



## OUR LADY IMMACULATE CATHOLIC CHURCH, TOLWORTH

# SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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## INTRODUCTION

As a parish family, our fundamental policy is that everyone in our community should know our church to be a place where they are welcome and loved. Each person, of any age, should experience in the life of the church the love of God the Father, Jesus his Son and the love which is the Holy Spirit.

Jesus made a special point of always welcoming children:

*"The disciples turned them away but when Jesus saw this He was angry and said to them , "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs" ( Mark 10 v13-16; cf Matthew 19 v 13-15; Luke 18 v 15-17)*



This document is the concern of all members of the parish: priests, deacons and lay people; parents, guardians, catechists and all who work with children and vulnerable adults.

Our aim in the end is simply to ensure that we are a true family

and that everyone can always be justifiably confident that Our Lady Immaculate parish is a place where they are both ' loved and safe'.

We all willingly accept our responsibility for the welfare and protection of our younger parishioners and vulnerable adults. In this way, the parish is working to do all it can to ensure that are valued and protected as Jesus himself demands. At all times, our protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults, will be directed by our Diocesan Policy and Guidelines, as well as those of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. As an essential part of this work, the parish will liaise with Our Lady Immaculate Primary School and seek to establish a close and effective working relationship with statutory and other voluntary agencies. including the local Police and Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames Social Services Department.

Our parish almost certainly has survivors of abuse within the community. We need to find ways to respond in a sympathetic and practical way and provide factual information and sources of professional help.

This means creating an environment within which healing can take place.

*" Sadly, it has to be recognised that parishes are not immune from abusers of children and young people. Church communities can provide a close family-type environment within which paedophiles and individuals who wish to have access to children and young people for their own purpose, can find it easy to operate. Abuse of children happens even in the best-run organisations".*

*Archdiocese of Southwark, Child Protection; Parish Guidelines for Good Practice, p 1*

Everyone who works with children and vulnerable adults has a duty to help protect them from abuse, by identifying those people who need to be referred to the statutory agencies (e.g. Social Services, Police, NSPCC) and by working to enable those people to learn how to keep themselves safe and ask for help when they need it.

We need to recognise that it *could* happen in our own parish, even though we continue to hope that our parish does **not** mirror the denial and cover-up often experienced by those who have the courage to speak openly about abuse. It is also essential that we learn together how to show love and care when there is abuse of any kind.

Our parish is totally committed to the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of all children, young people and vulnerable adults. This is a priority in any family and home and is no less so in our parish family and church. As a Christian community we aim to be in the forefront of upholding and protecting the rights and dignity of everyone. Our parishioners who lead and help our children and young people give their time freely and generously. Both the young parishioners and the adult helpers need a safe and secure environment in which to work. Such safety cannot be left to chance and requires constant vigilance.



*" It is worth bearing in mind, however, that most sexual abuse happens within the family home and is carried out by someone well known to the child"*

*( NSPCC )*

## The Parish and Good Practice

The intention of the Children Act 1989 that the welfare of the child is paramount is fully accepted. All other considerations (e.g. the fear of scandal or false accusations; the presumption of innocence until guilt is proved; the call to give care and forgiveness to the accused) **MUST** take second place to the **PARAMOUNTCY PRINCIPLE**.

*Our Lady Immaculate Parish, after consultation with the Diocese, has appointed a **Safeguarding Representative** who co-ordinates the work of the parish and who is responsible for seeing that the necessary checks are carried out on all employees and volunteers working with children, young people and vulnerable adults.*

*The **Safeguarding Representative** can be contacted at any time if a concern arises and details are available from the Presbytery, Parish Office, Parish Website or from the Notice Board in the Church.*

**All employees and volunteers will be given appropriate support and opportunities for training.**

tice. ( See Appendix 1).

All such people will be required to be properly appointed and supported in accordance with any guidelines issued by the Archdiocese of Southwark.

