

Child Safeguarding Statement of the Order of Franciscans Secular (OFS)¹ in Ireland

This statement has been prepared to comply with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015. We, members of the Order of Franciscans Secular in Ireland, recognise and uphold the dignity and rights of all children, are committed to ensuring their safety and well-being and will work in partnership with parents/ guardians to do this. We recognise each child as a gift from God, and we value and encourage the participation of children in all activities that enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development. All OFS members have a responsibility to safeguard children through promoting their welfare, health and development in a safe and caring environment that supports their best interests and prevents abuse.

1. Nature of Services:

The Order of Franciscans Secular belongs to the Franciscan Family. It is formed by the union of all its Catholic fraternities throughout the world. The members commit themselves to live the Gospel after the manner of St. Francis. They do so in their state² of life by following the Rule approved by Saint Paul VI in 1978. The Order of Franciscans Secular (Third Order) was founded by St. Francis in 1221 due to the wish of so many lay people to be part of the Franciscan movement. The ethos of the Order of Secular Franciscans is one of profound respect for the dignity of all human life from the moment of conception to the time of natural death. Members are over 18 years of age and typically meet on a monthly basis for prayer and fraternity. Some fraternities may have apostolic or social events that could involve attendance by children. The Order is completely voluntary, has no property and does not have any employees.

2. Principles:

As outlined in the Safeguarding Children 2016 Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland we are committed to the following principles:

- Mandatory reporting.

Each of us has a duty to notify the statutory authorities of suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations that a child is being or has been abused:

- physically
- emotionally
- sexually
- through neglect

Suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations may relate to possible abuse by a member of the OFS, but they can also relate to incidents in the child's family, or elsewhere in the community.

- Caring for the welfare of all children and the adults who work with them.
- Responding appropriately to child protection suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations.
- Caring pastorally for complainants and other affected persons.
- Caring pastorally for respondents and other affected persons.

¹ The official name of the order is in Latin: *Ordo Franciscanus Sæcularis (OFS)*

² The order is primarily made up of married and single lay people. However, membership is also open to diocesan clergy.

3. Risk Assessment

The table below sets out identified risks to the safety of children and young people involved in Church activities that take place under the auspices of the Order of Franciscans Secular, or using facilities provided by the Order; and the steps taken to minimise the risks of abuse. We are committed to observing the Standards and Guidance of the National Board for the Safeguarding of Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI).

[cf. <https://www.safeguarding.ie/guidance> – hereafter, *NBSCCCI*]

Identified Risks	Procedures in Place to Manage Risks
That those working with children may be unsafe or unsuitable to do so.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Safe Recruitment Procedures for members, following the Guidance of the NBSCCCI: involving screening, appropriate references, ○ For all Clergy and Religious: Certificate of “good standing”, and (for clerics) a <i>Celebret</i>. ○ Appropriate Training in Child Safeguarding. ○ Garda Vetting for relevant members ... <p>Cf. <i>NBSCCCI Guidance</i>: Standard 1.pdf, pp. 9–11, 21; Standard 5, pp 3–22</p>
That those working with children may behave inappropriately towards them	<p>Codes of Behaviour for Adults who deal with Children</p> <p>Cf. <i>NBSCCCI Guidance</i>: Standard 1.pdf, pp. 50-51, 54, 74</p>
That children who use our services may behave inappropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Codes of Behaviour for Children ○ Anti-Bullying Policy <p>Cf. <i>NBSCCCI Guidance</i>: Standard 1.pdf, pp. 52-54</p>
That the environment in which work with children is facilitated fails to meet effective safeguarding practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintenance of Attendance Registers and adequate supervision ratios; ○ Consent from Parents/Guardians and (where appropriate) from children ○ Contact Details of Parents/Guardians ○ Recording of Incidents/Accidents <p>Cf. <i>NBSCCCI Guidance</i>: Standard 1.pdf, pp. 57-74</p>
That external groups who use Church property may not have appropriate Safeguarding Standards	<p>Ensuring that all external groups which include children have appropriate Child Safeguarding policies in place.</p> <p>Cf. <i>NBSCCCI Guidance</i>: Standard 1.pdf, pp. 76-82</p>
That those who wish to behave dangerously or unethically towards children may be able to do so	<p>Procedures governing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adequate supervision ○ “Whistle-blowing” ○ the reporting and recording of concerns and complaints. <p>Cf. <i>NBSCCCI Guidance</i>: Standard 1.pdf, pp. 64, 83-87</p>
Those who wish to exploit children through the use of digital media in our ministries might be able to do so	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensuring control of access to media ○ Securing parental permission for access to media ○ Providing guidance in training re internet use. <p>Cf. <i>NBSCCCI Guidance</i>: Standard 1.pdf, pp. 91-99.</p>

