



The Focolare Movement in GB

Safeguarding children and adults policy

Revised April 2023

Introduction

The Focolare in GB is committed to creating a culture of safeguarding where all are safe from harm and abuse, and which underpins and is embedded in its mission to share God's love with all.

This policy should be read alongside the [Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency \(CSSA\) Practice Guidance \(catholicsssa.org.uk\)](https://catholicsssa.org.uk/), the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (SCSSA) document [In God's Image v2 \(scssa.org.uk\)](https://scssa.org.uk/), the [Good Practice Guidelines for adults leaders and helpers within the Focolare Movement in GB](#) and the [Focolare Appropriate use of Media](#) document.

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.

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Statement of commitment

Every human being has value which members of the Focolare believe comes directly from God's creation of people in his own image and likeness. Therefore, all people, and especially any who are at risk/vulnerable in any way, should be valued, supported and protected from harm.

The Focolare in GB and its individual members will undertake appropriate steps to promote the welfare/wellbeing and protect from harm of and maintain a safe environment for all for children, young people, and all adults including those who are considered more at risk/vulnerable, who take part in any day or residential events. The Focolare in GB will collectively manage risks and reduce the possibility of abuse by:

- having a robust procedure for checking the suitability of anyone working with children and vulnerable adults (safer recruitment)
- implementing safe working practices
- providing access to induction and training for all adult helpers
- providing up to date safeguarding policies and procedures that reflect current safeguarding legislation and guidance in respect of safeguarding children and at risk/vulnerable adults, and
- developing and maintaining a culture of risk management.

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

All Focolare groups in GB are required to adopt this policy and to commit themselves to working with other agencies in the development and implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures.

This policy applies to all Focolare activities in GB, regardless of location, and is therefore applicable to all Focolare activities taking place in GB and also those organised by the Focolare in GB but taking place overseas, and both on and off Focolare owned premises. This includes video conferencing platforms and social media.

The Focolare in GB is committed to providing support to all those who help with its work with children, young people and all adults including those who are considered more at risk/vulnerable and to provide a clear structure of safeguarding accountability.

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

The Focolare in GB will liaise closely with statutory agencies to ensure that any concerns or allegations of abuse are promptly and properly referred to the appropriate local statutory safeguarding agencies and where appropriate support is offered.

Key Principles and Values

The Focolare in GB 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 in GB have a responsibility to act and intervene when it appears that children and/or adults need to be made safe from harm, whether that risk is emotional, physical, sexual or through neglect.

The Focolare in GB will not act alone, but in an open, transparent and accountable way in partnership with social care services, the Police, health agencies, probation services and any other relevant agencies to safeguard children and adults and assist in bringing to justice anyone who has committed an offence against a child or an adult.

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

The Focolare in GB 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).

Support 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 or an at risk/vulnerable adult, safeguards will be put in place to manage the risk so that the adult may not harm any other children or at risk/vulnerable adults.

The Focolare in GB supports and promotes sound risk management through robust risk assessments, to justify decisions made and actions taken.

The Focolare is regulated by the Charity Commission and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) who have statutory objectives to ensure trustees/directors comply with their legal obligations in managing and increasing public trust and confidence in charities.

The role of the Trustees/Directors is to ensure that the Focolare Movement in GB:

- has appropriate policies and procedures in place, which are followed by all trustees/directors, members, volunteers and beneficiaries
- makes sure protecting people from harm is central to its culture.

Key Legislation and Guidance

The Focolare in GB follows the guidance and policies of the CSSA (England and Wales) and the SCSSA (Scotland) which draw their policies on the basis of law and guidance that seek to protect children and adults. Links to key legislation and guidance are as follows:

Children

A child is anyone under the age of 18 years.

England: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/england>

Scotland <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/scotland>

Wales: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/wales>

Adults

An adult is anyone 18 years and over.

While the Focolare in GB does not specifically organise activities for adults who may be at risk/vulnerable it is mindful that policies and procedures also need to reflect that they may be included in its programmes and activities.

An at risk/vulnerable adult

An at risk/vulnerable adult is any adult who is 'at risk of abuse or neglect because of their needs for care and support' (Care Act 2014, England). While in Scotland the definition of an at risk/vulnerable adult applies to those 16 years and over, for Focolare GB they are considered children until 18 years.

Links to key legislation and guidance are as follows:

England: [Care Act 2014](#)
[Care and Statutory Guidance](#) (updated January 2023)

Scotland: [Adult Support and Protection \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#)
[Adult Support and Protection Improvement Plan 2019-2022](#) (October 2019)

Wales: [Social Services and Wellbeing \(Wales\) Act 2014](#)
[Working together to safeguard people](#) (2018, last updated December 2022)
— code of practice relating to Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

Key terms

An explanation of the terms used in the Focolare are:

- **Gen** – children and young people who follow the spirituality of the Focolare and often meet according to age:
Gen 4, 4 - 8 years; **Gen 3**, 9 -16 years; **Gen 2**, 17 – 30 years all approximate
- **Gen Assistant** – men or women who work with the Gen and young people
- **Responsible of the Focolare** – The person who is responsible for a Focolare community house and the people and geographical area entrusted to them.
- **Mariapolis** - the annual retreat, often residential/ holiday for all ages.

Organisational Structure and Key Roles

The Focolare in GB has community houses and holds activities throughout GB. Each Focolare community house (Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham, Welwyn Garden City and London) has contact with CSSA (England and Wales) and diocesan safeguarding offices (Scotland) and would advise them, as well as the appropriate statutory authority, of any safeguarding concerns or allegations.

The Focolare in GB Safeguarding Team

The Focolare in GB Safeguarding Team has **at least** four members and meets at least six times a year.

It includes the two Designated Officers for safeguarding within the Focolare in GB, Jane Evans and Nic Innocent, together with Anja Primbs, and Claudia Melis (see page 13 for contact details).

The Focolare in GB Safeguarding team is responsible for:

- promoting good and safe practices in all activities involving children, young people and adults within the Focolare in GB
- providing advice on child and adult safeguarding matters within the Focolare in GB
- ensuring awareness of current legislation and CSSA's and SCSSA's guidelines within the Focolare in GB
- reviewing the Focolare in GB's safeguarding policy annually and the guidelines regularly
- supporting the training needs of all relevant leaders and helpers in the Focolare in GB
- supporting and advising those responsible for the Focolare community houses in GB and each group of young people, and the organisers of any Mariapolis or other Focolare events
- managing safeguarding allegations/disclosures/concerns reported to them by Focolare members or third parties
- reflecting on practice and plan for continuous improvement.

In addition, the two Focolare in GB Designated Safeguarding Officers are responsible for:

- responding to any safeguarding concerns, allegations and disclosures within the Focolare in GB
- ensuring all safeguarding allegations are reported to the appropriate bodies, including briefing the two Focolare in GB delegates: Mark D'Arcy and Liz Taite, and the Focolare delegates in Brussels and Rome where appropriate.

The role of the person responsible for a Focolare community house working together with Local Community Coordinators is to:

- promote good and safe practices in all Focolare activities in GB involving children, young people and adults
- ensure safer recruitment for all Focolare leaders and helpers in GB involved in any work with children and young people
- ensure understanding of and compliance with current legislation, CSSA and

SCSSA guidelines in the Focolare in GB

- support the GB Gen Assistants in their role and ensure they have sufficient support and leaders/helpers
- ensure risk assessments are completed for any Focolare activity that involves travel or meetings away from the normal venue whether in GB or elsewhere
- ensure GB 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, leaders and helpers
- liaise with the Focolare in GB Safeguarding Team with regard to training needs and DBS/PVG applications for leaders and helpers (see page 12)
- advise the Focolare in GB Designated Safeguarding Officers of any safeguarding concerns and to ensure any concerns are documented and records kept.

