

**CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT OF THE  
SOCIETY OF AFRICAN MISSIONS  
IRISH PROVINCE**

This statement has been prepared to comply with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015 and is derived from *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*.

**STATEMENT**

As a constituent member of the Catholic Church in Ireland, we recognise and uphold the dignity and rights of all children, are committed to ensuring their safety and well-being and will work in partnership with parents/ guardians to do this. We recognise each child as a gift from God, and we value and encourage the participation of children in all activities that enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development.

All SMA personnel (including clergy, staff and volunteers) have a responsibility to safeguard children through promoting their welfare, health and development in a safe and caring environment that supports their best interests and prevents abuse.

**NATURE OF SERVICE AND PRINCIPLES TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN FROM HARM**

The Society of African Missions as a constituent member of the Catholic Church in Ireland exists to promote the teachings of the Catholic Church. This includes the following ministry with children, as defined in *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*:

- Parish Ministry
- Church Ministry
- Youth Ministry including Summer Camps
- Parish Novenas
- Justice and Peace Ministry
- Mission Promotion
- Retreats

As outlined in *Safeguarding Children 2016: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland* we are committed to the following principles:

**Mandatory reporting**

Each of us has a duty to notify the statutory authorities of suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations that a child is being or has been abused:

- physically
- emotionally
- sexually
- through neglect

Suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations may relate to possible abuse by a member of Church personnel, but they can also relate to incidents in the child's family, or elsewhere in the community.

**Caring for the welfare of all children and the adults who work with them.**

Measures to create and maintain environments that are safe for children that prevent abuse, and that create nurturing, caring conditions within the SMA for children and the adults who work with them, will continue to be strengthened and reviewed. This will be done through training support, communications and quality assurance.

## **Responding appropriately to child protection suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations.**

Anyone who brings any suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation of current or past abuse of a child to the notice of the SMA will be responded to sensitively, respectfully, actively and in a timely manner, in line with statutory Child Protection procedures and Church requirements.

All suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations that reach the threshold for reporting to the statutory authorities (apart from those received in the Sacrament of Reconciliation) will be reported to the appropriate statutory authorities. This will be done irrespective of the status of the person (lay, cleric or religious) who is suspected of having been abusive to a child.

If the allegation relates to a lay member of SMA personnel, in addition to notifying the statutory authorities, the allegation must be reported to the Church authority.

If the allegation relates to a cleric or religious, in addition to notifying the statutory authorities, the allegation must also be reported to the SMA authority and the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

## **All SMA personnel will cooperate with the statutory authorities in all cases.**

In responding to complaints of child sexual abuse relating to clergy and all those in forms of consecrated life, SMA authorities will act in accordance with the requirements of civil law and canon law, and so will respect the rights and uphold the safeguards afforded in these, both to the complainant and respondent.

## **Caring pastorally for complainants and other affected persons.**

Those who have suffered child abuse by SMA personnel will receive a compassionate and just response, and will be offered appropriate pastoral care, counselling and support as they seek to rebuild their lives. An appropriate pastoral response to the family, parish, congregation or order and to the wider community will be provided, with due regard to the right of privacy of those directly involved, and to the administration of justice.

## **Caring pastorally for respondents and other affected persons.**

The SMA in its response to suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations of child sexual abuse will respect the rights under civil law and canon law of an accused cleric or religious or other Church personnel. A legal presumption of innocence will be maintained during the statutory and Church inquiry processes. As the processes develop, additional assessment, therapy and support services may be offered to the respondent.

The SMA will take responsibility for ensuring that any cleric or religious who is considered to constitute a danger to children is managed according to a risk management plan.

All requisite steps will be taken to restore the good name and reputation of anyone who has been wrongly accused of abusing a child.

Respondents belong to families and diocesan or religious communities. The SMA will be mindful of the need to provide support to members of families and communities affected by the respondent's changed situation.



## Risk Assessment

The table below sets out the identified risks to the safety of children and young people involved in Church activities in the Society of African Missions and the steps taken to minimise the risks of abuse.

