

**SOCIETY of AFRICAN MISSIONS
IRISH PROVINCE**

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults



Interim Guidelines

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Section 1 – Introduction

The Society of African Missions (hereafter SMA) recognises that there are many people with whom SMA personnel have contact who require special care and attention. The SMA values and encourages the participation of vulnerable adults in all liturgies and activities that enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development. We believe that all SMA personnel, including priests, staff and volunteers must carry out their ministry respecting the rights of the individual in line with gospel values and human rights legislation.

The SMA recognises and upholds the dignity and rights of vulnerable adults and is committed to safeguarding all our members. The guidance set out in this document provides a framework of how it is recommended that the SMA ministers to vulnerable adults. It identifies what we mean by the term and highlights values and principles which should underpin such necessary work.

These guidelines apply to all members of the Society, staff and volunteers, and adhere to current practice and guidance in the Republic of Ireland. They should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland both of which are available on the SMA website.

The SMA, through these guidelines, sets out to protect vulnerable adults from harm and exploitation and to uphold their rights by acting in their best interests and with their consent.

This is an Interim document. It will be reviewed and amended by the SMA during its first year of operation (15 February, 2020 to 15 February, 2021). It will then be reviewed and amended, as required, but at least every three years, to take account of any major changes including legislative or policy changes in Safeguarding.

Section 2 – Guiding Principles

2.1 Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Statement

The SMA is committed to Safeguarding as an integral component of the life and ministry of the Society and recognises that we have a special responsibility towards all vulnerable people who are members of our faith community.

We are committed to creating a safe, caring and compassionate environment for all but especially those defined as "vulnerable".

2.2 Underpinning Principles

The principles which underpin our work with vulnerable people are based on gospel values and are rooted in respect for the rights of vulnerable adults who are entitled to:

- To live in safety and be free from abuse or fear of abuse by others
- Be treated with respect, kindness and understanding
- Be protected from all forms of harm and exploitation.
- Have their emotional, physical and sexual integrity respected.
- Have their ethnicity and gender respected

- Be supported in making their own decisions
- Have allegations of abuse investigated
- Have their consent¹ sought and taken into consideration in notifying civil authorities
- Be offered guidance in seeking help and counselling
- Be supported in receiving the sacraments and spiritual direction

In order to ensure that these principles are embedded in its ministry the SMA will induct, train and support those who minister to vulnerable adults.

The training will include knowledge around abuse and exploitation of vulnerable adults and how to work safely, ensuring that any potential risks to both the vulnerable adult and the ministering person are recognised and managed.

The SMA Guidelines will ensure the welfare of vulnerable adults by:

- Making the welfare of the vulnerable adult a central element of safeguarding.
- Ensuring that these guidelines are supported by robust procedures.
- Implementing the existing procedures for safe recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers to work with vulnerable adults.
- Providing a Code of Conduct in on-going formation materials for SMA personnel whose ministry brings them into contact with vulnerable adults.
- Have clear procedures for dealing with and reporting concerns and allegations of abuse.
- Managing personal information and sensitive data, confidentiality and the sharing of information in line with legal requirements.
- Establishing and maintaining links with statutory and voluntary agencies / organisations to ensure "best practice" throughout the Society.

2.3 Values and Principles

SMA practice and Safeguarding Guidelines are underpinned and guided by a number of values and principles as outlined below:

- Access to information and knowledge
- Choice
- Consent
- Confidentiality
- Dignity and Respect
- Equality and Cultural Diversity
- Independence
- Privacy
- Safety

¹ See section 2.4 on Consent with reference to *capacity to consent*

2.4 Consent and Capacity

It is important that clergy, staff and volunteers understand the issues of consent and capacity in order to establish an individual's ability to give meaningful consent.

Consent is a clear indication of a willingness to participate in an activity or to accept a service. The vulnerable adult may signal consent verbally, by gesture, by willing participation or in writing. Decisions with more serious consequences will require more formal consideration of consent and appropriate steps should always be taken to ensure that consent is valid.

Clergy, staff and volunteers should remember that no one can give, or withhold consent on behalf of another adult, unless special provision has been made for this, usually in law. In certain situations, the need for consent may be overridden. This is generally in the interests of the public to do so, for example, the disclosure of information to prevent a crime or risk to health or life.

