Safeguarding **Handbook**

for spiritual directors and SDFP students



CACS

Creating a safe and sacred community

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Welcome **Message**



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.

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

The Carmelite Anglo-Irish Province Safeguarding **Policy Statement**

- It is the policy of the Discalced Carmelite Order Anglo-Irish Province to do everything in our power to safeguard the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk to whom we minister.

- We cherish and affirm each person as a gift from God with an inherent right to dignity of life and bodily integrity, which shall be respected, nurtured and protected by all. We strive to protect them from physical, sexual and emotional harm.

- Everyone in the Church has an obligation to ensure that the fundamental rights of all are respected.

- These guiding principles inform our Safeguarding Policy. This has been drawn up to ensure that we take every possible measure to prevent abuse. It aims to ensure that no personnel or volunteers engage in behaviour that could allow abuse or actions that could be misinterpreted by children, their families or other adults as constituting or leading to abuse to occur.

- Have a read of the safeguarding policies on the CACS website: *https://www.carmelite.uk.net/safeguarding*

Meet the **Safeguarding Team**



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



Fr Luke Onwe, OCD
Director of SEM
Safeguarding lead in SEM



Kate Keefe
Safeguarding lead 1
Lead of safeguarding development



Fr Liam Finnerty, OCD
Safeguarding lead 2
In-house pastoral & training lead



Fr Clement Obiorah, OCD
Safeguarding lead 3
DBS lead
Director of safeguarding communications



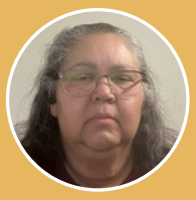
Judy Bartlett
Senior administrator at CACS
Safeguarding data lead
Safer recruitment lead



Christie Moreton
SDFP administrator
DBS deputy



Thelma Rogers
Safeguarding disability and diversity lead



Alma Castro
SDFP Alumni Committee link



Dr Kathleen Kelly
Leads committee's annual scrutiny of case work



Simon Bass
Consultant



Dr Barry O'Sullivan
Consultant

What Spiritual Directors Must Have in Place **Before Ministering**

- A CACS Level II Safeguarding Certificate as evidence that they have completed a comprehensive safeguarding course relevant to the ministry of the priory and their work at CACS.
- A DBS enhanced check ref adults and children, undertaken by Fr Clement, the DBS lead at CACS.
- If a spritual director or a student on the SDFP programme lives outside the UK, they must provide two ‘letters of endorsement’, which will act as the initial documentation used to verify their police record. After six months, we hope they will be able to complete a police check from their country of residence.
- For priests wishing to celebrate mass while a student on a CACS course, a celebrant card must be shown.

Who Are CACS Accountable to in Terms of Safeguarding?

As we are based in England, CACS is accountable to the following Church authorities:

Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA)
https://catholicsafeguarding.org.uk

The Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS)
https://religioussafeguarding.org

Additionally, CACS is accountable to secular authorities in the UK, which are not under the direction of the Catholic Church.

CACS is based in Oxford and must follow legislation and regulations on safeguarding provided by the UK government.

If any safeguarding case were to arise at CACS, the safeguarding lead (or deputy) would work alongside the local secular authorities, such as the Oxfordshire Local Authority, Thames Valley Police and other named agencies in the CACS safeguarding policy.

If a safeguarding issue were to arise for friars or laity working for CACS outside the jurisdiction of the UK government and the case could not be resolved by the CACS safeguarding lead (or deputy), they would contact the international desk at the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS). The RLSS would, in most instances, take over the case and work with the appropriate authorities in the particular region. The safeguarding lead would be kept informed as appropriate.

What You Need to Know About **DBS Checks**

What is a DBS check?

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are background checks carried out on individuals which detail all or some of their criminal history. DBS checks replaced the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks.

Who needs a DBS check?

Any remote volunteers or employees who on a frequent and intensive basis have direct access to, work with or volunteer with children and/or vulnerable adults need a DBS check.

Why is a DBS required, and what is the point of one?