**The parish will co-operate fully with the statutory and Diocesan agencies in every situation and will not conduct its own investigations.**

The parish will seek to implement all the guidelines in the 'Safe from Harm' Code of Prac-

The parish will seek to provide emotional and spiritual support for the child, young person or vulnerable adult and their family, the accused person and their family and the parish community. During any investigation, it will be the normal practice for the accused person to be withdrawn from any contact with children and young people. The advice of the statutory and Diocesan authorities will be accepted and implemented.

In addition to what has already been said, the Parish Priest and the Safeguarding Representative will be responsible for:

- \* recognising the signs of abuse and how to respond to its discovery or disclosure as part of the training of employees and all volunteers.
- \* in conjunction with parents; the education of children and young people on the ways they can protect themselves.
- \* the development of a package of on-going training for employees and volunteers.
- \* ensuring that all hiring agreements contain a clause whereby the outside group undertakes to follow ( in addition to any existing child protection procedures they have ) the guidelines contained in 'Safe from Harm' .(Appendix 1)
- \* providing a concise entry on this subject in any parish directory or web-site.

## PARISH CODE OF BEHAVIOUR



Adapted from the Code of Behaviour based on the work done by the Scout Association and set out in the Archdiocese of Southwark Parish Guidelines for Good Practice .

- ⇒ Treat all children, young people and vulnerable adults with dignity and respect.
- ⇒ Have other adults present, or in sight or hearing of others, when holding activities with children and young people. **It is vital that the ratio of adults to children is adequate to ensure safety. Extra help must be obtained with any outings or outdoor activities. Minimum ratios are:**

**1 adult leader for every 3 children under 5**  
**1 adult leader for every 6 children under 8**  
**1 adult leader for every 10-15 children aged 8-11**  
**1 adult leader for every 15-20 children aged over 11**

- ⇒ Try to ensure that each group includes a male and female helper.
- ⇒ Recognise that caution is required in all one-to-one situations.
- ⇒ Watch your speech, tone of voice and body language.
- ⇒ Remember that someone else may misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned.
- ⇒ Respect each person's right to personal privacy. Do not invade a child's privacy whilst they are washing or toileting, unless absolutely essential.
- ⇒ Arrange separate sleeping accommodation for adults and children and young people in any setting.
- ⇒ Ask parent/guardian's permission if you need to see a child on their own, making sure that another adult is present nearby and that the child knows this.
- ⇒ Provide access for children and young people to talk to others about any concerns they may have. Make sure that they know that they can speak to the Parish Safeguarding Representative or can contact CHILDLINE if they need to speak to someone.
- ⇒ Encourage children, young people and adults to feel comfortable and confident enough to point out attitudes and behaviour they do not like.
- ⇒ Do not be sexually suggestive about, or to, a child or young person, even in fun.
- ⇒ Avoid inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others. Do not touch inappropriately or intrusively.
- ⇒ Do not allow a child or young person to involve you in excessive attention seeking that is overtly physical or sexual in nature. Refrain from being drawn into inappropriate tantrums or crushes.
- ⇒ Do not scapegoat, ridicule or reject a child or young person.
- ⇒ Do not allow abusive peer activities such as 'initiation ceremonies', ridiculing or bullying of any kind.
- ⇒ Do not rely on your good name to protect you. Do not believe that ***'It could never happen to me'***



## GUIDELINES ON TOUCHING

(from *The Best of Caring*, published by PCCA Christian Child Care)

- ⇒ **Keep everything in public.** A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- ⇒ **Touch should be related to the child's needs, not the workers.**
- ⇒ **Touch should be age-appropriate** and generally initiated by the child rather than the adult.
- ⇒ **Avoid any physical activity that is, or may be construed as, sexually stimulating to the child or adult.**
- ⇒ **Children are entitled to determine the degree of physical contact with others** except in exceptional circumstances such as a medical emergency.
- ⇒ **Team members should take responsibility for monitoring one another in the area of physical contact.** They should be free to challenge a colleague if necessary.

