

Society of African Missions SMA

Irish Province



Safeguarding Children

SMA Policy

Standards and Procedures



Revised 2012

Contents

- ⇒ Preamble
- ⇒ Official SMA Policy Statement
- ⇒ 7 Standards
- ⇒ Guidelines and Procedures for implementing the Standards
- ⇒ Appendices

Preamble

The Society of African Missions [SMA] is committed to the promotion and protection of authentic human values which are an integral part of the proclamation of the Gospel. This commitment informs and shapes this Child Safeguarding policy.

The kingdom of God is at the heart of the teaching of Jesus Christ. And for Him the child is the great example of how we approach and accept the kingdom, “*whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it*” [Luke 18:17]

This SMA Policy is in line with a one-Church response within the Irish Church.

In December 2005 the Irish Bishops’ Conference, the Conference of Religious in Ireland and the Irish Missionary Union decided to establish a National Board for Safeguarding Children with a view to producing a unified approach to child protection across the Catholic Church in Ireland.

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church was established in 2006 to provide advice on best practice in safeguarding children and to monitor the implementation of safeguarding policy in the Church across both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland. Subsequently a company, *COIMIRCE*, was established to oversee child safeguarding matters for the Church in Ireland.

Church organizations need to develop a common understanding of how to safeguard children, develop good practice across the diverse and complex areas in which they operate and increase accountability in this crucial aspect of their work. Through the National Office for Safeguarding Children, established by the National Board, a Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland was produced.

The Standards should be used by all Church organizations (diocese, parishes, religious, institutions, seminaries) and personnel (clergy, religious, lay employees or volunteers). In developing the Standards account has been taken of the differences in legislation and protection systems that exist in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and some of the particular issues that arise in relation to missionaries who work overseas.

In April 2009, the Irish Province of the SMA signed a Memorandum of Agreement with *COIMIRCE* that it accepted the Standards document and would abide by its provisions.

This Policy is in line with the Standards and Guidance in the Safeguarding Children Document published by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church.

Our objective is:

- To raise the level of awareness about child safeguarding issues;
- To ensure to the best of our ability that all children in our care are safe and secure;
- To build confidence in our initiative as laid down in our policy statement;
- To implement proper codes of behaviour and procedures in every house / parish community of the SMA.



Society of African Missions

SMA Safeguarding Policy Statement

Based on the Gospel teaching, the leadership team wishes to state that as a Society all our members are committed to the belief that the life of each individual person is precious. We affirm that our members and employees are committed to ensuring that life will be cherished and nurtured at all times.

In particular we state that each child will be cherished and affirmed as a gift from God with inherent rights to dignity and bodily integrity which will be respected, nurtured and protected by all.

We fully accept the Standards and Guidance Principles laid down by the National Board for Safeguarding Children. All our members and employees are bound by the same Standards and Guidance Principles.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fachtna O'Driscoll SMA".

**Fachtna O'Driscoll SMA
Provincial Leader**

The 7 Standards

- 1 **A written policy on keeping children safe.**
- 2 **Procedures on how to respond to child protection allegations and suspicions.**
- 3 **Preventing harm to children.**
- 4 **Training and education for keeping children safe.**
- 5 **Communicating the church's safeguarding message.**
- 6 **Access to advice and support.**
- 7 **Implementing and monitoring the standards.**

Standard 1 A written policy on keeping children safe.

Every child should be cherished and affirmed 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.

- 1 Signed copies of the approved policy were sent to appointed leaders of House / Apostolic Communities.
- 2 Leaders were instructed to display laminated copies in prominent public areas in houses, halls and places used by the public.
- 3 Leaders were advised to hold meeting with members of the community and with lay staff who work in the community before displaying the policy.
- 4 The official policy will be reviewed at annual meetings.
- 5 At annual meetings House / Apostolic Community leaders will report on how the policy is implemented in their communities.

Standard 2 How to respond to child protection allegations and suspicions

Children have a right to be listened to and heard: Church organizations must respond effectively and ensure any allegations and suspicions of abuse are reported both within the church and to the civil authorities.

Any allegation or suspicion of abuse will be taken seriously. Complainants will be listened to with respect and attention. Follow up action will be taken.

- 1 As an integral part of our commitment to protection of children John Dunne will act as the designated child protection officer and Thomas McNamara as the deputy.
- 2 The designated officer and deputy will ensure adherence to what is laid down as best practice policy.
- 3 Act as liaison with statutory services in matters relating to child protection.
- 4 Act as a resource person to the SMA providing support and guidance in matters relating to child protection.
- 5 Ensure that procedures are followed systematically and thoroughly with regard to referrals to statutory services.
- 6 Make available to House / Apostolic Community leaders forms for recording details of concerns related to sexual abuse allegations.
- 7 The person receiving the allegation must make a note of the basic details of the allegation.

