



VIATORES  
CHRISTI-VC

# CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT SAFEGUARDING POLICY 2023

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# Core Statements

Safeguarding means taking all reasonable steps to prevent harm, to protect people, especially children and vulnerable adults from that harm; and to respond appropriately when harm does occur.

## General principles of Safeguarding:

- The safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults is paramount, and all children and vulnerable adults have equal rights to protection from harm.
- Safeguarding is everybody's responsibility, and we all have a duty to support the care and protection of children and vulnerable adults.
- All children and vulnerable adults should be encouraged to fulfil their potential regardless of their background, age, sex or gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion or ethnic origin and inequalities should be challenged

## Policy Statement:

**Viatres Christi and all its staff and members, undertake to do all in our power to create a safe environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults and to prevent their physical, sexual or emotional abuse. Viatres Christi is committed to acting at all times in the best interests of children and vulnerable adults, seeing these interests as paramount.**

Viatres Christi has a **zero-tolerance** policy towards all forms of abuse and exploitation. Our priority is to ensure the welfare and safety of every child and vulnerable adult who comes into contact with our organisation, its activities and our Employees and Related Personnel. We believe that all persons have an inherent right to live their lives free from abuse and exploitation regardless of age, sex or gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or ethnic origin.

We are committed to acting ethically and with integrity to safeguard children and vulnerable adults and we have put in place and enforce measures and controls that demonstrate that commitment. We are committed to ensuring effective action is taken when issues occur, referring all concerns, allegations and incidents to the relevant statutory authorities e.g., Tusla, HSE Safeguarding & Protection, and, An Garda Siochana.

Viatores Christi adheres to international best practice standards<sup>[1]</sup> for keeping children and vulnerable adults safe from harm and to enable appropriate responses when concerns and incidents arise.

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[1] Misesan Cara, Child & Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy (2021:4)

[1] Misesan Cara Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy (2021:7)

[1] International Standards include, having a policy in place which outlines how an organisation is committed to preventing harm and outlining the steps that must be taken should an incident occur, identifying clear responsibilities and expectations for all personnel and associates, supporting them to understand and act accordingly, the creation of safe environments by implementing high quality safeguarding procedures that are applied in all projects and activities and regular monitoring and review of an organisation's safeguarding measures (Adapted from Misesan Cara's Project Safeguarding Monitoring Report, p.1)

### **We will do this by:**

- Setting in place, implementing and regularly monitoring and reviewing procedures to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults. These procedures cover Viatores Christi's recruitment practice, staff training, and management responsibilities.
- Adopting a Code of Conduct for all staff and members.
- Ensuring that any allegations of abuse about a staff member, volunteer (member) working overseas or a member here at home (carrying out VC work) are promptly and properly dealt with, victims supported and perpetrators held to account. All allegations of abuse of a child will be reported to the statutory bodies.

**For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:**

**Child:** A person under the age of 18, regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally.

**Vulnerable Adult:** An adult who may be restricted in capacity to guard himself or herself against harm or exploitation or to report such harm or exploitation for any reason, where restriction of capacity arises as a result of physical or intellectual impairment.[1]

**Viatores Christi's policy applies to all children and vulnerable adults with whom Viatores Christi has contact, regardless of gender, religion or ethnicity.**

Viatores Christi recognises that vulnerable adults may also be in need of particular safeguarding, and recognises that the needs and concerns of this group may be different from those of children. Viatores Christi will extend this policy to include specific commitments relevant to this group.

Viatores Christi intends that our commitment to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults in our international work should reflect the same values and principles that underpin our organisational policy commitments at home.

[1] Adapted from Misesan Cara Child & Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy (2021:4)

## Definition of Abuse

Abuse occurs when adults or other children hurt children, young people or vulnerable adults. A child or vulnerable adult may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.

## Physical Abuse:

Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt.[1]

## Emotional Abuse:

Emotional abuse is normally found in the relationship between a parent/ carer and a child rather than in a specific event or patterns of events. It occurs when a child's developmental need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms.

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[1] Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017: 9)

[1] Adapted from Misesan Cara Child & Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy (2021:4)

[1] Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017: 9)

## Sexual Abuse:

An actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.[1]

## Neglect:

Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. Neglect can be defined in terms of omission of care, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, and/or medical care.[2]

**As well as the above main categories, members and staff should be aware of the following:**

## On-Line/Digital Abuse :

Any type of abuse that happens on the internet. It can happen across any device that is connected to the web, such as computers, tablets and mobile phones. Examples include: exposure and uploading of inappropriate abusive material without consent, Digital/social media and online sexual abuse/ production of sexual images.[3]

## Domestic Abuse:

Domestic abuse is defined as the use of physical or emotional force or threat of the same. In relation to children, exposure to domestic abuse is defined as emotional abuse. Children exposed to domestic abuse are also at higher risk of emotional and physical abuse.