The whole point of a DBS check is to reduce risk. Organisations have a legal duty to check people against the barred list if they are working with children or vulnerable people. All priests in England and Wales must have a DBS check and provide alternative police clearance until their DBS is processed. At the priory, this is referred to as ‘six months papers’, which the prior receives.

Specifics for friars

Friars visiting for an initial six-month period receive specific safeguarding guidance from the prior, the safeguarding development manager (Kate Keefe), and the safeguarding lead (Fr Liam).

Friars arriving from outside the UK are required to present ‘Celebrandi', which verify their status to act as a priest. They are also required to complete additional safeguarding courses at CACS to gain full safeguarding status.

Types of DBS checks

There are four types of DBS checks:

- Basic disclosure (checking for unspent convictions)
- Standard (checking for spent and unspent convictions)
- Enhanced (checking for spent and unspent convictions as well as checking local police info)
- Enhanced with Barred List (checking for spent and unspent convictions as well as checking local police info and barred lists for adults and children)

All SDFP applicants and spiritual directors must undertake an Enhanced with Barred List check.

DBS Application Process for SDFP Students and Spiritual Directors

Thinkific portal access

Christie Moreton, Academic Registrar, will then create a Thinkific course portal account for each friar and issue instructions on how to use it.

Beginning the DBS application

After being notified by Christie Moreton, Fr Clement organises DBS checks for SDFP applicants who are resident in Northern Ireland, England, Wales or Scotland.

Fr Clement will send an email with the following documents attached:

- A self-declaration form (Appendix 1)
- A copy of our Equal Opportunities and Handling of DBS Information policies (Appendix 2)

CACS is required by law to share these with you before completing your DBS.

Identity verification

Applicants must provide the documents below:

- Their passport.
- A bank statement or utility bill which has their address on it and is dated within the last three months.
- A provisional driving licence, which has their address and a photo.

Application submission

The application is completed and submitted to the DBS for processing through Fr Clement.

Safeguarding courses

It is a requirement that all SDFP students or those ministers in CACS undertake a Level II safeguarding course in England and Wales. This is a requirement by the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency. The CACS Level II Online Safeguarding Course will be on Thinkific for individuals to complete within their first month with CACS.

Laity resident in the priory undertaking ministries with CACS

The laity who are resident in the priory undertaking ministries within CACS will need to discuss the safeguarding processes they must undertake with Fr Liam and Kate Keefe (safeguarding leads). This will then be confirmed by the prior.

Safeguarding email addresses

safe@cacs.org.uk
DBSprocess@cacs.org.uk

How to **Report an Allegation of Abuse** in CACS

If an allegation is made in any situation described here, you must immediately refer it to one of the safeguarding leads (Fr Liam, Fr Clement or Kate Keefe):

- While you are working in any context for CACS.
- While in a CACS spiritual direction training group (either online or in person).
- While you are working as a volunteer spiritual director for CACS online or in person anywhere in the world.
- While you are working as a retreat guide for CACS.
- While attending Mass at the priory or at an intensive.
- While you are leading a prayer group for CACS.
- While you are leading/facilitating the spiritual direction course or any other CACS course.
- While you are meeting at the retreat house with members of the CACS community or outside groups who have booked the retreat house.

Contact details for the safeguarding leads can be found on the last page of this handbook.

Allegations of Abuse in the **Sacrament of Penance** and Spiritual Direction

The Catholic Seal of Confession is sacred. Anything told to a priest in the confessional cannot be shared outside of this, including abuse.

In spiritual direction, where the Seal of Confession is not applicable, abuse must be reported to the appropriate authorities.

The **Importance of the Covenant** When Ministering in Spiritual Direction

A covenant in spiritual direction is important because it establishes clear expectations and mutual commitments between the spiritual director and the directee.

It functions to:

- define the purpose of the relationship
- outline boundaries
- confirm confidentiality agreements
- agree on meeting frequency
- assign responsibilities.

This clarity fosters a safe, trusting environment where the directee or supervisee can be open and vulnerable, knowing there is a respectful, structured framework supporting their spiritual growth.

