

CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT SAFEGUARDING POLICY 2020

This document sets out the Viatores Christi's Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. It is for all members and staff and is available also to all supporters. The Policy and Procedures are also available to those outside Viatores Christi who may want to know how Viatores Christi works in relation to child safeguarding.

Viatores Christi does not work *directly* with children. We do, however occasionally, have indirect contact through our school, parish and public promotion work. We have undertaken to implement this policy in relation to any member (including staff) working overseas or here at home who comes into contact with children or vulnerable adults, in the course of their work. We do not seek to impose our policy verbatim on the partner agencies but we expect them to have in place and actively to implement a child and vulnerable adult safeguarding policy consistent with our own and with the law of the country in which they work, which has now become a vital step in VC's due diligence procedure for potential mission partners. The Policy applies to all members, staff and volunteers as part of their obligations to Viatores Christi.

Viatores Christi has become aware of the need to make explicit and visible our determination that our work and activities must promote the safety and security of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Our policy has been formulated in line with the 'Children First' Act and Guidance (2015, 2011) from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the 'Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland' (2016).

1. Designated Safeguarding Officer

Name of Designated Safeguarding officer: Rachel Ryan - Contact: +353 85 725 7256

Role of Designated Safeguarding Officer: To ensure that suspected cases of child or vulnerable adult neglect or abuse are referred promptly to the designated person in the Tusla, The Child and Family Agency through standard reporting procedures and to follow up with any other relevant statutory agencies, including the HSE or An Garda Síochána, as necessary.

The Child Safeguarding Officer may receive reports of suspected child abuse or concerns about a child or vulnerable adult's safety and welfare. It is their responsibility:

- To ensure that they are fully conversant with the organisation's duties to the protection and welfare of children and vulnerable persons.
- To ensure that they are fully familiar with Viatores Christi's Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults policies and procedures, and that they know what they are and where to find the most up-to-date version

Viatores Christi will ensure that the Designated Safeguarding Officer will have access to appropriate training to undertake their roles and have regular support and supervision.

2. Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy: Core Statements

Policy Statement: Viatores 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. Viatores Christi is committed to acting at all times in the best interests of children and vulnerable adults, seeing these interests as paramount.

We will do this by:

- a. 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.
- b. Adopting a Code of Behaviour (see section 10 of this document) for all staff and members.
- c. 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.
- d. Ensuring that Viatores Christi works in close liaison with Church safeguarding structures at all levels and with statutory agencies when necessary so that risk to children and vulnerable adults is minimised.
- e. Aiming to be an example of best practice in the prevention of child abuse and in responding to it.

For the purposes of this policy, please find Viatores Christi's definitions of children and vulnerable adults below:

1. Child & Young Person Definition: Those who are under the age of 18 years, excluding a person who is or has been married (*Children First, 2011*).
2. Vulnerable Adult: An adult who may be restricted in capacity to guard himself / herself against harm or exploitation or to report such harm or exploitation. The restriction of capacity may arise as a result of physical or intellectual impairment. Vulnerability to abuse is influenced by both context (e.g. social or personal circumstances) and individual circumstances (*HSE, 2014*).

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 its Safeguarding procedures will ensure a safe and protected environment for vulnerable adults in regard to Viatores Christi's work and activities.

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

3. Viatores Christi's context and work: principles of child safeguarding

Viatores Christi has an organisational office base in Dublin. Indirectly we come into contact with children. We work through schools, churches and other organisations to organise events, activities for fundraising and/or campaign purposes, in which children may be involved alongside Viatores Christi staff and members.

Viatores Christi believes that all staff and members need to be aware of our policy and commitments in relation to child safeguarding even though the majority of our staff and many members may never have any unaccompanied contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults through their work.

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. There are four main kinds of abuse (*Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2011*):

Neglect: Neglect can be defined in terms of *omission*, 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. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways *over a period of time* rather than at one specific point, for example a child who is deprived of adequate nutrition, who consistently misses school or who lacks necessary supervision and safety.

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.

Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child's behaviour, cognitive, affective or physical functioning. Examples of these include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, and oppositional behaviour. The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become *typical* of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

Physical Abuse: Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction, or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.

Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or that of others. Children or young people can also be exploited sexually. Sexual exploitation involves situations where a child or young person receive 'something' (food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) in return for sexual activity. Children and young people engaged in prostitution are other forms of sexual exploitation are also victims of abuse.

The age of consent in Ireland is 17 years. It should be noted that the definition of child sexual abuse presented in this section is not a legal definition and is not intended to be a description of the criminal offence of sexual assault.

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

On-Line Sexual Exploitation: On-line sexual exploitation can occur when children or young people are exploited by others who have power over them by virtue of age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or other resources. Children or young people may be engaged in contact with persons impersonating children or using false identities to make contact or form relationships with them. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common. Involvement in exploitative relationships are characterised by the child or young person's limited availability of choice as a result of their social/ economic or emotional vulnerability. The use of images, exposure or involvement in pornography,

sometimes without the child's knowledge or understanding can also occur through on line contact, for example, by being persuaded to post or view images on line.

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.

Abuse may be current or recent, or in some cases, historical, i.e. an adult may disclose sexual abuse that took place when he/she was a child. Abuse may be carried out by both males and females, adults and fellow young people.

There are some groups of children and young people who are particularly vulnerable; children with disabilities are among these, and children from ethnic minority communities who may be particularly vulnerable if their communities suffer from discrimination. Children who are refugees or asylum seeking, and children living in residential care are also among these groups. Abuse may also take place in families in which there is alcohol or drug abuse, domestic violence or mental health problems.

Although the statutory protection defines children and young people as those under the age of 18, care should also be taken of adults who are vulnerable through disability or other factors.

4. Recruitment of Staff and Members

- If applicable, candidates will be asked to describe their previous experience of working with children, young people or vulnerable adults and to provide a referee who can comment on their work in this context.
- Job offers made in relation to assignments will be subject to satisfactory verification of qualifications and the candidate's CV.
- Candidates (whether staff members or volunteers) will sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they might be deemed unsuitable for working with children or vulnerable adults and being in their company.
- Garda vetting will be undertaken for all members taking up an assignment with Viatores Christi.

5. Ensuring Awareness and Prevention

Viatores Christi's commitment to safeguarding will be stated in appropriate corporate documents and on our website. Viatores Christi will make its policy and procedures available to anyone who requests them.

Viatores Christi will ensure that all staff and members are aware of the Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy and have access to a copy. This will also form part of our training programme for prospective members.

Viatores Christi expects all staff and members to follow the Code of Behaviour (see section 10 of this document). Viatores Christi staff and members should make every effort to avoid situations in which they are lone adults working with one or more children. If urgent or practical circumstances result in such a situation occurring, staff and members should resolve it as soon as possible and note it to their managers at occurrence. In any Viatores Christi activity involving children or vulnerable adults, their parents, guardians or other relevant responsible adults should be present.

All managers have the responsibility for ensuring that the staff members they manage are aware of the Policy and for reminding them of its provisions when the need arises.

Viatores Christi has a number of other relevant policies, in which child protective and safeguarding issues are referred to, and can be provided upon request. These include:

1. Online Code of Etiquette
2. Data Protection
3. Social Media Policy
4. Risk Policy
5. Crisis Management Policy

Any Viatores Christi staff or member planning events should ensure that safeguarding issues are considered as part of the risk analysis and/or health and safety arrangements. In planning or coordinating multi-agency or coalition or network organised events and activities, Viatores Christi will ensure that Safeguarding considerations have been taken into account where relevant.

6. Dealing with Disclosures and Suspicion

Viatores Christi recognises that disclosures (i.e. when a specific allegation of abuse is made against a named individual) and suspicion (i.e. when concern is expressed about abuse that may have taken place or be in prospect) should always be reported to the statutory authorities who have sole responsibility for investigating complaints, such as Tulsa or An Garda Síochána. The Designated Safeguarding Officer will report any disclosures or suspicions to the CEO, who in-turn will inform a sub-committee of the Council of such allegations. At this stage, the sub-committee will also inform the individual accused that VC will be contacting statutory authorities, unless doing so could place the child or vulnerable adult at further risk.

