

Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy



Safeguarding Children Information

Policy, Principles and Guidance Document

May 2014

At a Congregation Leadership Team meeting on May 16th 2014, it was agreed that this Mercy Safeguarding Policy be adopted as Policy for all members of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, their Employees and Volunteers.

Date: 16th May 2014

Signed:

Margaret Casey



Contents

		<i>Page Number</i>
Introduction	Purpose of Mercy Congregation Safeguarding Policy	4
	7 Standards	5
Standard 1	Mercy Safeguarding Ethos Statement	6
	Our Safeguarding Children Structure	8
Standard 2	Procedures	10
	How a complaint is dealt with	13
Standard 3	Prevention	16
Standard 4	Training and Education	20
Standard 5	Communication	22
Standard 6	Access to Advice and Support	24
Standard 7	Implementation and Monitoring the Standards	26
	Appendices	30

Introduction: This document is The Safeguarding Policy, Principles and Guidance Document of The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, namely The Northern, Southern, South Central and Western Provinces in Ireland and the Kenyan, South African and USA Provinces.

Some countries have particular sets of guidelines as set out by the local jurisdictions, which will be implemented along with this Policy. In all countries the Congregational Policy needs to be read and interpreted in conjunction with applicable local laws.

Purpose:

The overall framework for this document is taken from The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI), is compliant with *Children First ROI, Cooperating to Safeguard Children N.I.* and applies to the four Provinces in Ireland.

Mercy Sisters are required to adhere to the laws of the Jurisdiction in which they reside. The Provinces in Kenya, South Africa and the USA along with the Communities in Brazil, Nigeria, Peru and Zambia will fulfill the requirements outlined in this document and make adaptations in accordance with their own local Jurisdictions.

The Purpose is:

- To ensure that all children are safe in all relationships with Mercy Sisters and with all Mercy employees and volunteers.
- To ensure that all Provinces in the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy have a Safeguarding Policy: (a) In Ireland which accords with Standards and Guidance required by NBSCCCI. (b) Overseas with due regard to local laws and Church guidance.
- To ensure that every Mercy Ministry* and Community has in place what is required of them by this Mercy Safeguarding Policy and the NBSCCCI Standards and Guidance Document.

***Mercy Ministry**

'Mercy Ministry' means 'the exercise of ministry by a Sister of Mercy and includes individual apostolates such as visitation of people in need and group apostolates in which Sisters of Mercy constitute a majority of those exercising governance.'

Although the Policy will always inform Congregational safeguarding actions necessitated in relation to Sisters of Mercy, the Policy does not have application to schools, hospitals, companies and other social services in respect of which National Government has promulgated specific Child Safeguarding Procedures.

In the implementation of this Policy careful regard shall be had to ensure conformity with State Law and with existing private contractual provisions.

MERCY SAFEGUARDING POLICY

7 STANDARDS

Standard 1	A written Safeguarding Ethos & Policy Statement
Standard 2	Procedures – how to respond to allegations and suspicions
Standard 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preventing harm to children• Recruitment and vetting• Code of Behaviour• Running safe activities for children
Standard 4	Training and education
Standard 5	Communicating the Church's Safeguarding message: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To children• To parents and adults• To other organisations
Standard 6	Access to advice and support
Standard 7	Implementing and monitoring the Standards

Standard 1

Mercy Safeguarding Ethos

&

Policy Statement

Standard 1

Mercy Safeguarding Ethos & Policy Statement

Mercy Sisters work with people under the age of 18 and have a written Policy on keeping children safe. This is generally known as a Child Safeguarding Policy.

Our Mercy Ethos & Policy Statement

Each child is a gift of God. As Mercy Sisters our ethos commits us to ensure that the fundamental rights of children are respected. In all circumstances we strive to create a supportive and caring environment where children are listened to, treated fairly, taken seriously and feel safe.

Inspired by Jesus' great love, respect and care for children and challenged by Catherine McAuley's faithfulness to His example, we Sisters of Mercy and all who share our lives and who work with us, commit ourselves to the wholesome development of every child and to his/her protection from harm or abuse of any form. We strive to do all in our power to safeguard the welfare of children to whom we minister or with whom we share our lives.

Our Principles, Standards and Guidelines will keep us focused on our Mercy Congregational Safeguarding Policy to safeguard children, to ensure we respond appropriately to allegations of abuse and will act as criteria for regular monitoring.

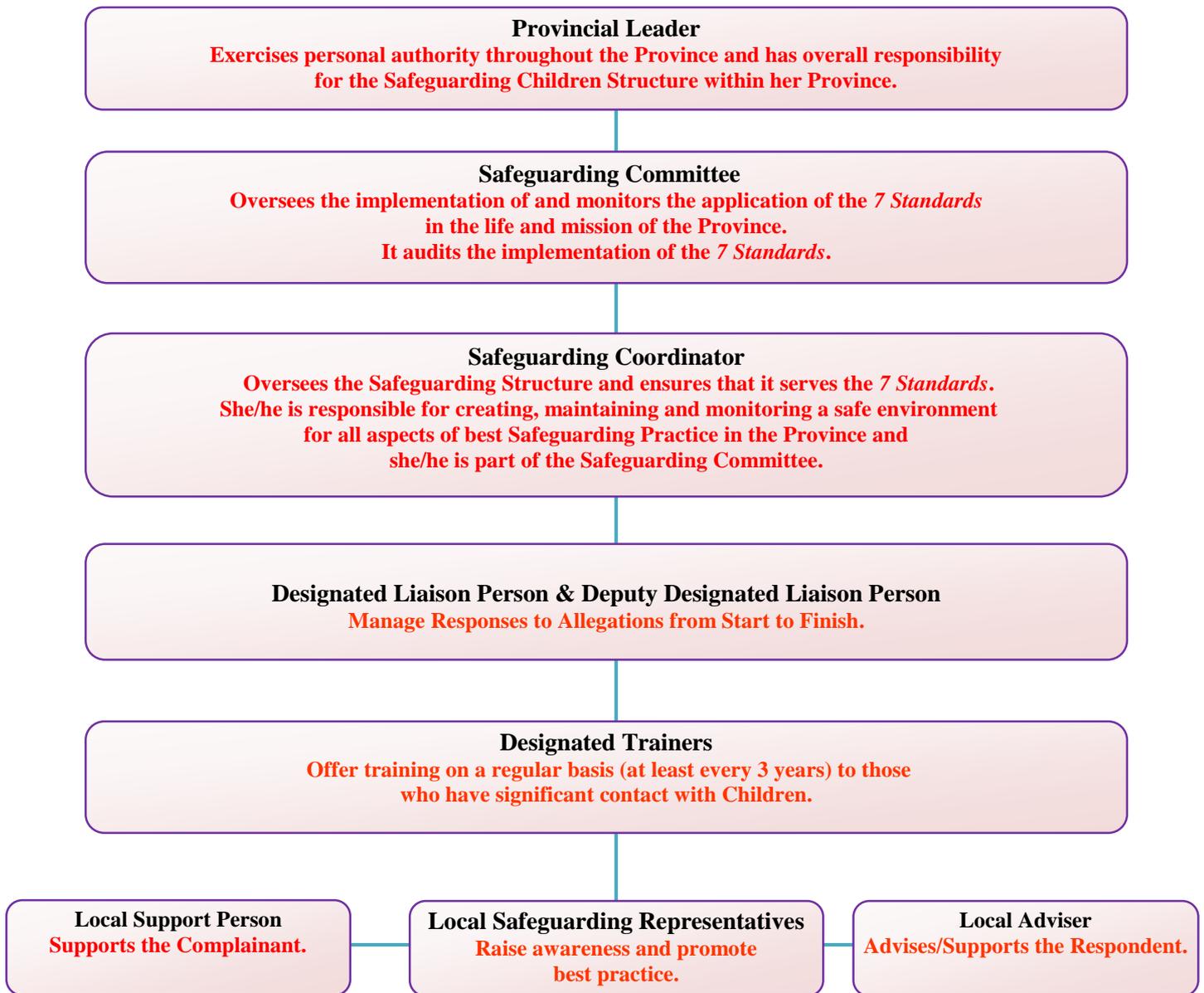
This ethos informs the OVERALL Mercy Policy. The Policy has been devised to ensure that the Mercy Sisters throughout the Congregation (Ireland, South Africa, Kenya, US, Nigeria, Zambia, Peru, Brazil, and other areas where Sisters live and minister) take every possible measure to safeguard children and to prevent abuse in all its forms. It aims to ensure that none of the sisters, employees or volunteers engage in behaviour that could allow abuse to occur or in actions that could be misinterpreted by children, their families or other adults as constituting or leading to abuse.

Note:

- The Policy belongs to all sisters, employees and volunteers. It informs the **7 Standards** as outlined in page 5 of this document.