2.5 Gaining consent from a vulnerable adult

Consent is a process – it results from understanding through dialogue and the provision of information. It may be expressly given or, alternatively, it may be signalled by a person's conduct. For example, an individual may signal his/her consent to participate in informal situations such as an event in the residential home or by willingly asking staff or volunteer to assist them in accessing toilet facilities.

As a general rule, the method of gaining consent is likely to be influenced by the seriousness of what is being proposed. The more serious the proposal and the consequences of agreeing to it might require that the vulnerable adult is asked to sign a form. There may also be occasions when written consent is required. In such circumstances, staff should always seek advice from their line manager, Provincial Leader or the SMA DLP.

Individuals always have the right to consult directly with statutory agencies.

The important issue is to ensure that the consent given is valid. The consent of a vulnerable adult is considered valid ONLY if:

1. He / she has the capacity to consent, i.e. he/she can understand and weigh up the information needed to make the decision.
2. Sufficient information has been to him/her in an appropriate way on which to base the decision.
3. Consent has been given on a voluntary basis that is free from coercion or negative influence.

If any of these three factors is absent, consent cannot be considered to be valid.

Circumstances may arise where the vulnerable adult is unable to make decisions for themselves; for example, a learning disability, a severe mental health issue, impaired functioning as a result of a stroke or some form of dementia or any brain injury or trauma which could severely affect his/her intellectual functioning. In these situations, mental capacity, in terms of decision making in respect of treatment, care, care provision, welfare and/or financial assets affairs may be impaired.

Legal protections need to be put in place if someone such as a family member, an advocate or health professional has to make decisions for a vulnerable adult who has been deemed to lack capacity.

If clergy, staff or volunteers have any doubts or concerns about whether the consent of a vulnerable adult is valid, or whether he/she has the capacity to do so, they should bring this to the attention of the DLP for the SMA.

Section 3 – Legal Framework

Vulnerable adults are protected against criminal acts in the same way as any other person. Where there is reasonable suspicion that a criminal offence may have occurred, it is the responsibility of the Gardaí to investigate and make decisions about what action should be taken. The Gardaí should always be consulted about criminal matters.

Key relevant legislation within the Republic of Ireland is as follows:

- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012.
- Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information of Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012.

3.1 Definition of a Vulnerable Adult

The current definition of a vulnerable adult within the Republic of Ireland is taken from *“The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012”* which states:

"Vulnerable Person" means a person, other than a child, who

- a) is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia,
 - b) has an intellectual disability
 - c) is suffering from a physical impairment, whether as a result of injury, illness or age
- or**
- d) has a physical disability, which is of such a nature or degree as to restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against harm by another person, or that results in the person requiring assistance with the activities of daily living including dressing, eating, walking, washing and bathing.

In addition, the *“Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information of Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012”* provides for a very similar (but not exactly the same) definition of "Vulnerable Person" in the following terms:

"Vulnerable Person" means a person (including, insofar as the offences specified at paragraph 8 of Schedule 2 are concerned, a child aged 17 years old)

- a) who is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia, or
- b) has an intellectual disability which is of such a nature or degree as to severely restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against serious exploitation or abuse, whether physical or sexual, by another person, or
- c) who is suffering from an enduring physical impairment or injury which is of such a nature or degree as to severely restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against serious exploitation or abuse, whether physical or sexual, by another person or to report such exploitation or abuse to the Gardaí or both.

The rights of vulnerable adults to live a life free from neglect, exploitation and abuse are protected under the Human Rights Act 1998. Specifically, a vulnerable adult's right to life is protected under Article 1; their right to be protected from inhuman and degrading treatment under Article 3; and their right to liberty and security under Article 5.

Section 4 – Recruitment and Selection

The SMA consistently implements a clearly defined process of recruiting staff and volunteers. Information on recruitment may be accessed in the SMA Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures document which is available on our website, www.sma.ie. These procedures, which are in compliance with legislative and Church requirements, must be adhered to by all clergy, staff and volunteers, who through their ministry or work, have regular and necessary contact with vulnerable adults.

Section 5 – Recognising Abuse

5.1 What is abuse?

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons.

