

SVP SAFEGUARDING POLICY 2019

Values Led

The Society's Safeguarding Policy Statement 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.

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.

While this commitment extends to everyone we come into contact with, it also recognises the need for particular 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.

These beneficiaries may 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. The best interests of children and adults at risk will always be of paramount importance.

Code of Conduct

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

Therefore, our Code of Conduct makes explicit commitments that the personal and professional conduct of anyone who carries out work for, or represents the SVP including members, staff, trustees, volunteers and contractors ('our representatives') is, and is seen to be of the highest standard. Our Code of Conduct strongly condemns all kinds of abuse and exploitation, including sexual exploitation and abuse, and makes clear that the SVP will not tolerate any form of such behaviour and will act swiftly and decisively to stop such behaviour.

Unified Approach

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 CSAS (Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service) policies and procedures.

With reference to our twinning work, Society 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).

As each twinnage 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.

This document will apply if SVP policy is more stringent than local legislation.

The SVP will always report allegations of abuse to relevant local and international statutory agencies to ensure that they are dealt with promptly and properly and where appropriate, perpetrators are held to account. The Society will act in an open and transparent and accountable way in working in partnership with social care services, the Police, health agencies, probation services and other relevant agencies.

Key Legislation

The Society is fully committed to working actively and constructively within the framework set out in the Care Act 2014, The General Data Protection Legislation 2016, The Data Protection Act 2018, Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and other associated statutory and good practice guidance. Accordingly, we will liaise closely and openly with statutory agencies including police, local councils, health agencies, probation providers and other relevant agencies to ensure that any concerns or allegations of abuse that are raised are promptly reported and properly responded to, victims supported and perpetrators held to account.

With regard to safeguarding children with whom we come into contact with, even where no statutory obligation exists, our policies and procedures will be guided by The Children's Acts 1989 and 2004, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and other associated statutory and good practice guidance.

Aim

The aim of this policy is to provide a safe environment for children, young persons, adults at risk and everyone who comes into contact with the SVP and to give confidence to those in the Society to allow appropriate healthy and supportive relationships to flourish without fear.

Scope

This policy and accompanying procedures cover all Conferences, District and Central Councils, the National Council and National Board of Trustees, as well as any SVP partner project overseas whether under the direct or indirect control of the Society in England and Wales but also governs our support for other National Councils through the Twinnage program. Its remit includes both auxiliary and full members as well as volunteers, paid staff and contractors in Community Support Projects and Special Works including children's camps who may come into contact with children or adults at risk.

These policies make 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.

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.

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

Accountability

The Board of Trustees is ultimately responsible for the effective implementation of all safeguarding policies and procedures and for providing adequate resource throughout the Society for effective safeguarding.

Safer Recruitment

It is not easy to identify those who are likely to abuse children, young people or adults at risk.

The Society recognizes 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 and/or are otherwise unsuited to work with them.

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.

Training

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

All new 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.

Appropriate training/information will cover policies, procedures, awareness and skills in safeguarding, creating safe environments, safe recruitment and recognising, responding to and reporting concerns and allegations of maltreatment.

Support for Victims and Survivors of Abuse

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

Support will be offered to those seeking it so far as is reasonably practicable, taking into account an assessment of needs, the availability of resources and all the circumstances.

Whistle Blowing

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.



July 16, 2019

Helen O'Shea
National President
St. Vincent de Paul Society (England and Wales)