The following diagram illustrates the formal structure for *Safeguarding Children* in each Province in the Congregation.

Our Safeguarding Children Structure



Footnotes:

- *In Provinces where a Manager is appointed, he/she fulfils the combined roles of the Safeguarding Coordinator and the Designated Liaison Person.*
- *Each Province must appoint a Deputy Designated Liaison Person who can act in the event that the Designated Liaison Person is not able to deal with a concern/allegation, where there may be a conflict of interest, or where he/she is unavailable due to absence or incapacity.*
- *In countries where the normal workings of civil authority have broken down or where the police cannot protect children, we take care to report to the local authorities who are best able to protect a child and cause no further harm.*

The Provincial Leader exercises personal authority throughout the Province and has overall responsibility to ensure that the *Safeguarding Children* Structure in her Province is effectively achieving the **7 Standards**.

The Safeguarding Committee oversees the implementation and monitors the application of the **7 Standards** in the life and mission of the Province. It audits the implementation of the **7 Standards**.

The Safeguarding Coordinator oversees the Safeguarding Structure and ensures that it serves the **7 Standards**. She is responsible for creating, maintaining and monitoring a safe environment for all aspects of best Safeguarding Practice in the province and she is part of the Safeguarding Committee

The Designated Liaison Person & The Deputy Designated Liaison Person manage responses to allegations of abuse from start to finish. (See p.12 & 13)

Manager: In Provinces where a Manager is appointed, he/she fulfils the combined roles of the Safeguarding Coordinator and the Designated Liaison Person.

The Designated Trainers offer training on a regular basis (at least every 3 years) to those who have significant contact with children.

The Local Safeguarding Representatives are responsible for raising awareness and promoting best practice in order to implement the **7 Standards** as outlined in this document. They do this with sisters, employees and volunteers.

Note: The Congregational Leader exercises personal authority in governing the entire Congregation. She leads and guides the Congregation in accordance with universal and proper law. She and her Team receive a Progress Report from each Province annually.

The National Case Management Review Group (NCMRG) under the auspices of the **NBSCCI** is the advisory panel for the four Provinces in Ireland. The purpose of the **NCMRG** is to provide high quality advice to Bishops, Religious Superiors/Provincials when they are called upon to respond to Safeguarding complaints/suspensions relating to Clergy and Religious. The advice will focus on the management of the investigation and assessment processes and make comment on the “fitness for ministry” of a respondent. The group will also review cases at different times according to the needs of each case.

The **NCMRG** is not available for consultation in relation to concerns regarding Employees and Volunteers. It is recommended that similar multi-disciplinary advice be available when addressing Employee and Volunteer complaints.

In countries outside of Ireland where similar advisory panels exist it is recommended that Sisters liaise with these services. If such a panel does not exist in these countries it is recommended that the Provincial Leader establishes such a panel in service of the Province. The composition of this panel should include the following skill set:

***Child Family Professional with Child Safeguarding expertise,
Adult Family Member/Parent.
Civil Lawyer,
Canon Lawyer,
Religious Sister/Brother or Priest.***

Each Community outside of Ireland needs to have a structure in place to receive complaints and to liaise with the Designated Liaison Person.

If you are concerned about a child please report your concern to the Designated Liaison Person or to the local HSE/NHSCT, (In countries outside of Ireland to the relevant Child Protection Services) or to the local Garda Síochána/Police. Contact details for the Designated Liaison Person, Deputy Designated Liaison Person along with the relevant civil authorities listed above should be prominently displayed in every community and place of ministry. (See template pg. 35)

Due to Data Protection and Confidentiality only those who need to know will be informed of the concern.

Standard 2

Procedures

Standard 2

Procedures

The Congregation must provide clear guidance to its Sisters, Employees and Volunteers on what to do when a concern arises in relation to an allegation against a Sister of Mercy, Employee or Volunteer*

A. Initial Reception of a Complaint of Abuse

What to do:

Be welcoming and supportive. Explain the procedure that any person making an allegation of abuse will be informed at the outset that the matter will be referred to the Designated Liaison Person and to the Civil Authorities.

Sensitively hear the person's story. Then explain the procedure and give the name and telephone number for the Designated Liaison Person, the HSE/NHSCT or equivalent and An Garda Síochána/Police.

Do not pass on the phone call or message to another Sister or lay person other than the Designated Liaison Person, HSE/NHSCT or equivalent and An Garda Síochána/Police. Certainly do not question the person or seek to investigate any detail of the allegation.

Be mindful of the rights of all involved - the person making the allegation and the respondent.

Make no promises that cannot be kept, particularly in relation to secrecy. It is essential that the person making the complaint be given the contact details of the Designated Liaison Person, HSE/NHSCT/Civil Child Protection Services and An Garda Síochána/Police as soon as possible. In all jurisdictions it is essential to follow Civil Law.

Record the name of the person who called, the date on which the call was received and inform the Designated Liaison Person.

Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation. In cases of emergency where there appears to be an immediate and serious risk, a report should be made to the local statutory body with responsibility for child protection as well as to the Designated Liaison Person. If these are not available contact your local police service.

The names and contact details of the Designated Liaison Person are displayed in each community and Mercy Ministry place. (See appendix 1.1 pg. 35)

****When a concern relates to an Employee due regard shall be had to any employment contract and applicable employment laws in the implementation of those parts of the procedures which have applicability. When a concern relates to a Volunteer due regard will be had to any rules of the organisation in which the Volunteer has been active in the implementation of those parts of these procedures which have applicability.***

B. How a complaint is dealt with

The person receiving the complaint refers it directly to the Designated Liaison Person in your Province.

The Designated Liaison Person, along with another person (possibly the support person) will:

- Receive information from the person making the allegation (Complainant).
- Inform the complainant of his/her rights and offer a Support Person.
- The Designated Liaison Person will inform the Provincial Leader and Civil Authorities as soon as possible after an allegation of abuse is received.
- Inform the NBSCCCI (Ireland) that an allegation has been received and that it has been referred to the Civil Authorities.
- Along with the Provincial, put the allegation to the Respondent and offer an Adviser*
- The Respondent may be asked to step aside from ministry as a precautionary measure for the duration of the investigation.
- Prepare a dossier for the NCMRG/relevant Panel to consider.
(Identities of respondents are included)
- Present dossier for the NCMRG/relevant Panel meeting.

The Provincial and Designated Liaison Person attend the NCMRG meeting.

Note:

It is important that there is a named Designated Liaison Person in each Country where Mercy Sisters live and minister. In communities outside of Ireland the position of the Designated Liaison Person can be shared with other Congregations/Dioceses.

****It is recommended that the Designated Liaison Person consults with the Civil Authorities regarding the timing of any interview with the respondent regarding the complaint. The Church enquiry is initiated and then suspended pending the outcome of any Civil Investigation.***

How a complaint is dealt with

1. Complainant makes the allegation

*2. Person\Sister receives the complaint. She gives the contact details of the Designated Liaison Person, the HSE or equivalent and An Garda Síochána\Police. She informs the Designated Liaison Person.

3. Designated Liaison Person gathers the presenting facts and circumstances of the allegation but does not investigate same.

4. Designated Liaison Person Informs Provincial/ Provincial Delegate & Reports the complaint to the Civil Authorities immediately upon receiving the complaint

5B: Inform the complainant of his/her rights and offer a support person.

5A. Designated Liaison Person creates a dossier and presents the report to the Provincial/Provincial Delegate who considers the dossier and decides if the case goes to N.C.M.R.G. /Relevant Advisory Panel outside of Ireland

*5C: When the respondent is informed of the allegation she is advised to obtain independent canonical, civil, legal advice and other supports. She is offered an adviser.

*6. Designated Liaison Person and Provincial/Provincial Delegate present the Case Submission Form to the N.C.M.R.G./Relevant Panel.

7. N.C.M.R.G. /Relevant Advisory Panel send their recommendations to the Provincial.

8. Provincial or Provincial Delegate receives the recommendations of N.C.M.R.G. /Relevant Panel

9. Provincial/ Provincial Delegate accounts to the N.C.M.R.G. /Relevant Advisory Panel re the implementation of recommendations

Note to 2. The complainant is encouraged to contact the Designated Liaison Person, H.S.E./H.S.C.T. or Equivalent, An Garda Síochána/Police.

Note to 5C. During both the civil investigation and the Church enquiry it may be necessary to restrict a respondent's exercise of her/his ministry/office. The provincial may request the respondent to withdraw from a particular ministry/office during the course of any civil or canonical investigation.

Note to 6. In Ireland a Case Submission Form is available from the NCMRG.

In the cases of allegations against Employees and Volunteers, State Guidelines and Legislation are complied with and as applicable, Employment and Volunteer procedures are fulfilled.

