

# SYRO MALANKARA CATHOLIC CHURCH

## UNITED KINGDOM

### Safeguarding Policy

1. 3
2. 4
3. 5
4. 5
5. 9
6. 12
7. 13
8. 16
9. 17
10. 17
11. ANNEX

**Applies to England and Wales only**  
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Syro Malankara Catholic Church UK is committed to creating a safe, respectful, and welcoming environment for all, especially children and vulnerable adults. The Church holds a sacred duty to protect those who are most at risk of harm and to act as a refuge for anyone in need. This safeguarding policy ensures that everyone who is involved in the Church's mission and ministry work towards preventing abuse and responds appropriately to concerns or allegations.

This policy applies to all clergy, religious, employees, volunteers, trustees and lay people within the parishes and ministries of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church in the United Kingdom (England and Wales) who work with, or provide ministry to, children (aged 0–18 years) and vulnerable adults. It encompasses individuals serving within parishes as well as those involved in any organisation, apostolate, or agency that has been formally recognised or accepted as a Catholic entity by the Syro Malankara Catholic Church in the UK. All individuals in these roles are expected to uphold the safeguarding values and procedures outlined in this policy, ensuring a consistent and proactive approach to the safety and wellbeing of all people entrusted to the care of the Church.

This policy is part of a national safeguarding strategy aligned with UK legislation, international best practice, and the guidance of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA). It includes:

- Promoting a culture of awareness, transparency, and prevention
- Supporting and training all Church personnel
- Responding compassionately and promptly to concerns
- Collaborating with statutory safeguarding professionals

## 2. THE RELEVANCE AND NEED FOR THIS POLICY

The Church has moral, legal, and spiritual responsibilities to safeguard all individuals, especially the vulnerable. In recent years, society has come to recognise the deep harm that abuse can cause, particularly when institutions fail to have systems in place to identify potential risks and implement processes to protect and safeguard its vulnerable members. This policy is essential because:

- The Church has a duty to keep its vulnerable members safe from harm.
- Children and vulnerable adults have the right to feel safe and to be protected from harm in all environments, including faith-based settings.
- There is a legal obligation for churches and charities to protect people they serve, under UK laws and Charity Commission requirements.
- A clear safeguarding policy builds trust within the community, with families, and among professionals.

Legal Requirement: As a registered charity and institution working with children and vulnerable adults, the Church is subject to legal duties under:

- Children Acts 1989 & 2004 and Care Act 2014
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Charity Commission Safeguarding Guidance (2023)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018 and 2023)

Finally, it will provide the Church clarity to deal with any matters of safeguarding and ensure that there is a fair and consistent system in place to respond to safeguarding issues.

### 3. IMPORTANCE OF SAFEGUARDING IN THE CHURCH

- **Spiritual Duty:** Christian teaching emphasises the inherent dignity of every person, especially those who are vulnerable. Jesus' message was one of compassion, protection, and justice.
- **Legal requirement:** All Syro Malankara Catholic churches and charitable institutions (under Syro Malankara Catholic church) in the UK are required to have robust policies and procedures in place to safeguard and protect vulnerable people.
- **Moral Responsibility:** The Syro Malankara Catholic Church must model good practice and provide a safe environment where people can worship, grow in faith, and receive pastoral support without fear.
- **Reputation and Integrity:** A proactive safeguarding culture enhances the Church's credibility and strengthens the trust of its members. A strong safeguarding culture for Syro Malankara catholic church UK means, people are protected, the risk of harm or abuse is minimised and everyone has confidence that their concerns will be addressed appropriately
- Everyone within the Syro Malankara catholic church leadership understands their safeguarding responsibilities

### 4. WHAT IS SAFEGUARDING AND WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

The term safeguarding is used in the UK to describe that children and vulnerable adults are protected from harm and any action taken to promote the welfare and ensure the safety of adults and children who may be at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation. A safeguarding incident results in significant harm or increases the risk of significant harm to children or vulnerable adults. Significant harm refers to any significant detrimental effect on a person's physical, emotional, or psychological wellbeing. It does not depend on how the harm was caused—whether through a single act, a failure to act (omission), or a pattern of circumstances. Abuse can take many forms including but not exclusively:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional or psychological abuse

- Sexual abuse or exploitation
- Neglect including self-neglect
- Domestic abuse (family violence) including coercive control
- Spiritual abuse
- Modern slavery
- 'Honor-based' abuse
- Organisational/institutional abuse
- Cuckooing
- County lines
- FGM
- CSE
- CCE

#### **4.1 Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse involves the deliberate infliction of physical harm to a child or vulnerable adult. This includes but is not limited to:

- Hitting, slapping, kicking, shaking
- Burning, scalding, biting, poisoning
- Suffocating, strangulation
- Throwing or forcefully handling someone
- Fabricated or induced illness (FII), where a parent or carer causes or claims symptoms in a child or vulnerable adult
- Enticing someone to commit physical harm to themselves including self harm.