Gen Assistants

The role of Gen Assistants is to:

- promote good and safe practices in all Focolare activities involving children, young people and adults
- ensure adult leaders and helpers have been properly briefed in their role in any Focolare gathering and are familiar with safeguarding policies and procedures
- ensure the Focolare in GB's code of conduct [Guidelines for adult leaders and helpers within the Focolare Movement in GB](#) (p16-19) 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 an at risk/vulnerable adult they must refer to the safeguarding [Guidelines for adult leaders and helpers within the Focolare Movement in GB](#):

- If someone is at an immediate risk of harm, contact the emergency services before reporting to the Designated Safeguarding Officers.
- For non immediate risks, communicating the concern to the Responsible of the Focolare in the first instance and to the Focolare in GB's Designated Safeguarding Officers .

Leaders

An adult leader is someone who assists the Gen Assistants in the planning and

delivering of activities, residential weekends and/or in any Mariapolis and is involved in youth work on a regular basis.

Helper

An adult helper is someone who supports the Focolare youth activities and events on an occasional/non-regular basis.

Helpers may have a supportive role with no contact with children/young people, e.g. setting up the venue, kitchen duties, or may have some contact, e.g. be in charge of a station during a station game or sharing a testimony during an event.

When there is occasional contact, the Gen Assistants and Leaders will supervise the activity.

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

- abide by the Focolare in GB's [Guidelines for adult leaders and helpers within the Focolare Movement in GB](#) (p16-19)
- promote the welfare of children, young people and at risk/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 any leader or helper has a concern about a child or an at risk/vulnerable adult, they must refer to the [Guidelines for adult leaders and helpers within the Focolare Movement in GB](#)

- If someone is at an immediate risk of harm, contact the emergency services before reporting to the Designated Safeguarding Officers.
- For non-immediate risks, communicating the concern to the Gen Assistant or the Responsible of the Focolare in the first instance and to the Focolare in GB's Designated Safeguarding Officers.

Training

All Focolare members in GB involved with working with children and adults must undergo safeguarding training provided by EduCare or in Scotland, within local

Dioceses. This may also include online training.

It is expected that all people involved in work with children will read the [Guidelines for adult leaders and helpers within the Focolare Movement in GB](#).

It is recommended that Gen Assistants and leaders meet with the Focolare GB's Safeguarding Team in preparation for any Mariapolis or other National event. Where possible this should be face-to-face training.

The Focolare in GB Safeguarding Team will keep a list of all adults involved in regulated activities/regular contact with children/young people noting when their DBS/PVG was received/renewed and training complete (see page 12).

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 in GB has any concerns over a child or an at risk/vulnerable adult 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 in GB, 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 Focolare in GB's Designated Safeguarding Officers (see page 13)
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 [Guidelines for adult leaders and helpers within the Focolare Movement](#), page 22.

Safer Recruitment

Within the Focolare in GB, people are normally approached to ask them to help with programmes/activities for children and young people as Gen Assistant, leaders or helpers. These people are usually already known well and are invited to help in a specific role, for example with the children under 7, or 8 -15, etc.

The person responsible for the safe and effective appointment of helpers is the person responsible for the local Focolare community house in GB.

The person responsible for the Focolare community house in GB or to whoever they delegate the task to must ensure:

- a face-to-face discussion with the person to discuss what their role involves
- the person contacts one of the ID Verifiers to have their DBS/PVG application processed and completes all relevant paperwork, including Focolare in GB Volunteers Application form
- the person receives the [Guidelines for adult leaders and helpers within the Focolare Movement in GB](#)
- the person receives access to safeguarding training and complete the relevant module(s) for their role
- the person receives support as relevant to enable them to undertake their role.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) / Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG)

In England and Wales the application for DBS clearance is through the CSSA. 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 for PVG is processed by the local Dioceses.

Contact details for the Focolare in GB Safeguarding Team

Contact details for the Focolare in GB Designated Safeguarding Officers

Jane Evans: safeguarding@focolare.org.uk

Nic Innocent: safeguarding@focolare.org.uk

Contact details for the other members of the Focolare in GB Safeguarding Team

Claudia Melis: safeguarding.admin@focolare.org.uk

Anja Primbs: safeguarding.admin@focolare.org.uk