Whistle Blowing

Sisters, Volunteers and Employees must acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of their Religious Leaders/Supervisors/Managers. Although this can be difficult it is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

You may be the first to recognise that something is wrong but may not feel able to express your concerns out of a feeling that this would be disloyal to colleagues or you may fear harassment or victimisation. These feelings, **however natural, must never result in a child or young person continuing to be unnecessarily at risk.** Remember it is often the most vulnerable children or young people who are targeted. These children need someone like you to safeguard their welfare.

Don't think "what if I'm wrong" – think "what if I'm right"

How to Raise a Concern

- + You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can. The earlier a concern is expressed the easier and sooner action can be taken.
- + Try to pinpoint exactly what practice is causing you concern and why.
- + Approach your immediate Religious Leader/supervisor/manager.
- + If your concern is about your immediate Religious Leader/supervisor/manager then please contact the Designated Liaison Person or externally the National Office for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church (Ireland)/Relevant Board outside of Ireland
Make sure you get a satisfactory response - don't let matters rest.
- + Ideally, you should put your concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, giving names, dates and places wherever you can.
- + Sisters/Employees/Volunteers are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.

Guidance for a Complainant Who Is Dissatisfied With the Way the Province Has Dealt With a Concern

At Provincial level every avenue will be explored to deal with a complainant's concerns. If you are unhappy with the way the Province dealt with your concerns you can ask for an independent review. You cannot ask for the matter to be reinvestigated but you can ask for the process (i.e. how it was dealt with) to be reviewed.

You should write to the National Board (Ireland)/Relevant Panels outside of Ireland, setting out the reason why you are unhappy with the process. If you have any difficulty doing this, please contact the National Office (Ireland)/Relevant Panels outside of Ireland to discuss other ways they may be able to help you to ask for a review.

(See Whistle Blowing Policy in Appendices Pg. 44)

Guidance on Leave and Restriction from Ministry:

Procedures for managing concerns, suspicions and allegations are set out in Resources 2 & 15 of the Standards and Guidance Document (See Standard and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland p. 87). The Provincial leader should advise The National Office for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church / relevant body outside of Ireland of the following:-

- That an allegation has been received
- That it has been referred to the statutory authorities
- That a Church Inquiry will begin.

A Church inquiry is initiated and then suspended, pending the outcome of the civil investigation. No church investigation should interfere with the civil inquiries, which takes precedence at this stage. The respondent will be offered an adviser who will encourage her to obtain advice from both civil and canon lawyers. The provincial leader possesses all the necessary powers to take measures to promote and ensure the safety and welfare of children. During both a civil investigation and a church enquiry, it may be necessary to restrict the respondent's exercise of her office, ministry and apostolate. A respondent may be asked to withdraw from a particular office during the course of the civil as well as church investigation.

There are two factors which will determine the Provincial leader's action in this regard:-

- The credibility of the allegation received
- An assessment of the potential risk to children.

Each case will have to be considered on its own merits. Advice can be sought from the National Case Management Reference Group of the National Board or relevant body outside of Ireland. This advice should specifically include an assessment of the credibility of the allegation and the potential risk arising as a consequence.

While the matter is pending the respondent enjoys the presumption of innocence and the right to her good name. Respondents shall be provided with an appropriate place to live and where possible given a suitable activity.

Standard 3

Prevention

Standard 3

Prevention

As a Congregation we are committed to transparency and openness at all times. We continue to develop a culture of safety that minimizes risks to children.

A. Safe Recruitment

We value and rely heavily on time and commitment given by our sisters, employees and volunteers to participate in our Mercy mission. Safe recruitment also includes the admission and incorporation of new members to the Mercy Congregation. New members are to be given training in child safeguarding/ protection and may not work with children until they have received this training. It is important to take all possible steps to prevent unsuitable people working with children in all our ministries.

Safe Recruitment and Selection Checklist:

- Define the role/job description. Make reference to working with and having responsibility for children.
- What contact with Children will the job involve – supervised / unsupervised? Other forms of contact – e.g. telephone, e –mail, letter, internet.
- Desirable qualifications and skills
- Written Application Forms
- Interview
- Declaration/Vetting
- Identification
- Induction, Training and Probation.

For a checklist for recruitment and selection of employees and volunteers see **(NBSCCCI Standards and Guidance Document: pg. 64-66, Resource 3.)**

For a sample declaration form see **NBSCCCI Standards and Guidance Document pg. 67 - Resource 4**

For examples of child safeguarding questions to ask during the recruitment process see **NBSCCCI: pg.68 - Resource 5**

Supervision of staff is a key element of best practice.

B. Codes of Behaviour

A code of behaviour is a clear and concise guide of what is and is not acceptable behaviour and practice. It is important that everyone is clear about what is and is not acceptable behaviour when working with children. This code of behaviour is to be displayed in each community/house and in places of Mercy Ministry.

NBSCCCI Standards and Guidance Document: pg.69 & Resource 6

Mercy Code of Behaviour

The effective implementation of this Policy requires commitment by all Sisters of Mercy, employees and volunteers to our Code of Good Behaviour. The Code must be signed by each person as an indication of her/his commitment to fully enact it in her/his work with children. The Code of Good Behaviour requires all to:

- Treat all children with respect and courtesy.
- Respect the boundary of physical and emotional space that others require, using touch in a prudent and responsible way. Touch should only ever be in response to the child's needs and never in an intrusive or sexualized way.
- Help children to develop their own sense of their rights as well as helping them to know what they can do if they feel that there is a problem.
- Never develop overfamiliar relationships or create over dependency in relating with children.
- Be visible to other adults when working with children
- Never stay in the same room alone with a minor
- When we have responsibility for transporting children, we ensure that our guidelines are followed. Except in cases of emergency a driver will never transport a child alone, and inform someone immediately if he/she does so. Vehicles must be road worthy, taxed and insured; drivers must hold a full license and must be fit to drive safely.
- Ensure whenever reasonably possible that another adult is present or close by when providing pastoral ministry to a minor.
- Challenge and report potential abusive behaviour.
- Develop a culture that enables children to talk openly about their contact with staff or others.
- Help children to develop a sense of their own rights and what to do if they are being violated.
- Do not use inappropriate communication with children through the internet, e-mail, text messages or otherwise.
- Never condone or participate in behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- Never develop relationships with children that could be deemed to be exploitative or abusive.
- Ensure that permission of parents/guardians is given when taking photographs and making videos or other recordings of children in the course of ministry to them.
- Do not engage in any of the following behaviours – striking, slapping, physical, sexual or emotional abuse of any kind including the use of provocative language.
- Never act in a way that is intended to shame, belittle, intimidate or degrade.
- Never provide alcohol or any drug substance to a minor.
- Never provide medication to a minor. This is the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

C. Safe Activities

The welfare of children and young people must be of paramount consideration. In both our Communities and Mercy Ministries there should be clear guidelines for Mercy Sisters, employees and volunteers on what to do to keep children safe before, during and after you have involved them in activities. It is important that all possible steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people working with children. There is a Safe Recruitment and Selection Checklist in the **NBSCCCI Standards and Guidance Document: pg. 64– 66** for Sisters, Employees and Volunteers. While applying the Checklist the following must be included:

- ▣ Written Application, Interview, Identification, Qualifications, References, Vetting Procedure and Record Keeping see pages **NBSCCCI Standards and Guidance Document : pg. 64– 66**
- ▣ Declaration Form for all persons working as employees or volunteers with children and young people see **NBSCCCI Standards and Guidance Document: pg. 67 – Resource 4**
- ▣ Supervision
Children are less likely to experience accidents or other harms if they are supervised properly. Activities should be organised so that they maximise participation, fun and learning, but they must also be safe. It is important to ensure that:

- ◆ children are never left unattended
- ◆ when boys and girls are present, adequate numbers of workers of both sexes are available to supervise the activities.

Recommended (not statutory) ratio of adults per number of children:

0-2 yrs.	2-3 yrs.	3-7 yrs.	8 yrs. and over
1 staff to 3 children	1 staff to 4 children	1 staff to 8 children (6 children for outdoor activities)	2 staff to 20 children (15 children for outdoor activities)

There should be 1 additional staff member for every 10 children

If the activities involve staying away from home overnight, attention should also be paid to the following:

- ◆ safe methods of transport
- ◆ adequate insurance to cover all aspects of the trip
- ◆ written parental consent for each individual trip - this should include emergency contact details, permission for treatment in the case of an emergency and other pertinent information in relation to the child see **NBSCCCI Standards and Guidance Document: pg. 70 Resource 7**
- ◆ relevant information about the children, such as allergies, medical problems and special needs
- ◆ appropriate and well supervised sleeping arrangements
- ◆ respect for the privacy of children and young people in dormitories, changing rooms and toilets.

