CENTRE FOR APPLIED CARMELITE SPIRITUALITY

Safeguarding & **Student Protection Handbook**

"The human person is of such magnificent beauty and marvellous capacity."

— St Teresa of Ávila

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Status	Approved on 24 July 2026
Owner	CACS Safeguarding Committee, chaired by the Director of CACS
Safeguarding leads	Kate Keefe · Fr Liam Finnerty, OCD · Fr Clement Obiorah, OCD · Fr Luke Onwe, OCD (Safeguarding Lead in SEM)
Report a concern	safe@cacs.org.uk · 07300 319055
Effective / review	24 July 2026 · reviewed annually

SECTION 1

A Message of **Commitment** from the Director

Here at the Centre for Applied Carmelite Spirituality (CACS), safeguarding is a core part of our mission to always be a safe and sacred community.

Carmelite spirituality is founded on a deep thirst for spiritual intimacy and friendship, recognising the divine indwelling in every single person. Because of this, we see every encounter as a kind of theophany — a manifestation of God — that must be respected and safeguarded. The dignity and sacredness of each person is paramount.

For us, safeguarding work takes many dimensions. It is not just a policy on a shelf or a box-ticking exercise. Instead, we are committed to promoting a genuine spirituality of care. As an international community of friars, laity, experts and volunteers, this work is challenging and demanding. But it is a journey we are committed to — a journey towards creating a sacred and safe place for spiritual growth, formation and wholeness for everyone.

As a registered affiliate of the CSSA, our safeguarding practices align with the eight national Safeguarding Standards, the national policies and associated best practice guidance for the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Supported by our safeguarding team, we ensure that all concerns of a safeguarding nature are responded to promptly. Our approach is one of zero tolerance; where an allegation of abuse is made against those working in the name of the Church, regardless of whether the allegation relates to their behaviour in their role within the Church or another setting, we will report this to the statutory authorities. This includes allegations where the identified perpetrator is deceased.

We will liaise openly with the relevant statutory authorities to support investigations. We seek to respond sensitively and compassionately to those in need, listening and learning from the voices of victims and survivors.

Fr Alexander Ezechukwu, OCD
Director of CACS, Chair of CACS Safeguarding Committee

Creating sacred and safe spaces where that lived capacity is awakened, nurtured and protected.

SECTION 2

Our Safeguarding Commitment and the **Eight CSSA Standards**

CACS's ministry occurs both onsite at the Oxford Carmelite Priory and across the globe via the internet. All members of CACS and the Oxford Priory are committed to the eight Catholic Safeguarding Standards. We start from the principle that each person is made in the image of God, and has a right to expect the highest level of protection, love, encouragement and respect. Our safeguarding policy is built around these eight standards:

- **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 (Respondents).
- **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.

The full Safeguarding Policy, setting out how CACS meets each standard, is available as a standalone document (see Section 9).

SECTION 3

Meet the **Safeguarding Team**

All concerns must be brought to a safeguarding lead. Never delay in acting.

Contact the safeguarding team:
safe@cacs.org.uk · 07300 319055

Fr Alex Ezechukwu, OCD	Director of CACS · Chair of the Safeguarding Committee
Kate Keefe	Safeguarding Lead · Lead of safeguarding development
Fr Liam Finnerty, OCD	Safeguarding Lead · In-house pastoral & training lead
Fr Clement Obiorah, OCD	Safeguarding Lead · DBS lead · Director of safeguarding communications
Fr Luke Onwe, OCD	Deputy Director (St Mary's liaison & Link Tutor) · Director of SEM · Safeguarding lead in SEM
Judy Bartlett	Senior Administrator · Safeguarding data lead · Safer-recruitment lead
Christie Moreton	SDFP Administrator · DBS deputy
Thelma Rogers	Safeguarding disability and diversity lead
Alma Castro	SDFP Alumni Committee link
Dr Kathleen Kelly	Leads the committee's annual scrutiny of casework
Simon Bass	Consultant
Dr Barry O'Sullivan	Consultant

SECTION 4

Code of **Conduct**

The Discalced Carmelite Code of Conduct for our life and ministry at CACS.

Carmelite spirituality begins with a vision: every human person is a dwelling place of God. Saint Teresa of Ávila saw in the soul a castle of great beauty, radiant at its centre with the presence of the Trinity. Saint John of the Cross recognised in every person a capacity for union with God that no earthly love can exhaust. When we receive a retreatant, accompany a pilgrim, support the learning of a student or serve any who come to us, we encounter a soul already held in the friendship of God — and we are bound to meet them as such.