These include:

- The name of the person against whom the allegation is made and any other identifying information.
- Date and time when the allegation was received.
- Name and contact details of the person making the allegation.
- An overview of information given by the person making the allegation.
- The individual receiving the allegation should not ask intrusive questions.

- 8 The allegation or suspicion must be passed immediately to the designated officer. It should not be discussed with anyone else.
- 9 The designated officer will inform the Provincial Leader and present a copy of the initial report as it was recorded by the person receiving the allegation.
- 10 The Provincial Leader will ask the designated officer to investigate and assess whether the allegation meets the criteria for being credible.
- 11 If an allegation is credible a referral will be made to the An Garda Síochána / PSNI and copied to the HSE / HSC as appropriate without delay.
- 12 The National Board will be advised of the referral.
- 13 A support person will be provided for both the person making the allegation and the alleged perpetrator. Support persons will be independent of the investigative process and will not provide support to victim and alleged abuser in the same case.
- 14 All parties will be kept informed of the progress of any investigation, confidentiality permitting, and informed of the outcome.
- 15 There is an * Advisory Panel put in place. The Advisory Panel will make recommendations to the Provincial Leader in all matters relating to best practice when an allegation is made against a member.

** Since 2009 the National Office has acted as advisory body pending the setting up of other/regional advisory bodies.*

Standard 3 Preventing harm to children

Children should have access to good role models they can trust, who will respect and nurture their spiritual, physical and emotional development. They also have a right to an environment free from abuse and neglect.

A member deemed to pose a risk to children will be obliged to live at the Society House, Blackrock Road, Cork, under supervision by the Leadership team and with the necessary support persons provided

SMA members working in Ireland do not have direct ministry to children apart from those working in parishes and those involved in the Dromantine Summer Youth Camps. Those members in parish ministry and who take part in the Mission Awareness programme have been vetted by An Garda Síochána. Dromantine Summer Youth Camps have comprehensive guidelines and procedures for all those working with children.

For SMA members and lay helpers / volunteers who work with children the following are in place:

- Copies of agreed recruiting methods are in place.
- Examples of application, reference and declaration forms are available and reviewed regularly.
- Evidence of registration with or access to agencies that can provide details of an applicant's past behaviour such as An Garda Síochána Central Vetting Unit or Access Northern Ireland will be provided.

Safe recruiting and vetting practices are important to prevent children and young people being abused:

- 1 SMA has safe recruitment and vetting practices.
- 2 SMA has clear guidelines that set out what is and is not acceptable behaviour.
- 3 SMA operates safe activities for children and young people.

Standard 4 Training and education for keeping children safe.

All church personnel should be offered training in child protection to maintain high standards and good practice.

Everyone in the church who comes into contact with children has a role to play in their protection. To carry out this role confidently and effectively they need to be aware of child protection issues and to have the necessary knowledge and skills to help keep children safe.

1. All SMA personnel, clerical and lay, who work with children are inducted into this safeguarding policy and procedures on child protection when they begin working with the SMA.
2. Identified personnel are provided with appropriate training for keeping children safe.
3. Ongoing training of members has been greatly helped by participation in training days offered by the National Board for Safeguarding Children. All training is updated in line with current legislation, guidance and best practice.
4. Copies of training programmes together with attendance records will be kept as evidence that this standard has been met.
5. The SMA, Irish Province, has over the last 6 years invested resources in training one of its members, Fr Hugh Lagan, to doctoral level. His post-doctoral training and certification was in St Luke's Institute, Washington DC, a world leader in the understanding and treatment of child abuse. He is now a valuable resource person for the SMA and other groups.

Standard 5 Communicating the Church's safeguarding policy.

Children are welcomed, cherished and protected in a manner consistent with their central place in the life of the Church.

Approved SMA policy and procedures are made available to members and all those who work with them.

- 1 The Child protection policy is openly displayed and available to everyone.
- 2 Children are made aware of their right to be safe from abuse and who to speak to if they have concerns. This applies particularly to the Dromantine Summer Youth Camps.
- 3 All members know who the designated person is and have contact details.
- 4 House / Apostolic Community leaders will establish links and good working relations with child protection services in local Health services, An Garda Síochána, PSNI and have contact details of designated person in each service readily available.
- 5 SMA members and leadership are committed to an established communications policy which reflects transparency and openness.