- ▣ Health and Safety Statement

Mercy sisters living and ministering in Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Kenya, South Africa, Zambia, Nigeria, USA, Peru, Brazil, and other areas of residency and ministry will implement the relevant Jurisdictional /Diocesan Safeguarding Policy in conjunction with this Policy.

Training and Education

Standard 4

Training and Education

There are opportunities for all Mercy personnel to develop and maintain the necessary attitudes, skills and knowledge to keep children safe.

Caring for children to the highest possible standards requires initial and ongoing training. Sisters, employees and volunteers who work with children will receive training in our Congregation's Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures. Training will focus on attitudes deemed to be consistent with our Mercy Ethos and Values. From this reference place, opportunities for skill development and up-to-date knowledge around the individual's role in child protection are provided according to need. This will include clear information on how to respond to suspicions and allegations of child abuse.

Those who hold additional responsibilities for child protection, participate in specific training programmes approved by the National Board for Safeguarding Children or a similar recognised body in the country where Sisters are domiciled. All other training programmes must be approved by the Provincial or Designated Liaison Person. Our Child Protection Policy is kept very much to the fore at all times.

Key Points:

- Child Safeguarding Training needs are regularly identified and an implementation plan put in place.
- Each Child Safeguarding role accesses training appropriate to the role.
- Resources are provided for training needs (this includes budget)

For identification of training needs
see **NBSCCCI Standards and Guidance Document: Pg. 71 – Resource 8**

Communication

Standard 5

Communication

Communicating our *Safeguarding Children* message to employees, volunteers and external agencies is crucial to the effective implementation of our procedures to keep children safe.

The following methods of communication exist within Mercy so that the **Safeguarding Children Ethos & Policy Statement** is known, understood and can be used by everyone.

Our Congregational Safeguarding Ethos & Policy is publicly available through our website:
www.sistersofmercy.ie

Our *Childcare Safeguarding Ethos & Policy Statement*, *Mercy Code of Behaviour* and *Initial Reception of Complaint of Abuse* are prominently and permanently displayed in all our places of residence and ministry.

When new employees/volunteers are engaged in Mercy activities they receive training in the Safeguarding Children Policy.

Questions: **NBSCCCI Standards and Guidance Document: pg. 48**

Access to Advice and Support

Standard 6

Access to Advice and Support

Child abuse is distressing and warrants speedy advice and support. We have a duty to ensure advice and support is available to help Sisters, Employees and Volunteers play their part in protecting children. Children also need someone to turn to when they are being abused. It is important to give them information about what, where and how to get help and to advise them if they have a concern.

Offer the support of the Designated Liaison Persons/Local Support Persons/Local Advisers.

In Ireland/Northern Ireland:

The National Office for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church is located: New House, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.

Tel: 01 5053124

In Ireland/Northern Ireland the specialist advice is obtained from the local HSE/NHSCT. Other agencies in Ireland include

Towards Healing - Tel. 1800 303416 (from ROI)
Ph. 0800 0963315 (from Northern Ireland and the UK)
Email: info@towardshealing.ie

Other agencies in the ROI include:

ISPCC/Childline	– Tel: 1800 666 666
Rape Crisis Centre	– Tel: 1800 77 88 88
Barnardos	– Tel: 1850 222 300

Agencies in Northern Ireland include:

CHILDLINE: 0800 11 11
STOP IT NOW: 0808 1000 900
Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Centre: 028 90 32 90 02
Barnardos: 028 906 723 66
NSPCC: 0800 800 5000

Outside of ROI make a list of the services, authorities and organisations in your area that can provide assistance to children. These lists will need to contain essential contact details and will need to be kept up to date.

Online Resource:

Kimmage Open and Distance Education (*kode*) are offering three courses per year on **Child Protection in Development Practice**. This, online 8 week course, aims to define essential child protection Standards for all organizations. It presents how child protection policies and procedures can be developed and implemented.

For further details: e - mail: kode@kimmagedsc.ie Web: www.kodeonline.com

Ref: NBSCCCI Standards and Guidance Document: pg. 72 & R 9 Responding to a child making an allegation of abuse.

Implementation and Monitoring the Standards

Standard 7

Implementation and Monitoring the Standards

The Mercy Sisters will continue to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their Mercy Congregational Safeguarding Policy

The Congregational Leader in consultation with her Team leads and guides the Congregation in accordance with universal and proper law. The seven Provincial Leaders or their delegates will connect with the CLT and review the living out of the **7 Standards** at least once a year.

A Progress Report from each Province is submitted in advance of these meetings. During the month of September each year, a Template of the format of this Report will be provided by CLT. (See Appendix 7 pgs. 60-64)

The Provincial Leader has overall responsibility for monitoring, auditing and ensuring the implementation of the **7 Standards** in her Province. To ensure the ongoing implementation of the Safeguarding Policy, financial and human resources need to be available. Each province reviews the implementation of The Mercy Congregation Safeguarding Policy as and when required. This needs to be done at least every three years to take account of changes in legislation and guidance.

The Safeguarding Committee oversees the implementation and monitors the application of the **7 Standards** in the life and mission of the Province. It audits the implementation of the **7 Standards**.

The Safeguarding Coordinator oversees the Safeguarding Structure and ensures that it serves the **7 Standards**. She/he is responsible for creating, maintaining and monitoring a safe environment for all aspects of best Safeguarding Practice in the province. She/he is part of this Safeguarding Committee

Designated Liaison Person & Deputy Designated Liaison Person manage responses to allegations of abuse from start to finish. (See p.12 &13 of this Policy)

Manager: In Provinces where a Manager is appointed, he/she fulfils the combined roles of the Safeguarding Coordinator and the Designated Liaison Person. (Appendices 1.2 & 1.3 pgs. 36-40)

Designated Trainers offer training on a regular basis (at least every 3 years) to those who have significant contact with children.

The Local Safeguarding Representatives are responsible for raising awareness and promoting best practice in order to implement the **7 Standards** as outlined in this document. This includes Employees and Volunteers.

The Congregation is committed to achieving each Standard.

The check list for each Standard (see The 'Self Audit Tool' in NBSCCCI Standard and Guidance Document pg. 27 – 34) outlines the minimum requirements (criteria) that we are committed to uphold. The Audit is fed back to the Safeguarding Coordinator and the cycle of Training/Education is renewed.

In ROI & Northern Ireland Statutory audits and reviews by the NBSCCCI will take place periodically.

Questions to Ask when Implementing the Seven Standards. (For more detail see Appendix 6:1 pg.54)

<p><u>STANDARD 1</u> A Written Safeguarding Policy Statement</p>	<p>Do you have a copy of the RSM Ethos & Policy Statement in a prominent/visible place in the community/mission site?</p>
<p><u>STANDARD 2</u> How to respond to allegations, concerns and suspicions</p>	<p>Do you know where and how to access the RSM Safeguarding Policy Booklet?</p> <p>Do you know what to do if an allegation, concern or suspicion is disclosed to you?</p>
<p><u>STANDARD 3</u> Prevention Recruitment, Vetting, Code of Behaviour, running safe activities for children</p>	<p>Do you know what the Code of Behaviour is for all Sisters, Employees and Volunteers?</p> <p>Do you know the guidelines for recruiting Staff, Volunteers, and Candidates to the Congregation?</p> <p>Do you know the guidelines for creating a safe environment for activities of children?</p>
<p><u>STANDARD 4</u> Training and Education</p>	<p>Have you had/or organised a training in Safeguarding Awareness, responding to Allegations, Code of Behaviour and Recruiting Practices?</p> <p>Do you know who to contact to get information about the Training and Education as outlined above?</p>
<p><u>STANDARD 5</u> Communicating the Safeguarding Policy to children, parents, adults and other organisations.</p>	<p>Do you know where to access the NBSCCCI Guidelines or similar documents e.g. <i>Children First</i> (ROI) and <i>Cooperating to Safeguard Children</i> (NI)</p> <p>Do you know the contact details of the Designated Liaison Person/Deputy Designated Liaison Person, HSE/NHSCT, An Garda Síochána/Police and other relevant Agencies?</p> <p>What are you doing in your community and ministry site to ensure all are aware of your RSM Safeguarding Policy?</p>
<p><u>STANDARD 6</u> Access to Advice and Support</p>	<p>Do you know who to go to for advice & support on any safeguarding & risk management issues?</p>
<p><u>STANDARD 7</u> Implementing and Monitoring the Standards</p>	<p>Who are the key people responsible for the implementing and monitoring of the Standards?</p> <p>What is the RSM plan of action to make sure that this happens?</p> <p>Do you know the check list audit/NBSCCCI Standards and Guidance Document to help you to do this?</p>

APPENDICES

	Page
Mercy Safeguarding Ethos & Policy	31
1. Definition of abuse	32
1.1 Designated Liaison Person's Job Description	33
1.2 Safeguarding Manager	36
1.3 Job Description of Safeguarding Manager	37
1.4 Child Protection Recording Form	40
1.5 Parental Consent Form	43
2. Whistleblowing Policy	44
2.1 Complaints Procedure	46
3. Best Practice - Safe Recruitment, Vetting & Selection	47
3.1 Sample Application Form for those with Substantial Access to Children	49
3.2 Declaration Form for all Persons working with Children and Young People	51
3.3 Confidential Reference Check	52
4. Questionnaire re Training Needs	53
5. Recognized Children's Service Providers in Your Area	54
6. Checklist for Monitoring Compliance with Standards	55
6.1 Ways of Providing Evidence re: Implementation of Policy	58
7. Annual Progress Report	60

Mercy Safeguarding Ethos & Policy Statement

Mercy Sisters work with people under the age of 18 and have a written Policy on keeping children safe. This is generally known as a Child Safeguarding Policy.

