

Light of Truth Safeguarding Policy

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1a. Introduction

The Dominican Sisters of St Joseph (henceforth ‘the Sisters’, ‘we’ or ‘us’) deliver Catholic faith formation both in-person and online via Zoom. In addition, we run an annual summer camp for children and young people, Fanning the Flame Summer Camp, with related smaller events for children and young people throughout the year.

In all our work we abide by the following Safeguarding Policy. This Policy is designed to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from all forms of abuse. It also provides the Sisters, and those with whom we collaborate, with a clear pathway for the reporting of allegations and incidents.

What is abuse?

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children defines abuse as follows: *‘Child abuse is when a child is **intentionally harmed** by an adult or another child – it can be over a period of time but can also be a one-off action. It can be **physical**,*

sexual or emotional** and it can happen in person or online. It can also be a lack of love, care and attention - this is **neglect.

This definition of abuse applies not only to children but also to vulnerable adults.

This safeguarding policy also covers:

- **Spiritual abuse**, in which religious language and ideas are used as a means to coerce, demean or manipulate a person
- **Financial abuse**, in which a person is coerced into making financial choices that harm themselves or others

Events to which this safeguarding policy applies are:

- Online faith formation for adults
- In-person faith formation for adults
- In-person events and retreat days for children
- Fanning the Flame Summer Camp for children and young people
- Events related to Fanning the Flame Summer Camp
- Discernment retreats and spiritual direction appointments taking place at our convent

This Safeguarding Policy is in accordance with the [CSSA eight standards for safeguarding](#).

1b. Safeguarding Officer

The L.O.T. Safeguarding Officer is responsible for ensuring that this Safeguarding Policy is implemented and that all allegations of abuse are properly investigated. They are required to undergo safeguarding training at least every two years.

The current Safeguarding Officer is **Sr Carino Hodder OP**.

In addition, there is a dedicated Safeguarding Officer for the Fanning the Flame Summer Camp. The Camp Safeguarding Officer abides by the same standards as the L.O.T Safeguarding Officer, and is assisted at each camp by two assistants and a Welfare Officer.

The current Camp Safeguarding Officer is **Sr Julie Marsh-Collis OP**.

2a. Checking and Recruitment of Volunteers

All volunteers involved in events organised by the Sisters, whether in-person or online, undergo the following process of checking and recruitment:

1. Sign and read the **Volunteer Agreement form**
2. Sign and read the **Light of Truth Safeguarding Policy** (*or, if they are a Fanning the Flame volunteer, the parts of the Policy relevant to their work and responsibilities*)
3. If assisting with an in-person event in a school in which children are present, they are also required to **obtain a valid DBS check**.

These stipulations apply equally to the Sisters.

Additional stipulations apply to volunteers for the Fanning the Flame Summer Camp due to the particular responsibilities of running this event. These are outlined in Section 3b of this Policy.

2b. Code of Conduct for Volunteers

All L.O.T. volunteers abide by the following code of conduct.

1. The adult:child ratios of the organisation or group responsible for the event are to be observed at all times. (Details of adult:child ratios for Fanning the Flame Summer Camp and related events can be found in section 3b below).
2. Volunteers are not to spend time alone with children, young people or vulnerable adults away from the sight of other adults.
3. Volunteers are not to contact children, young people or vulnerable adults after in person events unless with the specific permission of the adult responsible for them.
4. Volunteers are not to make unnecessary physical contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults without good reason (emotional comfort or physical help), and then only with the consent of the person. Physical contact of a sexual, coercive or aggressive nature is never justified.
5. Volunteers are never to use humiliating, threatening, sexually provocative or abusive language.
6. Volunteers are never to perform a physical task for children or vulnerable adults of a personal nature which they can perform themselves or for which they have a personal carer.