Our Commitments

The Discalced Carmelite Friars and all who minister in the name of CACS undertake to:

- **Receive each person with reverence** — recognising in them a soul beloved of God on a journey that ultimately belongs to the Holy Spirit.
- **Honour the integrity of the person** — offering ministry in a manner that is transparent and accountable, avoiding situations of undue privacy.
- **Honour all the boundaries** proper to the pastoral relationship, which is a sacred trust and never a space for control or over-familiarity.
- **Guard the vulnerable with particular care** — never ministering alone to a minor or vulnerable adult without another responsible adult present or nearby.
- **Exercise prudence in all communication** — whether in person, online or in writing, reflecting always the dignity of those we serve.
- **Refuse what degrades** — never acting in any way that shames, humiliates, coerces or manipulates. What cannot be done in the light cannot be done in the name of Carmel.
- **Remain accountable** — to our community, to those who lead CACS, and to the Church's safeguarding structures.

Saint Teresa, writing to her sisters in *The Way of Perfection*, calls true friendship the love that seeks nothing for itself but desires above all to lead the beloved closer to God (4:6). This is the spirit in which we make these commitments as an act of love — for those we serve, for the Order we represent, and for the God who first loved us. Those who come to CACS have the right to expect this to be honoured. Where concerns arise, we ask that they be brought to the safeguarding leads.

SECTION 5

Our Commitment to **Survivors**

If you have been wounded by the Church — by a priest, a religious, a minister or by the institution itself — we receive you with reverence. We believe you. We are sorry. What was done to you was wrong, and it will be met here with truth.

A Spirituality of Care

Carmelite spirituality holds that every person is a dwelling place of God — a dignity no harm can reach. Teresa of Ávila, John of the Cross and Blessed Francisco Palau each knew suffering at the Church's hands, and each found God present within it, not beyond it. They give us permission to name what has gone wrong without abandoning what remains true. We do not ask survivors to resolve these tensions quickly, or at all. We do not ask for forgiveness on a timeline. We do not ask anyone to return to the institution that harmed them. We ask only that they know they are welcome here, exactly as they are.

Our Commitments

CACS and all who minister in its name undertake:

- **To believe you** — without requiring proof before you are heard, and without minimising what you have experienced.
- **To receive you with reverence** — recognising in you a soul already held in the friendship of God, on a journey that belongs ultimately to the Holy Spirit.
- **To accompany without fixing** — sitting with the reality of your experience rather than rushing towards resolution, explanation or the rehabilitation of the Church's reputation.
- **To guard your privacy** — handling all disclosures with the utmost confidentiality, within the limits required by law and our safeguarding obligations, which we will always explain to you.
- **To refer to statutory authorities where required** — and to tell you in advance when that step must be taken, so that nothing happens without your knowledge.
- **To offer independent support** — including referral to external agencies and consideration of support on a case-by-case basis.
- **To remain accountable** — to our safeguarding committee, to the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency, and to those we serve.

"Where there is no love, put love — and you will find love."

— St John of the Cross

SECTION 6

Harassment and **Sexual Misconduct** Policy

This is CACS's single comprehensive source of information on the policies and procedures relating to harassment and sexual misconduct, as required by Office for Students (OfS) Condition E6. It gives specific effect, in the student context, to the commitments made earlier in this handbook, and sits alongside CACS's Safeguarding Policy and its obligations to the CSSA.

6.1 Purpose and scope

Harassment and sexual misconduct are a betrayal of the trust at the heart of our ministry. CACS holds a position of zero tolerance towards them in every form. OfS Condition E6 came into force on 1 August 2025 and applies to higher education provided by, or on behalf of, a registered provider. CACS delivers the Spiritual Direction Formation Programme (SDFP), whose Postgraduate Diploma is validated by St Mary's University, Twickenham; students studying for the St Mary's award are within its scope, and CACS supports the University in meeting the condition.

This policy applies to conduct connected with study, work, ministry or activity at CACS — in person at any centre, during residential intensives, online, or in any other connected setting — and to conduct between any members of our community, including between students. Where a person is registered for a St Mary's award, the University's own policies and procedures also apply, and this policy signposts them.

6.2 What we mean

These definitions set the threshold for the conduct the law and the University require us to address; they are not the whole of our understanding of human sexuality. As a Catholic and Carmelite community we hold the body and sexuality to be goods of great dignity, and the absence of consent is never the only thing that can make conduct wrong. Our positive expectations — including chastity appropriate to one's state of life and the boundaries proper to formation and spiritual direction — are set out in the Code of Conduct (Section 4).

Harassment
Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic, or of a sexual nature, that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Sexual misconduct
Any unwanted or attempted conduct of a sexual nature, including sexual harassment; sexual assault; coercion or pressure to engage in sexual activity; sharing private sexual images without consent; and the abuse of a position of power, trust or spiritual authority for sexual purposes.

