

Safeguarding Guidelines for Spiritual Directors

Order of Discalced Carmelites, UK



Introduction

As Spiritual Directors within the Carmelite Tradition, you will be journeying with others who seek to deepen and grow in their personal relationship with God, as expressed in the life of the Carmelite saints and deriving principles from Carmelite spirituality for the growth and flourishing of their spiritual life.

At the heart of this spirituality is a prayerful listening and response to the God who befriends us and an expression of this experience through a life of contemplative awareness and friendship with one another.

As Carmelites we wish to ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone, so there is a complete synergy between the sacred and safety. This is why only those who have completed our courses, and agreed to abide by our safeguarding policy will be accepted on our accredited list of Spiritual Directors.

For those seeking Spiritual Direction we provide a sacred and secure space where Directees are accompanied on their own unique spiritual journey. It gives them a regular time and place of complete confidentiality to explore the movements of the spirit in the everyday experience of their life.

While Spiritual Direction conversations would normally be held in confidence, where a disclosure is made that could cause a child or adult to be at risk of significant harm, then it is necessary to seek advice and guidance from our Safeguarding Lead and to keep a written record of any action taken.

Such situations include:

- Past abuse as a child where the perpetrator still has contact with children or adults at risk of harm.
- A person who may have committed abuse or fearful that they have the propensity to harm.
- A person currently experiencing abuse, witnessing it, or indirectly involved.
- A person who may view or download indecent images of children or extreme abuse.

Action to Take

“It is the policy of the Catholic Church in England and Wales to report all allegations of abuse to statutory authorities, regardless of whether the abuse occurred recently or in the past, or whether the accused person is living or deceased.”

Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency

It is not the role of the Spiritual Directors to ‘investigate’ the matter; instead, it is important to seek advice. In the event of a safeguarding matter arising, the Directee should keep a written record of the action taken.

As a protection for Spiritual Directors, the CACS recommends that at the start of all Spiritual Direction relationships either:

1. A written agreement is signed stating that while meetings are confidential, any matters relating to the protection of children or adults will be referred to the CACS Safeguarding Lead or statutory agencies i.e., Police or Social Care, or
2. A signed record is kept which states that these matters have been explained and discussed with the Directee.

Actions to take when there is a suspicion or allegation of abuse

At CACS we will support all our Spiritual Directors when faced with any concern regarding an adult or a child. A copy of the CACS Safeguarding Policy will be made available to all SD’s along with a flow chart outlining the action to take.

Where there is a suspicion or disclosure of abuse, then the Safeguarding Lead should be contacted immediately: If you are working outside of England, you should still contact Fr Liam and the safeguarding lead for your parish, the diocese or the retreat centre or other community you are working for.

Fr Liam Finnerty OCD
Mobile number: +44 7510 175621
Email: safeguarding.cacs@carmelite.org.uk

The Safeguarding Lead can seek advice from:

The Religious Life Safeguarding Service
Telephone: 0151 5562311
Email: safeguarding@religioussafeguarding.org

Concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a child or adult outside of the UK

We recognise that our Spiritual Directors operate globally, and that child and adult protection procedures are different in countries; though the principles remain the same, where a safeguarding matter is raised outside of the UK then a report should be made to Fr Liam Finnerty who will offer support by referring to the detailed guidelines for an incident outside of the UK.

Mandatory Reporting

It is the policy of the Catholic Church in England and Wales to report all allegations of abuse to statutory authorities, regardless of whether the abuse occurred recently or in the past, or whether the accused person is living or deceased. Spiritual Directors must refer allegations directly to the Safeguarding Lead or directly to the police, if appropriate.

In many jurisdictions, outside of England, there is a legal requirement to report suspicions or allegations of abuse to the civil authorities, for all those deemed to be mandated reporters. Please seek advice locally as to whether you have a legal duty to report and seek advice from the CACS Safeguarding Lead when faced with such a safeguarding situation.

Boundaries

The relationship between a Spiritual Director and a Directee is one that should be summarised as fruitful, nurturing, and safe. It is also one where there is a natural power imbalance. As such it is important that Spiritual Directors maintain a professional boundary.

This requires that Spiritual Directors:

- Recognise the power differential.
- Don't stray into providing counselling.
- Have an understanding of transference and countertransference.
- Recognise their own vulnerabilities.
- Engage in regular supervision.

Understanding Spiritual Abuse

“Spiritual abuse in the Catholic context is the misuse of spiritual authority that controls the victim to the point that the abuser, taking the place of God, obstructs or nullifies the victim’s spiritual freedom. This type of abuse is perpetrated by an individual or a system supported by the Church as trustworthy. Hence, it always has an ecclesial dimension. This kind of abuse can harm the person at the spiritual, psychological and physical levels” (Fernández, 2022).

At its simplest, spiritual abuse is the misuse of spiritual power. An example would be where a Spiritual Director mechanically imposes as the will of God his/her rigid understanding of the moral teachings of the Church, even with good will, they are misusing their spiritual authority and can cause harm to their Directee.

Due to the nature of Spiritual Direction, it is vitally important that Spiritual Directors have an understanding of spiritual abuse and harm.

The Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) 8 Standards

The eight safeguarding standards from the CSSA are below and form the basis of our procedures, mirroring the safeguarding expectations found in *'vos estis lux mundi'* (Apostolic Letter issued Motu Proprio by the Supreme Pontiff FRANCIS, 2019)

The following eight safeguarding stands from the CSSA inform all our work to ensure everyone is kept safe and well. In reference to the Church Body, safeguarding takes a 'One Church' approach and includes Religious Life groups and all other religious institutions and groups within the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

The eight standards lay out what the CSSA expects in terms of level of safeguarding practice in church bodies (that is, dioceses and religious life groups). Our implementation plan demonstrates how we aim to meet these standards. We will ensure that effective safeguarding is embedded in the Church body's leadership, governance, ministry, and culture.

Standard 1: Embed Safeguarding in The Church Body's Leadership, Governance, Ministry and Culture	Standard 2: Communicate the Church's Safeguarding Message
Standard 3: Engage with and Care for Those Who Report Having Been Harmed	Standard 4: Effectively Manage Allegations and Concerns
Standard 5: Manage and Support Subjects of Allegations and Concerns	Standard 6: Implement Robust Human Resource Management
Standard 7: Provide and Access Training and Support for Safeguarding	Standard 8: Quality Assure Compliance to Continuously Improve Practice

Spiritual Directors (UK based) Safeguarding Flowchart

Allegation of harm of a child or adult at risk whilst providing Spiritual Direction, which may included:

- ❖ inappropriate behaviour
- ❖ possible harm caused to a child or adult at risk, or
- ❖ possible crime committed against a child or adult at risk



- Listen the Directee
- Avoid expressing disbelief or colluding
- Tell them what you will do next and keep them updated
- Do not promise confidentiality but do say that their wishes should be considered by all professionals
- Information must only be shared on a need to know basis



Quick Contacts

Safeguarding Lead
Fr Liam Finnerty OCD
+447510175621
Safeguarding.cacs@carmelite.org.uk

RLSS
0151 5562311
safeguarding@religioussafeguarding.org

CSSA
020 7901 1920
admin@catholicsafeguarding.org.uk

Spiritual Directors (Non-UK based) Safeguarding Flowchart

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+447510175621
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