**Maintain the highest professional standards in work and relationships with children and young people.**

## WHAT TO DO ABOUT INAPPROPRIATE ADVANCES

**Children and young people can sometimes make suggestive approaches to an adult. They may have a 'crush' or they may act inappropriately following previous abusive experiences. Sometimes, inappropriate physical contact can happen accidentally.**

**It is important that the adult takes responsibility to :**

- ⇒ Tell the child or young person that their language or behaviour is unacceptable.
- ⇒ Tell their group leader and the Parish Safeguarding Representative immediately about the incident however embarrassing this may be.
- ⇒ Record the incident, who was told and what was done. This may be a very necessary safeguard if later accusations are made. (See also the Parish Incident Reporting Form).
- ⇒ Decide with the group leader and Parish Safeguarding Representative what measures will be taken to help the young person and prevent further incidents. Parental rights will be given due consideration.



## WHEN A PERSON TELLS YOU ABOUT ABUSE



Crucial to any assessment is a knowledge and sensitivity to racial, cultural and religious patterns. Whilst different practices must be taken into account, it is important to remember that everyone has basic human rights.

Differences in child rearing do not justify child abuse.

Whatever the reasons given, abuse is **ALWAYS** wrong and never the fault of the child or young person.

As a catechist or volunteer working with children, young people and vulnerable adults you will get to know them well. They may feel enough trust to be able to tell you about unhappy things that are happening at home, at school, at church or some other place. ***This is both a privilege and a responsibility.***

They may be in the desperate situation of wanting the abuse to stop but still love the abuser.

The child, young person or vulnerable adult may think that you are able to stop the abuse without anything else happening. If they ask to tell you something in confidence, always tell them that will depend on the circumstances, as you will have to tell someone else if they are being harmed.

If possible, try to have another adult present while they speak but do not prevent them talking to you if this is not possible. It is vital that they feel at ease enough to say what they want to say.

- \* Be totally attentive and show acceptance of whatever they say.
- \* Look directly at them and stay calm whatever they tell you.
- \* Allow them to talk but do not push for information. Go at the their pace.
- \* Do not ask probing questions; simply check back that you have heard correctly. Let them tell you what they want and no more. They may have to disclose to a specialist at a later stage and too much information now may interfere with later investigations.
- \* It is important that the listener cannot be said at a later date to have put anything into their mind.
- \* Let them know that you will have to tell other people so that the abuse can stop. Try to explain what will happen next on a way that they will understand.
- \* Reassure them that they are right to tell. Be encouraging.
- \* As soon as possible write down carefully what you have been told ( using their own words) and how they appeared physically and emotionally.
- \* Sign and date and time the incident and time you made your notes.



**Fear of scandal is NEVER a reason for silence**

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

**If you believe that the someone is in immediate danger or the matter is urgent.**

Report your suspicions immediately to the Police, Social Services or the NSPCC.

In an extreme case, the person may require urgent medical help. Call the appropriate Emergency Services or take them to the nearest Accident & Emergency Department and tell the staff of your suspicions.

Contact the Parish Safeguarding Representative who will inform the Diocesan Safeguarding Protection Officer.

**When there is a suspicion of sexual or serious physical abuse but with no immediate danger** to the child, young person or vulnerable adult, always inform the Parish Safeguarding Representative.

Do so immediately and do not delay.

Under normal circumstances they will liaise with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer. Social Services or the Police will then be informed.

If any other form of abuse is suspected, inform the Parish Safeguarding Representative who will advise or take appropriate action. If the concern is about poor parenting, discuss the matter with the Parish Safeguarding Representative. It may be necessary to encourage the parent/guardian to seek help from the Social Services Department.

**When an adult expresses concern.**

Listen carefully without making any judgement or asking leading questions. The personal cost to someone making a complaint, or expressing a concern, may be high.