Abuse is defined as: *'The physical, psychological, emotional, financial or sexual maltreatment or neglect of a vulnerable adult by another person. The abuse may be a single act or repeated over a period of time. It may take one form or a multiple of forms. The lack of appropriate action can also be a form of abuse.'*

Abuse can occur in a relationship where there is a breach of that trust, who have influence over the life of a dependant, whether they be formal or informal carers, staff or family members or others. It can also occur outside such a relationship'. (Department of Health and Social Services Guidance 2006)

Abuse can take many forms including the following:

5.1.1 Physical Abuse including hitting, slapping, pushing, burning, giving a person medicine that may harm them, restraining or disciplining a person in an inappropriate way.

Possible signs: may include fractures, bruising, burns, pain, marks, not wanting to be touched.
(Please note that these signs do not necessarily mean that abuse is definitely taking place)

5.1.2 Psychological Abuse including emotional abuse, verbal abuse, humiliation, bullying and the use of threats.

Possible signs: being withdrawn, too eager to do everything they are asked, showing compulsive behaviour, not being able to do things they used to, not being able to concentrate or focus.

(Please note that these signs do not necessarily mean that abuse is definitely taking place)

5.1.3 Financial or Material Abuse including misusing or stealing the person's property, possessions or benefits, cheating them, using them for financial gain, putting pressure on them about wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions.

Possible signs - having unusual difficulty with finances, not having enough money, being too protective of money and things they own, not paying bills, not having normal home comforts.

(Please note that these signs do not necessarily mean that abuse is definitely taking place)

5.1.4 Sexual Abuse including direct or indirect sexual activity where the vulnerable adult cannot or does not consent to it.

Possible signs - physical symptoms including genital itching or soreness or having a sexually transmitted disease, using bad language, not wanting to be touched, behaving in a sexually inappropriate way, changes in appearance.

(Please note that these signs do not necessarily mean that abuse is definitely taking place).

5.2 Initial concerns

There may be a need for initial “checking out” with the vulnerable adult if there are concerns, for example, if a member of staff or volunteer notices any of the signs as indicated above it may be appropriate to ask what happened or what is wrong. Care needs to be taken not to investigate; this should be avoided by not asking questions beyond initial checking out and listening to the words of the alleged victim for factual accuracy.

5.3 Where might abuse take place?

Abuse can happen anywhere. Some examples are as follows:

- In someone's own home
- In a carers home
- Within day care, residential care, nursing care or other institutional settings
- At work or in educational settings
- In rented accommodation or commercial premises
- In public places.

This can happen in different ways, such as

5.3.1 Neglect or Acts of Omission including withdrawing or not giving the help that a vulnerable adult needs, so causing them to suffer.

Possible signs - having pain or discomfort, being very hungry, thirsty or untidy, failing health, changes in behaviour.

(Please note that these signs do not necessarily mean that abuse is definitely taking place)

5.3.2 Discriminatory Abuse including the abuse of a person because of their ethnic origin, religion, language, age, sexuality, gender or disability.

Possible signs - the person not receiving the care services they require, their carer being overly critical or making insulting remarks about the person, the person being made to dress differently from how he/she wishes.

(Please note that these signs do not necessarily mean that abuse is definitely taking place)

5.3.3 Spiritual Abuse including denying access to sacraments and to the practice of their faith.

Possible signs - person not receiving sacraments, being absent from liturgies.

(Please note that these signs do not necessarily mean that abuse is definitely taking place)

5.3.4 Institutional Abuse - This can happen when an organisation, where the person is living or receiving care from, fails to ensure that the necessary processes and systems are in place to safeguard vulnerable adults and maintain good standards of care and service. Including - lack of training of staff and volunteers, lack of or poor quality supervision and management, poor record keeping and liaison with other agencies, low staff morale and high staff turnover.

Possible signs - vulnerable adult has no personal clothing or possessions, there is no care plan, the person is often admitted to hospital, or there are instances of staff/ volunteers having treated the person badly or unsatisfactorily or acting in a way that causes harm, poor staff morale and high staff turnover and lack of clear lines of accountability and consistency of management.

(Please note that these signs do not necessarily mean that abuse is definitely taking place).