## Standards of Conduct

### It is important for all Employees and Related Personnel working with Viatores Christi to:

- Treat all children and vulnerable adults with respect and dignity.
- Treat all children and vulnerable adults equally.
- Model positive & appropriate behaviour to all children and vulnerable adults with whom they come into contact.
- Challenge & report potentially abusive behaviour.
- Develop a culture of openness, honesty & safety.
- Respect personal boundaries and support children and vulnerable adults to exercise age-appropriate autonomy and a sense of rights.

### You must never:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children or vulnerable adults.
- Develop relationships with children or vulnerable adults that could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive.
- Act in any way that may be abusive or may place a child or vulnerable adult at risk of harm.
- Use language, make suggestions, or offer advice, which is inappropriate, offensive, or abusive.
- Do things for a child or vulnerable adult of a personal nature that they can do themselves.
- Condone or participate in, behaviour that is illegal, unsafe, or abusive.
- Act in any way that is intended to shame, humiliate, belittle, or degrade.
- Discriminate against, show different treatment, or favour particular children or vulnerable adults to the exclusion of others.
- Develop sexual relationships with children or vulnerable adults.

[1] United Nations Secretariat, 9 October 2003, Secretary General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation, 2003/13 (ST/SGB/2003/13), United Nations

[1] Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017: 9)

[1] Mísean Cara Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy (2021: 25)

### **In general, it is inappropriate to:**

- Spend excessive time alone with children and vulnerable adults away from others.
- Take children or vulnerable adults away/to your own home, especially where they will be alone with you.

## **Responding to a child or vulnerable adult who discloses abuse**

### **If a child, young person or vulnerable adult tells you they are being, or have been, abused:**

- Be as calm and natural as possible.
- Remember that you have been approached because you are trusted and possibly liked. Do not panic.
- Be aware that making a disclosure can be very difficult for a child or vulnerable adult.
- Remember, the child or vulnerable adult may initially be testing your reactions and may only fully open up over a period of time.
- Listen to what the child or vulnerable adult has to say. Give them the time and opportunity to tell as much as they are able and wish to.
- Do not pressurise the child or vulnerable adult. Allow him or her to disclose at their own pace and in their own language.
- Conceal any signs of disgust, anger, or disbelief.
- Accept what the child or vulnerable adult has to say – false disclosures are very rare.

- It is important to differentiate between the person who carried out the abuse and the act of abuse itself. It is possible that the child or vulnerable adult may love or strongly like the alleged abuser while also disliking what has been done to them. It is important therefore to avoid expressing any judgement on, or anger towards the alleged perpetrator while talking with the child or vulnerable adult.
- It may be necessary to reassure the child or vulnerable adult that your feelings towards him or her have not been affected in a negative way as a result of what they have disclosed to you.
- Reassure the child or vulnerable adult that they have taken the right action in talking to you.

### **When asking questions:**

- Questions should be supportive and for the purpose of clarification only.
- Avoid leading questions, such as asking whether a specific person carried out the abuse. Also, avoid asking about intimate details or suggesting that something else may have happened other than what you have been told. Such questions and suggestions could complicate the official investigation.

### **Confidentiality – Do not promise to keep secrets!**

- Acknowledge that they have come to you because they trust you.
- Outline that you will be sharing the information only with people who understand this area and who can help. There are secrets which are not helpful and should not be kept because they make matters worse. Such secrets hide things that need to be known if people are to be protected from further on-going harm. By refusing to make a commitment to secrecy to the child or vulnerable adult, you do run the risk that they may not tell you everything (or, indeed, anything) there and then. However, it is better to do this than tell a lie and ruin the child or vulnerable adults' confidence. By being honest, it is more likely they will return to you another time.
- ·At the earliest possible opportunity:
  - Record in writing in a factual manner, what the child or vulnerable adult has said including, as far as possible, the exact words used by the child or vulnerable adult.
  - Inform the Safeguarding Officer at the earliest opportunity and agree measures to protect the child or vulnerable adult e.g., reporting the matter directly to statutory authorities.
  - Maintain appropriate confidentiality.[1]

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[1] Misesan Cara Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy (2022: 12-13)



## **Adhere to Tusla guidelines regarding record keeping, including:**

Ensure that records on child protection concerns, allegations and disclosures are kept securely and safely within the organisation. Records should only be used for the purpose for which they are intended. Records should only be shared on a need-to-know basis in the best interests of the child/young person.

