

Safeguarding Policy:

The Missionary Society of St Columban – Region of Britain, 2023.

1. POLICY OVERVIEW.

- 1.1 The Missionary Society of St. Columban is an international body with an international safeguarding policy (the “Policy and Guidelines of the Missionary Society of Saint Columban on the Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults”, 2023). The present document relates specifically to the Region of Britain but has been drawn up within the context of the Society-wide policy and guidelines.
- 1.2 The policy document also forms part of the “One Church Approach” to safeguarding, which was adopted by the Catholic Church of England and Wales following the government’s 2018 Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and the subsequent Church reviews of its safeguarding structures and practices in 2020. Under the One Church Approach, the Columbans are committed to implementing these changes and ensuring that we can respond promptly and compassionately to victims and survivors, while also remembering our responsibilities towards accused persons and proven perpetrators.
- 1.3 The aforementioned changes have been developed for Religious by the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS). This body provides the standard safeguarding policy for its constituent members, together with services and advice when issues arise.
- 1.4 The Missionary Society of St. Columban is committed to safeguarding all children (minors) and adults (especially vulnerable adults). For the Society, this commitment directly relates to the fact that we are all made in the image of God and the Church’s common belief in the preciousness, dignity and uniqueness of every human life. We start from the principle that each person has a right to expect the highest level of protection, love, encouragement and respect.
- 1.5 For present purposes, a “child” (or “minor”) is defined as anyone who has not yet attained his or her 18th. Birthday.
- 1.6 A “vulnerable adult” (or “adult at risk”) is defined as a person who is 18 years or over and who is – or who may be – in need of community care or health care services by reason of a mental or other disability or illness, or who is – or may be – unable to take care of him/herself, or who is unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or exploitation.

2. SCOPE.

- 2.1 This policy applies to all within The Missionary Society of St. Columban (see para. 4.4), regardless of their roles or the activities they undertake.
- 2.2 It is the responsibility of all within The Missionary Society of St. Columban to prevent abuse, whether by action or omission. “Abuse” in this policy refers to: physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, organisational, material, psychological, financial, domestic or verbal abuse, and also to neglect and self-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 The Safeguarding Lead, the Safeguarding Board / Board of Trustees, and the Regional Director will undergo safeguarding training relevant to their roles.

3.2 All Columbans will undertake yearly training updates, usually during the Annual General Meeting.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

4.1 The Missionary Society of St. Columban Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees has a duty to maintain appropriate governance and oversight of safeguarding in line with this policy and national guidelines. Certain functions of the Board will be delegated to others within the Missionary Society of St. Columban, as indicated below. (Note: for the purpose of this policy, the Board of Trustees comprises the "Safeguarding Board".)

4.2 The Regional Director

The Regional Director is responsible for ensuring appropriate policies, procedures and best practice are in place for the effective delivery of a robust safeguarding service. Certain functions of the Regional Director will be delegated to members, as indicated below.

4.3 The Safeguarding Lead

The Safeguarding Lead has direct oversight of The Missionary Society of St. Columban's safeguarding policy and guidance. This includes oversight of the relationship with - and input to/from - the work of the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS).

4.4 All Other Roles

All Members of the Society, lay missionaries, lay staff and volunteers (be they clerical volunteers or volunteers engaged in outreach work) have an obligation to ensure they know how to respond to safeguarding concerns by making themselves familiar with the content of this policy, the procedures contained within it and any other associated policies/procedures. All will have the appropriate level of training, including guidance as to how to respond to people who may have safeguarding issues or who are trying to pass safeguarding information to the correct person.

4.5 General

Everyone involved in the work of The Missionary Society of St. Columban who has reason to believe they might be the subject of a safeguarding issue, have a duty to disclose to the Safeguarding Lead or Regional Director the concerns that have been raised about them. This policy applies to all within the Missionary Society of St. Columban, regardless of their roles or the activities they undertake.

5 PRACTICE GUIDANCE.

5.1 Action must be taken if a concern is raised that a child or adult is suffering or is likely to be suffering from significant harm. 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 vulnerable adult at risk of harm from someone else.
- Concerns over someone's mental capacity.

5.2 Action must also be taken in line with the Church's mandatory reporting policy. This means appropriate action must be taken if there are reasonable grounds to believe that someone who holds any role within the Church is: going to commit / has committed a crime; is going to cause / has caused harm; poses a risk or is otherwise unsuitable to work in their role.

6 PROCEDURE.

6.1 If The Missionary Society of St. Columban becomes aware of a concern as detailed in Section 5, or any other safeguarding issue, it should contact the RLSS Safeguarding Team, pass the concern and all records of it to them immediately and ensure that the person who made the Society aware of the concern knows the Society is doing this.

6.1.1 The RLSS will:

- Ensure that 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 within 24 hours.
- Complete the safeguarding paperwork and ensure that appropriate records are kept of all phone calls, meetings and discussions in relation to the case.
- Update the relevant people at The Missionary Society of St. Columban and offer any support needed.

7 "WHISTLEBLOWING".

7.1 The Missionary Society of St. Columban will encourage and enable anyone with a safeguarding concern to report the concern, without fear of victimisation or disadvantage, to the Safeguarding Lead or the Regional Director.

7.1.1 If that concern is regarding malpractice, illegal acts or omissions at The Missionary Society of St. Columban, or at any other religious institution in relation to safeguarding, then the RLSS should be made aware of it.

7.2 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 corresponding action. Written feedback will be provided, including a rationale documenting the reasons why identified actions have been taken.

8 RECORDING AND STORAGE OF SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS AND CASE FILES.

- 8.1 The Missionary Society of St. Columban has a responsibility to ensure that all the case files which it holds are accurate, up to date and stored securely. The person ultimately responsible for the files is the Regional Director.

- 8.2 Where the RLSS is responsible for the management of a case, the RLSS will ensure that records are accurate, auditable and secure, and that all records of any safeguarding concerns or allegations referred to it will be properly maintained.

9 SAFER RECRUITMENT PRACTICE GUIDANCE.

- 9.1 The Missionary Society of St. Columban will ensure that Society Members, lay missionaries, lay staff and volunteers are subject to the appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks (including enhanced DBS), in line with both statutory and Catholic Church requirements.

- 9.2 Appointments will be based on the person's experience, skills and ability to meet the set criteria and job specification for the particular role. It is essential to ensure that all documents relating to the applicants are kept in a secure place and are confidential.

- 9.3 Where appropriate, appointment to a role will not be confirmed until a satisfactory DBS disclosure check has been received and previous employment references confirmed as being acceptable. On appointment, new employees should be provided with all relevant policies and procedures, including a copy of this document (with their responsibilities in it highlighted).


- 9.4 Anyone who is 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.

- 10.1 This policy is approved by the Missionary Society of St. Columban's Board of Trustees in DECEMBER 2023. It will be subject to an initial review in January 2024 and then every 3 years, or sooner, if a need is identified.

Policy last updated: 7th December 2023

Date of next review: 31st January 2027

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Date: 18/3/24