

The Focolare Movement

Safeguarding children and adults policy

Revised January 2022

Introduction

The Focolare in the UK, together with all the Christian churches* is striving towards a culture of safeguarding where all are safe from harm and abuse and where every person is encouraged and enabled to enjoy the fullness of life in Jesus Christ through the prayerful, caring, nurturing, supportive and protective endeavours of the Christian community, both individually and collectively.

This policy and the related procedures underpin and are embedded in our mission to share God's love with all.

The Focolare Movement is an international movement which takes as its inspiration Jesus' prayer to the Father "May they all be one" (Jn 17:21). For over seventy years it has drawn together people of all Christian traditions and from many of the world's religions, alongside people with no formal faith, who share the aim of building a united world.

*For simplicity, most Focolare members will receive their DBS and training through Westminster Diocese and the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA). Members may also apply to DBS/PVG through their own Churches and Dioceses if they prefer and in prior agreement with the Safeguarding Team.

This policy should be read alongside the CSSA Practice Guidance page [Practice guidance - cssa \(catholicsafeguarding.org.uk\)](#) and the [Focolare Good Practice Guidelines for adults, leaders and helpers](#).

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Statement of commitment

Every human being has a value which we acknowledge as coming directly from God's creation of male and female in his own image and likeness. We believe therefore, that all people should be valued, supported and protected from harm. We recognise the personal dignity and rights of vulnerable people towards whom the Church has a special responsibility.

The Focolare and its individual members will undertake appropriate steps to maintain a safe environment for all, by practising fully and positively Christ's ministry towards children, young people and adults and responding sensitively and compassionately to their needs in order to help keep them safe from harm. This is demonstrated by the provision of carefully planned activities for children, young people and adults.

Focolare volunteers and staff undertake to create a safe environment for children, young people and any vulnerable adults who take part in any day or residential events. The Focolare will collectively manage risks and reduce the possibility of abuse by:

- having robust safe recruitment and selection procedures
- implementing safe working practices
- providing access to induction and training for all 'staff' and volunteers
- providing up to date safeguarding policies and procedures that reflect current safeguarding legislation and guidance in respect of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and
- developing and maintaining a culture of risk management.

The Focolare will also promote effective and early identification of safeguarding concerns in children and vulnerable adults.

All Focolare groups are required to adopt these procedures and commit themselves to work with other agencies in the development and implementation of policies and in the provision of services for victims and offenders.

These policies apply to all Focolare activities, regardless of location, and are therefore applicable to all Focolare activities taking place in the UK and overseas and both on and off Focolare owned premises. This includes video conferencing platforms and social media.

The Focolare is committed to providing support to all those who help with its work with children, young people and vulnerable adults and to provide a clear structure of safeguarding accountability.

The Focolare will ensure that it has arrangements in place to fulfil its commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults in the same way as statutory bodies and the public sector.

It will liaise closely with statutory agencies to ensure that any such concerns or allegations of abuse are promptly and properly referred to the appropriate local statutory safeguarding agencies, that victims are supported and that abusers are held to account.

Key Principles and Values

The Focolare embraces its role in supporting children and adults to achieve their full potential in an environment where they are protected from exploitation, abuse and maltreatment.

All adults within the Focolare have a responsibility to act and intervene when it appears that children or adults need to be made safe from harm, whether the risk of harm is Emotional Abuse, Neglect, Physical Abuse or Sexual Abuse.

The Focolare will act in an open, transparent and accountable way in working in partnership with social care services, the Police, health agencies, probation services and other relevant agencies to safeguard children and adults at risk and assist in bringing to justice anyone who has committed an offence against a child or adult.

Anyone who brings concerns or allegations to the notice of the Focolare will be responded to sensitively, respectfully and seriously. All concerns and allegations will be dealt with within the national procedures and in a timely manner.

The Focolare is fully committed to acting within the guidance as set out in *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (England)*, *Getting it right for every child 2017 (Scotland)* and *Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 (Wales)*, *Safeguarding Guidance 2019* and *Working Together to Safeguard People Guidance 2019 (Wales)*. It acknowledges that the Churches must work in partnership with other agencies and not act alone.

Pastoral care will be made available to children and their families and to other relevant people where there have been concerns and allegations of some form of harm or maltreatment of a child. Where services and support are provided to an

adult who has acted to harm a child, safeguards will be put in place to manage the risk so that the adult may not harm another child.

The Focolare will support and promote sound risk management for those situations that require more complex consideration. Such high risk activities will be robustly risk assessed, focusing on the needs of the individual as well as the skills of the adult leaders and helpers, to justify decisions made and actions taken.

As a registered charity, the Focolare is regulated by the Charity Commission and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator ("OSCR"). The Charity Commission and OSCR have statutory objectives to ensure trustees comply with their legal obligations in managing charities and to increase public trust and confidence in charities.