They may be upset, angry or confused. Give them as much time and encouragement as necessary but make it clear that it may have to be referred to the appropriate authority. Offer to accompany them to talk with the Parish Safeguarding Representative or the appropriate authority. If they are unwilling to do so, you must take the necessary action yourself.

**If an adult confides in you that they were abused as a child.**

The same guidelines as above apply. Remember, the alleged abuser could still be in a position to harm others.

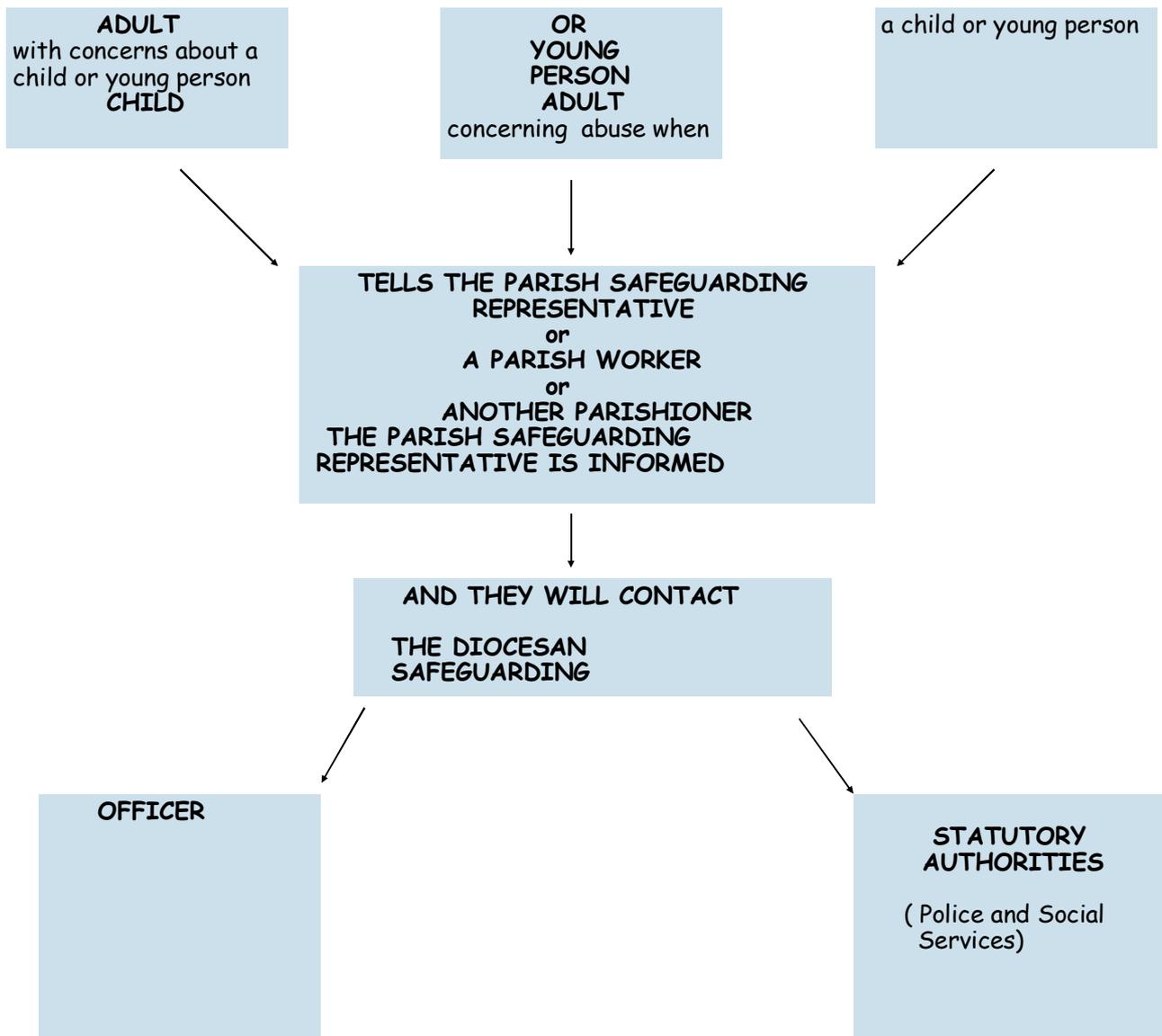
*Do not discuss the matter with anyone else. When sexual or serious physical abuse is involved under NO circumstances should you inform the accused person OR any member of their family.*