Our Mercy Ethos & Policy Statement

Each child is a gift of God. As Mercy Sisters our ethos commits us to ensure that the fundamental rights of children are respected. In all circumstances we strive to create a supportive and caring environment where children are listened to, treated fairly, taken seriously and feel safe.

Inspired by Jesus' great love, respect and care for children and challenged by Catherine McAuley's faithfulness to His example, we Sisters of Mercy and all who share our lives and work with us, commit ourselves to the wholesome development of every child and to their protection from harm or abuse of any form. We strive to do all in our power to safeguard the welfare of children to whom we minister or with whom we share our lives.

Our Principles, Standards and Guidelines will keep us focused on our Mercy Congregational Safeguarding Policy to ensure we respond appropriately to allegations of abuse and will act as criteria for regular monitoring.

This ethos informs the OVERALL Mercy Policy. The Policy has been devised to ensure that the Mercy Sisters throughout the Congregation (Ireland, South Africa, Kenya, US, Nigeria, Zambia, Peru, Brazil, and other areas where Sisters live and minister) take every possible measure to prevent abuse in all its forms. It aims to ensure that none of the sisters, employees or volunteers engage in behaviour that could allow abuse to occur or in actions that could be misinterpreted by children, their families or other adults as constituting or leading to abuse.

APPENDIX 1.

*In the context of this document a **Child** is a person under 18 years and **Child Abuse** refers to a form of maltreatment of a child which generally involves one or more of the following:*

Physical abuse which is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child;

Emotional abuse is the persistent or significant emotional ill-treatment or rejection of a child resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and /or behavioural development of the child. All abuse involves some emotional ill treatment;

Sexual abuse is the sexual exploitation of a child. It entails the involvement of children and adolescents in sexual activities which they do not fully comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate the sexual taboos of family roles;

Neglect is the persistent or significant neglect of, or the failure to protect a child from any kind of danger, or the persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

How to recognise Child Abuse: Recognising child abuse is not easy. It is **not** an individual's responsibility to decide if it has taken place. Her/his responsibility is to be alert to its signs and to contact the Designated Officer if there are concerns. (Remember many children will at times exhibit some of these indicators that can be explained.) Some useful indicators of child abuse are:

<i>Physical abuse</i>	<i>Emotional abuse</i>	<i>Sexual abuse</i>	<i>Neglect</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ unexplained bruising, or marks of injuries on any part of the body including hand or finger marks ○ cigarette burn/s ○ bite marks ○ broken bones ○ scalds. <p>Changes in behaviour- fear of parents being approached, temper outbursts, flinching when approached or touched, aggression, reluctance to get changed into sports gear etc., depression, withdrawn, running away.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ failure to thrive, particularly if the child puts on weight in other circumstances e.g. when away from home ○ sudden speech disorders ○ developmental delay-physically or emotionally. <p>Changes in behaviour - sulking, hair twisting, rocking, unable to play, fear of making mistakes, self-harm, fear of parents being approached regarding their behaviour.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ pain, itching, bruising or bleeding in the genital area ○ sexually transmitted diseases ○ vaginal discharge or infection ○ discomfort when walking or sitting down ○ stomach pains ○ pregnancy. <p>Changes in behaviour - unexplained aggression, withdrawn, fear of being left with a specific person/people, nightmares, running away, sexual knowledge, drawings or language beyond age, bedwetting, eating problems, self harm sometimes leading to suicide attempts, secrets they cannot share, substance or drug abuse, unexplained sources of money, not allowed to have friends, sexually explicit actions towards adults.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ constant hunger - sometimes stealing food from other children ○ constantly 'dirty' or smelly ○ constant underweight or loss of weight ○ being left alone or unsupervised ○ inappropriate dress for conditions. <p>Changes in behaviour - tiredness, not seeking medical assistance and/or failing to keep appointments, having few friends.</p>

DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSONS' JOB DESCRIPTION

- 1) Receives information about a concern or allegation or suspicion of child abuse in the presence of another person. She informs the Provincial.
- 2) Ensure the procedure for management of suspicions, concerns, and allegations is followed and a referral made to statutory authority.
- 3) Create a child protection case file that includes a log of actions as indicated in the recording form for every referral. *(Entries should be made as soon as possible and before the end of the day. Ensure time, date and signature are recorded.)*
- 4) Collect all written records in relation to the case and place them on the Child Protection case file.
- 5) Explain procedures for addressing concern/allegation to the person who has raised the concern (including parent or guardian). All concerns and allegations are reported to statutory bodies and to the Provincial.
- 6) Contact emergency or appropriate services where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk of harm. An immediate referral should be made to the statutory services to ensure that under no circumstance is a child left in a dangerous situation pending Health and Social Services intervention. Consideration should, in all cases, also be given to whether an immediate referral is necessary in order to preserve and safeguard against the possibility of any loss, deterioration or destruction of potential evidence or forensic evidence.
- 7) Make enquiries to identify the present and previous appointments of the respondent to establish whether there are any previous concerns about his/her practice, or any current grounds for concern about his/her practice.
- 8) Alert the adviser/ support person to be on standby, without identifying the respondent.

- 9) It is recommended that the Designated Liaison Person consults with the civil authorities regarding the timing of any interviewing with the respondent regarding the complaint. The Church enquiry is initiated and then suspended pending the outcome of any civil investigation. The Designated Liaison Person informs the respondent of the allegation and the process being followed. The respondent needs to be given enough detail about the allegation and the person raising it, to be able to offer a response. A written record of the interview must be prepared, agreed with the respondent, signed and dated.
- a) The respondent shall be given information about his or her entitlement to seek legal advice (both civil and, where appropriate, canonical) and about the child protection process.
 - b) The respondent should be informed that he/she is not obliged, in law, to respond or to furnish evidence, but that any statement provided will be taken into account in the investigation.
 - c) As agreed above the respondent should be informed of the nature and detail of the allegation and the name of the person raising it. The respondent shall be offered the services of the Adviser.
- 10) Manages concerns, suspicions, and allegations of abuse involving personnel in Mercy and in its ministries. The Child Protection Recording Form is completed by the Designated Liaison Person (Appendix 1:4 pg. 40)
- 11) In cases where a Designated Liaison Person has concerns about a child but is unsure whether to make a referral, she should seek advice on the appropriate steps to be taken (National Safeguarding Children Office, Health Service Executive/Health & Social Services, Police Service.)
- 12) The Designated Liaison Person must keep a written record of the outcome of the consultation with any of the above services. Decisions not to refer a matter must always be in consultation with the National Office or appropriate authority in the country where they are domiciled.
- 13) Refer to the NCMRG /Relevant Panel when appropriate.
- 14) Follow the advice given by the statutory authorities where the protection concern has been referred to them. Allow the statutory authorities to make their enquiries unimpeded. Do not visit the family or contact members without prior discussion with investigators.

- 15) Maintain a dialogue with the Investigating Officer or Social Worker to monitor the progress of the case and act on any advice given. Record details of contacts made in the Protection case file.
- 16) Ask in writing for an update from the statutory authority about the outcome of their investigation.
- 17) Conduct an internal investigation at the conclusion of any external investigation or where no such investigation has taken place. An internal investigation will be initiated in cases where child protection concerns remain or where disciplinary action needs to be considered.

Such an investigation will gather and assess available information from all sources and witnesses. Every effort should be made in consultation with the statutory authorities to avoid the necessity to interview a child for the purpose of disciplinary inquiries.

This investigation (which takes place after the statutory enquiries have been completed) should be conducted expeditiously, taking no longer than three months, wherever possible. In cases where there is a delay, and particularly where a person has been removed from active ministry, it is important to keep everyone informed of the progress of the investigation and to maintain records of such communications. There can be no excuse for a respondent being left uninformed and 'in limbo' indefinitely.