Key Legislation and Guidance

The Focolare follows the guidance and policies of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) and the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service (SCSS) which draw up their policies on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children which are as follows.

Although the Focolare does not specifically work with adults who may be vulnerable, they will often be included in its programmes and activities.

Children

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Getting it right for every child 2017 (Scotland)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Children and Families Act 2014 aspects apply to adults as well
- Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation 2009
- Safeguarding Children who may have been Trafficked 2011
- Safeguarding Children in Whom Illness is Fabricated or Induced 2008
- 'What to Do If You Are Worried a Child Is Being Abused' 2015
- Practise Guidance. Responding to safeguarding concerns or allegations that relate to children, young people and vulnerable adults'. Church of England November 2018
- Guidance for Safe Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People 2009
- Keeping Children Safe in Education - Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges (September 2021) and

- Safeguarding Children from Abuse Linked to a Belief in Spirit Possession 2007
- The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, which includes Sexual Harm Prevention Orders and Sexual Risk Orders
- Licensing Act 2003

The Focolare does not specifically organise activities for adults who may be vulnerable but is mindful that it needs to have policies in place for all day or residential meetings or event it holds. The Focolare follows the CSSA and SCSS guidance which draw their polices from the following legislation and guidance:

Adults

- The Care Act 2014;
- Care and Support Statutory Guidance issued under the Care Act 2014
- Local Authority Responsibilities for Sharing Information under the Care Act 2014
- The Common Law Duty of Confidentiality
- The Human Rights Act 1998, Article 8 (the right to respect for private life)
- The Data Protection Act 1998 and UK GDPR
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Action on Elder Abuse Report 2005 The Mental Capacity Act 2005
- The Mental Health Act 2007
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Legislation and Guidance in Wales

- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- Safeguarding Guidance 2019 and Working Together to Safeguard People Guidance 2019 (Wales)

Key terms

An explanation of the terms used in the **Focolare** are:

- **Gen** - young people who follow the spirituality of the Focolare and meet according to age
- **Gen 4** ages 4-8; **Gen 3** ages 9-16; **Gen 2** 17 – 30
- **Gen assistant** – men or women, normally living in a Focolare community who form and work with the Gen and young people
- **Responsible of the Focolare** – The person who is responsible for the Focolare community house and the people and geographical area entrusted to them

- **Mariapolis-** the annual retreat, often residential/ holiday for all ages of people.

Organisational Structure and Key Roles

The Focolare has community houses and holds activities throughout the UK. Each Focolare community house (Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham, Welwyn Garden City and London) has contact with their Diocesan Safeguarding Team and would advise them, as well as the appropriate statutory authority, of any safeguarding concerns or allegations.

UK Safeguarding Team

The Focolare has a UK Safeguarding Team which is responsible for ensuring that the Focolare is fully compliant in all matters of safeguarding legislation and for promoting best practice in all matters pertaining to safeguarding.

The Safeguarding Team has **at least** four members and meets at least twice a year and more often when appropriate.

The Safeguarding Team includes the two designated Officers for safeguarding within the Focolare in the UK, Jane Evans and Nic Innocent, together with Anja Primbs, and Claudia Melis (see page 12 for contact details).

The UK safeguarding team is responsible for:

- promoting good and safe practices in all activities involving children, young people and adults within the Focolare
- providing advice on child and adult safeguarding matters within the Focolare
- ensuring understanding of and compliance with current legislation and CSSA's guidelines within the Focolare
- reviewing the Focolare safeguarding policies and procedures annually
- ensuring all relevant leaders and helpers in the Focolare are trained, to underpin current and future safeguarding needs
- supporting and advising those responsible for the Focolare community houses and each group of young people, and the organisers of the Mariapolis
- monitoring the above

In addition, the two Safeguarding Officers will be responsible for:

- responding to any safeguarding concerns, allegations and disclosures within the Focolare
- ensuring all safeguarding allegations are reported to the appropriate bodies,

including briefing the two delegates within the UK: Mark Darcy and Liz Taite, and the Focolare delegates in Brussels and Rome where appropriate.

The person responsible for the Focolare community house

The role of the person responsible for the Focolare community house is to:

- promote good and safe practices in all Focolare activities involving children, young people and adults
- ensure safer recruitment for all Focolare leaders and helpers involved in any work with children and young people
- ensure understanding of and compliance with current legislation and CSSA guidelines in the Focolare
- support the gen assistants in their role and ensure they have sufficient support and leaders/helpers
- ensure risk assessments are completed for any activity that involves travel or meetings away from the normal venue
- ensure Gen assistants have sought and completed all the necessary preparations to ensure a safe environment for any overnight stay or residential event, including parental /medical consent and an agreed code of conduct for both children and adult leaders and helpers
- liaise with the UK Focolare Safeguarding Team with regard to training needs and DBS/PVG applications for leaders and helpers
- advise the Safeguarding Officers of any safeguarding concerns and to
- ensure any concerns are documented and records kept.