*NOR should you disclose any information to the parents or other family members of the child or young person who may have been abused.*

*Leave this to the statutory authorities Failure to comply with this may compromise any investigation.*



The chart below illustrates the normal process in Our Lady Immaculate Parish when a child, young person or adult discloses concern about abuse. Whenever possible, this process will be followed strictly. In an emergency, when the person is in immediate danger or the matter is urgent, and in some other special circumstances, it will be necessary to by-pass certain steps of the structure. In such a case, report *immediately* to the Police or Social Services, then contact the Parish Safeguarding Representative who will inform the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.



Social Services Departments have a duty under **Section 47 of the Children Act 1989**, to investigate "*where there is a reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm*".

**SEE APPENDIX FOR KEY CONTACTS AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

## APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

- \* If at any time Our Lady Immaculate Parish has **full or part-time employees** (including all priests, deacons and religious sisters) working, or in regular contact with identified groups of children, young people or vulnerable adults, such a person will be subject to the full range of checks available at the time, including the Criminal Records Bureau.
- \* All those undertaking a particular ministry within the church (**volunteers and occasional helpers**) where contact with children and young people is involved, will be subject to the full range of checks available at the time, including the Criminal Records Bureau.
- \* A simple Job Description may be desirable to cover the role.
- \* The Parish Safeguarding Representative, together with the Parish Priest, will need to be satisfied, in some cases by formal interview, that the person has the necessary personality and integrity for the particular work. This is especially important if the person is new to the parish.
- \* The Parish Safeguarding Representative will be responsible for this procedure and ensure the confidentiality of the information given.
- \* At least two references will be taken up. They will specifically ask about the person's ability and experience with children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- \* Each new worker in this field should have a probationary period of three months, at the end of which their position will be ratified if all checks have been completed satisfactorily.

Under **NO** circumstances should a person found guilty of any offences against children have any further access to them. Research has shown that there is a strong likelihood of re-offending in perpetrators of sexual abuse against children and that therefore **Section 1 offenders** (*those convicted of offences against children*) should not be allowed to work with children in any situation.

In accordance with the **PARAMOUNTCY PRINCIPLE**, the same exclusion must also apply where there is any reasonable cause to believe an adult has committed offences against children even if not convicted by a criminal court.



If it is known that an ex-offender attends Our Lady Immaculate Church or is otherwise seeking to be involved; the Parish Priest and Safeguarding Representative will discuss this with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer. They will work together in deciding appropriate safeguards.

Whenever help and support is offered to the offender, the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults must always come first.



## CHECK-LIST FOR PARISH GROUPS

( From the Archdiocese of Southwark, *Child Protection : Parish Guidelines for Good Practice.* See also *Parish Code of Behaviour* )