Where an investigation concerns a religious, the requirements of Canon Law will be observed and will be carried out by the Mercy province or someone delegated by it. (Canon 1717)

Contact details for Designated Liaison Person/Deputy Designated Liaison Person will be displayed in communities and places of Mercy Ministry.

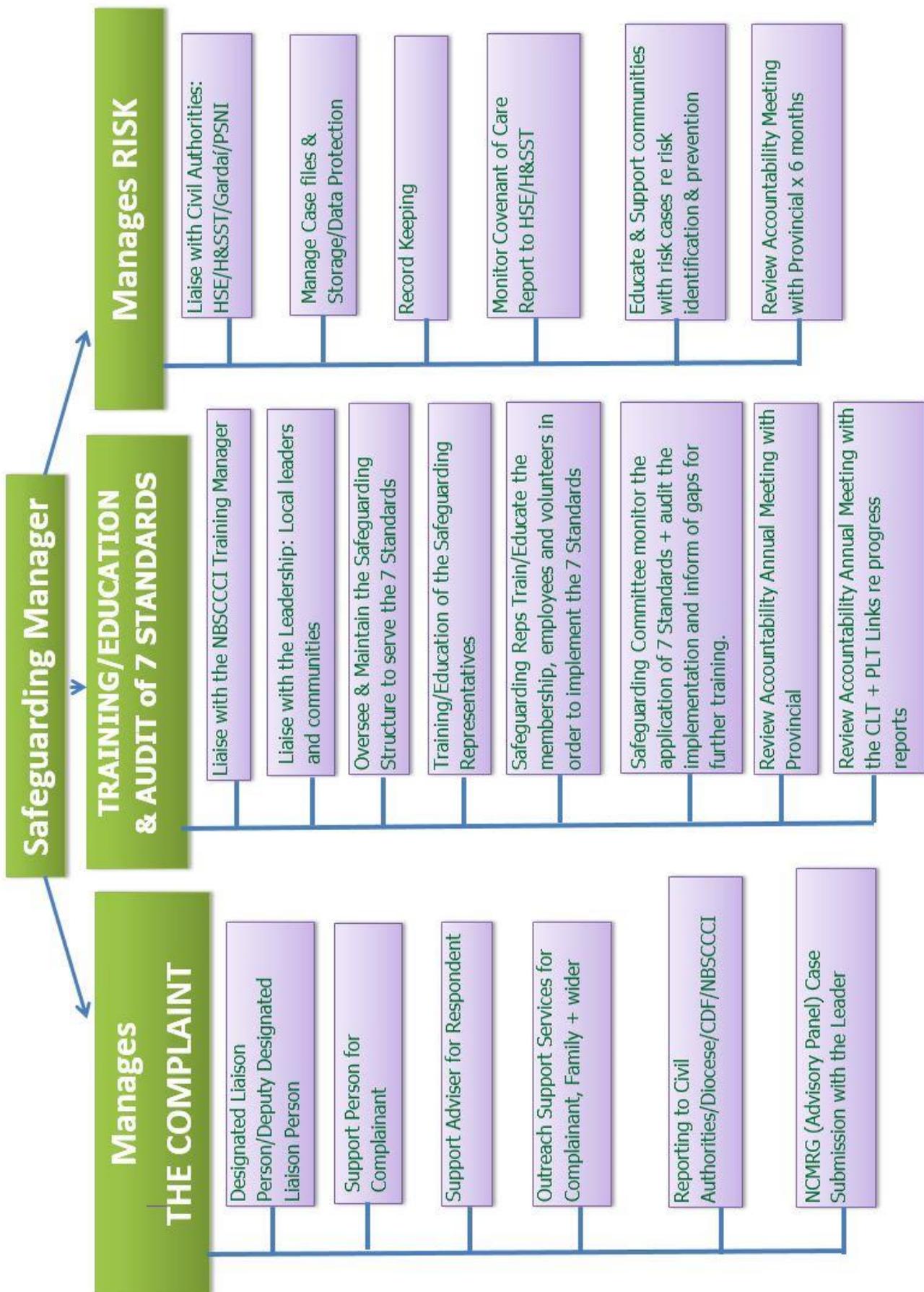
Name	Telephone No	Mobile No

**Contact Details for Local HSE Office/Health & Social Care Trust/
Child Protection Services in Countries outside of Ireland**

Name	Telephone Number

Contact details for local Garda Síochána/Police

Name	Telephone No	Mobile No



JOB DESCRIPTION OF SAFEGUARDING MANAGER

In Provinces where a Safeguarding Manager is appointed, there are three broad aspects to the post:-

A. MANAGING COMPLAINTS

Acts as the Designated Liaison Person for Safeguarding children as set out in the NBSCCCI Standards and Guidance Document (2008) pg. 55

- To hear any concerns relating to safeguarding, including any disclosures or allegations of abuse, and take responsibility for managing the response to that concern or disclosure from start to finish.
- To carry out the preliminary inquiry and referral to the civil authorities: HSE/NHSCT/ or Equivalent/An Garda Síochána/PSNI/Police and any subsequent internal investigations.
- To ensure that the person raising a concern, disclosing abuse, or making an allegation and anyone who is implicated by that are regularly informed about the progress of the inquiry process.
- To liaise with the NBSCCCI Office/relevant bodies and have an overview of all matters dealt with under these procedures within the Province/Congregation
- To share information with the local diocese when required.
- To carefully record all steps undertaken as part of these procedures.
- To work with the Deputy Designated Liaison Person as required e.g. in the event of a conflict of interest, or to offer choice to children or adults coming forward etc.
- To ensure that there is a SUPPORT PERSON available to the complainant
- To ensure that a SUPPORT ADVISER is available to the respondent
- To ensure that OUTREACH SUPPORT SERVICES are available to the complainant and wider as required
- To prepare the Case Submission Dossier and attend the Advisory Panel Meeting (NCMRG) with the Provincial as required.

B. MANAGING TRAINING, COMMUNICATION AND AUDIT

Acts as the Safeguarding Co-ordinator for children as set out by NBSCCCI Training Manager:

- To support the Provincial in the creation and management of safe environments through the establishment and development of policy and procedures for the Congregation (NBSCCCI/RSM Congregation Safeguarding Policy & Procedures).

- **Responsibilities include the following:**
 - Liaise with the NBSCCCI Training Manager
 - Liaise with the different levels of leadership and Communities/membership
 - Oversee and maintain the safeguarding structure that serves the seven standards
 - Co-ordination of Safeguarding Committee and related activities e.g. training, implementing + monitoring of seven standards etc.
 - Co-ordination and training of the Safeguarding Representatives/Local Safeguarding Committee re implementation of the seven standards carried out with the membership and personnel e.g. employees, volunteers etc.
 - Ensuring the annual audit, including correlation of records for training related activities
 - Ensuring the completion of training needs assessments across the various safeguarding roles in the Province Safeguarding Structure
 - With the Provincial ensuring that the Province has the appropriate personnel in place.
 - To prepare for/attend an annual accountability review meeting with the Provincial re progress reports on the structure and the seven standards
 - Ensuring that there are clear procedures and mechanisms to communicate the safeguarding policy and procedures of the Province including the updating of the website safeguarding data.
 - To participate in on-going professional development consistent with the post and changing safeguarding demands in light of State Inquiries/NBSCCCI audit outcomes.

C. MANAGING RISK

Acts as a Risk Manager with responsibilities to include:

- To liaise with the civil authorities: HSE/NHSCT, An Garda Síochána/ PSNI/ Diocese/ NBSCCCI
- To Liaise with the Support & Advice Agencies e.g. *Towards Healing, Rape Crisis Centre, etc.*
- To put in place and liaise with support persons and advisors to monitor Covenant of Care (*agreement drawn up between the congregation and the individual who is considered to be a possible risk*) in consultation with the HSE/NHSCT & Gardaí/PSNI as required.
- Record Keeping
- Manage Case files/ Storage in accordance with data protection
- Educate and support communities with risk cases for risk identification and prevention.
- Prepare for/attend risk management accountability meetings with the Provincial once every 6 months or as needed.

Additional Duties and Responsibilities

- Supervise and support the functions of the internal safeguarding structure and personnel in the service of the seven standards and other Church and State Guidelines/requirements.
- Represent the Province at Safeguarding Meetings.
- Other duties specified from time to time by the Provincial

Accountability Structure

The Safeguarding Manager will:

- Be accountable to the Link Person on the Provincial Leadership Team (PLT) with responsibility for safeguarding (line manager) and ultimately responsible to the Provincial Leader.
- Report on a monthly basis or as required to the PLT- Link Person
- To submit annual progress report to the PLT using the standard RSM Template

- To attend annual accountability meeting with the Provincial + PLT Link Person -> Annual Congregational Accountability Review Meeting with the PLT Link Persons + CLT Person for Safeguarding.