Standard 6 Access to advice and support.

Those who have suffered child abuse should receive a compassionate and just response and should be offered appropriate pastoral care to rebuild their lives.

Those who have harmed others should be helped to face up to the reality of abuse, as well as being assisted in healing.

- 1 SMA identifies the services available locally or nationally and provides contact details.
- 2 SMA has available for members and children copies of sources of support for children.
- 3 SMA has available information on outreach programmes for those abused and their families. It will provide a support person to complainants who wish to avail of such support.
- 4 Appropriate support is provided through Stroud, Southdown and St Luke's to those who have perpetrated abuse to help them face the reality of abuse and move on to a path towards healing.
- 5 An advisory support person is offered to any member against whom an allegation of abuse is made.
- 6 SMA will strive to develop going forward programmes of forgiveness and healing for both victims and perpetrators.
- 7 See Appendix 1: Access to advice and support.



11

Standard 7 Implementing and monitoring the Standards.

To keep children safe, policies, procedures and plans have to be put in place across all Church organizations. Checks are needed to ensure this is happening consistently. The views of those involved both inside and outside of Church organizations can help to improve the effectiveness of any measures taken.

- 1 All incidents, allegations / suspicions of abuse are recorded and stored securely in a designated safe.
- 2 SMA follows policy on best practice recording and data protection protocols.
- 3 Personnel and finance are made available to ensure the implementation of this policy. The annual meetings are used as a focus point to evaluate the implementation of policy and best practice with the Leaders of our houses and Apostolic Communities.
- 4 Review dates regarding policy and procedures are built into our annual meetings.
- 5 A safeguarding committee has been put in place. This group will meet bi-annually.



12

Appendix 1 IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Access to advice and support

An Garda Síochána

Cork: 021 4522000
SMA Houses in Ireland: local area contact

Health Service Executive

Cork: 021 4927000
Other counties: local area contact

Society of African Missions

Fr Fachtna O'Driscoll, Provincial Leader 021 4616300

Help Available Freephone

Towards Healing 1800 331234
National Counselling Service (HSE) 1800 344116
Connect 1800 477477
Childline 1800 666666

National Office for Safeguarding Children

Mr Ian Elliot 01 503 3018
Ms Teresa Devlin 01 503 3023
Sr Collette Stevenson 01 503 3025

Designated Officer for Safeguarding Children

Fr John Dunne 021 4616302

Deputy Designated Officer for Safeguarding Children

Fr Thomas McNamara 01 4968162

Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) 0845 600 8000

Gateway Team, Newry 028 3082 5000

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

(NSPCC), Belfast 0844 892 0282

Appendix 2

Definitions of Abuse

Recognising child abuse is not easy; and it is not your responsibility to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. You do, however, have a responsibility and a duty to act in order that appropriate agencies can investigate and take any necessary action to protect a child.

Someone may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in their family, in a faith based institution or community setting; by those known to them, or more rarely by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult/s, another child or children. It often involves people they trust or know well.

The abuse of children generally involves one or more of the four main forms of abuse:

- ◆ Physical abuse
- ◆ Emotional abuse
- ◆ Sexual abuse
- ◆ Neglect

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. These activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts (oral sex). They may involve non-contact activities, such as involving children looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and /or females, by adults and by other young people. This includes people from all different walks of life.

Appendix 3

Confidentiality and information sharing

The Society of African Missions recognises the importance of ensuring peoples' right to confidentiality and is committed to keeping confidential all personal information about children and their families. The only exception is when child safeguarding or welfare concerns arise in relation to a child.

- ◆ All information regarding concerns about child abuse will only be shared on a 'need to know' basis in order to safeguard the child. If information is being shared, parents and children are to be informed unless doing so puts the child at further risk.
- ◆ No undertakings regarding secrecy should be given. This should be made clear to all parties involved. Giving information to others for the safeguarding of a child is not a breach of confidentiality.
- ◆ The Seal of Confession requires absolute confidentiality and allows no exceptions.
- ◆ If a disclosure is made in the context of Confession, the priest is obliged to invite the person making the disclosure to discuss the matter outside the Confessional.
- ◆ Because of the obligations of the sacramental seal, no priest performing a function under the procedures for dealing with a child-protection matter should celebrate the Sacrament of Penance with a respondent. (See SGP pp 54, 62)

Keep Children Safe

Keep Children First



Keep Children First

Keep Children Safe