#### **4.2 Emotional or Psychological Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a person that causes severe, long-term adverse effects on their emotional development or mental health. Examples include:

- Verbal abuse, humiliation, ridicule
- Rejection, ignoring, or isolating someone

- Bullying, intimidation, or controlling behaviours
- Age-inappropriate expectations or exploitation
- Exposure to domestic abuse or substance misuse

#### **4.3 Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child or vulnerable adult's basic physical and/or emotional needs, likely to result in serious harm to health or development. This may include failure to provide:

- Adequate food, shelter, or clothing
- Medical care or treatment
- Hygiene and safe living conditions
- Supervision or education

In adults, neglect may also include failure to provide necessary assistance with care and daily living or failure to protect from harm.

#### **4.4 Domestic Abuse (Family Violence)**

Domestic abuse refers to controlling, coercing, threatening, violent or abusive behaviour between people aged 16 or over who are personally connected (e.g., spouses, partners, family members). It includes:

- Physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abuse
- Financial or economic abuse. Coercive control (a pattern of intimidation, isolation, and control)

Gaslighting (making them doubt their own perceptions, memory, or understanding of events)

Domestic abuse affects children both directly and indirectly and is recognised as a form of child abuse.

#### **4.5. Sexual Abuse and Exploitation**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities—whether or not the person is aware of what is happening. This includes:

- Rape, sexual assault, inappropriate touching
- Non-contact abuse (e.g., exposing someone to pornography or sexual conversations)
- Sexting: Sending or receiving sexually explicit images or messages electronically
- Grooming: Building an emotional connection to gain trust for the purpose of abuse
- Exploitation through prostitution, pornography, or online platforms
- Recording, creating, or distributing indecent images of children or vulnerable adults
- Forcing or manipulating a child or adult into watching sexual acts, either live or recorded
- Sexualised bullying or harassment, including verbal, physical, or digital behaviour of a sexual nature that intimidates, humiliates, or degrades
- Any sexual activity with an individual who lacks the capacity to consent, including intoxication, cognitive impairment, mental illness, or disability

In a Church context, any sexual behaviour by people associated with the Church towards someone in their pastoral care is a serious breach of trust and will be treated as abuse. This includes any sexual activity or behaviour forced, coerced, manipulated, or encouraged with a child, young person, or adult at risk. In the Church, this is treated with particular seriousness when the individual responsible is in a position of trust—such as clergy, religious, catechists, youth leaders, or anyone with pastoral or supervisory authority.

The Church follows Position of Trust Guidance, which requires those in ministry to uphold the highest standards of conduct. Any misuse of spiritual authority, trust, or influence to engage in or encourage sexual behaviour, grooming, or boundary violations is a grave safeguarding concern. Such allegations must be referred immediately to statutory authorities and managed in line with Church safeguarding procedures and legal obligations.

## 5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHURCH/ PARISH/ MISSION

The Syro Malankara Catholic church UK will take all necessary steps to promote a culture of safeguarding at every level by ensuring:

### 5.1 Safe Environments

- Activities for children, young people, and vulnerable adults are designed with safety in mind.
- Venues used are risk-assessed and appropriately supervised.
- Safe adult-to-child ratios are maintained.

### 5.2 Safer Recruitment

All those working with children or vulnerable adults whether in a paid or voluntary role must undergo:

- Enhanced DBS checks.
- A full recruitment process including references, role description and/or interviews.
- Safeguarding induction and training before starting their role.

### 5.3 Training and Education

- All clergy, volunteers, and staff must complete regular safeguarding training in line with Catholic Church and Charity Commission standards.
- Refresher training will be required every three years or as updated guidance is issued.

### 5.4 Listening to Children and Vulnerable Adults

- All individuals, regardless of age or ability, must be heard and taken seriously. In the event of a safeguarding incident, do not ask the children or adults involved any leading question.
- Opportunities must be created for children and vulnerable adults to express concerns in a trusted, confidential space without coercion or bias.

### 5.5 Clear Procedures for Reporting

- All safeguarding concerns must be reported to the National Safeguarding Lead or Mission Safeguarding Representative without delay.
- In cases of immediate and imminent risk of harm, the police or local authority safeguarding board should be contacted immediately.
- All allegations must be documented as a safeguarding incident and handled confidentially and professionally.
- Where concerns are raised against a member of staff, clergy or volunteer working directly with the children, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be duly consulted for further action and/ or advise on the same working day should an incident occur outside of normal working hours matters should be consulted on the next working day itself.
- In other instances of safeguarding the Local Authority will be duly notified for further action and/ or advise.