<i><b>Risk Identified</b></i>	<i><b>Procedure in place to manage Risk Identified</b></i>
<p><i><b>Those that work with children are unsafe to do so</b></i></p> <p><i>Indicator 1.1</i></p>	Procedures for Recruitment include obligatory vetting. Appropriate procedures are in place for clergy on vacation / returning from Mission work abroad as well as visiting clergy.
<p><i><b>Those that work with children behave inappropriately towards them</b></i></p> <p><i>Indicator 1.2</i></p>	All clergy, staff and volunteers receive ongoing training and support on a planned basis. Code of Behaviour is in place.
<p><i><b>Children who use our service do not understand the roles and responsibilities in place to encourage positive behaviour</b></i></p> <p><i>Indicator 1.2</i></p>	Code of Behaviour, guidance and training in place for clergy, staff and volunteers on promoting positive behaviour.
<p><i><b>The environment in which work with children is facilitated fails to meet effective safeguarding practice</b></i></p> <p><i>Indicator 1.4</i></p>	Procedures and training in place for Creating a Safe Environment for Children including but not limited to: preventing bullying; safe care; dealing with accidents; maintaining adequate supervision ratios; whistle blowing; complaints; hazard assessment of activities; use of technology.
<p><i><b>External groups who use Church property are unsafe to do so</b></i></p> <p><i>Indicator 1.5</i></p>	All external groups must provide evidence of having a Child Safeguarding Policy and an up-to-date Insurance policy.
<p><i><b>Those who wish to behave dangerously or unethically towards children are able to do so</b></i></p> <p><i>Indicator 1.6</i></p>	Code of Behaviour, Whistle-Blowing Policy, Complaints Procedure, Vetting Procedure and Training Policy are in place.
<p><i><b>Those who wish to exploit children through the use of digital media in our ministries are able to do so</b></i></p> <p><i>Indicator 1.9</i></p>	Policies and procedures are in place for the use of digital media.
<p><i><b>SMA personnel fail to report an allegation, suspicion, concern or knowledge appropriately</b></i></p> <p><i>Indicator 2.1</i></p>	All clergy, staff and volunteers receive on-going training in recognising, responding and reporting are in place. Clergy receive a full day's training every three years.

<p><b><i>SMA personnel fail to understand their responsibilities to safeguard children</i></b></p> <p><i>Indicators 5.1-5.4</i></p>	<p>The SMA provides safeguarding training for all clergy, staff and volunteers who have contact with children.</p>
<p><b><i>Children and their parents do not understand the Church's policy, procedures and structure to safeguard children</i></b></p> <p><i>Indicators 5.5 and 6.1-6.4</i></p>	<p>Procedures are in place to ensure that children and their parents / guardians who are involved in activities receive information through registration, policy leaflets and website.</p>
<p><b><i>The procedures for safeguarding children fail to be implemented</i></b></p> <p><i>Indicators 7.1-7.3</i></p>	<p>The SMA has structures in place to monitor compliance. An annual Safeguarding Audit is undertaken, the Safeguarding Committee reviews the implementation of robust practice, while the Provincial Leader and the Provincial Council receive regular reports from the DLP.</p>
<p><b><i>The Church authority fails to ensure the appointment of a relevant person and maintain a list of mandated persons</i></b></p> <p><i>Indicators 1.1,2.1 and 6.1</i></p>	<p>The relevant person is the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for the SMA Irish Province. Mandated lists are kept in each House and by the DLP. These are updated in September of each year.</p>

## **Implementation**

The Society of African Missions is committed to safeguarding children through the implementation of *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*. This Child Safeguarding Statement and our practice supports our desire to keep children safe from harm while in our ministries. As part of our annual audit against the relevant indicators of the child safeguarding standards, we will review the effectiveness of our practice as outlined in this statement and will revise, as appropriate.

Signed



Church Authority



Date

For any queries relating to this statement please contact  
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