

Information Sheet - Safeguarding Plans

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1. Introduction and Principles

The Catholic Church in England and Wales¹ aims to respect the human dignity and value of all, as we are all created in God's image. In doing so, the Church seeks to ensure that whilst dealing with abusive behaviour and prioritising the safety of others, there is a place for every person within the Church. The Church recognises that supporting somebody to practise their faith in a safe way may contribute to building a positive identity.

2. What is a Safeguarding Plan?

A Safeguarding Plan is a formal written document which contains some agreed rules and guidance about how you can attend and participate in the life of the Church. The Safeguarding Plan is developed in discussion with you and sets out what you can expect from the Church and what the Church expects from you in terms of behaviour.

¹ This includes certain areas outside of England and Wales which are the responsibility of dioceses within England and Wales e.g. the Channel Islands and Isle of Man

3. When is a Safeguarding Plan required?

A Safeguarding Plan is required in circumstances when there are significant concerns or allegations which indicate a possible risk of harm to others and the person concerned intends worshipping within or being an active member of any Church community or setting.

4. How is the Safeguarding Plan written?

You will be asked to take part in a meeting with other relevant people to talk about the actions that need to be taken to ensure that you can continue to take part in the life of the Church in a way that does not place children or adults at risk. The Safeguarding Plan will be discussed at this meeting and you will be asked to sign it. You will be provided with the name of those people who are responsible for ensuring that you adhere to the conditions within the Plan and those who will be there to support and help you.

The Safeguarding Plan will be reviewed regularly. For example, when there is a change of circumstances and at least annually. A date for the first review will be set at the meeting.

5. What happens if I do not agree with a Safeguarding Plan?

A Safeguarding Plan is voluntary and the Church hopes that you will make a commitment to behave in a safe manner within the Church and enter into this knowing that you will be respected and treated fairly. If you do not agree and it is thought necessary, legal advice might be taken as to whether the Church needs to take any other action e.g. seeking a civil injunction to prevent attendance at Church where a known victim attends. Statutory agencies (where relevant) will be informed and the matter will be referred to the Safeguarding Commission², which will make recommendations about what should happen next.

² Dioceses and Religious Orders have a safeguarding Commission that leads on the strategic direction of safeguarding and provides independent oversight, scrutiny, advice and guidance on safeguarding related matters relating to dioceses, religious congregations and seminaries.

6. Will my information be kept confidential and where will it be stored?

The sensitive information contained in the Safeguarding Plan will be stored securely and shared, in confidence, only with those who need to know. You can view all records kept in relation to this Safeguarding Plan (by putting a request in writing to the Safeguarding Coordinator). Information will be shared with relevant agencies (e.g., Probation Officer, independent assessor, treatment facilitator, statutory agencies), in the interests of protecting children, young people and adults at risk.

By signing the Safeguarding Plan, you are acknowledging and agreeing that your sensitive personal information can be shared with these third parties.

7. What support can I expect?

Where the need is identified, a named support might be recruited from the parish or Religious Congregation.

If somebody is appointed to monitor and report back on behaviour within the Church, you should be notified that this arrangement is being put in place and reassured that not everybody is aware of your circumstances and observing you.

8. When is the Safeguarding Plan reviewed?

This Plan will be reviewed by the Safeguarding Commission at least annually, or if there is a significant change in circumstances. You can request a review of the Safeguarding Plan, via the Safeguarding Coordinator, if you believe the conditions of the Plan are no longer appropriate or if you require additional matters to be taken into consideration.

You will be able to participate in the review process in a manner determined by the Safeguarding Commission.

If additional safeguarding concerns are identified at any time, the statutory authorities will be informed and the matter dealt with under the National Safeguarding Procedures of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.