While the matter is being investigated by the statutory authorities the Viatores Christi member or volunteer may be asked to step aside from the activities of the organisation. Any information offered in confidence should be received on the basis that it will be shared with the relevant people in authority. Parents or carers will also be informed if appropriate. Apart from this, careful confidentiality will be observed. The person will be informed that a report will be made to the statutory authorities and that VC will cooperate fully with any assessment or investigation that ensues. This should be undertaken without delay.

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

- Listen to and accept what they are saying.
- Do not investigate, and do not inform, question or confront the alleged abuser.
- Take the alleged abuse seriously.
- Reassure the child, young person or vulnerable adult that they have done the right thing by telling you.
- Let them know you need to tell the Designated Safeguarding Officer. Do not promise total confidentiality.
- Let the child, young person or vulnerable adult speak freely but do not press for information.
- Let the child, young person or vulnerable adult know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.
- Record carefully (on the form provided) what you have heard whilst it is still fresh in your mind. Include the date and time of your conversation and any incident disclosed.

If any staff or member suspects abuse, or if a child, young person or vulnerable adult makes a disclosure, or if a person external to Viatores Christi reports a suspicion or allegation relating to Viatores Christi staff, members or activities, the following steps should be taken:

- Avoid any delay.
- Report this to the person designated as the Safeguarding Officer, immediately both verbally and in writing.
- If the suspicion or allegation relates to activities or persons working in a school or parish or diocesan setting, ensure that the relevant Safeguarding Officer or other appropriate authority is also informed.
- The Designated Safeguarding Officer will ensure a report is made and given to the appropriate Social Services Department (Tusla, here in Ireland) and Police Station. However, if urgent action is required to protect children this should be done immediately.
- No staff or other member will prejudice their own standing or position within Viatores Christi by responsibly reporting potential or suspected child abuse.

7. Confidentiality

Where child protection and welfare concerns arise, information must be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the best interest of the child or vulnerable adult involved. No undertaking regarding secrecy can be given to either adults or children in relation to child protection concerns, disclosures or allegations. Sharing information in reporting child protection or welfare concerns is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection. Viatores Christi will cooperate with the Child and Family Agency or An Garda Síochána on the sharing of information and records where a child welfare or protection issue arises. Parents and children have a right to know if personal information is being shared, unless doing so could put the child or vulnerable adult at further risk.

8. Reporting Form

Part One: Person Reporting
 Part Two: About the Child/Young Person(s)/Vulnerable Adult
 Part Three: About Your Concern

9. Viatores Christi's Responsibilities and How We Will Act

If a member of staff is the subject of an allegation of abuse, that staff member will be asked to take leave from their duties on full pay until an investigation has been completed. If a Viatores Christi member (on assignment, either overseas or on home mission or involved in Viatores Christi here at home) is the subject of an allegation of abuse, that member will be asked to withdraw from their work until an investigation has been completed. In all cases, it should be made clear that suspension does not imply guilt but rather protects all parties whilst an investigation is undertaken.

If a disclosure of abuse takes place in which the alleged abuser is staff or a member of Viatores Christi, or the incident has taken place on Viatores Christi premises or in connection with Viatores Christi activities, Viatores Christi will see that the statutory authorities are informed, in conjunction with our overseas partner, should this occur overseas.

If an allegation of abuse is made involving Viatores Christi staff or a member, this allegation, together with a record of the investigation undertaken and the outcome, will be recorded in their personnel files. Record keeping is of critical importance, as the ability to protect children and vulnerable adults requires accurate records to be maintained. Confidentiality regarding these records will be scrupulously maintained and kept in a safe and confidential manner. Paper records should be stored in a locked filing cabinet with restricted access. Information will only be released to those in positions of authority. If a member of Viatores Christi staff or anyone closely associated with Viatores

Christi work in some recognisable capacity is found to have committed acts in relation to children or vulnerable adults which are criminal or which contravene in a serious way the principles and standards set out in this policy, Viatores Christi will take disciplinary action and/or any other action which may be appropriate to the circumstances. If members are found to have committed such acts, the membership relationship will be ended.