Consent

In law, present only where a person agrees by choice and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice; it cannot be assumed, cannot be given where a person is incapacitated, and can be withdrawn at any time. Its absence makes sexual conduct a grave wrong; its presence does not of itself make conduct good or acceptable within our community, whose expectations rest on the fuller Christian vision set out in the Code of Conduct.

Abuse of power

The misuse of authority, trust or influence — including the pastoral and formational authority inherent in teaching, accompaniment and spiritual direction — to coerce, manipulate or exploit another person.

6.3 The steps we take to protect students

- Maintaining and communicating this policy as a single, accessible source, and embedding it in student induction and staff formation.
- Setting clear expectations through the Code of Conduct (Section 4).
- Requiring safeguarding training and appropriate DBS (or local equivalent) checks for all who work with students, through our Safer Recruitment and DBS policies.
- Providing training and information for students early in their studies (6.7).
- Consulting students, and where appropriate the SDFP student body and Alumni Committee link, on the appropriateness of our measures.
- Reviewing this policy at least annually and reporting on its operation to St Mary's through the Joint Management Board.

6.4 Intimate personal relationships between staff and students

A relationship between a member of staff, faculty or a spiritual director and a student they teach, supervise, direct or assess carries an inherent imbalance of power and a serious risk of conflict of interest and abuse of trust — most gravely in spiritual direction. CACS therefore adopts the following position (to be confirmed on approval):

- A member of staff, faculty or spiritual director must not enter into, or continue, an intimate personal relationship with a CACS student over whom they hold, or could reasonably be expected to hold, a position of trust, authority or influence.
- Any pre-existing relationship, or any risk of one arising, must be disclosed in confidence to a safeguarding lead or the Director, so that direction, supervision or assessment arrangements can be changed to remove the conflict of interest.
- Arrangements made to manage such a situation must never disadvantage the student academically, pastorally or spiritually.

6.5 Freedom of speech and academic freedom

CACS is committed to freedom of speech within the law, to academic freedom, and to the free and faithful expression of religious belief. This policy is not intended to prevent lawful and robust teaching, discussion, debate or scholarship, and conduct does not amount to harassment merely because it is challenging, critical or unwelcome. It is concerned with the unlawful and unwanted conduct defined above, applied so as to honour both the dignity of the person and the freedom of lawful expression.

6.6 Reporting, response and support

Anyone who experiences or witnesses harassment or sexual misconduct is encouraged to come forward, through the routes set out in Section 7. Reports are acknowledged promptly and handled fairly, in line with the principles of our Complaints Policy. For students on the St Mary's award, the University's investigation, decision-making and appeals procedures apply, and CACS supports their operation.

Support is available — without a person having first to make a formal report — to anyone who wishes to make an allegation, who has experienced harassment or sexual misconduct, or who is an actual or alleged perpetrator and is entitled to fair treatment. This may include pastoral accompaniment, referral to counselling and external specialist services (Section 7), and, for students, reasonable academic adjustments. Our Commitment to Survivors (Section 5) sets the spirit of this care.

6.7 Training

Students studying for a St Mary's award complete training on harassment and sexual misconduct early in their studies, delivered through CACS's virtual learning environment using materials provided by St Mary's University, including education on sexual consent — helping students recognise what does and does not constitute freely given consent, so as to identify and prevent non-consensual conduct and sexual violence — and guidance for potential witnesses. Such education concerns the recognition and prevention of harm; it is not a statement of CACS's understanding of human sexuality, which is set out in the Code of Conduct (Section 4). CACS reviews the material it is asked to deliver to ensure it can be presented consistently with its Catholic ethos. Completion is monitored and reported to St Mary's, with records made available to the designated Link Tutor. Staff, faculty and spiritual directors receive safeguarding and professional-boundaries training, led by our in-house pastoral and training lead, and its effectiveness is evaluated under the annual scrutiny of the Safeguarding Committee.

6.8 Confidentiality and non-disclosure agreements

Reports are handled with appropriate confidentiality, in line with our Data Handling & Record-Keeping Policy. CACS does not, and will not, use non-disclosure agreements or any other confidentiality provision to prevent or discourage a person from disclosing an allegation of harassment or sexual misconduct, and no student will be restricted, through any formal or informal agreement, from speaking about such an allegation.

SECTION 7

How to Report a **Concern**

All concerns must be brought to a safeguarding lead. Never delay in acting. If you cannot reach a CACS safeguarding lead, you can contact the safeguarding lead for the OCD.

Ways to report

In person or by email — to any safeguarding lead (Kate Keefe, Fr Liam Finnerty, OCD, or Fr Clement Obiorah, OCD) at safe@cacs.org.uk or 07300 319055.

Online — through the CACS website 'Report a Concern' form, featured as Section G of the safeguarding page.

