



The Focolare Movement in GB

Safeguarding children and adults policy

Revised April 2024

Introduction

The Focolare in GB is committed to creating a culture of safeguarding where all adults and children 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 [Practice Guidance \(catholicsafeguarding.org.uk\)](https://catholicsafeguarding.org.uk) the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (SCSSA) document [In God's Image v2 \(scssa.org.uk\)](https://scssa.org.uk) , the Focolare in GB's [Guidelines-for-adult-leaders-and-helpers-Oct-21.pdf](#) 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 eighty 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 to maintain a safe environment and protect from harm all who take part in any day or residential events. They will take appropriate steps to promote the welfare/wellbeing of all in attendance, all children, young people, and adults including those who are considered more at risk/vulnerable 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 2023* (England), *Getting it right for every child 2022* (Scotland) and *Safeguarding Procedures and Practice Guides 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 October 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

- **Responsible of the Focolare** – the person responsible for a Focolare community house and the people and geographical area entrusted to them.
- **Local Safeguarding Coordinator** – person delegated by the Responsible of the Focolare.
- **Gen Assistant** – an adult who works specifically for the Gen (children and young people who follow the spirituality of the Focolare) by planning, preparing and delivering events whether day or residential.
- **Leader** – someone who assists the Gen Assistants on a regular basis.
- **Helper** – someone who supports the Gen Assistants on an occasional/non-regular basis. They may have a supporting role with no contact with the children/young people (e.g. setting up the venue, kitchen duties) or have some contact (e.g. in charge of a station in a station game or sharing a testimony during an event).

Organisational Structure and Key Roles

The Focolare in GB has community houses in Glasgow, Liverpool, Birmingham, Welwyn Garden City and London, and holds events throughout GB.

The Focolare in GB Safeguarding Team

The Focolare in GB Safeguarding Team has two Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) who are appointed by the zonal delegates and at least two other members who are co-opted onto the team by the DSOs. The team as far as possible operates independently of any Focolare structures. See page 13 for contact details.

The role of the Focolare in GB Safeguarding Team:

- Promoting good and safe practices in all activities involving children, young people and adults within the Focolare GB through providing advice on child and adult safeguarding matters.
- This includes ensuring awareness of current legislation and CSSA's and SCSSA's guidelines within the Focolare in GB.
- Offering safeguarding support and advice to those responsible for the Focolare community houses and the organisers of any Focolare events in GB.
- Reflecting on safeguarding practice and planning for continuous improvement including through
 - Reviewing the Focolare in GB's safeguarding policy annually
 - Reviewing the Guidelines for adults, leaders and helpers, Risk Assessments, Safety Checklist for venues and any other safeguarding documents regularly.
- Supporting the training needs of all relevant leaders and helpers in the Focolare GB.
- Meeting at least six times a year.

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

- Ensuring any safeguarding allegations/disclosures/concerns they are made aware of are reported in a timely manner to the appropriate authorities. See Flowchart 'Responding to allegations of abuse or concerns about children and adults at risk' (page 10).
- Briefing the two Focolare in GB delegates: Mark D'Arcy and Liz Taite, and the Focolare delegates in Brussels and in Rome, when appropriate.

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

- Promote good and safe practices in all Focolare in GB's activities.
- Ensure safer recruitment for all Focolare in GB leaders and helpers involved in any work with children, young people and vulnerable adults/adults at risk.
- Ensure understanding of and compliance with current legislation and CSSA and SCSSA guidance in the Focolare in GB.
- Support the Focolare in GB Gen Assistants in their role and ensure they have sufficient support and Leaders/Helpers.
- Ensure risk assessments are completed for any Focolare event, including those that involve travel or meetings away from the normal venue, whether in GB or elsewhere.
- Ensure Focolare in 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 forms and an agreed code of conduct for children and young people, Leaders and Helpers.
- Liaise with the Focolare in GB Safeguarding Team regarding any training needs and DBS/PVG applications for Leaders and Helpers (see page 11).
- Recognise and ensure any potential or actual safeguarding allegations/ disclosures/concerns they are aware of are reported in a timely manner to the appropriate authorities. See Flowchart 'Responding to allegations of abuse or concerns about children and adults at risk' (page 10).
- Brief the two Focolare in GB Designated Safeguarding Officers of any safeguarding allegations/disclosures/concerns (see page 13).