([https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Tusla\\_-\\_Child\\_Safeguarding\\_-\\_A\\_Guide\\_for\\_Policy,\\_Procedure\\_and\\_Practice.pdf](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Tusla_-_Child_Safeguarding_-_A_Guide_for_Policy,_Procedure_and_Practice.pdf))

## **Reporting**

Personnel who have concerns about child or vulnerable adult abuse or who have received a disclosure of abuse should bring this to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Officer at the **earliest opportunity**.

### **See Appendix 1 and 2 for Reporting Flowchart**

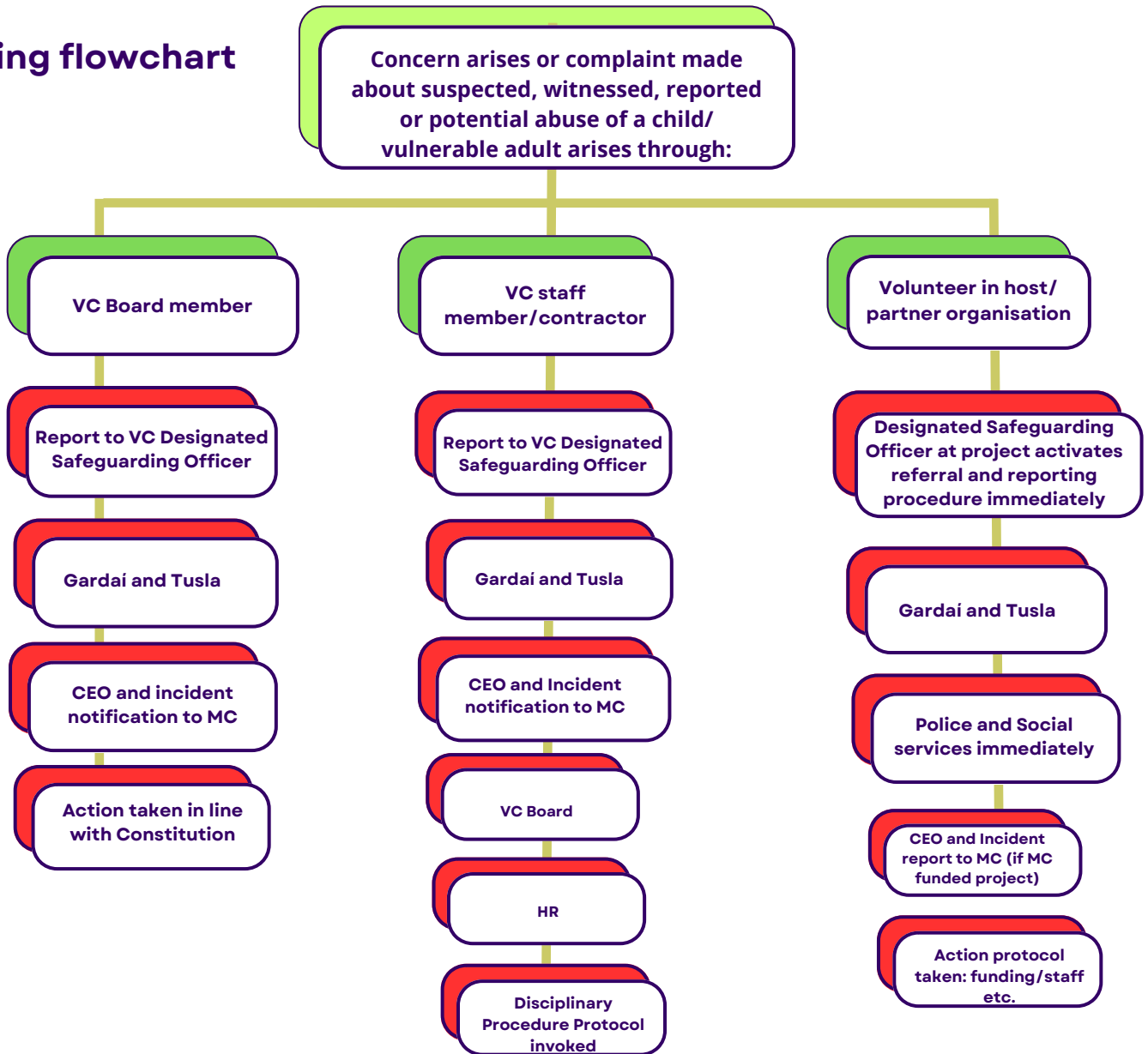
Under no circumstances should a child or vulnerable adult be left in a situation that exposes them to harm or risk of harm pending the intervention of the statutory authorities.

### **Record Keeping & Information Sharing**

Viaores Christi will record all reports and actions taken in compliance with data protection legislation and statutory guidance. This information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis and in the best interests of the child or vulnerable adult.

# Appendix 1: Reporting Flowchart 1

## Reporting flowchart



## Appendix 2: Reporting Flowchart 2

### Reporting flowchart