APPENDIX 1.4

CHILD PROTECTION RECORDING FORM

(To be used by the Designated Liaison Person)

1 The Disclosure/Concern

Date of disclosure/concern _____ Time of disclosure/concern _____

How was information received? (Attach any written information to this form)

Telephone Letter Email In person

2 Details of Person Making Disclosure/Raising Concern

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____ Mobile: _____

Email: _____

Relationship to Child or Alleged Victim _____

3 Details of Child or Alleged Victim

Name: _____ DOB: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____ Mobile _____

Ethnic origin: _____ Language (is interpreter needed?) _____

Disability: _____ Special needs: _____

4 Parent/Care Details (where appropriate)

Name: _____

Address: (if different from above) _____

Tel: _____ Mobile: _____

Are they aware of the Allegation, Suspicion or Complaint?

Yes

No

5 Details of Respondent

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____ Mobile: _____

Relationship to child: _____ Position in organisation: _____

Address at time of incident(s) _____

Current contact with children if known (Board member, runs youth activities etc.)

Any additional information _____

6 Details of Concern, Allegation or Complaint

(Includes dates/times and location the incident occurred, witnesses, if known. Does the child/victim know this referral is being made?)

7 Action Taken

Has the matter been referred to civil authorities?

Yes

No

If Yes: Date _____ Time _____

If No explain why

Who was it referred to?

Name: _____

Designation: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____ Email: _____

Has the matter been referred to the Designated Liaison Person or Provincial? Yes No

If yes: Date _____ Time _____

If no explain why _____

Who was it referred to?

Name: _____

Designation: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____ Email: _____

8 Next Steps

What actions were agreed and by whom when the matter was referred to the civil/Province authorities?

Are there any immediate child protection concerns? If so please record what they are and state what actions have been taken to address them and by whom?

9 Designated Liaison Person(s) detail:

Date form sent _____

10 Details of person completing the form

Name: _____

Tel: _____ Mobile: _____ Email: _____

Position in Province/ministry _____

Form completed: Signed: _____ Date _____ Time _____

(A copy must be retained by the recipient and filed in a secure location and a copy must be sent to the designated officer and civil/statutory authorities.)

Parental Consent Form

Activity permission form for persons under 18 years

1 Name of organisation: _____

Venue/activity/group/event: _____

Date/time: _____

Name of group leader: _____

2 Name of child/young person: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____ Date of birth: _____

Give details of any medical condition of which the organisers need to be aware. Please include details of any medication which has to be taken or dietary requirements. (Information will be kept confidential)

3 I have read all the information provided concerning the programmes of activity. I hereby request permission for my son/daughter/ward to participate in the above activity.

4 The _____ organisation only accepts liability or responsibility for an incident or accident caused by the negligence or breach of statutory duty of the organisation, its agents or servants.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(Parent/guardian)

Address (if different from above)

Any additional telephone numbers during the period of the activity _____

WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY

This guidance is written for sisters, employees and volunteers.

Sisters, employees and volunteers must acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of their religious leader/supervisor/person in charge. Although this can be difficult this is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

You may be the first to recognise that something is wrong but may not feel able to express your concerns out of a feeling that this would be disloyal to colleagues or you may fear harassment or victimisation. These feelings, **however natural, must never result in a child or young person continuing to be unnecessarily at risk.** Remember it is often the most vulnerable children or young persons who are targeted. These children need someone like you to safeguard their welfare.

Don't think *"what if I'm wrong"* - think *"what if I'm right"*

Reasons for whistle blowing

- Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour
- To prevent the problem worsening or widening
- To protect or reduce risks to others
- To prevent becoming implicated yourself

What stops people from whistle blowing

- Fear of starting a chain of events which spirals out of control
- Disrupting the work or project
- Fear of getting it wrong
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers
- Fear of not being believed

How to raise a concern

- You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can. The earlier a concern is expressed the easier and sooner action can be taken.
- Try to pinpoint exactly what practice is causing you concern and why.
- Approach your immediate religious leader/supervisor/person in charge.
- If your concern is about your immediate religious leader/supervisor/person in charge, then please contact either one of our Designated Liaison Persons or externally the National Office for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church.
- Make sure you get a satisfactory response - don't let matters rest.
- Ideally, you should put your concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, giving names, dates and places wherever you can.
- Sisters, employees and volunteers are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.

What happens next?

- You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries.
- Your immediate religious leader/supervisor/person in charge has a responsibility to protect you from harassment or victimisation.
- No action will be taken against you if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith. In Ireland this is in line with the PROTECTION FOR PERSON REPORTING CHILD ABUSE ACT, 1998.
- Malicious allegations may be considered as a disciplinary offence.

This is also in line with the PROTECTION FOR PERSON REPORTING CHILD ABUSE ACT, 1998.

Complaints Procedure

Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy Complaints Handling Policy

Our complaints policy

The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy is committed to providing a high-quality child safeguarding service. When something goes wrong in relation to how we respond, we need you to tell us about it. This will help us to improve our standards.

If you have a complaint re our child safeguarding services please contact us with the details. We have eight weeks to consider your complaint.

What will happen next?

1. We will send you a letter acknowledging receipt of your complaint within seven days of receiving it, enclosing a copy of this procedure.
2. We will then investigate your complaint. This will normally involve passing your complaint to the Provincial who will review the matter and speak to the member of staff/volunteer who complained to you.
3. The Provincial may invite you to a meeting to discuss and hopefully resolve your complaint. This communication may also take place by telephone if a meeting is not possible. She will do this within 14 days of sending you the acknowledgement letter.
4. Within seven days of the meeting/discussion, the Provincial will write to you to confirm what took place and any solutions she has agreed with you.
5. If you do not want a meeting or it is not possible, the Provincial will send you a detailed written reply to your complaint, including her suggestions for resolving the matter, within 21 days of sending you the acknowledgement letter.
6. At this stage, if you are still not satisfied, you should contact us again and we will inform NBSCCCI.
7. If your complaint relates to how the Congregation dealt with a child protection/concern, you can write to the National Board requesting a review of how your complaint was handled. For guidance on how to request a review by NBSCCCI please refer to "Safeguarding Children" Standards and Guidance document for the Catholic Church in Ireland: Resource 13; page 79

Best Practice Safe Recruitment, vetting and selection

<p>Contact with children What contact with children will be involved? Will the person have unsupervised contact with children or hold a position of trust? What other forms of contact will the person have with children e.g. email, phone, internet?</p>	
<p>Defining the Role Tasks & skills for the job are identified. The job description refers to working with & having responsibility for children.</p>	
<p>Key selection criteria A list of essential & desirable qualifications, skills & experience are made.</p>	
<p>Written application All applicants are asked to supply details requested in our application form including personal details, past & current work/volunteering experience.</p>	
<p>Interview Two representatives from the Congregation meet with applicant to explore information contained in the application. Applicant and application forms are carefully considered, highlighting points to raise at interview including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *the applicants attitudes towards working with children *areas that need more detail *vague statements or unsubstantiated qualifications *frequent changes of employment. 	
<p>Declaration Applicants should be asked to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they might be considered unsuitable to work with children. Applicants should be asked to declare any past criminal convictions & pending cases against them.</p>	

<p>Identification</p> <p>Applicants should be asked for photographic documentation to confirm their identity e.g. birth certificate, passport.</p>	
<p>Qualifications</p> <p>Applicants should be asked for documentation to confirm qualifications.</p>	
<p>References</p> <p>Applicants should be asked to supply the names of 2 referees who are not family members & ideally who have first-hand knowledge of the applicant's experience of work/contact with children.</p> <p>Referees should be asked specifically to comment on the applicant's suitability to work with children.</p> <p>References should be provided in writing & followed up with a phone call if appropriate.</p> <p>Identity of referees should be established.</p>	
<p>Vetting procedures</p> <p>Vetting procedures for selected applicant are being considered. (Obtainable from Police or other statutory agency in your country.) This information is treated with utmost confidence and is kept under data protection guidelines.</p>	
<p>Records</p> <p>Details are kept of the selection & induction process on the personnel file of the person appointed.</p> <p>References are kept on file as part of the record of the recruitment process.</p>	
<p>Confidentiality</p> <p>Information about the applicant is only seen by those directly involved in the recruitment process.</p> <p>Applicants are reassured that information about them, including information about convictions, will be treated in confidence & not used against them.</p>	

APPENDIX 3.1

SAMPLE APPLICATION FORM FOR THOSE WITH SUBSTANTIAL ACCESS TO CHILDREN

All information received in this form will be treated confidentially

Full Name: _____ Maiden Name: _____
(If applicable)

Address: _____ Previous Address over the last 5 years: _____

How long have you lived at this address? _____

Tel: _____ Mobile: _____ DOB: _____

PPS Number (R.O.I) _____

N. I Number (N.I): _____

I.D. Number _____

Are you (Please tick):

Employed Unemployed Student
Homemaker Retired Other

Previous work experience & relevant qualifications:

Have you previously been involved in voluntary work? YES / NO

If yes, give details:

How much time can you commit? (Please tick)

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

Do you have any spare time hobbies, interests or activities?

