THE MALANKARA (INDIAN) ORTHODOX CHURCH

DIOCESE OF U.K. - EUROPE & AFRICA

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults at Risk Policy Document

2026

UK Charity Reg. No. 1139302
Email : office@indianorthodoxuk.org

Safeguarding Children, Young People & Adults Operational Policy

Source ID	**UK/SO/SGP/04**
Version	**04**
Date Due for Review	**01.09.2029**

Responsible Director	**His Eminence Abraham Mar Stephanos Metropolitan**
Document Author	**Mrs Beena. K. Mathew**
Document Reviewer	**Mr. Simon Chacko/Mrs. Omana Varghese/ Dr. Thomas Jacob/Mr.Saji Varghese**
Special Adviser	**Fr. Anoop M. Abraham**

Approving Committee/Group	**Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adult Committee**
Date Approved	**04.09.2026**
Date Ratified by Executive Committee	**04.09.2026**

Target Audience	**All affiliated to Diocese of UK Europe and Africa of the Indian Orthodox Church** - **Diocesan Metropolitan (Bishop)** - **Parish Vicars** - **Diocesan Council (Executive Committee)** - **Parish's Managing Committee** - **Sunday School Director,** - **Sunday School Head Teachers** - **Sunday School Teachers** - **Camp Leaders** - **Spiritual organizations and its office bearers**
Category	**Children and Adult Safety in the Parishes and Church Premises.**

Contents

1. Introduction....4
   1.1. Legal Framework....5
   1.2. Purpose....6
   1.3. Core Safeguarding Principles....6
   1.4. Equality Statement....7
   1.5. Safeguarding Framework and Key Commitments....8
   1.6. Policy Statement....10
   1.7. Governance and Duty of Care....11
   1.8. Safeguarding in Parish Contexts....11
2. Safeguarding Definitions....13
   2.1. What is Safeguarding?....13
   2.2. Types of Abuse and How Children May Be Harmed....15
   2.5. Categories of Abuse (Adults at Risk – Care Act 2014)....20
   2.6. Additional Cross-Cutting Safeguarding Risks....21
   2.7. Understanding barriers to disclosure....22
   2.8. Code of Safer Working Practice....23
   3.9 Safeguarding: Social Media, Photography and Filming....25
3. Procedures to Follow if There is a Concern....28
   3.1. What to Do with Disclosures and Concerns....28
   3.2. Referral to Social Care or Police....30
4. Safeguarding Responsibilities....33
   4.1. Diocesan Safeguarding Responsibilities....33
   4.2. Parish Safeguarding Responsibilities....33
   4.3. Partnership Working....34
   4.4. Episcopal Areas....34
   4.5. Parish Managing Committee (PMC)....35
   5. Safeguarding Roles....37
6. Selecting, Recruiting and Supporting Workers....39
   6.1. Safer Recruitment and Risk Assessment....39
   6.2. DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service)....41
7. Hire of Church Premises....42
8. Off-Site Visits....43
   8.1. Day Visits....44

8.2. Residential Visits 44
8.3. Accommodation 46
8.4. Transporting Vulnerable Groups 49
9. Consent 51
10. Pastoral Counselling, Confession and Pastoral Visits 52
11. Contact Addresses and References 54
12. Whistleblowing Policy 56
13. First Aid Guidance 58
Emergency Action 60
14. Core Required Forms 62
References 70

Disclaimer: This document is electronically signed by the author and the approver. This document is the property of the Indian Orthodox Church, Diocese of UK-Europe and Africa (Registered UK Charity 1139302). Copying or duplication of the document or part of it without prior permission is prohibited.

1. Introduction

The Diocese of UK–Europe and Africa of the Indian (Malankara) Orthodox Church is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk, and to providing a safe and nurturing environment for all who gather to worship and participate in any activities in our premises. We recognise that safeguarding includes:

- Protection from **physical, emotional, sexual and spiritual abuse and neglect.**
- Awareness of **emerging risks**, including online abuse, misinformation, exploitation and radicalisation [**Ref**: 1. Keeping children safe in education caspar briefing].
- Ensuring safe environments both **in person and online.**

We are committed to:

- Safe recruitment practices, including appropriate **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks** for all relevant roles [**Ref**: 2. DBS checks for working with children in places of worship]
- Providing safeguarding training appropriate to roles
- Establishing clear reporting procedures
- Supporting victims/survivors of abuse with compassion and confidentiality
- Managing those who may pose a risk in a safe and proportionate manner

This policy outlines how safeguarding is carried out across the Diocese in the UK (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland). Its purpose is to ensure that unsuitable individuals are prevented from accessing children and adults at risk through Church activities. Protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults is a fundamental part of the Church's life, ministry and mission. It reflects our core values and is essential to fostering a safe, supportive and nurturing environment for everyone.

We recognise our responsibilities under relevant UK legislation and statutory guidance.This policy draws on recognised safeguarding guidance, including the **Church of England's "Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable !dults: Policy and Practice Guidance" (2021)**.

Safeguarding Responsibility

It is essential to recognise that: **Failure to act on safeguarding concerns can place children and adults at continued risk of harm.**

The Diocese operates a **zero-tolerance approach to abuse** in any form. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility; !ll clergy, staff, volunteers and members of the Church community share a duty to:

- Protect children, young people and adults at risk from harm, abuse and neglect.
- Promote their wellbeing and dignity. Remain alert to signs of abuse or neglect
- Cooperate with statutory agencies and safeguarding partners.
- Take all concerns seriously, respond promptly and report in line with safeguarding procedures
- Avoid making assumptions or dismissing concerns without appropriate review.

1.1. Legal Framework

This safeguarding policy is informed by current UK legislation and statutory guidance designed to protect children, young people and adults at risk.

Key Legislation

- **Children Act 1989 and 2004**
  Provides the legal foundation for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- **Children and Social Work Act 2017**
  Strengthens safeguarding arrangements, including multi -agency working and statutory safeguarding partners.
- **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006**
  Establishes the framework for vetting and barring individuals (Disclosure and Barring Service – DBS).
- **Protection of Freedoms Act 2012**
  Reforms and defines "regulated activity" and DBS arrangements;
- **Care Act 2014**
  Places duties on organisations and local authorities to safeguard adults at risk and promote their wellbeing.
- **Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions Order)**
  Governs disclosure of criminal records in safeguarding contexts.

Statutory Guidance

- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)**
  The latest statutory guidance setting out how organisations must work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. [**Ref**: 3. Working together to safeguard children]
- **Care and Support Statutory Guidance (updated 2025)**
  Provides guidance on implementing the Care Act 2014, including safeguarding duties for adults at risk. [**Ref**: 4. Care and support statutory guidance]
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)** *(as best practice guidance)*
  Provides detailed safeguarding expectations, including safer recruitment and responding to concerns.

Additional Guidance and Frameworks

- **National Action Plan to Tackle Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief**
  Supports awareness and prevention of abuse in faith -based contexts.
- **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)**
  Establishes the rights of children to protection, care, and participation.

"This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure compliance with current legislation, statutory guidance, and best practice in safeguarding;"

1.2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all those involved with children, young people and adults at risk within the Diocese clearly understand:

- Their **individual and collective responsibilities** in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk
- The **processes and procedures** in place to respond effectively when a safeguarding concern or allegation arises within any Church setting or activity
- The **framework for reporting, recording and referring concerns** to the appropriate safeguarding authorities and statutory agencies
- The requirements for **safe recruitment**, including the appropriate use of **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks** for those working in regulated activities
- The **training and ongoing development** required to ensure all clergy, staff and volunteers are competent and confident in safeguarding practice
- The importance of maintaining a **safe environment**, including managing both **in-person and online risks**

1.3. Core Safeguarding Principles

The Diocese's approach to safeguarding is underpinned by the following key principles:

- **Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility**
  All members of the Church community share a duty to protect children, young people and adults at risk.
- **Transparency, openness and accountability**
  Safeguarding concerns will be handled with honesty, integrity and appropriate record-keeping, with access to professional safeguarding advice both within and outside the Church.
- **Prevention of abuse and harm**
  A proactive approach will be taken to identify risks early, prevent abuse, and create a culture of vigilance and care.
- **Partnership and multi-agency working**
  The Diocese will work collaboratively with statutory authorities (e.g. local authorities, police, health services) and other organisations to safeguard individuals effectively.
- **Victim-centred and person-centred approach**
  The welfare, dignity, and voice of the child, young person, or adult at risk will always be paramount.
- **Zero tolerance of abuse**
  Abuse in any form—physical, emotional, sexual, spiritual, or neglect—is unacceptable and will be acted upon promptly.
- **Awareness of emerging risks**
  Safeguarding practice will reflect current risks, including **online abuse, exploitation, misinformation, and radicalisation**, ensuring protection in both physical and digital environments.

Additional principles

- Abuse can occur **in any setting**, including homes, institutions, and places of worship
- Individuals may experience **multiple forms of abuse at the same time** [**Ref**: 5. Types and indicators of abuse]
- Abuse can be **intentional or due to neglect or systemic failure**
- All abuse involves a **misuse of power, control or trust**

1.4. Equality Statement

The Diocese of the Indian Orthodox Church UK, Europe and Africa is committed to ensuring that all children, young people and adults at risk receive equal protection, regardless of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender or gender identity
- Race, ethnicity or cultural heritage
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation

This commitment reflects the principles of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)** and UK equality legislation.

We are committed to **anti-discriminatory and inclusive safeguarding practice**. We recognise that some individuals, particularly those from minority ethnic communities, those with disabilities, and those with additional communication needs, may face increased vulnerability and barriers to accessing support and protection. The Dioces e will:

- Promote **equity, inclusion and respect** in all safeguarding practices
- Ensure safeguarding responses are **accessible, culturally sensitive and responsive to individual needs**
- Take proactive steps to **identify and remove barriers** to safeguarding support
- Provide appropriate support to enable all individuals to **voice concerns safely and be heard**
- Adopt a **collaborative and consistent approach** to safeguarding across all parishes, ensuring that:
    - Safeguarding policies and practices are applied consistently throughout the Diocese
    - Everyone associated with parish life who comes into contact with children, young people and adults at risk plays an active role in creating a safe and inclusive environment.

1.5. Safeguarding Framework and Key Commitments

a. Alignment with Current Statutory Guidance

This policy reflects the most recent UK safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance, ensuring best practice across all Church activities. The Diocese adopts and follows the principles set out in:

- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)** , which establishes that safeguarding is a **shared responsibility across all organisations**, including voluntary and faith-based bodies [**Ref**: 6. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026]
- This guidance strengthens expectations around:
    - **Multi-agency working and accountability**
    - **Early help and prevention of harm**
    - Responding to **complex and overlapping risks**, including abuse, exploitation and domestic harm [**Ref**: 7. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 Statutory guidance]
    - Promoting **anti-discriminatory and inclusive safeguarding practice**

The Diocese also aligns its safeguarding arrangements with principles from **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)**, which reinforces:

- Clear safeguarding responsibilities for all staff and volunteers
- Stronger awareness of **online safety risks and emerging harms**
- The need for effective **reporting, monitoring and safer recruitment systems**

b. Adult Safeguarding Responsibilities

The Diocese recognises its duties under the **Care Act 2014** and associated statutory guidance, which provide the legal framework for safeguarding adults at risk.

