing Concerns

Other concerns should follow the relevant policy, including:

- The safeguarding policy and the Provincial Safeguarding Handbook.
- grievance or complaint procedures;
- disciplinary processes;
- harassment and bullying policies.

Whistleblowing should only be used for serious safeguarding-related concerns as defined above.

9. How to Raise a Concern

Concerns should be raised **as early as possible**, ideally in writing. If verbal, the recipient will record the concern.

A written concern should include:

- relevant background, context, and dates;
- individuals involved;
- description of the issue and why it causes concern;

- a clear statement that it is raised under the whistleblowing policy;
- indication of whether confidentiality is requested.

Anonymous disclosures will be considered, though they may limit the ability to investigate or provide feedback.

10. Who Should Concerns Be Raised With?

Concerns should ordinarily be raised with:

- Your Prior, Parish Priest, Local Safeguarding Friar or Lay Safeguarding Representative, or line manager unless they may be implicated.

If the above are implicated, you can contact:

- The Prior Provincial, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or the Safeguarding Trustee
- The Provincial Bursar (for concerns about administrative or financial malpractice relevant to safeguarding).

If Safeguarding personnel are implicated, you may seek confidential advice from the **Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA)** or the **Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS)**.

Contact details for all safeguarding offices are available through the Provincial website or CSSA.

11. Response to Concerns Raised

Actions taken will depend on the nature of the concern. Possibilities include:

- internal safeguarding investigation;
- referral to statutory authorities (Police, Social Services);
- consideration under disciplinary processes (for friars: according to the LCO and canon law);

- canonical procedures overseen by the Prior Provincial;
- notification to insurers and the Charity Commission;
- mediation or corrective action where appropriate.

Initial enquiries will determine whether a full investigation is required. Some matters may be resolved without formal investigation, but urgent action will be taken where necessary.

If legal or disciplinary proceedings arise, the whistleblower may be asked to provide evidence, and appropriate support will be offered.

Subject to legal constraints, the whistleblower will be informed that the matter has been addressed and, where possible, of the general outcome.

12. If You Are Not Satisfied

If you believe your concern has not been properly addressed, you may escalate it to:

- **The Prior Provincial,**
- **The Provincial Bursar, or**
- **The CSSA** (for external oversight).

Conclusion

This policy reflects the Dominican commitment to truth, justice, and the safeguarding of all God's people. The Province encourages all who share in our mission to speak up courageously and responsibly whenever safeguarding standards may be at risk.

Approved by: Provincial Council

Date: 22nd April 2026

Review by: April 2028