#### **5.6 Pastoral and specialist Support for Survivors**

- The Church recognises the lifelong impact abuse can have. Support will be offered to those affected by abuse, including referral to local authority, police and GP. Insurance considerations must be taken into account before arranging specialist support. Any funding for counselling or therapeutic services must be agreed in advance with the Church's insurer, in line with policy requirements and liability responsibilities.
- A referral can be made to *Safe places*, this is a free independent organisation providing confidential support for victims and survivors of abuse

#### **5.7 Declaration of conflict of Interest**

A conflict of interest is a set of circumstances that creates a risk that an individual's ability to apply judgement or act in a role is, or could be, impaired or influenced by a secondary interest. The perception of competing interests, impaired judgement or undue influence can also be considered a conflict. Aspects that may affect an individual's judgement such as a financial interest, outside role, family relationship or friendship.

A potential conflict of interest is where a relationship may become a conflict due to the nature of the postholder's role or organisation. These require declaration and may require mitigations.

In certain circumstances a reasonable person might believe that a conflict of interest is likely to occur in a specific decision or

activity which can be referred to as a perceived conflict of interest.

Both actual and perceived conflicts require declaration and mitigation. Mitigations will involve agreed actions to manage a conflict of interest. These can range from letting other people know about the conflict or by recusing oneself from being part of the safeguarding process involving the conflict of interest.

### **5.8 Expectations of volunteers and any paid staff**

Anyone who is working with children or vulnerable adults has a responsibility to familiarise themselves with this safeguarding policy, the volunteers code of conduct and the procedures that go with it. They must maintain a proper focus on the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults in all aspects of their work. Anyone who works/ volunteers for the church must inform their parish priest or the Safeguarding officer for the parish if they or any adult living in their household become(s) the subject of an allegation involving a safeguarding concern or abuse against a child or vulnerable adult.

### **5.9 Expectations of Clergy**

Clergy hold a position of trust and must uphold the highest safeguarding standards. They are expected to:

- Model safe behaviour and maintain clear professional boundaries.
- Follow all Church safeguarding policies, statutory requirements, and canonical obligations.
- Ensure safeguarding is embedded in all parish and pastoral activities.
- Cooperate fully with any safeguarding investigation.
- Inform the National Safeguarding Lead and Bishop immediately regarding any subject of safeguarding concerns.
- Avoid any behaviour that could be seen as grooming, boundary violations, or misuse of spiritual authority.
- Support safe recruitment and supervision of volunteers and staff.
- Foster a culture where concerns can be raised without fear.

Any breach of these expectations, or misuse of a position of trust, will be treated as a serious safeguarding matter.

### **5.10 Acting on Safeguarding Concerns**

No one working or volunteering for the Syro Malankara Catholic Church is expected to personally investigate concerns regarding

individual children or vulnerable adults who may be experiencing abuse or are at risk. However, this does not mean that we should take no action. We all share a responsibility to ensure that any concerns are promptly referred to the appropriate authorities. If anyone has reason to believe that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of abuse or neglect, they must not ignore their concerns or assume someone else will act.

Concerns about children should be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or the children's social care team in the local authority where the child resides. Concerns about vulnerable adults should be referred to the local authority's adult services.

If any paid staff member or volunteer is unsure about what steps to take, they should seek guidance from the local Mission Safeguarding Lead at the Syro Malankara Catholic Church without delay.

Anyone working or volunteering for the Church who has concerns about the behaviour of a colleague must report this to the local Mission Safeguarding Lead or National safeguarding lead at the earliest opportunity. – whistleblowing should be referenced here

## 6. POLICY APPLICATION

This safeguarding policy applies to all Church organisations, ministries, agencies that operate under the authority of, or in association with, the Syro Malankara Catholic Church in the United Kingdom (England and Wales) and any person in a position of trust, influence or service within the church community covering all work involving children and young people (under 18 years of age) and vulnerable adults.

Each parish/mission is responsible for maintaining an up-to-date list of such organisations and agencies within its jurisdiction.

These may include, but are not limited to:

- Catechetical programmes
- Youth and children's ministries
- Altar server groups
- Choirs and liturgical groups
- Charitable outreach initiatives
- Cultural and social associations

- Prayer groups and lay associations
- Retreat teams and faith formation groups

These bodies are considered to be covered by this policy only if they meet the requirements of Canon 216

## 7. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Syro Malankara Catholic Church UK recognises that safeguarding is an ongoing responsibility requiring regular oversight, evaluation, and adaptation. The policy and procedures around safeguarding have to be reviewed annually and monitored by the national safeguarding lead officer.