10. Reviewing this policy and reporting to Viatores Christi's Council.

Viatores Christi will ensure that this policy is reviewed annually and that an annual report on any incidents relating to child safeguarding is made to Council.

11. Code of Behaviour

There are some simple rules and procedures that will minimise the risk of an incident occurring or being alleged. Most of these are common sense and will already be followed, but it is important that staff and members specifically check that they are being implemented in any event which involves children, young people or vulnerable adults.

- Treat everyone with respect, recognising their right to personal privacy.
- Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these.
- Plan and organise the event so that risks are minimised.
- Recognise that caution is required in all one-to-one situations.
- If it is a residential event, ensure that adults and children have separate sleeping accommodation.
- Provide access for children, young people and vulnerable adults to talk to others about any concerns they have.
- Encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable enough to point out attitudes and behaviour they do not like.
- Remember that someone else may misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned.
- Do not spend time alone with children – plan activities so that more than one adult is present or, at least, other people are within sight and hearing.
- Do not take children alone in a car, even for short journeys, unless this is unavoidable for safety reasons. If this is unavoidable, make sure an adult carer or another member of staff is aware it is happening.
- Avoid inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others.
- Avoid being drawn in to inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour, such as tantrums or crushes
- Avoid showing favouritism to any individual.
- Never make suggestive remarks or gestures, even in fun.
- Do not trivialise or exaggerate child abuse issues.
- Do not rely on just your good name to protect you.
- Do not believe "It could never happen to me"

Annex 1: Child Protection Legislation

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international treaty that recognises the human rights of children, defined as persons up to the age of 18 years. It was adopted by the UN in 1989 and ratified by Ireland in 1992. It pledges to protect and promote children's rights to survive and thrive, to learn and grow, to make their voices heard and to reach their full potential.

The Childcare Act 1991 is the primary legislation regulating child care policy in Ireland. Under the Child Care Act 1991 Act, as amended by the Child and Family Agency Act

2013, the Child and Family Agency (CFA) has a statutory duty to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection. Under the Act, the definition of a child is a person under 18 years of age who is not or has not been married. It establishes the principle that the welfare of the child is paramount.

The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 makes provision for the protection from civil liability of persons who have reported suspected child abuse reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of the Child and Family Agency or to any member of An Garda Síochána. This protection applies to organisations as well as to individuals. This means that even if a communicated suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the person who communicated the concern had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report. The Act also provides protection from penalisation by an employer.

The Criminal Justice Act (2006) (Section 176 Reckless Endangerment of Children) states that "a person, having authority or control over a child or abuse, who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by:

- (a) Causing or permitting any child to be placed or left in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child of being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse or
- (b) Failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation."

Children First–National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Young People

Children First was originally published in 1999 to give effect to the provisions of the Childcare Act 1991. It was up dated and re-issued in 2011. The Children First: National Guidance is intended to assist people in identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect and deal effectively with concerns. It emphasizes that the needs of children and families must be at the centre of child protection and welfare services, and that the welfare of children is of paramount importance. It highlights the roles and responsibilities of Tusla, The Child and Family Agency and An Garda Síochána, which are the two agencies with statutory responsibility for child protection. It also offers guidance to agencies and community and voluntary organisations (e.g. religious/faith sector, sporting organisations, etc.) that have contact with or provide services to children.

Annex 2: National Contacts for Tusla - Child and Family Agency and HSE Safeguarding and Protection Teams

The contact numbers may be updated from time to time. Please check Tusla / HSE website for latest information.

Area	Address	Telephone No.
Dublin North City	Child and Family Agency, Wellmount Health Centre, Wellmount Park, Finglas, Dublin 11	(01) 8567704
Dublin North	Ms. Mary McNutt HSE Safeguarding and Protection Team St Mary's Hospital Phoenix Park Dublin 20	(01) 7959528 Safeguarding.cho9@hse.ie