Scan QR code to access link

CACS safeguarding page and 'Report a Concern' form: cacs.org.uk/safeguarding

Anonymously — using the anonymous option on the CACS 'Report a Concern' form. You will be given a reference code and can follow up by emailing safe@cacs.org.uk and quoting it. Anonymity may limit the action we can take, and we will always be honest with you about that.

Students on the St Mary's award — may also use St Mary's University's Report and Support service (stmarys.ac.uk/report), which offers named and anonymous reporting.

Scan QR code to access link
St Mary's University Report and Support:
stmarys.ac.uk/report

If someone is in immediate danger

Call the police on **999**, or contact social services or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Then inform a safeguarding lead.

In all cases: listen to and reassure the person; avoid expressing disbelief; explain what you will do next; do not promise confidentiality, but say their wishes will be considered; share information only on a need-to-know basis; take notes and pass them to a safeguarding lead within 24 hours. A record will be kept, and the safeguarding lead will provide updates where necessary.

Key contacts

CACS Safeguarding
safe@cacs.org.uk · 07300 319055

OCD Safeguarding (Anglo-Irish Province)
Fr Thaddeus Ekuma, OCD · safeguarding@carmelite.org.uk · +44 7438 916700

Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS)
0151 556 2311 · safeguarding@religioussafeguarding.org

Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA)
020 7901 1920 · admin@catholicsafeguarding.org.uk

LADO (Oxfordshire)
01865 810603 · lado.safeguardingchildren@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Police
999 (emergency) or 101

External support for those affected

The services below are most directly relevant to harassment and sexual misconduct; the full CACS 'Support Organisations for Survivors in the UK' list is maintained by the Safeguarding Team and available on the CACS website.

Safe Spaces
free, independent support for anyone abused in a Church context. 0300 303 1056

Rape Crisis England & Wales
sexual violence, assault and harassment. 0808 500 2222 (24/7)

MACSAS
those sexually abused by ministers or clergy. 08088 010340

NAPAC
adult survivors of childhood abuse. 0808 801 0331

Galop
LGBT+ people experiencing abuse or violence. 0800 999 5428

Replenished
abuse and trauma in a religious context. 07746 153703

SECTION 8

Complaints and **Whistleblowing** in Brief

Making a complaint

For minor issues, we encourage you to speak directly to the staff member involved or the programme coordinator; many concerns are resolved informally. For a formal complaint, complete the complaints template on our website, or write to us, including your name and contact details, a clear description of the complaint, relevant details (dates and names), and any supporting evidence.

Written complaints are acknowledged within five business days by a member of the safeguarding personnel, investigated fairly and impartially, and the outcome communicated within thirty business days. If you are not satisfied, you may appeal in writing within fourteen days; the appeal is reviewed by a designated senior staff member not involved in the original complaint.

Complaints contact — complaints@cacs.org.uk · The Safeguarding Team, Carmelite Priory, Boars Hill, Oxford OX1 5HB. The full Complaints Policy is available as a standalone document.

Whistleblowing

Anyone who works within CACS — employee, office holder or volunteer — who has a serious concern about safeguarding practice or malpractice is encouraged to raise it without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. It is recognised that some cases will proceed on a confidential basis. CACS will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation, including informal pressures, and will take appropriate action to protect those who raise a concern in good faith. Concerns may be raised with the Safeguarding Team at safe@cacs.org.uk. The full Whistleblowing Policy is available as a standalone document.

SECTION 9

Related CACS **Policies**

The following operational policies sit behind this handbook and are maintained as standalone documents. Together with this handbook they form CACS's complete safeguarding and student-protection framework.

- Safeguarding Policy (built on the eight CSSA Standards) and Referral Chart
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- DBS and Police Clearance Policy
- Handling of Disclosure Information Policy
- Data Handling and Record-Keeping Policy
- International Safeguarding Policy
- Social Media and Internet Use Policy
- Letters of Endorsement Policy
- Complaints Policy · Whistleblowing Policy (summarised in Section 8)
- For students on the St Mary's award: St Mary's University harassment and sexual misconduct policy and reporting route · OfS Condition E6

Those who come to CACS have the right to expect this to be honoured. Where concerns arise, please bring them to our safeguarding leads.

Report a Concern

CACS Safeguarding Team

Kate Keefe · Fr Liam Finnerty, OCD · Fr Clement Obiorah, OCD · Fr Luke Onwe, OCD

Email: safe@cacs.org.uk · Tel: 07300 319055

OCD Safeguarding (Anglo-Irish Province)

Fr Thaddeus Ekuma, OCD

Email: safeguarding@carmelite.org.uk · Tel: +44 7438 916700

Complaints

complaints@cacs.org.uk

In an emergency, call 999.

Scan QR code to access link

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www.cacs.org.uk