3a. Safeguarding at In-Person Events

The Sisters deliver both formation courses and individual formation sessions as part of their apostolate, Light of Truth (L.O.T). These take place in a variety of locations at the

request of parishes, schools, dioceses and other organisations or groups. Before the event, the Sisters will contact the leader/organiser by letter to ensure that:

1. The organisation or group has carried out a risk assessment of the event.
2. The organisation or group has made available their safeguarding policy (or their Diocese's safeguarding policy) to L.O.T so that we can ensure compliance.
3. The organisation or group understands that, given the event is taking place on their premises, they have overall responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of attendees.
3. The organisation or group has a designated Safeguarding Officer (or equivalent role) with whom the L.O.T. Safeguarding Officer can liaise.
4. All volunteers have sought to ascertain the number of children, young people and vulnerable adults who will be present at the event, and any additional needs they have which volunteers should be aware of.

If the in-person event is taking place at the convent, the sisters will contact the leader/organiser by letter to ensure that:

1. The organisation or group has viewed the convent risk assessment.
2. The organisation or group is made aware of the safeguarding requirements with which we expect the group to be compliant.
3. The organisation or group accepts that they have overall responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of their members - in particular, they are responsible for supervising any children in their group during breaktimes and mealtimes.

3b. Additional Safeguarding for Fanning the Flame Summer Camp

The above requirements also apply to Fanning the Flame Summer Camp. In addition, the following stipulations will also be observed at Camp:

Recruitment and training of Volunteers

4. All volunteers are to meet the requirements for recruitment outlined in Section 2a of this Policy.
5. In addition, they are to attend a **safeguarding meeting** on the morning the Summer Camp begins or an **equivalent training** stipulated by Fanning the Flame. If any volunteer is unable to attend this meeting or complete the equivalent training, for any reason, this must be noted and their responsibilities at camp curtailed accordingly.

During the day

6. At the beginning of camp, the group - both attendees and adult volunteers - is to be introduced to the Camp Safeguarding Officer and made aware of their role and responsibilities.
7. A register is to be taken twice a day (morning and evening) of both attendees and adult volunteers.
8. The adult:child ratio for supervision of children at Fanning the Flame events is one adult to ten children, in keeping with [the recommended supervision ratios for children aged 13-18 years given by the NSPCC](#). This is to be observed at all times.
9. A group of children or young people may leave the campsite for a specific, prearranged activity (for instance a walk). In this circumstance, a register is to be taken on leaving and returning to the campsite. The adult:child ratio is to be observed and adult volunteers should be positioned at the front and the back of the group.
10. If a child or young person needs to leave the campsite for a medical or family emergency, they are to be accompanied by two adults, at least one of whom is the same sex of the child. The Camp Coordinator is to be informed when the child has left the site and when they return, and is also to be informed which adult volunteers are accompanying them.
11. Any adult volunteer wishing to leave the campsite must seek the permission of the Camp Coordinator.
12. Children are to be referred to by the pronouns that correspond to their sex and by the name stated by their parents on their camp booking form.
13. Parental permission is to be sought before engaging in discussions (for instance, teaching sessions or Q+A sessions) in which sexuality, sexual relationships, and gender identity is either the main topic or likely to be relevant. This permission is normatively to be sought before camp as part of the information requested on the booking form.
14. Under-eighteens and over-eighteens are to have separate shower times.
15. All camp participants are to be admitted to the camp's single-sex spaces on the basis of their natal sex, not gender identity. The single-sex spaces are the camp toilets/showers and the male and female areas of the campsite. (The campsite also includes a 'family section', for relatives sharing tents, which is mixed-sex.)

During the night

16. Any adult volunteer wishing to leave the campsite must seek the permission of the Camp Coordinator.
17. There will be three female adult volunteers and three male adult volunteers who are designated as Night Contacts. They can be woken by children and young people during the night in the event they have any concerns, including but not limited to emotional, physical, medical and safety concerns. Their tents will be clearly marked by additional lighting.

18. There will be at least one adult whose sole responsibility is the safety and welfare of the camp during the night.
19. All camp participants are to be admitted to the camp's single-sex spaces on the basis of their natal sex, not gender identity.