5.3.5 Professional Abuse

The misuse of power and abuse of trust by professionals, the failure of professionals to act on suspected abuse / crimes, poor care practice or neglect in services, resource shortfalls or service pressures that lead to service failure and culpability as a result of poor management systems.

Possible forms of professional abuse include:

- i. Entering into inappropriate relationships with a vulnerable adult
- ii. Failure to refer disclosure of abuse
- iii. Poor, ill- informed or outmoded care practice
- iv. Failure to support a vulnerable adult to access health/care treatment
- v. Denying a vulnerable adult access to professional support and services such as advocacy
- vi. Inappropriate response to challenging behaviours
- vii. Failure to whistle blow on issues when internal procedures to highlight issues are exhausted

5.3.6 Peer Abuse

This is the abuse of one vulnerable adult by another vulnerable adult within a care setting. It can occur in group or communal settings, such as day care centres, clubs, residential care homes, nursing homes or other institutional settings.

5.3.7 Stranger Abuse

A vulnerable adult may be abused by someone who they do not know such as a stranger, member of the public or a person who deliberately targets vulnerable people.

5.4 Who might abuse?

This could be anyone who has contact with the vulnerable person. It could be a partner, spouse, child, relative, friend, advocate, informal carer, a member of the clergy or religious order, a healthcare, social care or other worker, a peer or, less commonly, a stranger.

Section 6 – Recording and Reporting

Everyone is entitled to have their civil and human rights upheld and to live a life free from abuse and neglect. All concerns, allegations and disclosures must be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.

When there are concerns or where a disclosure or allegation is made, people often feel anxious about passing on the information to someone else. Concerned individuals may ask themselves, "What if I am wrong?" and this may hold them back from taking action.

It is important for clergy, staff and volunteers to know that they are not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred and neither are they responsible for conducting an investigation. This is the role of the appropriate authorities. However, clergy, staff and volunteers do need to pass on any concerns they have.

If there are concerns about a vulnerable adult's wellbeing which are not dealt with under vulnerable adult safeguarding procedures, they should be reported to the local HSE Department. A record of this referral should be retained.

6.1 How to Report

All allegations / concerns / suspicions against **Church personnel** (clergy, staff or volunteers) must be reported without delay to the **Diocesan Designated Liaison Persons**.

The contact details for each diocese where the SMA has a House are:

Diocese of Cork and Ross	Ms. Cleo Yates 086 8096027
Archdiocese of Tuam	Mrs. Mary Trench – 087 931 5823
	Fr. Francis Mitchell – 087 407 0206
Archdiocese of Dublin	Andrew Fagan
	Julie McCullough – 01 836 0314
Diocese of Dromore	Mrs. Pat Carville – 077 8991 7741

If your ministry involves visiting vulnerable adults in hospitals, residential care homes or other institutional settings, the reporting procedure is through the Designated Person / Manager of the relevant institution.

For allegations / concerns / suspicions against **non-Church personnel**, the person who is worried about possible harm to a vulnerable adult should report the concerns directly to the civil authorities (e.g. abuse of a vulnerable person by a relative or non-Church carer and/or peer abuse).

6.2 Ways you may become aware that abuse is happening?

There are a number of ways in which you might become concerned or suspicious that a vulnerable adult is suffering or, has suffered abuse.

- The vulnerable adult may tell you directly.
- Someone else may tell you of their concerns.
- Some incident that causes you concern.
- A vulnerable adult may show some signs of physical injury for which there appears to be no credible or satisfactory explanation.
- A vulnerable adult's demeanour / behaviour may cause you to suspect that something may

not be right, or that possible abuse has taken place.

- The behaviour of another individual close to the vulnerable adult makes you feel uncomfortable (this may be another staff member, volunteer, or leader of an activity or family member).

Being alert to possible abuse plays a significant role in ensuring that vulnerable adults are safeguarded and it is important that all concerns about possible abuse are reported.

