

Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales)

Victim and Survivor Care Charter

Applies to England and Wales only

Review Cycle: Biennial

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1. Introduction

The **Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales)** is committed to creating a safe, compassionate and supportive Church environment for all. Safeguarding is central to the mission and ministry of the Church, and this includes caring for those who have been harmed through abuse.

We recognise that abuse can have profound and lasting effects on individuals, families and communities. We also recognise that speaking about abuse, whether recent or historical, can be extremely difficult. Our mission is therefore committed to ensuring that all victims and survivors who approach us are treated with dignity, compassion, respect and sensitivity.

This Charter outlines how the **Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales)** will respond to victims and survivors of abuse connected to Church activities, clergy, volunteers or representatives.

The Apostolic Mission operates under the spiritual leadership of **His Excellency Kuriakose Mar Osthathios, Apostolic Visitor**, and safeguarding within the Mission is supported by a **National Safeguarding Lead** and **Mission Safeguarding Representatives** within each mission community.

All clergy, staff and volunteers serving the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales) share responsibility for creating a culture that promotes safeguarding, encourages disclosure, and provides compassionate care for victims and survivors.

Our response will always be **survivor-centred**, recognising the needs, wishes and wellbeing of each individual.

2. Communication and Transparency

The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales) is committed to providing clear and accessible information for victims and survivors.

We will ensure that people are able to access information about safeguarding and support without needing to identify themselves publicly as victims or survivors.

We will provide clear information about:

- How abuse or safeguarding concerns can be reported within the Mission
- How victims and survivors can contact the **Mission or National Safeguarding Lead**
- What support is available following a disclosure
- The process that will be followed after a safeguarding concern is raised
- How statutory authorities such as the Police and Local Authorities may become involved
- Independent support services available nationally and locally
- Confidential support services available to victims and survivors

Information will be shared through a variety of channels including:

- The official website of the **Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales)**

- Safeguarding information within mission communities
- Leaflets and safeguarding notices
- Communication through mission events and gatherings
- Safeguarding awareness initiatives and training

Information will be presented in ways that are inclusive and accessible to people of different languages, cultures and abilities.

3. Support for Victims and Survivors

Following a disclosure of abuse connected with the Church, the **Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales)** will offer appropriate support to victims and survivors.

Where appropriate, a **Support Person** may be identified to assist the victim or survivor during their engagement with the Mission.

The Support Person may:

- Listen compassionately and respectfully to the victim or survivor
- Provide emotional support and reassurance
- Assist the victim or survivor in understanding available support options
- Help the survivor access appropriate support services
- Help facilitate communication with the National Safeguarding Lead where appropriate
- Support the survivor in engaging with external services if they choose to do so
- Help the survivor identify longer-term pastoral or community support if desired

The support provided will always respect the wishes and choices of the victim or survivor.

4. The Role and Limits of a Support Person

While the Support Person provides support and accompaniment, their role has defined boundaries.

The Support Person:

- Is not responsible for investigating safeguarding concerns
- Does not replace professional counselling or therapeutic support
- Cannot promise confidentiality where safeguarding risks exist
- Must report safeguarding concerns to the **Mission or National Safeguarding Lead** where necessary to protect others from harm

If there is a risk of harm to others, safeguarding information may need to be shared with appropriate authorities in line with safeguarding policies and legal obligations.

5. Independent Support and Referral

Victims and survivors may wish to receive independent support outside the Church. The **Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales)** will actively support this choice.

We will provide information and referral options to relevant independent services, including:

- Independent support organisations
- Counselling and therapeutic services
- Victim support organisations
- Safeguarding advocacy services

Where appropriate and with the consent of the victim or survivor, the **National Safeguarding Lead** may help facilitate referrals to such services.

The choice to access any support service always remains with the victim or survivor.

6. Spiritual and Pastoral Support

For many individuals, spiritual care may be an important element of healing and recovery.

The **Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales)** may offer pastoral and spiritual support where requested by the victim or survivor.

This support may include:

- Pastoral conversations with clergy
- Prayer and spiritual accompaniment
- Opportunities for reconciliation or healing services
- Participation in supportive faith communities if the survivor wishes

Spiritual support will always be offered **only at the request of the victim or survivor** and will never be imposed.

7. Responding to Disclosures of Abuse

The Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales) is committed to responding appropriately and compassionately when abuse is disclosed.

When a disclosure is made:

- The person disclosing will be listened to respectfully and taken seriously
- They will be given the opportunity to speak at their own pace
- They will be informed about what will happen next

- Safeguarding concerns will be reported to the **Mission or National Safeguarding Lead**
- Where necessary, concerns will be referred to statutory authorities

The response will prioritise the safety and wellbeing of victims and survivors.

8. Responding to Disclosures from Children and Young People

Where a child or young person discloses abuse:

- They will be listened to carefully and respectfully
- They will be reassured that they have done the right thing by speaking out
- Questions will only be asked to clarify information
- Safeguarding procedures will be followed immediately
- Statutory authorities will be contacted where required

The safety and protection of children and young people will always be the primary concern.

9. Working with Statutory Authorities

The **Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales)** will work collaboratively with statutory authorities where safeguarding concerns arise.

This includes cooperation with:

- Police services
- Local authority safeguarding services (including the LADO)
- Social services
- Relevant regulatory bodies

Our safeguarding response will always comply with the safeguarding policies applicable within the Catholic Church in England and Wales and with relevant civil law.

10. Mental Capacity and Consent

We recognise that individuals who disclose abuse may have different needs and circumstances.

If there are concerns regarding a person's ability to make decisions about their support or about sharing information, appropriate advice will be sought from safeguarding professionals or statutory services.

Wherever possible, individuals will be supported to make their own decisions about the support they receive.

11. Working with Other Support Services

The **National Safeguarding Lead** will maintain awareness of local and national support services and build relationships with organisations that support victims and survivors.

These may include:

- Victim support organisations
- Specialist abuse support services
- Counselling and therapeutic providers
- Community and advocacy services

This ensures that victims and survivors have access to the most appropriate support available.

12. Feedback and Learning

The **Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales)** is committed to learning from the experiences of victims and survivors.

Where appropriate, survivors may be invited to provide feedback on the support they have received. This feedback helps improve safeguarding practice and the care offered to others.

Feedback may be provided:

- Directly to the National Safeguarding Lead
- Through written communication
- Through confidential conversations if preferred

All feedback will be treated with respect and confidentiality.

13. Review of this Charter

This Charter will be reviewed biennially to ensure that it reflects best safeguarding practice in alignment to the policies and guidance provided by the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) and continues to support victims and survivors effectively.

The **Syro-Malankara Catholic Church Apostolic Mission in the UK (England and Wales)** is committed to continuously strengthening its safeguarding culture and its care for those who have been harmed in close partnership with the CSSA and the diocese level safeguarding leaderships of the catholic dioceses in the UK.