These stipulations apply to anyone who is officially designated an adult volunteer at the Summer Camp, i.e. any member of the Youth Team who is over the age of eighteen or of the Adult Team.

4a. Safeguarding at Online Events

The platform used for L.O.T. online events is Zoom.

Preparation for Online Events

All Zoom meetings are set up using a specific L.O.T. Zoom account and never an individual's personal Zoom account. The Safeguarding Officer will ensure that the Zoom moderator for each session is aware of their responsibility to ensure the Zoom meeting is safeguarding compliant.

Before the online event (or the first session of the course if it is a multi-session course), the Sister with primary responsibility for organising the course will do the following:

20. Send a basic Participants' Code of Conduct to registered participants, so that they are aware of standards of behaviour on this Zoom and the steps that will be taken if this Code of Conduct is breached.
21. Ask participants to provide details of any additional needs that they feel may be relevant to their participation in this course (for instance, physical or cognitive disabilities and/or emotional/psychological difficulties.)

4b. Policy for Zoom Meetings Involving Adults

1. Links to Zoom meetings are given only to those who have registered for the meeting and are not made publicly available.
2. Every Zoom meeting has the 'Waiting Room' function enabled and participants are only admitted to the meeting if immediately identifiable by their first and last name.
3. Any participant engaging in inappropriate behaviour (such as exposure and foul or abusive language) will be immediately removed from the meeting by the moderator.
4. Inappropriate behaviour is to be logged after the event in the L.O.T. Safeguarding Concerns Log so that any necessary action can be taken.

4c. Policy for Zoom Meetings Involving Children

In addition to the stipulations outlined above, the following applies to meetings in which children are present:

1. For Zoom meetings aimed primarily at adults, participants under the age of 18 are to be accompanied by a responsible adult who is in the room with them while they are participating in the Zoom meeting.
2. For meetings involving participants under the age of 18, two responsible adults must be present in the meeting at all times, including in breakout rooms.
3. The parents/guardians of participants under the age of 18 are to be informed of: the nature and purpose of the Zoom event in which their child is participating; the number of other participants in the meeting and what information about their child these participants will be privy to (name and visual image); the names and contact details of the adults responsible for safeguarding compliance.
4. Participants under the age of 18, and their parents/guardians, should be made aware that they are permitted to turn off their camera if they do not wish to be visible to other participants.

5a. Reporting Allegations

In the event of an adult being accused of inappropriate behaviour, whether at an in-person event or on an online meeting, the following process is to be followed:

1. Anybody who witnesses abuse or receives an allegation of abuse must immediately inform the Safeguarding Officer.
2. No allegation is to be trivialised, ignored or dismissed.
3. No volunteer is to initiate an investigation into a safeguarding allegation independently, even if they were the adult to whom the allegation was made.
4. The allegation is not to be discussed with the accused person outside of a formal investigation, and never before the allegation has been reported.
5. The Safeguarding Officer is required to report the allegation to the relevant authorities (depending on whether the safeguarding incident took place in a school, a parish, or online).
6. If the accused volunteer is a Dominican Sister of St Joseph, the safeguarding policy of the Diocese of Portsmouth (which can be viewed [here](#)) and the relevant CSSA Practice Guidances (which can be viewed [here](#)) will also be followed.

If a volunteer has a concern about a person's conduct that is not a specific allegation of abuse, then they are to log their concern in the Log of Safeguarding Concerns.

5b. Processes Following an investigation

1. While an investigation is ongoing, the accused volunteer (respondent) is to be suspended from involvement in L.O.T.
2. If an allegation of sexual, physical or emotional abuse is proven to be true, the respondent is to be immediately dismissed from all involvement in L.O.T going forward.
3. L.O.T. acknowledges a duty of care towards both the alleged victim of a safeguarding incident and the respondent/s.

Policy Reviewal

This document is reviewed once a year by the Chapter of the Dominican Sisters of St Joseph and updated as necessary. Changes to the Safeguarding Policy can be proposed by any Sister or volunteer and must be ratified by the Chapter of the Dominican Sisters of St Joseph.

Last updated October 2024