This will ensure compliance with both the UK legal framework, the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) eight standards, best practice and identify and rectify gaps in the existing policy or to make relevant changes as per the changes in the national legal framework or to suite any changing needs of the organisation. Having the files and procedures monitored in a timely manner will also strengthen accountability and transparency across the organisation as well as ensure clarity of the requirements across board. Additionally robust monitoring and review will also help with the following

- To ensure safeguarding practices remain effective
- To identify and rectify gaps in implementation across parishes and associated organisations.
- To ensure that training, reporting, and record-keeping processes are actively followed and documented.
- To foster a culture of continual improvement, accountability, and learning.

### 7.1 Timeframe for Monitoring and Reviewing

This policy will be reviewed biennially by the national safeguarding lead officer, or:

- Following a serious incident.
- In line with updates to legal frameworks or safeguarding guidance.
- When new procedures or activities are introduced that affect children or vulnerable adults.

In addition to the set timescales, safeguarding audits may also be undertaken to monitor compliance, record-keeping, training

completion and risk management. This will involve monitoring the training records, incident log, policy usage and how each system implemented as part of this policy is utilised.

## **7.2 Review and Monitoring Methods**

Review and Monitoring will be carried out through a combination of the following:

- Annual safeguarding audits at parish/mission and national levels.
- Review of incident reports, referrals, and case responses.
- Training completion checks for clergy, staff, and volunteers.
- Feedback mechanisms, including anonymous surveys and feedback from service users, parents, and survivors.
- Spot checks and visits to assess compliance with safeguarding protocols.
- Self-assessment tools for parishes and ministries.

## **7.3 Training**

All clergy, staff, and volunteers must complete safeguarding training appropriate to their role and refresh this at the intervals required by the Church's safeguarding standards. Training should include recognising abuse, responding to disclosures, maintaining professional boundaries, and understanding responsibilities under the safeguarding policy.

Safeguarding training must also cover Safer Recruitment principles to ensure that anyone involved in selecting, supervising, or managing staff or volunteers understands how to apply safer recruitment checks, including DBS requirements, references, and role suitability assessments. Clergy and parish leaders must ensure these processes are followed consistently before anyone begins ministry or work with children, young people, or adults at risk.

<https://training.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/course/safeguarding-in-the-catholic-church-l1>

<https://training.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/course/safeguarding-for-volunteers-in-the-catholic-church-l3>

### Responsibilities for Monitoring

Role	Responsibility
National Safeguarding Lead	Oversees policy review, conducts audits, and provides support to parishes/missions.
Mission level Safeguarding Representatives	Ensure local implementation of policy and submit compliance checklists.
Clergy and Ministry Leaders	Ensure their teams are trained and uphold safeguarding standards.
External Evaluators (if needed)	Provide impartial reviews of safeguarding systems and procedures.

### 7.4 Review Schedule and Timescales

Task	Frequency	Responsible Person/Team	Notes
Full Policy Review	Biennially	National Safeguarding Lead	Adjust for legal or CSSA updates
Safeguarding Audit (National-wide)	Annually	NSL + Audit Team	Can involve external audit

Parish Compliance Checklist Submission	Every 6 months	Mission Safeguarding Reps	Includes training logs, risk assessments, DBS checks
Training Records Review	Quarterly	NSL / Mission Reps	To ensure timely refresher training
Incident Report Reviews	Ongoing / Monthly Review	NSL	All concerns must be logged, reviewed, and followed up
Feedback from Young People and Families	Annually	Mission teams / NSL	Can include surveys, interviews, or informal feedback
Local Authority & CSSA Compliance Check	As required	NSL	Based on changes in legislation or after incidents

## 8. CONTACTS AND SUPPORT

- National Safeguarding Lead: Please refer to the Safeguarding Directory Document
- Mission Safeguarding Representative: Please refer to the Safeguarding Directory Document
- Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA): <https://www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk>
- NSPCC (for concerns or advice): 0808 800 5000
- Local Authority Safeguarding Board: Please refer to the Safeguarding Directory Document

## 9. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

The Syro Malankara Catholic Church UK is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. We expect all clergy, employees, and volunteers to share this commitment and to act in accordance with this policy. This policy will be reviewed annually or after any significant incident or legal update.

### Approval

Date 21-March-2026

This policy is executed by Trustee and Chair of National Safeguarding Committee

Name of signatory: Rev. Fr. Louis Charuvila Pappy

## 10. REFERENCES

- Children Acts 1989 & 2004 and Care Act 2014
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Charity Commission Safeguarding Guidance (2023)
- Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) framework
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- Ofsted - Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills.