

St Cecilia's Abbey Safeguarding Policy

1. POLICY OVERVIEW

St Cecilia's Abbey, as an enclosed, contemplative community, does not normally have direct contact with children, or with adults outside the community. However, in line with the One Church Approach which has been adopted by all institutions in the Catholic Church following the safeguarding reviews of 2020, we are committed to safeguarding all children and adults. For St Cecilia's Abbey this commitment directly relates to the fact that we are all made in the image of God and the Church's common belief in the preciousness, dignity and uniqueness of every human life. We start from the principle that each person has a right to expect the highest level of protection, love, encouragement and respect. We are committed to putting into practice the safeguarding recommendations of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency and the Religious Life Safeguarding Service, and to ensuring that if any safeguarding concerns should arise, we will respond to the victims/survivors promptly and compassionately.

2. SCOPE

2.1 This policy and procedure apply to all within St Cecilia's Abbey regardless of their role or the activities they undertake.

2.2 It is the responsibility of all within St Cecilia's Abbey to prevent, whether by action or omission, abuse. Abuse in this policy refers to: physical; sexual; emotional; spiritual; neglect; self-neglect; organisational; material; psychological; financial; domestic or verbal. Additionally, behaviour which effectively results in modern day slavery or where there is evidence of discrimination or radicalisation, needs to be recognised and addressed as a safeguarding issue, in accordance with the procedures outlined in Section 6.

3. TRAINING

3.1 Members of St Cecilia's Abbey will undergo Safeguarding Training as is relevant to their role.

3.2 Those members of St Cecilia's Abbey will undertake refresher training as required.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 The St Cecilia's Abbey Trustees

The St Cecilia's Abbey Trustees have a duty to maintain appropriate governance and oversight of safeguarding in line with this policy and national guidelines. Certain functions will be delegated within St Cecilia's Abbey as indicated below.

4.2 The Abbess (Reverend Mother Eustochium Lee)

The Abbess is responsible for ensuring appropriate policy, procedures and best practice are in place for the effective delivery of safeguarding, including any related due diligence checks. It is her responsibility to appoint a sister as safeguarding representative for the community.

4.3 The Safeguarding Representative (Sister Rachel Appleby)

The safeguarding representative has direct oversight of the safeguarding policy and guidance of the relationship with and input on the work of the RLSS.

4.4 All other roles

All sisters and staff have an obligation to ensure they know how to respond to safeguarding concerns by being familiar with the content of this policy and the procedure contained within it and any other associated policies/procedures.

4.5 General

Everyone involved in the work of St Cecilia's Abbey has a duty to disclose to the Abbess or safeguarding representative any safeguarding concerns that have been raised about them.

5 PRACTICE GUIDANCE

5.1 Action must be taken if a concern is raised that a child or adult is suffering or is likely to be suffering from significant harm. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Someone who is at serious risk of harm from self or others
- Someone who poses a serious risk of harm to someone else
- A concern about a child or vulnerable adult at risk of harm from someone else
- Concerns over someone's mental capacity

5.2 Action must also be taken in line with the Church's mandatory reporting policy. This means that action must be taken if there are reasonable grounds to suspect or believe, that someone who holds any type of role within the Church is going to or has committed a crime, is going to or has caused harm, poses a risk or is otherwise unsuitable to work in a public facing role.

6 PROCEDURE

6.1 If St Cecilia's Abbey becomes aware of a concern as detailed in Section 5 or any other safeguarding issue, they should contact the RLSS Safeguarding Team and pass the concern and all associated records to them immediately. They should ensure the person who made them aware of the issue knows they are doing this.

6.1.1 The RLSS :

- Ensure the victim/survivor or individual has been informed of the next steps
- Explain what will happen, give them options if possible and an indicative timescale
- Contact any relevant bodies within 24 hours
- Complete the safeguarding paperwork and ensure appropriate record keeping of all communications including phone calls, meetings and discussions in relation to the case are documented.
- Update the relevant people at St Cecilia's Abbey and offer any support as needed.

7 WHISTLEBLOWING

7.1 St Cecilia's Abbey will encourage and enable anyone with a safeguarding concern, to refer the concern without fear of victimisation, or disadvantage.

7.1.1 If that concern is regarding malpractice, illegal acts, or omissions at St Cecilia's Abbey or other religious institution relating to safeguarding, then the RLSS should be made aware.

7.2 . The action taken by the RLSS will depend upon the nature of the concern referred. However, an investigation by the RLSS will be undertaken if appropriate, followed by appropriate action and written feedback will be provided, including a rationale documenting the reasons why identified actions have been taken.

8 RECORDING AND STORAGE OF SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS AND CASE FILES

8.1 St Cecilia's Abbey has a responsibility to ensure that all case files held are accurate, up to date and stored securely.

8.2 We will endeavour to keep files for as long as is necessary for our purposes or as required by law and to delete them when no longer required.

8.3 Where RLSS is responsible for the management of a case, RLSS will ensure records are accurate, auditable, and secure and all records of any safeguarding concerns or allegations referred will be properly maintained.

9 SAFER RECRUITMENT PRACTICE GUIDANCE

9.1 If St Cecilia's Abbey ever has any staff who are to have direct contact with our elderly and infirm sisters they will be subject to the appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks (including enhanced DBS) in line with both statutory and Catholic Church requirements.

9.2 On appointment, all new employees will be provided with a copy of this document and will sign to say that they understand all relevant policies and procedures.

9.3 Anyone seeking to work with children or adults whether in a paid or unpaid capacity must be provided with the opportunity to self-disclose relevant conviction information. This is a DBS Code of Practice requirement.

9.4 If St Cecilia's Abbey needs the assistance of carers for their elderly and infirm sisters within the enclosure, they use only those from a registered agency whose carers have all undertaken an enhanced DBS and whose care services are fully regulated by the relevant country regulator including Care Quality Commission (CQC) for England.

10 POLICY REVIEW

10.1 This policy was approved by the Trustees of St Cecilia's Abbey May 2026 and will be subject to an initial review in May 2027 and then annually and/or as soon as possible in response to any changes in relevant legislation and/or a safeguarding incident occurring.