The role of the Gen Assistants:

- Promote good and safe practices in all Focolare in GB's activities.
- Ensure Leaders and Helpers have been properly briefed in their role in any Focolare GB event and are familiar with safeguarding principles and procedures.
- Ensure the Focolare in GB's code of behaviour [Guidelines for adult leaders and helpers within the Focolare Movement in GB](#) (pages 16-19) is understood and followed.
- Ensure that any contact (which will at most only ever be occasional) at an event between Helpers and children/young people, will be supervised by the Gen Assistants/Leaders.
- Recognise and ensure any potential or actual safeguarding allegations/ disclosures/concerns they are aware of are reported in a timely manner to the appropriate authorities. See Flowchart 'Responding to allegations of abuse or concerns about children and adults at risk' (page 10).

- Brief the two Focolare in GB Designated Safeguarding Officers of any safeguarding allegations/disclosures/concerns (see page 13).

The role of Leaders and Helpers:

- Promote good and safe practices in all Focolare in GB's activities.
- Ensure that any contact (which will at most only ever be occasional) at an event between Helpers and children/young people, will be supervised by the Gen Assistants/Leaders.
- Be familiar with the Focolare in GB's safeguarding principles and procedures.
- Understand and follow the Focolare in GB's code of behaviour [Guidelines for adult leaders and helpers within the Focolare in GB](#), pages 16-19.
- Recognise and ensure any potential or actual safeguarding allegations/ disclosures/ concerns they are aware of are reported in a timely manner to the person responsible for a Focolare house/ Local Community Co-ordinator/ Gen Assistant/ leader for the activity and if relevant to the appropriate authorities. See Flowchart 'Responding to allegations of abuse or concerns about children and adults at risk' (page 10).
- If not already done, brief the two Focolare in GB Designated Safeguarding Officers of any safeguarding allegations/disclosures/ concerns (see page 13)

Procedure for reporting concerns

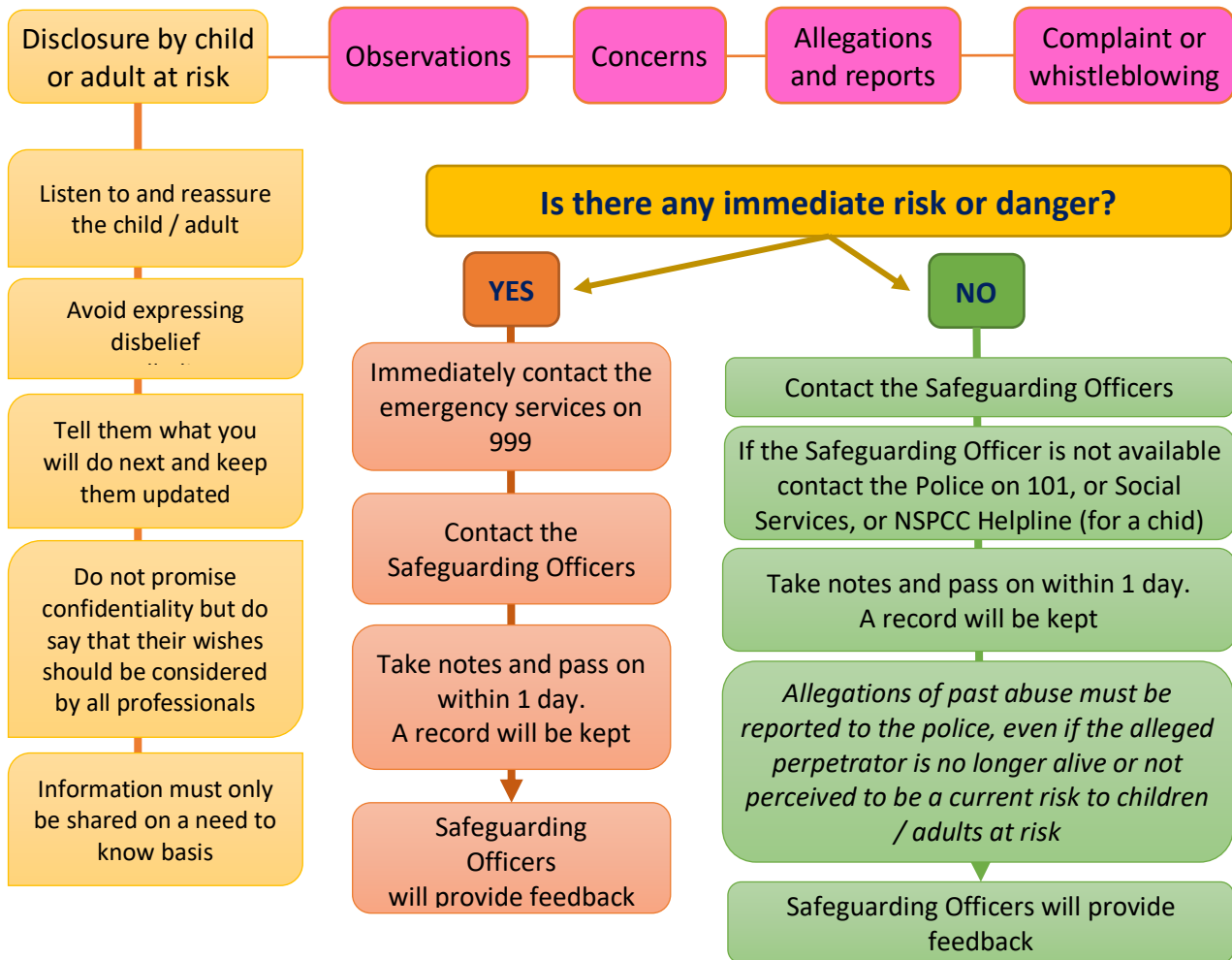
See flowchart 'Responding to allegations of abuse or concerns about children and adults at risk' (page 10 below this page).