OFS members may fail to report an allegation, suspicion, concern or knowledge appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Procedures for the reporting to the civil and relevant authorities of concerns, suspicions, knowledge or allegations regarding the safeguarding of children; ○ Procedures for the maintenance of records of such reports. <p><i>Cf. NBSCCCI Guidance: Standard 2.pdf, pp. 3-33.</i></p>
OFS members may fail to understand their responsibilities to safeguard children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appropriate training for all members, including employees and volunteers. ○ Role-Specific training for those with special responsibilities in the area of Child Safeguarding ○ Regular training needs assessment at local and provincial level by superiors and safeguarding committees <p><i>Cf. NBSCCCI Guidance: Standard 5.pdf, pp. 3-19.</i></p>
That Children and their parents may not understand the OFS policy, procedures and structures for the safeguarding of children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Publicising of the Church's Safeguarding Policy by (e.g.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Age-appropriate posters for adults and children – Information leaflets – Information/consultation sessions with parents – Special celebrations drawing attention to the safeguarding of children ("Safeguarding Sundays") ○ Cooperation with other organisations that promote the safeguarding and welfare of children. <p><i>Cf. NBSCCCI Guidance: Standard 5.pdf, p. 20; Standard 6.pdf, pp. 5-31.</i></p>
That the procedures for safeguarding children may fail to be implemented	<p>Procedures are in place to ensure that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Designated Liaison Person makes an annual report to the National Council on the status and management of current and historical allegations of abuse; ○ Incoming council members at National, Regional and Local fraternity levels are briefed by their predecessors on child safeguarding issues; ○ Compliance with the standards required in Child Safeguarding are subject to review by NBSCCCI, and by Tusla. <p><i>Cf. NBSCCCI Guidance: Standard 7.pdf, pp. 6-39.</i></p>
That the Order may fail to appoint a "relevant person" to be a point of contact with Tusla and maintain a list of mandated persons	<p>All required members are appointed: The Designated Liaison Person (DLP); Deputy DLP the Coordinator of Safeguarding (a "relevant person").</p>

4. Procedures

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, the Children First: National Guidance, and Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice. In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment, the following procedures support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our service:

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children
- Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla
- Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated persons
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person

5. Implementation

The Order of Franciscans Secular in Ireland is committed to safeguarding children through the implementation of *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*. This Child Safeguarding Statement³ and our practice expresses our commitment to ensuring that in our ministries and in any place under our control children are kept safe from harm.

The implementation of the Child Safeguarding Policy is subject to oversight and monitoring by the National, Regional and Local Fraternity Councils, the Designated Liaison Person; and, when necessary, appropriate or desirable, in consultation with Tusla and the Garda Síochána.

We recognise that implementation is an ongoing process. Our service is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our service. The possibility of risks to children is subject to regular assessment as determined by the National Council of the Secular Franciscan Order in Ireland.

Signed:

Ms Philomena Rooney, National President of the Order Franciscans Secular in Ireland

Date:

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³ A pdf version of this document is available electronically at the <https://ofsgalway.com/national-ofs/>