In line with this framework:

- Safeguarding aims to **prevent abuse and neglect wherever possible**
- Organisations must take action to **identify, report and respond to concerns promptly**
- Effective safeguarding requires **close partnership working** with local authorities, health services, police and other agencies

Local safeguarding systems are built on multi -agency cooperation, including Safeguarding Adults Boards, which coordinate responses and strategies to protect individuals at risk [**Ref**:8. The Care Act: safeguarding adults]. The Diocese will:

- Promote the **wellbeing, dignity and independence** of adults at risk
- Ensure concerns are appropriately referred and investigated
- Work in partnership with statutory agencies to safeguard individuals effectively

c. Recognition of Modern Safeguarding Risks

Safeguarding practice must respond to evolving risks faced by children, young people and adults at risk. The Diocese recognises the importance of addressing:

- **Online and Digital Risks**
    - Exposure to **online abuse, grooming, exploitation and harmful content**
    - Risks linked to **misinformation, disinformation and emerging technologies (including AI)**
    - The overlap between **online harm and real-world abuse [Ref:** 7. Working together to safeguard children 2026: Statutory guidance]
- **Peer-on-Peer (Child-on-Child) Abuse**
    - Abuse occurring between children or young people, including:
        - Bullying (including cyberbullying)
        - Sexual harassment or violence
        - Emotional or coercive behaviour
- **Radicalisation and Exploitation**
    - The risk of individuals being drawn into **extremism or terrorism** is recognised as a safeguarding concern
    - Organisations have a responsibility to identify those vulnerable to radicalisation and take appropriate action under safeguarding frameworks [**Ref**: 9. The Prevent duty: safeguarding learners vulnerable to radicalisation]

The Diocese will ensure that safeguarding training and practices include awareness of these risks and how to respond appropriately.

d. Safer Recruitment and DBS Requirements

The Diocese is committed to **robust safer recruitment practices** to prevent unsuitable individuals from gaining access to children and adults at risk. This includes:

- Ensuring all roles are clearly defined and assessed for **regulated activity**
- Requiring appropriate **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks**:
    - **Enhanced DBS checks (with barred list checks)** for roles involving regular or unsupervised contact with children or adults at risk
    - DBS checks for both **paid staff (E.g. Clergy) and volunteers**

In line with national guidance for places of worship:

- Activities such as **teaching, supervising, caring for, or advising children** make roles eligible for Enhanced DBS checks [Ref: 10. DBS checks for working with children in places of worship]
- DBS eligibility depends on the **type, frequency and level of contact**

Good practice standards include:

- Regular **review and renewal of DBS checks** (typically every 3 years)
- Verification of identity, references, and role suitability
- Clear policies for the recruitment of individuals with criminal records

e. Safeguarding is Everyone's Responsibility

The Diocese affirms that **safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone** within the Church community.

This includes Clergy, Office bearers [Diocesan, Parish & Spiritual organisation], Invited guests, Parish members and volunteers.

All individuals who come into contact with children, young people and adults at risk have a duty to:

- Remain **vigilant to signs of abuse or neglect**
- **Report concerns promptly** using established procedures
- Contribute to creating a **safe, respectful and inclusive environment**

Safeguarding requires a **whole-organisation approach**, with:

- Strong leadership and accountability
- A culture of openness and learning
- Collaboration with statutory and community partners

Faith communities play a vital role in safeguarding, and all organisations are expected to take **active steps to protect those who are vulnerable and promote their welfare** [**Ref**: 11. Safeguarding in faith communities]

1.6. Policy Statement

The Diocese affirms that:

- **The welfare of the child is paramount**
- All children, young people and adults at risk have the right to be **protected from harm, abuse and neglect**
- Safeguarding is a **shared responsibility** across the whole Church community

We are committed to working in partnership with the following categories to promote wellbeing and ensure effective safeguarding arrangements:

- Children and young people
- Parents and carers
- Statutory agencies (local authorities, police, health services)
- Other organisations

In line with Diocesan Council guidance, the Diocese has:

- Adopted a safeguarding policy aligned with **current UK legislation and statutory guidance**, including *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)* and the **Care Act 2014**, alongside recognised good practice from the House of Bishops and wider Church safeguarding frameworks
- Established and maintained a **clear safeguarding structure** across the Diocese to ensure effective governance, accountability and oversight
- Appointed a **Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST)** to:
    - Coordinate and manage all aspects of safeguarding
    - Provide professional advice and guidance
    - Lead on case management, risk assessment and liaison with statutory agencies
- Developed and implemented a **Code of Safer Working Practice** for all clergy, staff and volunteers, setting clear expectations for professional boundaries and conduct
- Appointed **Episcopal Area Safeguarding Coordinators** to support safeguarding practice across regional areas
- Ensured access to **regular safeguarding training and development**, appropriate to roles and responsibilities
- Promoted a culture of:
    - **Prevention of harm**
    - **Early identification of risk**
    - **Prompt reporting and response to concerns**

1.7. Governance and Duty of Care

According to the 1934 Church constitution and Governing document of the Diocese, all these roles are required to have **"due regard"** to safeguarding guidance issued by the Diocese.

- Clergy
- Bishops
- Spiritual organisation representatives

A duty to have *due regard* means that individuals and bodies:

- **Must follow safeguarding guidance** unless there are **clear, logical and justifiable reasons (cogent reasons)** for not doing so
- Cannot disregard safeguarding guidance without appropriate justification

According to the 1934 Church constitution and Governing document of the Diocese, failure to comply with this duty may result in **disciplinary action**.

1.8. Safeguarding in Parish Contexts

Within Parish settings, there is a particular responsibility to ensure that:

- Positions of **trust, authority and leadership** are never misused

- Children are safeguarded from harmful behaviour by **any member of the Church community**
- All interactions reflect the highest standards of **care, respect and accountability**

Inappropriate behaviour within parish environments may include:

- Bullying, intimidation or emotional abuse
- Misuse of authority or influence
- Behaviour that causes **physical, emotional or psychological harm**

This applies to all individuals, including clergy, volunteers, office bearers, committee members and congregation members.

2. Safeguarding Definitions

2.1. What is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding refers to the actions and measures taken to protect the health, wellbeing and human rights of children, young people and adults at risk, enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

Safeguarding is a **proactive and ongoing process**. It involves promoting a safe culture within the Church where all individuals are valued, respected and protected. It includes:

- Promoting the **welfare and wellbeing** of children, young people and adults at risk
- Preventing abuse, neglect, and harm from occurring
- Protecting those who may be at risk of abuse
- Responding appropriately and effectively where concerns or allegations arise

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and requires **vigilance, awareness and timely action**.

Key Safeguarding Message

- Abuse can be caused by **adults or other children**
- It is most often carried out by someone the child **knows and trusts**
- Harm may be **physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, or spiritual**
- Abuse has **serious and long-term consequences**

Recognising who may pose a risk is essential to:

- Prevent harm
- Respond early to concerns
- Ensure children are protected and supported

Safeguarding Children

Safeguarding children includes protecting them from **significant harm**, which may arise from a single incident or an accumulation of events. Significant harm refers to:

- The **ill-treatment or impairment of health or development** (physical, emotional, social or behavioural)
- Circumstances where a child is at risk of serious harm through abuse or neglect

Decisions about significant harm are based on **careful assessment**, taking into account the child's needs, circumstances and environment;

Safeguarding Adults at Risk

Safeguarding adults is defined within the **Care Act 2014 and associated statutory guidance**, and focuses on protecting individuals with care and support needs. Safeguarding adults means:

- Protecting the rights of adults to **live in safety, free from abuse and neglect**
- Ensuring that individuals and organisations work together to **prevent and stop abuse or neglect**
- Promoting the adult's **wellbeing, dignity and independence**, taking into account their views, wishes, beliefs and feelings
- Recognising that adults may have **complex circumstances and relationships**, and may not always recognise or act upon risks to their own safety

Safeguarding responses must therefore be **person-centred**, proportionate, and respectful of the individual's rights and choices, while ensuring appropriate protection;

Why is Safeguarding Important?

Safeguarding is essential to ensure that children, young people and adults at risk are protected from abuse, neglect and harm, and are supported to live safely with dignity and respect.

Safeguarding is fundamentally about **people and organisations working together** to prevent abuse and respond effectively when concerns arise. In line with the **Care Act 2014**, safeguarding also ensures that an individual's **wellbeing is promoted**, and that their **views, wishes, feelings and beliefs** are taken into account when decisions are made.

Protection from Harm

History has shown that, without effective safeguarding systems, individuals —especially children and vulnerable adults—can be exposed to serious harm, often from those in positions of trust. Safeguarding frameworks have therefore been developed to:

- Prevent abuse before it occurs
- Identify and respond to concerns at the earliest stage
- Protect those who are most vulnerable
- Ensure accountability across organisations

These frameworks are supported by comprehensive legislation and guidance that place clear responsibilities on organisations, including faith communities.

A Duty to Work Together

Modern safeguarding practice emphasises the importance of **multi-agency collaboration**, ensuring that organisations:

- Share information appropriately
- Work in partnership with statutory agencies (local authorities, police, health services)
- Take coordinated action to protect individuals at risk

The latest guidance reinforces that safeguarding must involve:

- Early identification of risk
- Timely intervention
- A coordinated response to complex needs and multiple forms of harm [**Ref**: 12. Who is Eligible for DBS Check?]

Commitment to Safe and Supportive Environments

For the Church, safeguarding is not only a legal requirement but a **moral and pastoral responsibility**. It reflects our commitment to:

- Creating a **safe, welcoming and inclusive environment** for all
- Supporting individuals to **grow, flourish and participate fully** in Church life
- Ensuring that those who have experienced harm are **listened to, supported and treated with compassion**

2.2. Types of Abuse and How Children May Be Harmed

This policy recognises all categories of abuse defined in UK safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance, including **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)** and the **Care Act 2014**.

Children and young people can be harmed in many different ways. Abuse occurs when a child's **health, development, wellbeing, dignity or safety is compromised** through the actions or inaction of others.

All abuse involves a **misuse of power, control, or trust** and can occur in any setting, including families, communities, faith environments, and online spaces. Abuse may occur through **a single act, repeated acts, or failure to act**, and different forms of abuse often occur together.[**Ref**: 5. Types and indicators of abuse]

a. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse involves deliberately causing physical harm to a child. This may include:

- Hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding
- Suffocating or otherwise causing physical injury

- Fabricating or inducing illness

b. Emotional (Psychological) Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child that affects their emotional development. This may include:

- Conveying that a child is worthless, unloved, or inadequate
- Excessive criticism, humiliation, or rejection, Body shaming, Intimidation
- Comments on physical and mental challenges, Compulsive restrictions on faith.
- Exposure to domestic abuse
- Bullying, intimidation, coercion or controlling behaviour
- Silencing or ridiculing communication
- Imposing inappropriate expectations

c. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. This includes:

- Physical contact (assault, rape)
- Non-contact activities (exposure, grooming, online exploitation)
- Forcing a child to witness sexual acts
- Involving children in the production of sexual images or videos

d. Neglect

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs; This may include:

- Lack of food, clothing, shelter or supervision
- Failure to provide medical care or education
- Emotional neglect and lack of attention or affection

e. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

A form of sexual abuse where a child is manipulated or coerced into sexual activity in exchange for something (e.g. gifts, money, affection). It can involve:

- Grooming (online or in person)
- Exploitation by individuals or groups

f. 6. Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Occurs when children are manipulated into criminal activity, such as:

- Drug trafficking (e.g. county lines)
- Theft, violence, or other illegal acts

  Children may appear to consent but are often controlled or threatened.

g. Child-on-Child (Peer) Abuse

Abuse that occurs between children, including:

- Bullying (physical, verbal, emotional or cyberbullying)
- Sexual harassment or sexual violence
- Coercion, intimidation or harmful group behaviour

This must always be treated as a **serious safeguarding concern**.

h. Online/Digital Abuse

Children may be harmed through digital technology, including:

- Grooming via social media, gaming platforms or messaging apps
- Coercion into sharing explicit images (**sexting / image-based abuse**)
- Cyberbullying or online harassment
- Exposure to harmful or misleading content, including misinformation

Online abuse is often linked to real-world harm.

i. Radicalisation and Extremism

Children may be vulnerable to being influenced or drawn into extremist views or activities. This can involve:

- Exposure to extremist ideology
- Grooming into radical groups
- Encouragement to engage in harmful or illegal acts

j. Spiritual Abuse (Faith Context)

Particularly relevant in faith settings, this includes:

- Misuse of religious authority or teachings to control or harm
- Forcing participation in religious practices
- Using faith to justify abuse or silence victims

Church communities must remain especially vigilant against this form of abuse.

k. Domestic Abuse (Impact on Children)

Children may be harmed by witnessing or living with domestic abuse. This includes:

- Physical, emotional, or coercive control between adults
- Exposure to violence in the home environment

l. Honour-Based Abuse, Forced Marriage & FGM

Includes harmful practices linked to cultural or social beliefs:

- **Honour-based violence**
- **Forced marriage**
- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

These are serious safeguarding concerns and criminal offences in the UK.

m. Discriminatory Abuse

Abuse based on prejudice related to:

- Race, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation
  This may include harassment, exclusion, or degrading treatment.

n. Organised or Institutional Abuse

Abuse involving:

- Groups of perpetrators
- Institutional settings (including places of worship if safeguards fail)
- Systemic failure to protect individuals

2.3. Who Might Harm a Child?

Children and young people may be harmed in a variety of settings and by different individuals. Abuse can occur:

- Within the **family environment**
- In **community or institutional settings**, including places of worship
- Through **online or digital environments**

In most cases, children are abused by someone **known to them and in a position of trust**, rather than by strangers.

Who May Perpetrate Abuse?

A child may be harmed by:

- **Adults**
  - Parents, carers or family members
  - Extended family or family friends
  - Trusted members of the community, including:
    - Clergy and church leaders
    - Teachers, professionals or authority figures, Volunteers, workers or parish members,

These individuals may misuse their position of **power, trust or responsibility** to harm a child.

- **Other Children or Young People (Child -on-Child Abuse)**

Children and young people may also harm others, intentionally or unintentionally, including through:

- Bullying (physical, verbal, emotional or cyberbullying)
- Sexual harassment or sexual violence
- Coercion, intimidation or controlling behaviour
- Abuse through **digital platforms or social media**

Such behaviour must always be treated as a **serious safeguarding concern**, not simply as "peer conflict";

- **Abuse Through Action or Inaction**

Abuse may occur through:

- **Acts of commission** (deliberate harm), such as physical or sexual abuse
- **Acts of omission** (failure to act), such as neglect or failing to protect a child from harm

2.4. Impact of Abuse on Children

Child abuse can have **serious and lasting effects** on a child's wellbeing and development;

- **Immediate and Long-Term Impact**

!buse may affect a child's:

- Physical health
- Emotional and psychological wellbeing
- Educational development
- Ability to form relationships and trust others

Children may suffer harm:

- During the period of abuse
- Long after the abuse has occurred

Therefore, **historical (non-recent) abuse disclosures must be taken as seriously as current concerns** and responded to promptly.

- **Impact on Faith and Spiritual Development**

Where abuse occurs within a Church context, or is perpetrated by someone associated with the Church, it may also:

- Damage a child's **spiritual wellbeing and sense of identity**
- Lead to loss of trust in faith, community, or authority
- Have long-term effects on belief, belonging and participation in religious life

- **Impact of Domestic Abuse**

Children may be harmed directly or indirectly through **domestic abuse** within their household.

Domestic abuse includes:

- Threatening behaviour, violence or abuse
- Emotional, controlling or coercive behaviour
- Abuse between partners, family members or extended family

Children living in such environments:

- May **witness abuse**, leading to emotional harm
- May also be directly abused

It is now widely recognised that:

Children living in households where there is domestic abuse **experience at least emotional harm**, even if they are not physically harmed.

2.5. Categories of Abuse (Adults at Risk – Care Act 2014)

The **Care Act 2014 identifies 10 categories of abuse** for adults with care and support needs:[**Ref**: 5. Types and indicators of abuse]

a. Physical Abuse

- Hitting, pushing, restraint, misuse of medication

b. Sexual Abuse

- Non-consensual sexual activity, harassment or exploitation

c. Psychological / Emotional Abuse

- Threats, intimidation, humiliation, coercion, isolation

d. Financial or Material Abuse

- Theft, fraud, misuse of money or property
- Pressure regarding wills or inheritance

e. Neglect and Acts of Omission

- Failure to provide care, medical treatment or basic needs

f. Domestic Abuse

- Physical, emotional, sexual or financial abuse within relationships

g. Discriminatory Abuse

- Harassment or poor treatment based on protected characteristics

h. Organisational / Institutional Abuse

- Poor care and unsafe practices within organisations
- Failure of systems to protect individuals

i. Modern Slavery

- Human trafficking, forced labour, domestic servitude
- Sexual exploitation or debt bondage

j. Self-Neglect

- Failure to care for personal health, hygiene or environment

2.6. Additional Cross-Cutting Safeguarding Risks

These may apply to both children and adults:

- **Online & Cyber Abuse**
  - Cyberbullying, Social media bullying, fraud, exploitation, harassment
- **Exploitation**
  - Sexual, criminal or financial exploitation
- **Abuse of Power / Position of Trust**
  - Particularly relevant in Church or faith settings
- **Organised / Group Abuse**
  - Abuse involving multiple perpetrators or networks

2.7. Understanding barriers to disclosure

Safeguarding Message

- Children rarely disclose abuse easily or immediately
- Adults must **not rely on disclosure alone** to identify harm
- Safeguarding depends on a culture of **vigilance, confidence and accountability**

Creating an environment where children feel **safe, listened to and believed**, and where adults feel **supported to act**, is essential to effective safeguarding practice.

Why Children Don't Tell and Adults Don't Act

There is a common assumption that children or young people will immediately disclose abuse or seek help. In reality, many children face **significant emotional, psychological and practical barriers** that prevent them from speaking out.

Understanding these barriers is essential to ensuring that safeguarding concerns are recognised and acted upon promptly.

Why Children and Young People May Not Tell

Children and young people may not disclose abuse for a variety of reasons, including:

- **Fear of consequences**
  - They may have been threatened or intimidated by the abuser
  - They may fear punishment, further harm, or retaliation
- **Fear of separation**
  - They may worry about being removed from their family or home
- **Fear of faith**
  - They may worry about getting penalised, supernatural coercion, scapegoating and isolation and control.
  - Anxiety or vulnerability of stepping into the unknown, the risk of abandoning self reliance or cultural apprehension towards religious conviction.
- **Feelings of guilt or self-blame**
  - They may believe the abuse is their fault or that they have done something wrong
- **Normalisation of abuse**
  - They may think that what is happening is normal or happens to all children
- **Shame, embarrassment, or stigma**
  - They may feel too ashamed or embarrassed to talk about their experiences
- **Loyalty or attachment to the abuser**
  - They may care about the person harming them and not want them to get into trouble
- **Lack of understanding or language**
  - Younger children or those with communication needs may not have the vocabulary to explain what has happened
  - They may not fully understand that what is happening is abuse

- **Fear of not being believed**
  - They may worry that adults will dismiss or ignore their concerns
- **Previous negative experiences**
  - If a child has tried to tell before and was not believed, they may be less likely to disclose again

Why Adults May Not Act on Concerns

Adults, including professionals, volunteers and community members, may also face barriers to responding appropriately to safeguarding concerns.

These may include:

- **Disbelief or denial**
  - Difficulty accepting that abuse could be happening, especially when it involves someone known or respected
- **Fear of getting it wrong**
  - Concern about misinterpreting a situation or making a false allegation
- **Fear of consequences**
  - Worry about the impact on the child, family, community or themselves
- **Personal relationships or loyalties**
  - Reluctance to act against someone they know, trust, or work with
- **Lack of confidence or knowledge**
  - Uncertainty about what signs to look for or what action to take
  - Not knowing how or where to report concerns
- **Minimising or rationalising concerns**
  - Attempting to explain away behaviour rather than recognising it as a safeguarding issue
- **Reluctance to get involved**
  - ! belief that it is "someone else's responsibility"

- **Social rejection/ Community hostility**
  - Fear of Faith
  - Concerns on unity among communities.
  - Fear of rejection from families

2.8. Code of Safer Working Practice

This Code of Safer Working Practice applies to all clergy, staff and volunteers working with children, young people and adults at risk within the Diocese.

It sets out the **expected standards of behaviour** to ensure that all interactions are safe, respectful and appropriate. It also helps individuals to **protect themselves against allegations**, while promoting a culture of integrity, accountability and safeguarding.

All staff and volunteers must report breaches of this Code to the PSO. Breaches may result in disciplinary action, removal from role, or referral to statutory agencies.

a. Core Expectations for Everyone Working with Children, Young People, or Adults

You must:

- Treat every individual with **respect and dignity**
- Respect each person's **right to privacy**
- Use **respectful language, tone, and body language**
- Ensure people know **who they can talk to** about personal concerns
- **Record and report** safeguarding concerns or inappropriate behaviour to the activity leader and/or PSO
    - Records must be **signed and dated**
- Obtain **written consent** for photographs or videos taken, displayed, or stored

b. Additional Requirements When Working with Children & Young People

You must:

- Work **with or within sight of another adult**
- Inform another adult if a child needs to go to the toilet
- Offer comfort **warmly but appropriately**, ensuring other adults are present
- Ensure children and parents understand any activity requiring **physical contact** before it takes place

c. Prohibited Conduct (Applies to All Ages)

You must not:

- Use **physical punishment**
- Make **sexually suggestive** comments or behaviour
- Ridicule, scapegoat, or reject an individual or group
- Permit **abusive peer activities** (bullying, initiation rituals, ridicule)
- Show **favouritism**
- Allow individuals to draw you into **excessive attention-seeking** behaviour
- Allow **unknown adults** unsupervised access to vulnerable people
- Allow strangers to give lifts to children, young people, or vulnerable adults
- Befriend children, young people, or vulnerable adults on **social media**
- Take photographs on **personal phones or cameras**

d. Additional Prohibited Conduct for Work with Children & Young People

You must not:

- Give lifts to children you supervise, except in **exceptional circumstances** (medical emergency, parent fails to collect)
  - Any such incident must be **recorded and shared** promptly
- Smoke or drink alcohol in the presence of children, except in **family-based social settings**.
- Arrange **social occasions** with children outside organised group events unless family/carers are present

e. Acceptable Touch

Physical contact may be appropriate, especially for younger children, but must always be:

- Safe
- Minimal
- Child-led

Guidelines:

- **Ask permission** before touching
- Allow the person to **set the level of contact**, except in emergencies
- Avoid any contact that could be **sexual, abusive, or offensive**
- Keep physical contact **public**, never behind closed doors
- Ensure touch responds to **the person's needs**, not your own
- Touch should be **age-appropriate**, welcome, and generally **initiated by the child**

3.9 Safeguarding: Social Media, Photography and Filming

The Diocese recognises that the use of **photography, video and social media** is important for communication and community engagement. However, this must always be balanced with the **safety, dignity and legal rights** of children, young people and adults at risk.

a. Legal Framework

All use of images and social media must comply with:

- **UK GDPR & Data Protection Act 2018**
- **Safeguarding legislation (Working Together 2026, KCSIE)**
- **Human Rights and privacy laws**

If a child is identifiable in an image or video, it is considered **personal data** and must be processed lawfully, fairly and safely [Ref: 13. Data protection in schools]

Children's data requires **additional protection**, and organisations must act in the **best interests of the child** [**Ref:** 14. Children and the UK GDPR]

b. Safeguarding Risks

Improper use of images or social media may lead to:

- Identification of a child by a potential abuser
- Grooming or exploitation risks
- Misuse or manipulation of images (including AI misuse)
- Exposure of vulnerable children (e.g. those under protection) [**Ref**: 15. Photographing and filming children]

c. Consent and Permissions

- **Children**
  - **Parental/carer consent is required** before:
    - Taking photos/videos
    - Sharing or publishing images
  - Where appropriate:
    - Children should also be **asked for their agreement**
  - **Consent must be informed**, including:
    - Where images will be used (e.g. website, social media, publications)
    - How long they will be kept
- **Adults**
  - Adults must provide their **own consent**
- **Withdrawal of Consent**
  - Consent must be **Freely given and withdrawable**
  - If consent is withdrawn Images must be **removed where possible without delay [Ref: 16.** Photography permissions and consent]

d. Good Practice for Photography and Filming

When taking images:

- Use images that:
  - Show children in **appropriate, positive settings**
  - Maintain dignity and respect
- Avoid:
  - Identifying children by full name and location
  - Close-up images of vulnerable individuals
  - Images that could be misinterpreted
- Ensure:
  - A designated person is responsible for photography
  - Staff use **church-approved devices only**
  - Personal phones are not used for official photography

e. Safe Use of Social Media

- Only **authorised individuals** may post on behalf of the parish and Diocese.
- Never:
  - Share personal details of children
  - Tag or identify children without consent
  - Use private social media accounts for church safeguarding activities
- All posts must:
  - Be respectful and appropriate
  - Protect the identity of vulnerable individuals

Public vs Private Sharing

- Posting on **public social media** carries higher risk
- Individuals must consider whether the child would **reasonably expect their image to be shared [Ref: 17.** Taking photos in schools]

f. Storage and Data Protection

- Images must be:
  - Stored securely (password-protected systems)
  - Accessed only by authorised persons
- Retention only keep images for as long as necessary
- Images must not be shared via personal messaging apps (e.g. WhatsApp) unless authorised

g. Managing Events and Photography

- Inform all attendees if Photography or filming will take place
- Provide:
  - Clear opportunity to **opt out**
  - Designated **photo-free areas** where necessary **[Ref: 16.** Photography permissions and consent]

h. External Photographers / Media

- Must agree to:
  - Safeguarding policy
  - Data protection rules
- Must:
  - Be supervised
  - Use images only for agreed purposes

i. Reporting Concerns

If you are concerned about:

- Inappropriate images
- Online misuse

- Breach of safeguarding rules

Report immediately to:

- Parish Safeguarding Officer
- Diocesan Safeguarding Team

Serious concerns must be referred to Police or Social Care

3. Procedures to Follow if There is a Concern

3.1. What to Do with Disclosures and Concerns

(Children, Young People and Adults at Risk)

Safeguarding concerns may arise in many ways, including:

- A disclosure (direct or indirect)
- Observations of behaviour or injuries
- Concerns raised by another person
- Changes in behaviour or presentation

All concerns must be **taken seriously and acted upon promptly**.

Immediate Actions (All Cases)

The following core actions must always be taken:

- **Ensure immediate safety**
  - Take urgent action if there is a risk of serious harm or medical emergency
  - Contact **emergency services (999)** where necessary
- **Listen carefully**
  - Stay calm, listen and reassure
  - Do **not ask leading questions** or investigate
  - Do not promise confidentiality—explain that you must share the information to keep them safe
- **Record the concern**
  - Make a **clear, factual written record as soon as possible (ideally within 1 hour)**
  - Record:
    - What was said (use actual words where possible)
    - Date, time and location
    - Observations (injuries, behaviour)
  - Distinguish clearly between **fact, opinion and hearsay**
- **Report immediately**
  - Share concerns with the **Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)** without delay
  - Do not wait for proof or further information
- **Do not investigate yourself**

- Safeguarding concerns must be handled by trained professionals

Reporting Procedure (Diocese)

All actual or suspected abuse must be:

- Reported **without delay (same day wherever possible, always within 24 hours)**
- Reported to the **Parish Safeguarding Officer and/or Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST - office@indianorthodoxuk.org)**

Reporting can be made:

- By **email or telephone**, using official contact details displayed in Church premises and Diocesan websites

Escalation

If the concern involves:

- The Parish Safeguarding Officer, or
- Members of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team

The concern must be reported directly to:

Chief Safeguarding Officer / Diocesan Metropolitan

" metropolitan@indianorthodoxuk.org

What to Do If a Child Makes a Disclosure

When a child or young person discloses abuse:

- Listen and take it seriously
- Reassure them they have done the right thing
- Do not:
  - Ask leading questions
  - Investigate
  - Show shock or disbelief
- Explain:
  - You must pass the information on to keep them safe
- Record and report immediately

What to Do If You Have Concerns About an Adult at Risk

When concerns relate to an adult at risk, consider:

- Is the adult experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect?
- What type of abuse is suspected?

- Are there **immediate risks to the adult or others (including children)**?

Person-Centred Approach

- Seek the adult's **views, wishes and consent**, where appropriate
- Provide information, advice and support

However, you must still report concerns where:

- There is **risk to others (including children)**
- There is a **public interest concern**
- The adult **lacks capacity** to make decisions

In these cases, a safeguarding concern **must still be raised**, even without consent.

3.2. Referral to Social Care or Police

Where appropriate, a referral will be made to:

- **Children's Social Care**
- **Adult Social Care**
- **Police**

This is usually undertaken by:

- Parish Safeguarding Officer
- Parish Priest (Vicar)
- Diocesan Safeguarding Team

Key Requirements When Making a Referral:

- Provide as much detail as possible:
  - Dates, times, observations, and exact words
- Clearly separate:
  - Facts
  - Opinions
  - Third-party information
- Confirm referrals in writing (within 24 hours)
- Maintain secure and accurate records

Ongoing Responsibilities

After a referral:

- Cooperate fully with Social Services and Police investigations
- Continue to:
  - Support the child or adult at risk
  - Maintain confidentiality (information shared on a need-to-know basis)
- Seek support if needed

- From Parish Priest, Safeguarding Officer, or Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.

Key Safeguarding Principles

- Always act **in the best interests of the child or adult at risk**
- **Never ignore** a concern or delay reporting
- Maintain accurate and timely **record-keeping**
- Safeguarding concerns must be handled **promptly, professionally and sensitively**

"! safeguarding flowchart outlining these procedures is displayed in all Church premises and included in the **Core Required Forms** section of this policy;"

Allegations Against Church Officers

This section applies where there are concerns or allegations that a **church or Diocesan officer (paid or voluntary)** has:

- Behaved in a way that **has harmed or may have harmed** a child, young person or adult at risk
- Possibly committed a **criminal offence** against or related to a child or adult at risk
- Behaved in a way that indicates they may be **unsuitable to work with children or adults at risk**

Immediate Action

Any concerns or allegations must be:

- **Reported immediately** to the **Chief Safeguarding Officer / Diocesan Safeguarding Team**
- **Not investigated internally** by parish members or leaders

The Chief Safeguarding Officer will:

- Assess the concern
- Determine appropriate action
- Liaise with statutory agencies where required

Referral to Statutory Authorities

In England, any allegation meeting the above criteria must be referred to the:

- **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**

The LADO:

- Provides advice on whether the allegation meets the threshold
- Oversees the management of allegations
- Supports coordination between agencies (e.g. police, social care)

This ensures that allegations are handled **consistently, fairly, and in line with statutory procedures**.

Possible Outcomes and Actions

Safeguarding responses may include:

- Immediate safeguarding actions to protect children or adults at risk
- Referral to statutory agencies (social care or police)
- Suspension or restriction of duties (as a neutral safeguarding measure)
- Internal disciplinary procedures
- Enhanced supervision, support and training

All actions will:

- Prioritise the **safety and wellbeing** of children and adults at risk
- Be **proportionate and lawful**
- Respect confidentiality while ensuring appropriate information sharing

Caring for Those Who May Pose a Risk

The Diocese recognises the need to balance:

- **Protection of children and adults at risk**, and
- **Pastoral care and support for individuals**

4. Safeguarding Responsibilities

Safeguarding is a **shared responsibility** and is most effective when all individuals and bodies understand their roles and work collaboratively within a clear structure of accountability.

Within the Diocese of the UK–Europe and Africa (UK Region), safeguarding responsibilities are held at **Diocesan and Parish levels**, supported by designated safeguarding officers and leadership oversight.

4.1. Diocesan Safeguarding Responsibilities

Safeguarding responsibility across the Diocese rests with:

- The **Diocesan Metropolitan (Bishop)** – who acts as the **Chief Safeguarding Officer**
- The **Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST)**
- The **Diocesan Council (DC)**

The Diocese is responsible for:

- Ensuring compliance with **UK safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance**
- Providing **leadership, oversight and accountability** for safeguarding practice
- Developing and maintaining **safeguarding policies and procedures**
- Supporting parishes with **training, advice and case management**
- Responding to safeguarding concerns and **liaising with statutory authorities** (e.g. Local Authority, Police, LADO)

4.2. Parish Safeguarding Responsibilities

At Parish level, safeguarding responsibility is held by:

- The **Parish Priest (Vicar)** – acting as the Parish safeguarding lead
- The **Parish Managing Committee (PMC)**
- The **Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)**

The Parish is responsible for:

- Implementing diocesan safeguarding policies locally
- Ensuring a **safe environment for worship and activities**
- Identifying and responding to safeguarding concerns
- Maintaining accurate records and reporting concerns
- Ensuring all staff and volunteers are **safely recruited and trained**

- **Key Principle**

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility;

All clergy, staff, volunteers and members of the Church community have a duty to:

- Remain vigilant to signs of abuse or neglect
- Report concerns promptly
- Promote a safe, respectful and inclusive environment

4.3. Partnership Working

Effective safeguarding requires working in partnership with:

- Children, young people and adults at risk
- Parents and carers
- Statutory agencies (local authorities, police, health services)
- Other organisations and safeguarding partners

This collaborative approach ensures:

- Early identification of concerns
- Timely intervention
- Coordinated and effective safeguarding responses

4.4. Episcopal Areas

Episcopal Areas, under the leadership of the **Metropolitans (Bishops)**, hold delegated responsibility for safeguarding within their regions on behalf of the Diocese.

Their role is to ensure that safeguarding is carried out consistently in accordance with:

- Diocesan safeguarding policies and procedures
- Diocesan Council guidance
- Relevant UK statutory safeguarding requirements

- **Key Responsibilities of Episcopal Areas**

Episcopal Areas are responsible for:

- **Coordinating safeguarding practice** across their region, in partnership with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team
- Ensuring the **effective flow of safeguarding information** between parishes and the Diocesan Safeguarding Team
- Monitoring and promoting adherence to the **Code of Safer Working Practice**
- Identifying local safeguarding needs and supporting the delivery of **training and development**
- Promoting **good safeguarding practice, awareness and culture** across all parishes
- Supporting Parish Priests, Parish Safeguarding Officers and Managing Committees in fulfilling their safeguarding responsibilities

- **Key Safeguarding Principle**

Safeguarding leadership at all levels must ensure that safeguarding is **embedded into practice, consistently applied, and actively monitored** across the Diocese.

4.5. Parish Managing Committee (PMC)

The Parish Managing Committee (PMC) plays a **central role in ensuring effective safeguarding** within the worshipping community. Its leadership and oversight are essential in creating and maintaining a safe environment for children, young people and adults at risk.

● Core Responsibilities

Each Parish Managing Committee must:

Policy Adoption and Implementation

- Every time the Diocesan Council/ Parish Managing Committee changes their office, formally adopt the Diocesan safeguarding policy in the first meeting: *"Safeguarding in the Diocese of UK–Europe and !frica (UK Region)"* and all associated procedures.
- Ensure the policy is **fully implemented at Parish level**
- Not amend the core policy statement provided by the Diocese
- Where necessary, develop **Parish-specific guidelines** that support implementation (without altering the core policy)

Visibility and Accessibility

- Ensure safeguarding information is **clearly displayed** within church premises, including:
    - Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) contact details
    - Diocesan Chief Safeguarding Officer contact details
    - National helplines:
        - **Childline:** 0800 1111
        - **NSPCC Helpline:** 0808 800 5000
        - **Family Lives (Parent line):** 0808 800 2222
- Display this information particularly in areas where **children's activities take place**

Safeguarding Leadership and Roles

- Appoint at least one **Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)** to:
    - Work with the Parish Priest and PMC
    - Implement safeguarding procedures
- Ensure the PSO:
    - Reports to the PMC
    - Attends meetings at least **twice a year**
- Appoint a **Children's Champion**:
    - A trusted individual accessible to children
    - Separate from the PSO role

Governance and Oversight

- Ensure safeguarding is a **standing agenda item**, including:
  - At the first PMC meeting following the Annual General Body meeting
  - At regular intervals throughout the year
- Conduct an **annual safeguarding review**, including:
  - Implementation of policy and procedures
  - Training compliance
  - Risk management practices
- Receive and record an **annual safeguarding report** from the PSO
- Maintain records of safeguarding policies:
  - One copy with PMC minutes
  - One copy sent to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team
  - One copy displayed publicly

Safer Recruitment and Training

- Ensure all individuals working with children or adults at risk:
  - Are recruited using **safe recruitment practices** (including DBS checks)
  - Receive **appropriate safeguarding training and support**

Safe Environment and Risk Management

- Ensure appropriate **insurance cover** is in place for all parish activities involving children or adults at risk
- Ensure all external organisations or groups using church premises:
  - Understand and comply with safeguarding requirements
  - Provide their own safeguarding assurances where appropriate

Responding to Concerns

- Ensure that all safeguarding concerns are:
  - Taken seriously
  - Reported in line with Diocesan procedures
- Provide clear guidance within the Parish on:
  - How to report concerns to **Children's Social Care**
  - When to contact:
    - **Emergency services (999)** – if a child or adult is at immediate risk
    - **Police (101)** – for non-emergency concerns

Partnership Working (LEPs)

Where working within **Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs)**:

- Agree which safeguarding policy will be followed
- Ensure clarity on Reporting procedures and Points of contact in urgent situations
- Ensure this agreement is formally **ratified by relevant church leadership**
- Notify all partners if a **safeguarding concern arises**

- **Key Safeguarding Principle**

The Parish Managing Committee must ensure that safeguarding is **actively implemented, regularly reviewed, and embedded into all aspects of parish life**.

5. Safeguarding Roles

Clear safeguarding roles and responsibilities are essential to ensure effective coordination, accountability, and timely response to concerns across the Diocese.

5.1. Diocesan Safeguarding Officer

The **Diocesan Metropolitan** serves as the **Chief Safeguarding Officer** and Chair of the **Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST)**.

- **Role and Responsibilities**

The Chief Safeguarding Officer is responsible for:

- Providing **strategic leadership and oversight** of safeguarding across the Diocese
- Coordinating safeguarding arrangements through the **Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST)**
- Offering **specialist advice, guidance and support** to parishes
- Overseeing safeguarding cases and ensuring appropriate **risk management**
- Ensuring compliance with:
    - UK safeguarding legislation
    - Statutory guidance
    - Diocesan policy and procedures
- Liaising with **statutory agencies** (e.g. Police, Local Authority, LADO)

5.2. Diocesan Safeguarding Team

This team should include leads from Child, Adults and Neurodiversity (Special Needs people) categories.

- Diocesan Metropolitan shall appoint Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

- **Role and Responsibilities**

The Diocesan Safeguarding Team is responsible for:

- Coordinating safeguarding arrangements with Chief Safeguarding Officer and Parish Safeguarding Officers.
- Offering **specialist advice, guidance and support** to parishes
- Overseeing safeguarding cases and ensuring appropriate **risk management**
- Ensuring compliance with:
    - UK safeguarding legislation
    - Statutory guidance
    - Diocesan policy and procedures

Liaising with **statutory agencies** (e.g. Police, Local Authority, LADO)

5.3. Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)

The Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) plays a key role in implementing safeguarding at parish level.

- Parish Safeguarding Officer shall be elected by the Parish General Body.

- **Role and Responsibilities**

The PSO is responsible for:

- Coordinating the **parish response to safeguarding concerns**
- Ensuring concerns about children, young people or adults at risk are Recorded and Reported promptly
- Acting as the main **point of contact** between:
  - Parish
  - Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST)
  - Statutory agencies
- Supporting the Vicar and Parish Management Committee (PMC) in:
  - Implementing safeguarding policy
  - Promoting safe practice
- Whenever the new Committee takes charge, PSO should attend the first MC meeting; Safeguarding training, complete/review risk assessment, and reporting on safeguarding matters.
- In addition, PSO should be invited to the MC meeting at least once in six months to review risks and action any safeguarding concerns.

- **Procedure When a Concern Arises (PSO)**

When the PSO becomes aware of a safeguarding concern:

- **Ensure immediate safety**
  - If there is immediate danger, contact:
    - Emergency services (**999**)
    - Ambulance or police
- **Inform appropriate leadership**
  - Inform the Parish Priest/Vicar (unless there is a valid reason not to)
- **Report without delay**
  - Inform the **Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST) within 24 hours (same day where possible)**
- **Seek advice**
  - Consult with DST, Local Children's or !dult Social Care and NSPCC (for additional guidance if needed)
- **Do not investigate**
  - Do not attempt to investigate concerns yourself

- **Key Principle**

All safeguarding concerns must be reported **promptly, accurately, and without delay** , ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the individual at all times.

6. Selecting, Recruiting and Supporting Workers

Safe recruitment practices are essential to **prevent unsuitable individuals from working with children and adults at risk**, in line with Safer Recruiting Guidelines.

They form part of a wider safeguarding framework that promotes safe, accountable and effective practice.

- **Four Key Elements of Safer Recruitment**

Safer recruitment is based on:

- **Clear recruitment procedures and role descriptions**
- **Defined standards of behaviour and conduct**
- **Effective supervision and accountability structures**
- **Access to appropriate training and ongoing support**

- **Recruitment Requirements**

All appointments (paid or voluntary) must:

- Follow Diocesan safeguarding policies and procedures
- Undergo a **structured recruitment process**
- Include appropriate **vetting and safeguarding checks (DBS).**
- Include a **mandatory probation period (e.g. 6 months)**

- **Safer Recruitment Practices**

Good recruitment processes must include:

- Clear **role descriptions and personal specifications**
- Completion of **confidential safeguarding declarations**
- Verification of **identity and eligibility to work/volunteer**
- **References** to confirm suitability
- Interview and assessment processes appropriate to the role
- Consideration of the individual's:
    - Experience
    - Integrity
    - Suitability to work with vulnerable groups

6.1. Safer Recruitment and Risk Assessment

Under safeguarding legislation:

- For roles involving children or adults at risk, **no offences are considered "spent"** under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions Order)

- All individuals with criminal record disclosures must undergo a **risk assessment proportionate to their role**

This includes consideration of:

- Nature and seriousness of the offence
- Relevance to the role
- Time elapsed since the offence
- Evidence of behaviour change

The **Diocesan Safeguarding Team must always be involved** in these decisions.

Managing Risk

Where concerns exist, the Diocese will implement appropriate measures, including:

Managing Offenders Protocol

- For individuals with cautions or convictions
- Sets clear boundaries and supervision arrangements

Covenant of Care Agreement

- For individuals who may pose a risk (with or without conviction)
- Outlines conditions for participation in Church life

These measures aim to:

- Protect children and adults at risk
- Support safe inclusion within the Church community

Key Principle

The protection of children and adults at risk is always paramount.

Church Responsibility

As a place of worship and community, the Church must:

- Recognise that safeguarding risks can exist **within its own settings**
- Take proactive steps to **identify and manage risk**
- Ensure that all members, especially children and adults at risk, are **protected and supported**

Balancing Care and Protection

The Church is called to offer:

- **Welcome, care and pastoral support to all**, including those who may have offended

However, this must **never compromise safeguarding**.

This requires:

- Clear boundaries
- Careful risk management
- Accountability in all roles and relationships

Key Safeguarding Principle

The Church must **not place individuals in positions of temptation or access** where they could cause harm, and must ensure that the safety of children and adults at risk is never compromised.

6.2. DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service)

- All roles involving children or adults at risk must have:
  - Enhanced **DBS check**(Enhanced with Barred List)
- DBS checks must be:
  - Obtained before appointment
  - **Regularly reviewed or updated** (good practice every 3 years)
- Eligibility must align with **regulated activity requirements** (Staff children ratio according to age group)

Risk Assessment

Where a DBS check or declaration raises concerns:

- A **formal risk assessment** must be completed
- The Diocesan Safeguarding Team must be involved
- Decisions must be Proportionate, Recorded and Focused on safeguarding

Induction, Training and Support

All staff and volunteers must receive:

- **Safeguarding induction training** before starting their role
- Ongoing safeguarding training appropriate to their responsibilities
- Regular supervision and support
- Clear understanding of Safeguarding procedures and Code of Safer Working Practice

Additional Good Practice

- Volunteers should normally:
  - Be known to the parish community before appointment
  - Demonstrate commitment and suitability
- Regular reviews (Vicar/Sunday School Head Teacher) should confirm that individuals:
  - Continue to meet safeguarding expectations
  - Remain suitable for their role

Key Safeguarding Principle

Safe recruitment is essential to preventing harm and ensuring that only suitable individuals are entrusted with responsibilities involving children and adults at risk.

6.3. Safeguarding Training Requirements by Role

Role / Position	DBS Requirement &	Training Level	Training Frequency
Diocesan Metropolitan (Chief Safeguarding Officer)	Enhanced DBS (with Barred List check where applicable)	Leadership Safeguarding Training	Every 3 years
Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST) Members	Enhanced DBS	Advanced / Specialist Safeguarding Training	Every 3 years
All Clergy (including retired clergy in active service)	Enhanced DBS with Barred List check	Leadership Safeguarding Training	Every 3 years
Parish Vicars / Priests	Enhanced DBS with Barred List check	Leadership Safeguarding Training	Every 3 years
Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)	Enhanced DBS	Basic & Advanced Safeguarding Training	Every 3 years
Sunday School Teachers	Enhanced DBS with Barred List check	Safeguarding Training (Children)	Every year
Youth Leaders / Camp Leaders	Enhanced DBS (where eligible)	Foundation Safeguarding Training + First Aid	Every 3 years (Safeguarding) / As required (First Aid)
Parish Managing Committee Members (PMC)	Basic DBS (if applicable)	Safeguarding Awareness Training	Every year
Volunteers working with children or adults at risk	DBS appropriate to role (Basic/Enhanced)	Safeguarding Awareness Training	Every year

7. Hire of Church Premises

The Diocese recognises that safeguarding responsibilities extend to all activities taking place on Church premises, including those delivered by external organisations.

Responsibilities for Hirers

Where external organisations use Church premises, the Parish must ensure that:

- The **responsibility for the welfare and safety of children, young people and adults at risk remains with the hiring organisation**
- All hirers are made aware of and agree to comply with the **Diocesan safeguarding policy and procedures**

Safeguarding Requirements for Hire Agreements

Parish Managing Committees must ensure that:

- A **formal hire agreement** is in place
- The agreement includes a clear **safeguarding clause**, requiring compliance with safeguarding standards
- A copy of the Diocesan safeguarding policy is:
    - Provided to the hirer
    - Attached to the hire agreement
- Hirers must:
    - Confirm they have **read and understood** the safeguarding policy
    - **Sign to acknowledge compliance**, even if they have their own safeguarding policy

Use of External Premises by the Parish

Where a Parish hires external premises for activities involving children, young people or adults at risk:

- Both parties must:
    - **Exchange safeguarding policies**
    - Confirm mutual understanding and compliance
- The Parish must:
    - Satisfy itself that the venue has **appropriate safeguarding arrangements and risk controls**
    - Ensure clear **roles and responsibilities** are agreed and documented.

Key Safeguarding Principle

Safeguarding responsibilities cannot be delegated or transferred; all organisations must ensure appropriate safeguards are in place for their activities.

8. Off-Site Visits

Off-site activities can provide valuable opportunities but require **careful planning, risk assessment, and safeguarding measures**.

8.1. Day Visits

Before the Visit

- Plan activities, location and itinerary
- Ensure **adequate insurance cover**
- Obtain **written parental/carer consent** (including medical and emergency details)
- Carry out a **risk assessment** (journey + activities)
- Identify **medical needs and emergency contacts**
- Ensure **appropriate adult supervision ratios**
- Assign children to **named group leaders**
- Ensure access to:
    - First Aid kit
    - Qualified First Aider
- Leave copies of:
    - Participant list
    - Emergency contacts
    - Itinerary

  with a **designated parish contact**

On the Day

- Ensure all leaders:
    - Understand their roles and emergency procedures
- Carry:
    - First Aid kit
    - Emergency contact details
- Maintain:
    - Clear supervision of all participants
    - Access to mobile phones for communication

8.2. Residential Visits

In addition to day visit requirements:

- Obtain **formal approval** from the Parish Managing Committee
- Ensure venue has:
    - Safeguarding policy
    - DBS-checked staff (where applicable)
    - Insurance and health & safety compliance
    - Fire safety procedures
- Conduct a **full risk assessment**
- Ensure all leaders are:
    - Safely recruited
    - Clear about their responsibilities

On Arrival

- Check fire exits and safety procedures

- Report any risks immediately
- Carry out a fire drill where appropriate

Key Safeguarding Requirements

- No child under 18 should attend without **appropriate consent**
- Parents/carers must receive full information, including:
    - Purpose and activities
    - Dates and accommodation
    - Travel arrangements
    - Leader contact details
    - Emergency contact arrangements
- Maintain awareness of:
    - Where each child is at all times
- Record:
    - Any incidents or concerns (e.g. daily log for residential visits

Adult–Child Supervision Ratios

There must always be a **sufficient number of adults** present to ensure the safety, wellbeing and effective supervision of all children.

- A **minimum of two adults** must be present at all times
- Ratios may need to be **increased depending on risk, needs of the group, or activity type** (e.g. off-site visits, children with additional needs)

Recommended Minimum Ratios

Age Group	Adult : Child Ratio
0 – 2 years	1 : 3
2 – 3 years	1 : 4
3 – 5 years	1 : 8 *(1:13 if led by a qualified teacher/EYFS standard)*
5 – 7 years	1 : 8
8 – 11 years	1 : 10
12 – 16 years	1 : 10–15 (depending on activity and risk)

Additional Supervision Requirements

- Always ensure **mixed-gender supervision** where appropriate
- Individual children should **not be left alone** with one adult
- Higher ratios are required where:
    - Activities involve higher risk (e.g. trips, outdoor activities)
    - Children have additional needs or disabilities

- Groups are large or unfamiliar

8.3. Accommodation

Appropriate accommodation arrangements are essential to ensure the **safety, dignity and wellbeing** of children, young people and adults at risk during overnight or residential activities.

General Requirements (Children and Young People)

- There must be **at least two adult leaders**, with:
  - **Both male and female leaders** present for mixed-gender groups
- **Adults must not share sleeping accommodation** with children or young people under any circumstances
- Adults should:
  - Sleep in **close proximity**, ensuring appropriate supervision
  - Remain **accessible at all times during the night**
- **Separate sleeping and washing facilities** must be provided for:
  - Males and females
- A minimum of **two adults should be on duty (rota basis)** until all children have settled

Supervision and Safety

- Clear arrangements must be in place for:
  - Night-time supervision
  - Emergencies and safeguarding concerns
- Leaders must:
  - Know the **layout of accommodation**
  - Ensure children understand **rules and boundaries**

Adults at Risk – Additional Considerations

When organising residential visits involving adults at risk:

- The individual must be:
  - **Fully involved in planning**, wherever possible
  - Supported by a **family member/advocate** if needed
- Leaders must ensure:
  - Adequate staffing beyond the minimum of two adults
  - Appropriate **support and supervision levels**

Planning Considerations

When selecting accommodation, consideration must be given to:

- **Suitability and safety of the venue**
- Adequacy of:
  - Sleeping arrangements

    - Washing facilities
    - Accessibility
- **Travel arrangements and journey length**
- Individual needs:
    - Medical
    - Behavioural
    - Cultural and personal requirements

Affordability and Accessibility

When planning visits or residential activities, consideration must be given to both **cost and accessibility**, ensuring that participation is safe and inclusive.

Key Considerations

- The venue should be **affordable and accessible** to all participants, wherever possible
- The location must be:
    - Within **reasonable distance of essential services**, including:
        - Hospitals
        - Doctors / medical facilities
- Consider the **additional costs** required for:
    - Safe supervision
    - Specialist support (if needed)
    - Transport and emergency arrangements

Health and Support Needs

- Where individuals have **complex medical or support needs**:
    - A written **health declaration / care plan** must be completed
    - This should include:
        - Medical conditions
        - Medication requirements
        - Support needs and emergency procedures
- Appropriate arrangements must be in place to ensure:
    - Safe participation
    - Adequate support during the visit

Sleepovers at Church

Parishes may organise sleepovers or provide overnight accommodation during events such as pilgrimages or youth activities. These must be **carefully planned and risk-assessed** to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all participants.

General Safeguarding Requirements

- Follow all requirements outlined for **Residential Visits**
- Ensure:
    - Adequate **insurance cover**, including capacity limits
    - A completed **risk assessment** for the premises and activities

Health and Safety

- Ensure:
  - **Fire exits are clear and accessible**
  - Fire extinguishers are available
  - Leaders know how to **turn off utilities** (water, gas, electricity)
- Have available:
  - A **fully stocked First Aid kit**
  - At least one **qualified First Aider**
  - A **torch/emergency lighting**

Supervision and Staffing

- Minimum of **two adult leaders**, with:
  - Appropriate **adult–child ratios**
  - Leaders recruited through **safer recruitment processes**
- Provide:
  - **Male and female leaders** for mixed-gender groups
- Maintain:
  - Clear supervision arrangements, including **night-time supervision**
  - Leaders accessible at all times

Sleeping Arrangements

- Adults must **not share sleeping areas** with children or young people
  (except in exceptional circumstances where justified for care, and risk -assessed)
- Children and young people must:
  - Sleep in **single-sex groups** (where appropriate)
  - Have separate space from adults
- Leaders may:
  - Conduct **periodic night checks** to ensure safety

Privacy and Facilities

- Ensure **separate facilities** for:
  - Male and female participants
  - Adults and children
- Where facilities are limited:
  - Implement a **supervised timetable** for use

Key Safeguarding Principle

Sleepovers must be carefully managed to ensure **safe supervision, appropriate boundaries, and respect for privacy**, preventing risk or situations that could lead to harm.

8.4. Transporting Vulnerable Groups

Transport arrangements must ensure the **safety, welfare and supervision** of children, young people and adults at risk during all journeys.

- Safeguarding procedures must apply to **all transport organised by the parish**
- **Written consent** must be obtained from parents/carers (and adults at risk where appropriate) before travel

General Requirements

- Ensure all journeys are:
  - Planned and risk-assessed
  - Supervised with appropriate **adult–child ratios**
- Drivers must be:
  - **Over 25 years old**
  - Hold a **full driving licence (minimum 2 years)**
  - Adequately **insured for voluntary transport**
- Drivers must NOT:
  - Have relevant unspent convictions for unsafe driving

Coach Travel

- Only use coaches with **seat belts**
- All passengers must:
  - Have a seat
  - Wear seat belts at all times
- Ensure safe boarding and supervision

Minibus Travel

- Driver must:
  - Be licensed and qualified to drive a minibus
- Ensure:
  - A **second adult escort** is present
  - Passengers wear **seat belts**
  - No child sits in the front seat
- Luggage must be:
  - Stored safely without blocking exits
- Leaders must carry a **mobile phone for emergencies**

Private Cars (Voluntary Drivers)

- Drivers must provide:
  - Valid driving licence
  - Insurance (covering voluntary use)
  - MOT certificate (if applicable)
- Requirements:
  - All children sit in the **rear seats**
  - Use **booster seats** where required (under 12 or below 135cm)
  - All passengers wear seat belts
- Good practice:
  - Avoid transporting a child alone
  - If unavoidable, ensure:
    - Child sits in the back
    - Another adult is informed

Public Transport

- Use **higher supervision ratios**
- Ensure:
  - Clear group supervision (leaders at front and rear)
  - Children remain seated where possible
- Inform parents/carers:
  - That seating may not be guaranteed
- Provide clear instructions to children on:
  - What to do if separated or lost

Key Safeguarding Principle

Transport arrangements must be **safe, supervised, and risk-assessed**, ensuring that children and adults at risk are protected throughout all journeys.

9. Consent

Obtaining informed consent is an essential part of safeguarding practice and supports the participation, dignity and rights of children and young people.

Informed Participation

Children and young people should be:

- Provided with clear, age-appropriate information about activities
- Given the opportunity to:
  - Ask questions
  - Understand what the activity involves
  - Make an **informed choice** about participation

This may be achieved through Written briefings and/or Pre-activity discussions or meetings

Ongoing Consent

Children and young people must be:

- Able to **withdraw at any time** if they feel uncomfortable
- Listened to and taken seriously when they express concerns

Parental/Carer Consent

For children under 18 years:

- **Written parental or guardian consent must be obtained** for:
  - Participation in activities
  - Trips, events or off-site activities
  - Photography or recording (where applicable)

Young People Aged 16–17

Young people aged 16–17 may be able to give their own consent **depending on their circumstances**, including:

- Their level of independence
- Whether they are living or working independently

However:

- Where a young person is:
  - Looked after by the local authority, or
  - Otherwise considered vulnerable

Consent must involve the **relevant authority or responsible adult**

Record Keeping

Parishes must:

- Maintain accurate and secure records of:
  - Consent forms
  - Permissions given
- Ensure compliance with **data protection and confidentiality requirements**

10. Pastoral Counselling, Confession and Pastoral Visits

The Diocese recognises pastoral counselling, the Sacrament of Holy Confession (Kumbasaram), and pastoral visitation as essential spiritual ministries of the Malankara (Indian) Orthodox Syrian Church. These ministries must be exercised in accordance with Canon Law, the Diocesan Pastoral Code of Conduct, and statutory safeguarding requirements across UK jurisdictions (England & Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland).

The following provisions must be strictly implemented across all parishes and missions:

1. General Safeguarding Requirements & Vetting

DBS & Vetting: Clergy and authorised pastoral carers may offer pastoral ministry to children or adults at risk only if they have completed enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) / PVG / Access NI checks, received formal diocesan authorisation, and completed mandatory diocesan safeguarding training.

Compliance: !ll pastoral interactions shall comply with the Diocese's Code of Safer Working Practice, relevant UK statutory legislation (including the Children Act 1989/2004 and the Care Act 2014), and local authority reporting frameworks.

Free Consent: Participation in Holy Confession, spiritual direction (Spiritual Guidance/Fatherhood), or pastoral counselling must be entirely voluntary. No person shall be subjected to coercion, undue influence, spiritual abuse, or manipulation.

A) Confidentiality & Sacramental Confession -

Sacramental Seal: In accordance with Orthodox Christian doctrine, the secrecy of Sacramental Confession is sacred.

Disclosures in Confession: If a disclosure of abuse or serious harm involving a child or adult at risk is made during Holy Confession, the priest cannot break the sacramental seal directly. However, the priest must pastorally and firmly urge the penitent t o report the matter to statutory authorities (Police/Social Care) or allow the priest to assist them in doing so outside the sacrament.

B) General Pastoral Confidentiality: Outside the Sacrament of Confession, confidentiality in general pastoral counselling and pastoral visits is conditional. It is subject to statutory safeguarding obligations where there is a risk of serious harm, neglect , or abuse involving a child or adult at risk.

C) Planned Visits & Meetings (Off-Site and On-Site)

Risk Assessments: A formal safeguarding risk assessment shall be completed prior to any scheduled off-site pastoral visit or meeting involving a child or an adult at risk, using the official Diocesan Risk Assessment Form.

D) Safe Locations: Meetings held outside church premises must occur in safe, transparent, and mutually agreed-upon locations. Isolated or unmonitored venues must be avoided.

Third-Party Presence & Chaperones:

Where requested by the person receiving pastoral care (or required by a risk assessment), one-to-one meetings may take place within visual range of another trusted adult, while preserving conversational privacy. The additional person shall not participate in the discussion unless invited.

No third party shall be present without the explicit consent of the person receiving care or, where applicable, their parent, legal guardian, or lawful representative.

For individuals lacking legal or mental capacity (under the Mental Capacity Act 2005), the involvement of a parent, carer, or legal representative must be decided based on statutory safeguarding advice and the individual's best interests.

E) Consent: Pastoral visits to children or adults at risk outside church premises require prior written or verifiable consent from a parent, guardian, or primary carer, except where statutory agencies (Social Services/Police) direct otherwise.

F) Emergency Pastoral Visits (Homes, Hospitals, and Care Facilities)

Unplanned / Urgent Care: In emergency situations —such as critical illness, end-of-life care (Anointing of the Sick/Last Rites), or acute family distress —a priest may conduct an immediate house, hospital, or hospice visit without prior completion of a forma l written risk assessment.

Safety Protocols for Emergency Visits:

Notification: Prior to entering the venue (or immediately after, if in a severe crisis), the priest must notify the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO), the Assistant Priest, or Parish Trustee/ Secretary of their location and expected duration of the visit.

G) Hospital & Hospice Settings: Clergy must adhere to NHS Trust or hospice visitor regulations, check in with ward staff/hospital chaplaincy upon arrival, and ensure prayers or ministrations take place in a visible area or with NHS staff aware of their pre sence.

H) Home Emergencies: A priest should avoid entering a private residence alone with a child or adult at risk without another family member, carer, or parish chaperone present, unless delaying the emergency ministry would cause severe spiritual or medical de triment.

Virtual & Electronic Pastoral Communication -

Electronic communication, telephone counselling, and online pastoral meetings (e.g., Zoom, Teams) must comply with Diocesan boundaries.

Clergy must avoid 1-to-1 video calls with minors without parental knowledge/consent. Official church platforms should be used rather than personal social media channels.

Governance & Record Keeping

Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO): The PSO must be consulted in advance regarding any non-routine pastoral visits involving vulnerable individuals.

Record Keeping: Clergy and pastoral workers must maintain clear, factual, and accurate logs of pastoral interactions where safeguarding concerns or disclosures arise. These logs must be securely stored in line with UK GDPR and Diocesan Data Protection poli cies.

11. Contact Addresses and References

It is essential that all parishes maintain up-to-date safeguarding contact information to support prompt reporting and effective safeguarding responses.

Local Contact Information

Each parish must:

- Develop and maintain a **local safeguarding contact sheet**, including:
  - Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)
  - Parish Priest/Vicar
  - Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST)
  - Chief Safeguarding Officer (Diocesan Metropolitan)
  - Local !uthority Children's Social Care
  - Adult Social Care Services
  - Police (Emergency: 999 / Non-emergency: 101)
  - National helplines (e.g. NSPCC, Childline)
- Use the **standard contact template** provided in *Section 5: Forms and Templates*

Maintenance and Review

- The contact sheet must be:
  - **Reviewed and updated at least annually**
  - Updated earlier if there are changes to personnel or contact details
- The **Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)** is responsible for:
  - Maintaining accuracy

    - Ensuring accessibility
- A copy of the updated contact sheet must be:
    - Sent to the **Diocesan Safeguarding Team**
    - Made **available within parish premises**

Key Safeguarding Principle

Accurate and accessible contact information is essential to enable timely reporting and effective safeguarding action.

12. Whistleblowing Policy

The Diocese of UK–Europe and Africa of the Indian Orthodox Church is committed to promoting an **open, transparent and accountable safeguarding culture** .

Whistleblowing is a vital mechanism that enables individuals to raise concerns about safeguarding, malpractice or wrongdoing **without fear of reprisal**.

12.1. Purpose

This policy aims to ensure that:

- Safeguarding concerns can be **raised freely, safely and responsibly**
- Individuals who raise concerns are **protected from victimisation, discrimination or disadvantage**
- All concerns are taken seriously and **appropriate action is taken promptly**

12.2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Clergy and church workers
- Volunteers and parish office-bearers
- Parish Managing Committee members
- Sunday School staff and youth leaders
- Any individual associated with the Diocese or its parishes

12.3. What Should Be Reported?

Concerns that should be reported include, but are not limited to:

- Unsafe or poor **safeguarding practices**
- Inappropriate behaviour towards children, young people or adults at risk
- Misconduct, abuse of power or breach of trust
- Failure to act on safeguarding concerns
- Concealment, mishandling or mismanagement of disclosures
- Breaches of safeguarding policies or procedures

12.4. Procedure for Reporting

Concerns should be raised using the following steps:

1. **Report to Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)**
    - Where appropriate and safe to do so
2. **Escalate to Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST)**
    - If the concern cannot be raised locally or requires escalation
3. **Report directly to Chief Safeguarding Officer (Metropolitan)**
    - If the concern involves:

- The PSO, Vicar
- Members of the DST

" Email: **metropolitan@indianorthodoxuk.org**

1. **Contact statutory authorities directly** where necessary
    - **Police (999)** – for emergencies or immediate risk
    - **Police (101)** – non-emergency
    - Local Authority Social Services

Protection for Whistleblowers

The Diocese is committed to protecting individuals who raise concerns in good faith.

- All reports will be handled:
    - **Sensitively and confidentially**
    - In accordance with safeguarding and data protection requirements
- Individuals who raise concerns will be protected under the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA)**
- No individual will face:
    - Dismissal
    - Disciplinary action
    - Threats or disadvantage

for raising a **genuine concern in good faith**, even if the concern is not substantiated.

13. First Aid Guidance

The Diocese recognises the importance of ensuring that appropriate **first aid provision** is available at all Church activities involving children, young people and adults at risk.

All those working with vulnerable groups should have a **basic awareness of first aid**, while ensuring that appropriate trained personnel are available when needed.

13.1. First Aid Provision

Each Parish must ensure that:

- At least **one suitably trained and qualified First Aider** is present at all activities involving children, young people or adults at risk
- First Aid training is obtained from **recognised providers**
- A designated team of **trained First Aiders** is identified within each Parish

13.2. First Aid Equipment

Each Parish must have:

- A suitably stocked **First Aid kit**, appropriate to the size and nature of activities
- The kit should:
  - Be **easily accessible and clearly identifiable**
  - Not be locked away or difficult to access
  - Be **checked regularly (at least termly)** and restocked as required
- The location of First Aid equipment should be clearly known to all staff and volunteers
- **Nearest hospital details and emergency contact numbers** must be:
  - Clearly displayed within Church premises

13.3. Suggested Contents of First Aid Kit

A standard First Aid kit should include (as a minimum):

- Sterile dressings (medium and large)
- Triangular bandages
- Eye pads and eye wash
- Adhesive plasters (assorted sizes)
- Antibacterial wipes (alcohol-free)
- Medical tape (microporous)
- Disposable gloves (nitrile, powder-free)
- Finger dressings
- Resuscitation face shield (with one-way valve)
- Emergency (thermal) blanket
- Burn dressings
- Scissors (medical grade)
- Clinical waste bags
- **Accident/incident report book or forms**

13.4 Responding to Serious Accidents or Incidents

In the event of a serious injury or medical emergency:

- **Call 999 immediately** for:
  - Life-threatening situations
  - Serious injury or illness
- **NHS 111 may be used** for urgent but non-life-threatening medical advice
- Provide First Aid by a **qualified First Aider** until help arrives
- Follow instructions given by emergency services
- Notify:
  - Parents/carers (for children or young people) **as soon as possible**
  - Parish safeguarding lead if appropriate
- Record the incident:
  - As soon as possible (ideally within 1 hour)
  - With full factual details

13.5 Responding to Minor Accidents

For minor injuries:

- Basic First Aid may be administered
- A **second adult should be present** where possible
- If not, ensure another adult is aware of the situation
- Inform parents/carers:
  - At the earliest appropriate opportunity
  - Usually at collection time
- Record all details in the **accident/incident record** before the end of the session

13.6 Administration of Medicines

As a general rule:

- **Medicines should not be administered** unless necessary

Where medication is required:

Written **parent/carer consent** (for under 18s)

A written **care plan** must be in place, including:

  - Name of medication
  - Dosage and frequency
  - Method of administration
  - Written parental/carer consent (for under 18s)
- Encourage independence where appropriate (e.g. inhalers)
- Only authorised individuals should administer medication, following clear procedures

Emergency Action

- Call **999** if needed
- Inform parents/carers immediately
- Record the incident

Emergency Planning

Accidents are, by definition, unanticipated, but this does not mean they should be unprepared for. Creating an emergency plan may feel unusual because you are preparing for something you hope will never happen. However, experience shows that it is far bett er to have a plan and not need it than to need a plan and not have one. It is also preferable to agree on an "in the event of an emergency" plan in advance, while calm, rather than during the stress of an incident.

Having an emergency plan can help people feel confident enough to take sensible and well - managed risks. This enables a wider range of activities and makes working with children and vulnerable adults more enjoyable and rewarding for everyone involved.

The most familiar example of an emergency plan is a fire drill. Other scenarios can be practised through role play in team meetings. For example, consider what actions you would take if someone in your group had an accident requiring medical attention, or if someone on a trip went temporarily missing.

You will never be able to cover all possible situations. However, by planning for common and foreseeable scenarios, you can improve preparedness, reduce panic, and ensure a quicker, safer, and more effective response when incidents occur.

13.7 Emergency Contact Details

Parishes must ensure that:

- Emergency contact details for **parents/carers** are:
  - Collected and readily accessible
  - Kept securely in line with data protection requirements

13.8 Recording and Reporting

All accidents and incidents must:

- Be recorded in the **accident/incident log**
- Include:
  - Date, time and location
  - Details of the injury or incident
  - Action taken
  - Names of those involved
- Be signed and dated by the person recording

Serious incidents (including safeguarding concerns) must be Reported in line with **safeguarding procedures**

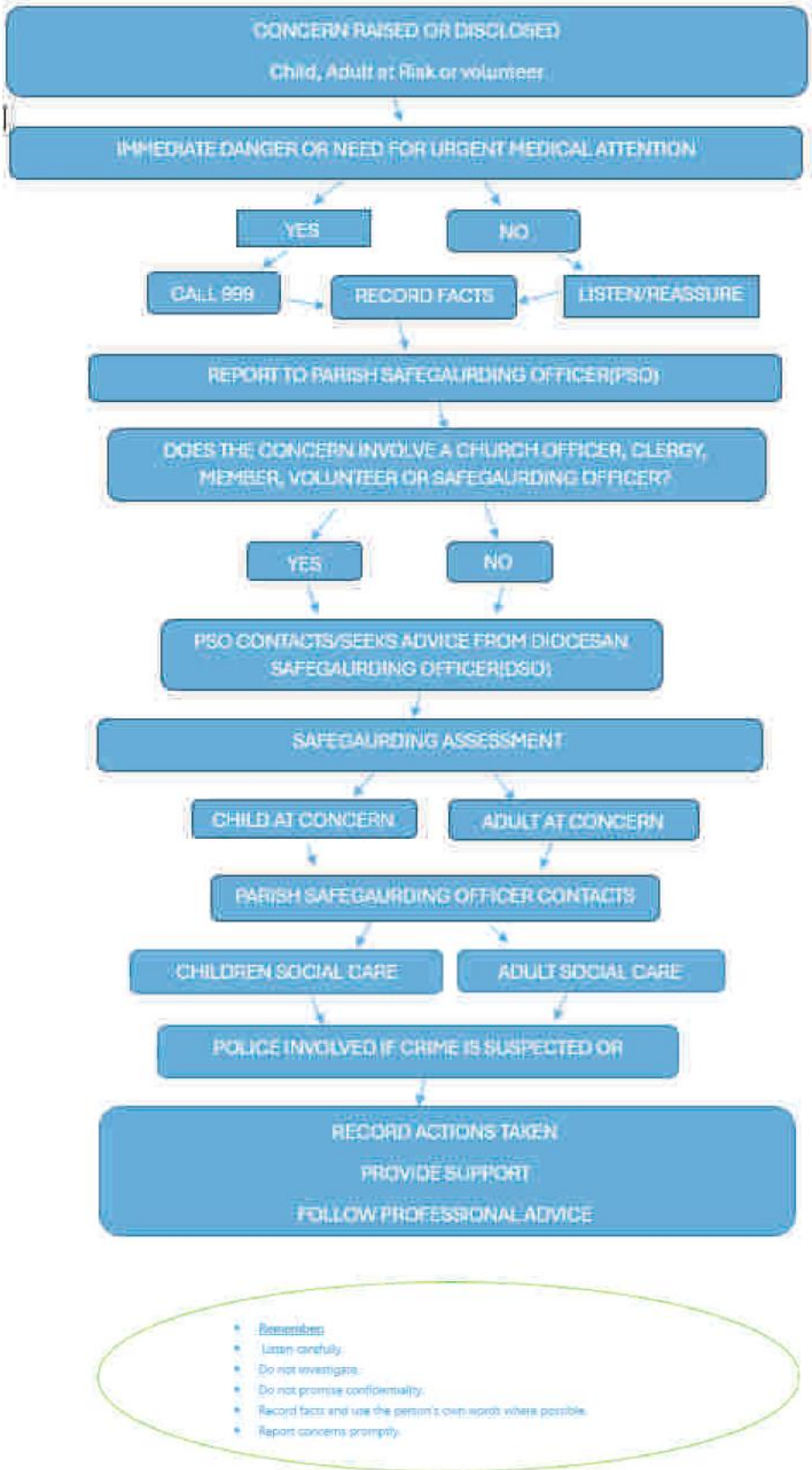
13.9 Accident Book

- An **accident/incident book must be maintained** on all Church premises
- Full details of all accidents must be:
    - Recorded promptly (ideally within the same day)
    - Accurate and factual
- The accident book must:
    - Be **available during all activities**, including off-site visits
    - Be stored securely in line with **data protection requirements**

14. Core Required Forms

14.1. Flow Chart

- Clear visual guide outlining how to respond to concerns.
  - Reporting pathways (PSO → DST → statutory agencies)
- Must be displayed in all parish premises



14.2. Risk Assessment form

- *Used for: Activities, events, trips and premises*

Activity:	
Date & Time of Activity:	
Venue:	

1. Potential Hazards	
2. Attendees (which age group?)	
3. Who is at maximum risk	
4. How to minimise the above risks(what measures are/can be taken) List those measures	
5. What arrangements are in place to cope with these hazards? List them.	
Level of Risk Estimation:(see reference on page 21) (Minimal/Acceptable/Moderate/Substantial/Unacceptable)	
Risk Assessment Completed (Print name):	
Signed:	

Date:	Review Date:

Level of Risk Estimation

Minimal	No Action to be taken. No recording necessary
Acceptable	No action required, however, monitoring and recording is required to ensure that controls are maintained.
Moderate	Efforts should be made to reduce the risk. If a risk is associated with harmful consequences, further risk assessment will be necessary
Substantial	The activity should not commence until the risk has been reduced or removed
Unacceptable	The activity should not be continued or started until the risk has been reduced or removed

Risk Definition

What is the risk? Who might be harmed? What are we already doing to reduce the risk? What additional steps do we need to take? Action by whom? Action by when? Recording the UV warning is very high – the risk is sunburn. The children, who will be in swimming costumes so they can paddle in the sea. Get to the beach early before the sun gets too strong. Take sun hats for the children. Stop off at the store on the way to the beach and get some waterproof sunblock. Keep an eye on the children and re apply sunblock as necessary. Matt and Ravinder (note: with an example like this, this and the next two boxes are redundant, but Matt and Ravinder might decide whose responsibility it is to ensure they don't run out of sun block again!) On the way to the beach! (Again, not relevant in this example, but good to record who does what in a church setting).

14.3 PRIEST RISK ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

Note: This assessment must be completed on notification of the Diocesan Metropolitan	
Name and address of Priest	

Risk Assessor	
Assessor Title/Position	Diocesan Bishop and Chief Safe Guarding officer
Location / Parish	
Date /Duration of the assessment	
Type of Assessment	
Incident Report Reference	
Evidence Checker and Position	
Incident Briefing	
Initial assessment date	
Trimester review dates	

Activity and Associated Hazard	Risks to the Children and Vulnerable Adults	Proposed control measures and Actions	Residual risks acceptable (ü)
Administering Holy Confession and Absolution: Physical			

Intimacy to the person and Psychological Influence.			
Administering Holy Communion; Physical Intimacy to the person			
Administering Blessings and Anointing of Oil; Physical Intimacy to the person.			
Solemnising Holy Baptism; Physical Intimacy to the person			
Conducting Individual Counselling; Physical Intimacy to the person and Psychological influencing.			
Teaching in Sunday School; Physical Intimacy to the person and Psychological influencing.			

14.4 Children's Activity Registration Form

This form should be completed by the parent or guardian of any child taking part in a church-led activity.

Child's Full Name: _____
Date of Birth: _____
Parent/Guardian's Name: _____
Address: _____
Postcode: _____ Phone: _____
Email: _____
Emergency Contact (Name & Number): _____
Allergies/Medical Conditions: _____
Special Needs/Dietary Requirements: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

14.5 Accident Report Form

This form must be filled out immediately after any accident occurs.

Name of Injured Person: _____
Date and Time of Accident: _____
Location of Accident: _____
Details of Incident: _____

Witnesses (if any): _____
First Aid Administered? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Name of First Aider: _____
Emergency Services Contacted? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Further Action Taken: _____

Reported by (Name and Signature): _____ Date: _____

14.6 Consent to Photograph/Video Form

We occasionally take photos or videos during church activities to celebrate and share our work. These may be used in:
- Church newsletters or websites
- Church social media pages
- Diocesan publications

Name of Child: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

☐ I give permission for photographs/videos of my child to be taken and used for the above purposes.
☐ I do NOT give permission for photographs/videos of my child to be taken.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

14.7 Safeguarding Concern Report Form

- Used to record:
  - Disclosures
  - Allegations
- Concerns must include:
  - Date and Time:
  - Name of Person Reporting:
  - Name of Child/Adult at Risk:
  - Description of Concern (facts only):
  - Actions Taken:
  - Reported to (PSO/DST):
  - Signature and Date:

14.8 Parental / Carer Consent Form

- Required for Activities, trips, transport, and photography
- Includes:
  - Child Name:
  - Parent/Guardian Name:
  - Emergency Contact:
  - Consent for Activity (Yes/No):
  - Signature and Date:
  - Emergency contacts
  - Consent for participation
  - Medical conditions
  - Allergies
  - Medication requirements
  - Essential for events and off-site visits
  - Written consent for medication
  - Record of administration (date, time, dosage, signature)

14.9 Volunteer / Driver Declaration Form

- For anyone transporting children or adults at risk
- Includes:
  - Name:
  - Driving Licence Number:
  - Insurance Valid (Yes/No):
  - MOT Valid (Yes/No):
  - Declaration of fitness to drive
  - Declaration Signature:

14.10 Code of Conduct / Safer Working Agreement

- Signed by all staff and volunteers
- Confirms understanding of:
  - Safeguarding responsibilities
  - Expected behaviour

14.11 Safeguarding Training Record Form

- Tracks Safeguarding training completed
  - Name:
  - Role:
  - Training Completed Date:
  - Next Renewal Due:
- Maintained by Parish and Diocese

14.12 Medication Administration Record (MAR)

- Name:
- Medication:
- Dose:
- Time Given:
- Administered by:
- Signature:

14.13 Incident Record Form

- Date:
- Location:
- Details of Incident:
- Action Taken:
- Reported to:
- Signature:

14.14 Standard contact template

- Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)
- Parish Priest/Vicar
- Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST)
- Chief Safeguarding Officer (Diocesan Metropolitan)
- Local !uthority Children's Social Care
- Adult Social Care Services
- Police (Emergency: 999 / Non-emergency: 101)
- National helplines (e.g. NSPCC, Childline)

References

Sl. No	Title	Link
1	Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) 2026	https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/schools/keeping-children-safe-in-education-caspar-briefing
2	DBS checks for working with children in places of worship	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-checks-for-working-with-children-in-places-of-worship/dbs-checks-for-working-with-children-in-places-of-worship
3	Working together to safeguard children	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2
4	Care and support statutory guidance	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance
5	Types and indicators of abuse	https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/adults/introduction/types-and-indicators-of-abuse/
6	Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026	https://neglect.co.uk/guides/working-together-2026/
7	Working together to safeguard children 2026: Statutory guidance	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2/working-together-to-safeguard-children-2026-summary-of-changes
8	The Care Act: safeguarding adults	https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/adults/care-act-safeguarding-adults/
9	The Prevent duty: safeguarding learners vulnerable to radicalisation	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-prevent-duty-safeguarding-learners-vulnerable-to-radicalisation
10	DBS checks for working with children in places of worship	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/604b8f6a8fa8f505da05af1e/Faith_-_12.03.21.pdf

11	Safeguarding in faith communities	https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/faith-communities
12	Who is Eligible for DBS Check?	https://safeguarding.chichester.anglican.org/who -is-eligible-for-DBS-checks/
13	Data protection in schools	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/data -protection-in-schools/taking-and-using-photos-and-videos-and-using-cctv-in-schools
14	Children and the UK GDPR	https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/childrens-information/children-and-the-uk-gdpr/
15	Photographing and filming children	https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/online-safety/photographing-filming-children
16	Photography permissions and consent	https://www.london.anglican.org/church -and-parish-support/communications-and-digital/photography-permissions-and-consent/
17	Taking photos in schools	https://docs.google.com/document/d/1X2kYGQOnib8zN8F1p7_PcoFyykV1rFYJdOWFFRBF6GY/edit?tab=t.0

Endorsed by:

Metropolitan Abraham Stephanos