See also [Guidelines for adult leaders and helpers within the Focolare Movement in GB](#), page 22.

What to do if you are concerned about a child / vulnerable adult/adult at risk including:

- ❖ inappropriate behaviour against them
- ❖ possible harm caused to a child or adult at risk or
- ❖ possible crime committed against a child or adult at risk

In your Focolare role



Quick Contacts

Focolare Safeguarding Officers:

Jane Evans, Nic Innocent – safeguarding@focolare.org.uk

Social Services / Social Care – search for your Local Authority online or look for details of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000 help@nspcc.org.uk

Catholic Safeguarding Standard Agency (CSSA): 020 7901 1920
admin@catholicsafeguarding.org.uk

Flowchart responding to allegations of abuse or concerns about children and vulnerable adults/adults at risk – Adapted from CSSA Flowchart: <https://catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/resources/national-safeguarding-policy>

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.

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 8, or 8-12, 13-15, 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 applicant to discuss what their role involves
- the applicant is legally entitled to volunteer in the UK
- if the role is eligible for criminal records checks, the applicant 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 applicant will be provided with the opportunity to self-disclose relevant conviction information¹. Relevant convictions will not need to be disclosed in advance or during the formal

¹ This is a DBS/PVG Code of Practice requirement and applies to anyone being asked to have an Enhanced Disclosure.

discussion about the role but must be discussed with the volunteer applicant before a decision is made about an appointment

- two references will be sought and provided
- the applicant receives the [Guidelines for adult leaders and helpers within the Focolare Movement in GB](#)
- the applicant receives access to safeguarding training and complete the relevant module(s) for their role
- the applicant receives support as relevant to enable them to undertake their role.

Criminal record checks: Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) / Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG)

The Safeguarding Team will assess volunteer roles for eligibility for – and type of – DBS/PVG Disclosure, and where eligible the Disclosure Certificate must be obtained before the person commences in role.

Different roles are eligible for different types of criminal record checks. Eligibility is determined by the nature of the activity undertaken by the person.

In England and Wales, the application for a DBS check is through the CSSA/the local Dioceses. The two ID verifiers for proof of identity and residency are Claudia Melis and Nic Innocent (safeguarding.admin@focolare.org.uk). *(At the time of writing we are clarifying this arrangement with the CSSA)*

In Scotland the application for PVG is processed by the local Dioceses.

The Focolare GB promotes equality of opportunity for all, including people with criminal records. Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar a person from volunteering within Focolare activities. Appointment to any role will depend on the nature of the position, the nature of the offence(s) and the circumstances and context of the offending behaviour.

The Focolare GB follows CSSA policies for the recruitment of ex- offenders².

² <https://catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/resources/national-safeguarding-policy/>

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