Gen Assistants

The role of the Gen Assistant is to:

- promote good and safe practices in all Focolare activities involving children, young people and adults
- ensure other adult leaders and helpers have been properly briefed in their role in any Focolare gathering and are familiar with the safeguarding policies and procedures
- ensure the Focolare code of conduct is understood and followed
- recognise and respond to any potential or actual safeguarding situations and concerns

If any Gen assistant has a concern about a child or vulnerable adult they must refer

to the safeguarding procedures, communicating the concern to the Responsible of the Focolare in the first instance and to the UK Focolare Safeguarding Officers if appropriate.

Adult Leaders and Helpers

An adult leader or helper is someone who assists the Gen assistants in activities, residential weekends and/or in the annual Mariapolis.

All Gen assistants, leaders and helpers who come into contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults within Focolare activities have a shared responsibility to:

- contribute to the development of work with young people promoting the spiritual, social and fun aspects of Christian living
- abide by the Focolare Code of Conduct
- promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults
- recognise and respond to any potential or actual safeguarding situations and concerns
- develop a culture of listening and engaging children and vulnerable adults.

If a leader or helper has a concern about a child or vulnerable adult, they must refer to the safeguarding procedures and communicate the concern to the Gen assistant or responsible of the Focolare in the first instance and to the UK Focolare Safeguarding Officers if appropriate.

Training

All Focolare members involved with working with children and adults must undergo safeguarding training provided by Edu Care or within local Dioceses. This may also include online training.

It is expected that all people involved in work with children will read the Focolare Good Practise Guidelines and will sign to say that they have read and understood them.

Gen assistants, leaders and helpers can receive training from the UK Focolare Safeguarding Team each year in preparation of the Mariapolis.

The responsible of the Focolare will keep a list of all leaders and helpers noting when their DBS/PVG was received and training complete (see page 11).

Certificates relating to proof of training and DBS/PVG certificates should be sent to Claudia Melis or Nic Innocent at safeguarding.admin@focolare.org.uk.

Procedure for reporting concerns

If any member of the Focolare has any concerns over a child or an adult at risk and suspects abuse, or if a child or young person makes a disclosure, or if a person external to the Focolare reports a suspicion or allegation relating to Focolare members, leaders, helpers or activities, the following steps must be taken:

1. reassure the child /adult if present
2. if the child / adult is in immediate danger or risk contact the local social services or police
3. inform the UK Focolare Safeguarding Officers (see page 12)
4. make notes of the information received within 24 hours including the date and time and sign them

For more on the above see the **Focolare Good Practice Guidelines for adult leaders and helpers**.

Safer Recruitment

Every organisation and movement within the church and society needs to have a safer recruitment policy to cover the recruitment of all those working with children, young people and adults at risk.

Within the Focolare, people are normally approached to ask them to help with formation programmes for children and young people. These people are usually already known well and are invited to help in a specific role, for example with the under 7's, the 8-15 age group etc. However, this personal approach is still the appointment of an adult leader or helper. Therefore, safeguarding guidelines still need to be adhered to.

The Focolare safeguarding guidelines were drawn from the policies of the CSAS and are about to be checked against the new CSSA policies.

Definition of a Focolare adult leader or helper:

- Gen 2, Gen 3 and Gen 4 Assistants or young people who assist youth programmes regularly
- anyone helping on a residential weekend or at the Mariapolis for the children's programmes
- anyone who lives in a Focolare community house and, working at the Focolare Centre, gives regular input to children or under 18 groups.

The person responsible for the safe and effective appointment of adult leaders or helpers is the Responsible of the local Focolare:

The Responsible of the Focolare or to whoever they delegate the task to must ensure:

- the leader/helper completes a Focolare Volunteers Application form and their responsibilities in relation to the DBS/PVG are fully understood
- the leader/helper contacts one of the ID Verifiers to have their DBS/PVG application processed and provides their ID, proof of residence and two referees as required
- a face-to-face discussion with leaders/helpers to discuss what their role involves
- the leader/helper receives the Focolare safeguarding guidelines and signs their understanding and commitment to them
- the leader/helper receives training and support as relevant to enable them to undertake the role.

Applying for DBS/PVG

In England and Wales the two ID verifiers for proof of identity and residency are Claudia Melis and Nic Innocent (safeguarding.admin@focolare.org.uk).

In Scotland the application to PVG is processed by the local Diocese.

Contact details for the UK Focolare Safeguarding Team

Contact details for the Focolare Safeguarding Officers

Jane Evans: safeguarding@focolare.org.uk

Nic Innocent: safeguarding@focolare.org.uk

Contact details for the other members of the Safeguarding Team

Anja Primbs, Claudia Melis: safeguarding.admin@focolare.org.uk