- ⇒ Everyone must complete all the necessary personal details and declaration forms currently required
- ⇒ All new volunteers will have a trial period of three months, at the end of which, both parties review the situation.
- ⇒ No volunteer will have unsupervised access until the completion of all checks and references have been taken up.
- ⇒ All leaders and volunteers have access to a copy of the Diocesan Guidelines ( held in the Presbytery ) and should know what to do in the case of alleged or suspected abuse.
- ⇒ Inexperienced volunteers will benefit from clear guidance and supervision from group leaders.
- ⇒ A register must be kept and be available at all group meetings. As well as recording the names of the children, young people and adults present, it should also include up-to-date information on the contact numbers for parents/guardians. It should also include specific medical information on the child or young person; permission to act on the basis of '*in loco parentis*' and any necessary doctor's name, address and telephone number.
- ⇒ Leaders must ensure that there is adequate insurance cover to cover all activities on and off the premises.
- ⇒ For any activity away from the normal meeting place, leaders must obtain a signed consent form. [ N.B. *The Children Act 1989 states that consent has to be from BOTH parents. All 'reasonable steps' must be taken to ensure that this happens.* ]
- ⇒ Details of activities off premises must be left with someone in the Parish, including contact numbers. A mobile phone should be available to the group in case of emergencies.
- ⇒ There should be access on the premises to a telephone, a First Aid Kit, and an Accident Book.
- ⇒ The location of the Fire extinguishers and Emergency Exits should be noted at all meetings.
- ⇒ Children with infectious diseases should not attend parish groups.
- ⇒ Children must not be allowed to leave the premises unsupervised and must remain until collected by their parent/guardian.
- ⇒ Our Lady Immaculate Parish has a *No Smoking* Policy for all premises on the site. No smoking should be allowed in areas where there are children.

## THE GOVERNMENT'S "SAFE FROM HARM" GUIDELINES

### APPENDIX 1

- ◆ Adopt a Policy Statement on Safeguarding the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults
- ◆ Plan the work of the organisation so as to minimise situations where the abuse may occur.
- ◆ Introduce a system whereby children, young people and vulnerable adults may talk to an independent person.
- ◆ Apply agreed procedures for protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults to all paid staff and volunteers. They should all be treated as job applicants for any position involving children and young people.
- ◆ References must be gained from persons who have knowledge of the applicant's paid or voluntary work with children, young people or vulnerable adults. The applicant's experience of working or contact with these groups should be explored at interview before appointment.
- ◆ Ensure that all paid staff and volunteers have clear roles.
- ◆ Use supervision as a means of protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- ◆ Find out if the applicant has convictions for criminal offences against children, young people or vulnerable adults
- ◆ Make paid or voluntary appointments conditional upon the successful completion of a probationary period.
- ◆ Issue guidelines on how to deal with disclosure of abuse.



## SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS GUIDELINES

### APPENDIX 2

**All people, no matter where they live or what their circumstances, are entitled to a life free from exploitation and abuse. Adults are autonomous, they make their own decisions.**

Self determination must guide Adult Protection activities wherever possible. Some adults will be making decisions under duress and will need extra support. Others will not have the mental capacity to make informed decisions about their own protection; they need to have as much choice as possible within the principle of the duty of care.

- \* All adults are entitled to access the criminal justice system; subject to the mental capacity of the adult to consent, the seriousness of the suspected offence and the wishes of the adult concerned. The police should be called immediately if it is believed that a crime has been committed.
- \* Adults need to be made aware of their rights, and how to get help if they are being abused. Any adult disclosing abuse must be listened to, taken seriously and believed, unless there is a good, substantiated reason that disproves what they are saying.
- \* The vulnerable adult, and their protection needs, should be at the centre of any investigation. Interventions to protect must, wherever possible, follow principles of adult self-determination, consent and minimal intervention needed to protect the vulnerable adult.
- \* Abuse occurs when one person by doing, or failing to do something they should, causes harm or distress. The person responsible can be anyone in a position of trust. This includes care/support workers, family, friends and neighbours or staff of an organisation (both statutory and independent sector). It can also mean casual callers to the vulnerable person.

**Physical** - The non-accidental infliction of physical force that results in bodily injury, pain or impairment - this could include being hit, slapped pushed, kicked, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate care and treatment.