6.3 What if a vulnerable adult discloses abuse?

Where this happens, it is important that clergy, staff and volunteers know how to respond and do so in accordance with the following guidelines:

DO

- Stay calm
- Listen
- Reassure the person – tell him / her they did the right thing in telling you
- Let them know that the information will be taken seriously and give them information about what will happen next
- If urgent help is needed, call the emergency services – medical/Gardaí
- Ensure the safety of the person
- Be aware that forensic evidence might be needed
- Let the person know that they will be kept informed at every stage
- Record in writing (date and sign your record) and report to one of the Designated Liaison Persons for the Diocese
- Act without delay

DO NOT

- Stop someone disclosing to you
- Promise to keep secret what they tell you
- Press the person for more details or make them repeat the story
- Gossip about the disclosure or pass any information about this to anyone who does not have a legitimate need to know
- Under any circumstances, contact the alleged abuser
- Attempt to initiate an investigation yourself
- Leave details of your concern on a voicemail or by e-mail
- Delay in responding

Section 7 – Inter-Agency Cooperation and Sharing of Information

The principles and rights, which have been identified in these Guidelines, can be further strengthened through the promotion of effective Inter-Agency cooperation in compliance with the **General Data Protection Regulations 2018**

7.1 These include the requirements for agencies, both statutory and voluntary, to:

- Work together to protect the rights of vulnerable adults.
- Actively promote the empowerment and well-being of vulnerable adults through the services they provide.
- Work together with the aim of improving the quality of safeguarding work.
- Ensure that best practice in keeping vulnerable adults safe from harm is achieved.

7.2 The purpose of Inter-agency cooperation in relation to the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable adults is to ensure that by working cooperatively, a consistent response will be made when concerns are raised or allegations of harm are made.

7.3 Sharing of Information

All vulnerable adults and, where appropriate, their carers or advocates, need to be made aware that the operation of multi-disciplinary and inter-agency procedures will, on occasion, require the sharing of information in order to protect a vulnerable adult or others, or to investigate an alleged suspected criminal offence.

7.4 Confidential Information Sharing

In normal circumstances, observing the principle of confidentiality will mean that information is only passed on to others with the consent of the Vulnerable Adult. However, it should be recognised that in order to protect vulnerable adults, it may be necessary, in some circumstances, to share information that might, normally, be regarded as confidential.

The duty to protect takes precedence over individual confidentiality if a person or others are at serious risk of harm or have been seriously harmed. But information sharing will be proportional and on a "need to know" basis.

The person will be advised before the information is shared and with whom it will be shared.

Section 8 – Role of the Designated Liaison Person [DLP]

The SMA has a Designated Liaison Person who is responsible for managing all concerns, allegations and complaints regarding actual or potential harm or abuse which come to the attention of the SMA.

The Designated Liaison Person is responsible for acting as a source of advice on vulnerable adult safeguarding matters, for co-ordinating action within the SMA and for liaising with the relevant statutory authorities and other agencies, as appropriate, about suspected or actual cases of vulnerable adult harm or abuse.

When you contact the Designated Liaison Person, she will undertake the following steps:

- They will establish contact with the Designated Officer in the relevant HSE department and the Gardaí.
- Provide information and advice on safeguarding vulnerable adults.
- Ensure that the vulnerable adult guidelines are followed, particularly in relation to informing the appropriate statutory agencies.
- Ensure that appropriate information is available at the time of the referral to the statutory agencies and that the referral is confirmed in writing, under confidential cover.
- Liaise with the relevant statutory authorities and other agencies as appropriate.
- Keep relevant people within the SMA informed about any action taken and any further action required.
- Ensure that an individual case record is maintained of concerns about the abuse and the action taken by the SMA, the liaison with other agencies and the outcome

Section 9 – Record keeping

Please refer to Recording Policy for Management of Cases in the SMA Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures Document for details on how all records relating to concerns, allegations of suspected or actual abuse of vulnerable adults are maintained.

Section 10 – Confidentiality

It is important that clergy, staff and volunteers understand the importance of confidentiality. All information relating to concerns/suspicious/allegations about a vulnerable adult should be treated as confidential and should only be communicated on a "need to know" basis. This information should NOT be shared with anyone, inside or outside the SMA, unless they are involved in the case. Only the relevant personnel need to be involved. The Designated Liaison Person will advise on "who needs to know" and who should have access to records.

While information about vulnerable adults is confidential, it may be disclosed to external agencies to ensure the care and safety of an individual or others or where a crime is suspected. This includes the disclosure of information to the Gardaí and the relevant HSE Department for such purposes.