Additionally, it helps maintain the integrity and focus of the spiritual direction or supervision process. This can be put in writing, or you can at the beginning of your spiritual direction ministry speak this through with your directee and then make a note of this conversation with the date and what you shared.

Safeguarding for Individuals Who Are **Neurodivergent or Have a Disability**

Attention to neurodiversity and disability in spiritual direction and pastoral supervision is essential for fostering inclusive, compassionate and meaningful spiritual accompaniment. It highlights those amongst us who are dyslexic or have been diagnosed with ADHD or autism or another vulnerability. As we know from our safeguarding training, vulnerabilities signal that greater care might be needed.

For attention to be effective, we first need to become aware, and awareness for the neurodiverse and disabled people enables adaption, inclusion and a welcoming into our community of Carmelite Christian friendship in a safe and sacred way.

At CACS, we foster an atmosphere in which the spiritually accompanied are enabled to state plainly their needs and identity, thereby enriching the practice of spiritual care, and imaging a community rooted in the diversity of human experience.

By developing our community in this way, we challenge stereotypes and assumptions about disability and spirituality, allowing spiritual leaders to examine their biases, whilst attending to the rich spiritual lives of their directee or supervisee. These are often individuals with profound experiences of faith and connection to the divine, and their diversity essential in building the Kingdom in a safe and sacred way. This approach opens the heart of CACS to welcome all our brothers and sisters with their unique identities into community and sometimes into leadership roles.

Spiritual direction and pastoral supervision encompass the whole person: mind, body and spirit. Recognising neurodiversity and disability as integral to a person's identity allows a more comprehensive approach to spiritual care, one that respects and honours everyone's experiences.

Great care should be taken when establishing covenants to open a space for directees or supervisees to share their disability or neurodiversity, if they wish to do so. In response, we should adapt our approach and the environment in which we practice in welcome and friendship.

Support Groups and **Organisations**

General

Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA)
Website: https://www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk
(Sets safeguarding standards; can direct you to diocesan/religious order safeguarding contacts.)

Religious Life Safeguarding Service
Website: https://religioussafeguarding.org

Pope Francis' statement on abuse
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14VHtwuhPWc

United Kingdom

National Domestic Violence Helpline
Website: www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk
(provides support and information for those experiencing domestic violence)

Women's Aid
Website: www.womensaid.org.uk
(Offers support for women and children affected by domestic abuse, including a live chat service)

Refuge
Website: www.refuge.org.uk
(provides support for women and children experiencing domestic violence, including emergency accommodation)

The Survivors Trust
Website: www.thesurvivorstrust.org
(A national umbrella agency for specialist rape and sexual abuse support services)

Men's Advice Line
Website: www.mensadviceline.org.uk
(offers support to men experiencing domestic violence and abuse)

First Light
Website: https://www.firstlight.org.uk/our-services/safe-spaces

United States

National Domestic Violence Hotline
Website: www.thehotline.org
(provides 24/7 support for those affected by domestic violence)

RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network)
Website: www.rainn.org
(offers resources and support for survivors of sexual violence, including a confidential hotline)

Sexual Assault Hotline (National Sexual Violence Resource Center)
Website: www.nsvrc.org
(provides resources for survivors of sexual violence and information about local services)

Loveisrespect
Website: www.loveisrespect.org
(focuses on providing support to young people in abusive relationships)

Men Can Stop Rape
Website: www.mencanstoprape.org
(works to engage men and boys in preventing sexual violence)

These organisations provide a range of services, including hotlines, counselling, legal assistance, and resources for finding safe housing.

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, please call emergency services.

Contact Information

Fr Thaddeus Ekuma, OCD

Safeguarding lead for the Discalced Carmelite Order Anglo Irish-Province

Email: safeguarding@carmelite.org.uk

Phone: +447438916700

Kate Keefe, Fr Liam Finnerty OCD and Fr Clement Oboriah OCD

Safeguarding leads for CACS

Email: safe@cacs.org.uk

Phone: 07300319055

The phone line is open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. UK time (GMT or BST), Monday to Sunday.

Enquiries will be picked up by Kate in the first instance and forwarded when appropriate.