**Sexual** Direct or indirect involvement in sexual activity without consent - this can include rape, sexual assault or sexual relationships to which the vulnerable adult is either unwilling or unable to agree to. Consent may not be given because:

- \* A person has capacity and does not want to give it
- \* A person lacks capacity and is therefore unable to give it
- \* A person feels coerced into activity because the other person is in a position of trust, power or authority

**Emotional/psychological** - including being made to feel abandoned, threatened, blamed, or humiliated. This can



adultabuse...

it is **everyone's** responsibility to report abuse of vulnerable adults



**SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS GUIDELINES**

include coercion, harassment, verbal abuse isolation or withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

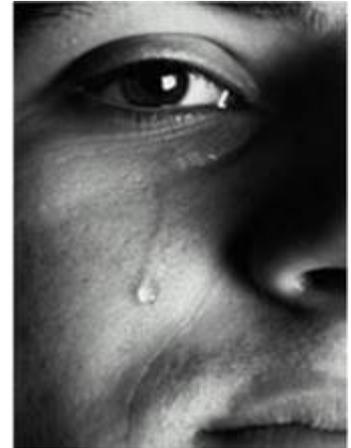
**Financial or material** - including theft, fraud, exploitation or the misuse of property, money or belongings.

**Neglect and acts of omission** - including the failure to provide health or social care and withholding the necessities of life including medication, adequate food and heating. This also includes the failure to intervene in behaviour which is dangerous to the vulnerable adult or to others.

**Wilful neglect and ill treatment** - is a Criminal Offence under the Mental Capacity Act 2005

**Discriminatory** - It is the exploitation of a person's vulnerability, resulting in repeated or pervasive treatment of an individual. E.g. behaviour or words that are racist, sexist, based on someone's sexual orientation, disability, age, religion or belief. It can also be harassment or slurs, or similar treatment.

**Institutional abuse** - repeated, systematic practices within an institution or regime of "care" which cause harm, deprive people of their right, neglect peoples wellbeing and/or take advantage of their vulnerability or lack of capacity. This may include environments which convey a perpetual and/or repeated subjective sense of a lack of safety amongst users and/or carers.



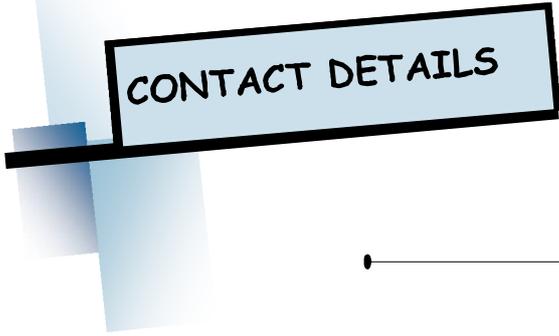

**OUR LADY IMMACULATE  
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**CONTACT DETAILS**

**Catholic Office for the Protection of Children and  
Vulnerable Adults (COPCA) 020 7630 8220**

**Archbishop's Representative and Episcopal Vicar for  
Safeguarding Fr Graham Preston**  
(Safeguarding Office, St Gabriel's House,  
Westminster Bridge Road, SE1 7FQ )

**Diocesan Safeguarding Officer**

Helen Sheppard 020 7261 1606  
Fax 020 7261 1433  
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Safeguarding Office [office@sgo-rcdsouthwark.org](mailto:office@sgo-rcdsouthwark.org)

**Parish Safeguarding Representative 020 8399 9550**

Monica Tett E-mail [Meryan46@aol.com](mailto:Meryan46@aol.com)  
Kate Kelk E-mail [Kate@kelky.co.uk](mailto:Kate@kelky.co.uk)

**Police**

In an Emergency 999  
Local Police Safeguarding Unit 020 8547 1212

**RBK Social Services Dept**

Out of Hours Duty Social Services 020 8547 5757

**CHILDLINE (24hr FREEPHONE) 0800 1111**

**NSPCC (24 hr Helpline)  
5000**

**0808 800**

( See website [www.olionline.co.uk](http://www.olionline.co.uk) under Safeguarding for more  
contact information and details)