In normal circumstances observing the principle of confidentiality will mean that the information is passed on to others with the consent of the person concerned. However, it should be recognised that in order to safeguard vulnerable adults, it may be necessary, in some circumstances, to share information that might normally be regarded as confidential. All vulnerable adults, and where appropriate, their carers or representatives need to be made aware that the operation of inter-agency procedures will, on occasion, require the sharing of information in order to safeguard a vulnerable adult or others, or to investigate an alleged or suspected criminal offence.

Section 11 – Code of Conduct for Those who Minister to Vulnerable Adults

When ministering to Vulnerable Adults it is critical that boundaries are respected and that appropriate work practices are established which always place the needs and well-being of the vulnerable adult as the primary concern. Those carrying out ministries, either as clergy or staff, should have clearly defined codes of conduct. A balance needs to be struck between the right to protection and the need to allow appropriate interaction between an individual and his / her priest, lay minister or volunteer.

11.1 It is important for all clergy, staff and volunteers to:

- a) Adhere to the protocols and guidelines of the SMA whose premises they are ministering within.
- b) Treat everyone equally with respect.
- c) Engage and interact appropriately with vulnerable adults.
- d) Be aware of the difficulties posed by language barriers and other communication difficulties.
- e) Respect the dignity of each individual and their right to personal privacy.
- f) Recognise that particular care is required in moments when you may be discussing sensitive issues with vulnerable adults.
- g) Avoid situations that might compromise your ministry with vulnerable adults, and which are unacceptable within a relationship of trust. This rule should apply to all such behaviours including those which would constitute an illegal act.
- h) Respect the religious, cultural, racial and sexual orientation of the vulnerable adult and be open to and aware of diversity in their beliefs and practices and those of their families.
- i) Provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow.
- j) Operate within SMA Guidelines.

11.2 Unacceptable behaviour

Clergy, staff and volunteers must never:

- a) Physically or emotionally abuse or exploit a vulnerable adult.
- b) Become involved in either using the vulnerable adult's money on his/her behalf or in giving the vulnerable adult advice in use of his/her money.
- c) Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
- d) Do things of a personal nature for a vulnerable adult that he/she is capable of doing for his/herself or are the responsibility of their family or carer.
- e) Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade.
- f) Discriminate against the person on the basis of religion, race, culture, gender or sexual orientation.
- g) Form inappropriate relationships with vulnerable adults.
- h) Gossip about personal details of vulnerable adults and their families.
- i) Photograph or video a vulnerable adult.

Clergy, staff and volunteers must be made aware of the Code in the expectation that they will act in accordance with it when exercising ministry to the vulnerable.

Section 12 – External Groups

External / independent groups / organisations, seeking to hire or lease SMA property to deliver their own service / activity involving vulnerable adults will be made aware of the Diocesan Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Guidelines, but will also be expected to meet certain requirements before an agreement of lease or rental of property is made.

Section 13 – Access to Advice and Support

13.1 Designated Liaison Person

The DLP is responsible for managing and coordinating all allegations, suspicions and concerns of child and vulnerable adult abuse within the SMA. This involves referral to the statutory services, setting up multi-disciplinary strategy discussion meetings and the internal management of cases.

13.2 SMA Designated Liaison Person Contact Details

Elizabeth Murphy,
Feltrim,
Blackrock Road,
Cork

Email: dlpsafeguarding@sma.ie Phone: 087 713 5240 or 021 461 6303

13.3 HSE Contact Details for the Region

The HSE has a dedicated Elder Abuse Service, with Senior Case Workers now working in most Local Health Office Areas. You can also seek advice from the HSE Information Line from Monday to Saturday [8am - 8pm]

Call Save: 1850 24 1850 or Email: info@hse.ie

13.4 An Garda Síochána

Garda National Protective Services Bureau, Harcourt Square, Dublin.
Phone: +353 1 666 3430 or any Garda Station

13.5 The Samaritans – Phone: 1850 609 090

13.6 AWARE – Phone: 1800 80 48 48

13.7 Towards Healing – Freephone: 1800 303 416

“Towards Healing” is a private and confidential counselling and support service for survivors of institutional, clerical and religious abuse, funded by the Catholic Church in Ireland. The operational hours of the helpline are: Monday and Wednesday (11.00a.m.- 8.00p.m.) and Friday (1 1.00a.m.-4.00p.m.). An answering machine service is available at all other times.

13.8 Towards Peace: Phone: +353 1 505 3028

"Towards Peace" offers spiritual support to victims / survivors of clerical abuse whose faith in God may have been affected by their experience. Following initial telephone contact, "Towards Peace" offers an opportunity to talk to a trained spiritual companion in a one-to-one setting and to explore questions and concerns about God, and to get in touch with God's presence in their lives.

Section 14 – Roles and Responsibilities

A summary of the roles and responsibilities within the SMA Safeguarding Structure are listed below.

14.1 The SMA Provincial Leader

Overall responsibility for ensuring that the safeguarding mechanisms for protecting children and vulnerable people are firmly established and working across the SMA

14.2 SMA Safeguarding Committee

Established to oversee the implementation of a safeguarding strategy and to ensure that arrangements are set up within the SMA

14.3 Cork and Ross Diocesan Safeguarding Office

Ms Cleo Yates
Director of Safeguarding
Diocese of Cork and Ross
Cork and Ross Offices
Redemption Road
Cork

Tel: 021 430 1717

Mobile: 087 376 8599

Email: cleo.yates@corkandross.org

Section 15 – Whistleblowing Policy

COMPLAINTS and WHISTLE-BLOWING POLICY and PROCEDURES

For all members of the Society of African Missions [SMA], their co-workers, employees and volunteers, and for all adults and young people with whom they work.

15.1 INTRODUCTION

Safeguarding children and young adults requires staff working with them to be committed to the highest possible standards of openness, integrity and transparency. Staff and volunteers must acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of either the designated liaison person, senior management, Túsla or the Gardaí.

15.2 AIMS and SCOPE of this POLICY

This policy aims to:

- a. encourage the raising of serious concerns
- b. provide avenues for the raising of these concerns
- c. ensure that there is adequate and appropriate feedback
- d. re-assure complainants that they will be protected from all possible reprisals when the disclosure is made in good faith.

15.3 WHISTLE BLOWING

Whistle blowing is the term used to describe a complaint made by anyone about any form of malpractice in an organisation, or a concern about health and safety.

Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns at once in order to prevent the problem worsening or widening, and to reduce the risk to others.

15.4 SAFEGUARDS

The SMA will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of those raising concerns, and will take appropriate action to protect those raising genuine concerns. All concerns will be treated in confidence, and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of the whistle-blower, if he or she so wishes. However, a whistle-blower may be required to come forward, at a later date, as a witness. Concerns expressed anonymously will be considered and addressed. But extra caution will be exercised in dealing with such complaints at the discretion of the SMA, and initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate. If an allegation is made in good faith, but is not later confirmed to be true, no action will be taken against the complainant. If, however, the complaint is found to be frivolous, malicious or for personal gain, legal action may be taken against the complainant, following consultation with our solicitors

15.5 HOW to RAISE CONCERNS

The concern should be raised as soon as possible, and addressed to the immediate group leader, or the Designated Person for the SMA. If the concern is related to either of the latter, you should approach the local Superior or the Provincial Leader. Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing: if verbally, a written note should be taken down with the details of the concern. Allegations/concerns or knowledge of the physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult should be brought to the attention of the Designated Liaison Person for Safeguarding without delay. If the concern relates to the DLP, then the Provincial Leader should be informed.

15.6 HOW the SMA will RESPOND

Your concern will be reported to the Designated Person of the SMA within five working days, or sooner if the concern raised indicates immediate risk to someone. The complaint will be thoroughly investigated internally. But it may be necessary to refer the matter to the Police / Garda Síochána, Túsla, Access NI, the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church, or it may form the subject of an independent inquiry.

Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the SMA will write to you acknowledging the fact that your concern has been received, and that the matter is being dealt with. Subsequent to legal constraints, you will be informed of the outcome of the investigation.

The SMA may seek further information from you about the concern. Where any meeting is arranged, you can be accompanied by a union representative or a work colleague. If you are required to give evidence in a subsequent criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the SMA will arrange for you to receive professional advice.

Signed

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Malachy Flanagan SMA". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr Malachy Flanagan SMA
Provincial Leader

30 July 2020