Do you agree to abide by the Mercy Congregation's Code of Behaviour (copy included with this form?)

Yes No

Have you completed Child Protection Awareness Training?

Yes No

If yes, who was it organised by and when approximately: _____

Do you agree to undergo specific training on the role of the (*position being appointed*)?

Yes No

Have you ever been asked to leave an organisation in the past?

(if you have answered yes we will contact you in confidence)

Yes No

Any other relevant information:

Please supply the names of two responsible people whom we can contact and who from personal knowledge, are willing to endorse your application.

Name: _____
 Address: _____

 Tel: _____
 Designation: _____

Name: _____
 Address: _____

 Tel: _____
 Designation: _____

APPENDIX 3.2

Declaration Form for all persons working with children & young people

Confidential

Legislation in both jurisdictions in Ireland, have at their core, the principle that the welfare of children and young people must be the paramount consideration. Legislation in other countries is likely to reflect the same principles. Everyone working within Mercy who will come in contact with children or personal details of children, abide by good practice by completing this declaration.

Do you have any prosecutions pending or have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a Caution or of a Bound Over Order. (Please tick)

Yes

No

If yes please state below the nature and date(s) of the offence(s).

Date(s) of offence: _____

Nature of offence: _____

Have you ever been the subject of disciplinary procedure or been asked to leave employment or voluntary activity due to inappropriate behaviour towards a child? (Please tick)

Yes

No

If yes please give details below:

Full Name: _____

Any surname previously known by: _____

Address: _____

Date of birth: _____ Place of birth: _____

Declaration. I understand that, if it is found out that I have withheld information or included any false or misleading information above, I may be removed from my post whether paid or voluntary, without notice. I understand that the information will be kept securely by the Mercy Congregation.

I hereby declare the information I have provided is accurate.

Signed: _____

Date _____

Confidential Reference Check

The following person:

has expressed an interest in working in _____

If you are happy to complete this reference, any information will be treated with due confidentiality and in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance. Information will only be shared with the person conducting the assessment of the candidate's suitability for the post, if he/she is offered the position in question. We would appreciate you being extremely candid, open and honest in your evaluation of this person.

1. How long have you known this person? _____

2. In what capacity? _____

3. What attributes does this person have that would make him/her suited to this work?

4. Please rate this person on the following - please tick one box for each statement:

	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Responsibility					
Maturity					
Self-motivation					
Can motivate others					
Energy					
Trustworthiness					
Reliability					

This post involves substantial access to children. As a Congregation committed to the welfare and protection of children we are anxious to know if you have any reason at all to be concerned about this applicant being in contact with children. Yes No

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Position: _____ Organisation: _____

APPENDIX 4.

Questionnaire re: Training Needs

Who needs to be trained?	What training do they need?	How to meet them	Priority High=4 Low=1	Resources/costs?

Recognised Children's Service Providers in your area

Name of Organisation	Tel No.	Contact person
Barnardo's Ireland	01 4530355	
Barnardo's N. Ireland	028 90233646	
ISPCC Ireland	01 6767960	
NSPCC N.Ireland	028 90351135	

APPENDIX 6.

CHECKLIST FOR MONITORING COMPLIANCE WITH STANDARDS

	Standard 1: A written policy on keeping children safe	In place	Proposed	Not in place	Date reviewed
1	A clear written child protection policy in place.				
2	All obliged to comply with it & it is signed by relevant leadership.				
3	Reviewed at least every 3 years and adapted when necessary.				
4	All aspects & contexts of child protection work addressed.				
5	Management of those who pose a risk to children is spelt out clearly.				
6	The Congregation's understanding & definitions of abuse.				
7	All current child protection concerns reported to civil authorities immediately.				
8	Policy created at Congregational level. Other policies must be consistent with Policy of Congregation and be approved.				

	Standard 2: Procedures - responding to allegations	In place	Proposed	Not in place	Date reviewed
1	Clear written step-by-step procedures on action to take (historic or current abuse).				
2	Procedures consistent with legislation on child welfare & civil guidance for child protection- clearly written.				
3	Designated Liaison Person(s) with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.				
4	Process for recording incidents, allegations or suspicions & referrals. Details stored securely.				
5	Process for dealing with complaints (made by adults & children) with timescale for resolving them.				
6	Guidance on confidentiality which makes it clear that the protection of the child is paramount.				
7	Contact details for local child protection services in your jurisdiction.				

	Standard 3: Preventing harm to children	In place	Proposed	Not in place	Date reviewed
1	Policies & procedures in place for recruitment and assessment of personnel.				
2	Safe recruitment & vetting policy in line with best practice guidance.				
3	All involved regularly with children or in positions of trust complete form in appendix 3.3				
4	Guidance provided on expected standards of adult behaviour towards children.				
5	Guidance on expected behaviour of children towards other children.				
6	Clear ways to raise allegations or suspicions, confidentially if necessary, about unacceptable behaviour towards children (whistle blowing).				
7	Processes in place for dealing appropriately with children's unacceptable behaviour.				
8	Discriminatory behaviour or language unacceptable re: race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality or political views.				
9	Guidelines on personal/intimate care of children with disabilities.				
10	Guidelines on risk assessment especially in activities away from base.				
11	Ensure children are adequately supervised at all times (including projects/activities).				
12	Guidelines re: use of IT (mobile phones, email, digital camera, website, internet).				

	Standard 4: Training and education	In place	Proposed	Not in place	Date reviewed
1	All personnel inducted into policy and procedures on child protection.				
2	Personnel trained and up-skilled regularly for keeping children safe.				
3	Extra training provided for Designated Persons and for those involved in recruiting, dealing with complaints, disciplinary processes, managing risk.				
4	Training in places of religious formation.				
5	Training programmes monitored by National Board for Safeguarding Children/other agencies.				

	Standard 5: Communicating our Safeguarding Policy	In place	Proposed	Not in place	Date reviewed
1	The Child Protection Ethos & Policy Statement is openly displayed and available to everyone.				
2	Children know their right to be safe from abuse and how to raise concerns.				
3	Everyone knows who the Designated Liaison Person is and how to contact her/him.				
4	Personnel are provided with contact details of local child protection services such as the Police and Statutory Child Protection Agencies, Designated Liaison Person & Telephone Help lines.				
5	Positive links with Statutory Child Protection Agencies.				

	Standard 6: Access to Advice & Support	In place	Proposed	Not in place	Date reviewed
1	Those with special responsibility have access to specialist advice, support and information on child protection.				
2	Contact with sources of support and information at local/national levels.				
3	Guidance on how to respond to a child suspected to have been abused.				
4	Information for those who have been abused on how to seek support.				
5	Support in a manner which does not compromise children's safety for those who have abused.				

	Standard 7: Implementing & Monitoring Standards	In place	Proposed	Not in place	Date reviewed
1	Written action plan for keeping children safe (with details of by whom and when).				
2	The human and financial resources for implementation of plan.				
3	Details of monitoring compliance with Child Protection Policies and Procedures.				
4	Processes to get views of children and others re: policies for keeping children safe.				
5	All incidents, allegations/suspensions of abuse recorded and safely stored.				

Ways of providing evidence re: Implementation of Policy

The following documents will provide evidence of compliance:

Standard 1: A written policy on keeping children safe

- a copy of the policy
- minutes of the meeting where the policy was authorised
- written evidence of how abuse is dealt with and provision for review.

Standard 2: Procedures for responding to allegations

- copy of written procedures
- flow chart indicating steps in reporting process
- name and duties of those with special responsibility for child protection
- examples of forms for recording details.

Standard 3: Preventing Harm to children

- copy of recruitment process
- examples of application, reference and declaration forms
- evidence of registration with or access to agencies in any jurisdictions where we minister, who are authorised to vet people
- guidance for adult-to-child and child-to-child behaviours
- guidance on physical contact
- document explaining how those with child protection concerns can confidentially discuss them with senior staff.
- copy of child welfare plan re: transportation, overnights, use of IT, filming, along with evidence to show compliance with supervision ratios.

Standard 4: Training and Education

- copy of training plan
- record of course attendance
- induction documentation
- systemic ongoing formation programmes for safeguarding children.

Standard 5: Communicating our Safeguarding Message

- examples of resources used to communicate the message with reference to child protection policy and code of behaviour
- examples of ways the policy has been promoted, including with communities and children
- information including contact details for children when they have a concern.

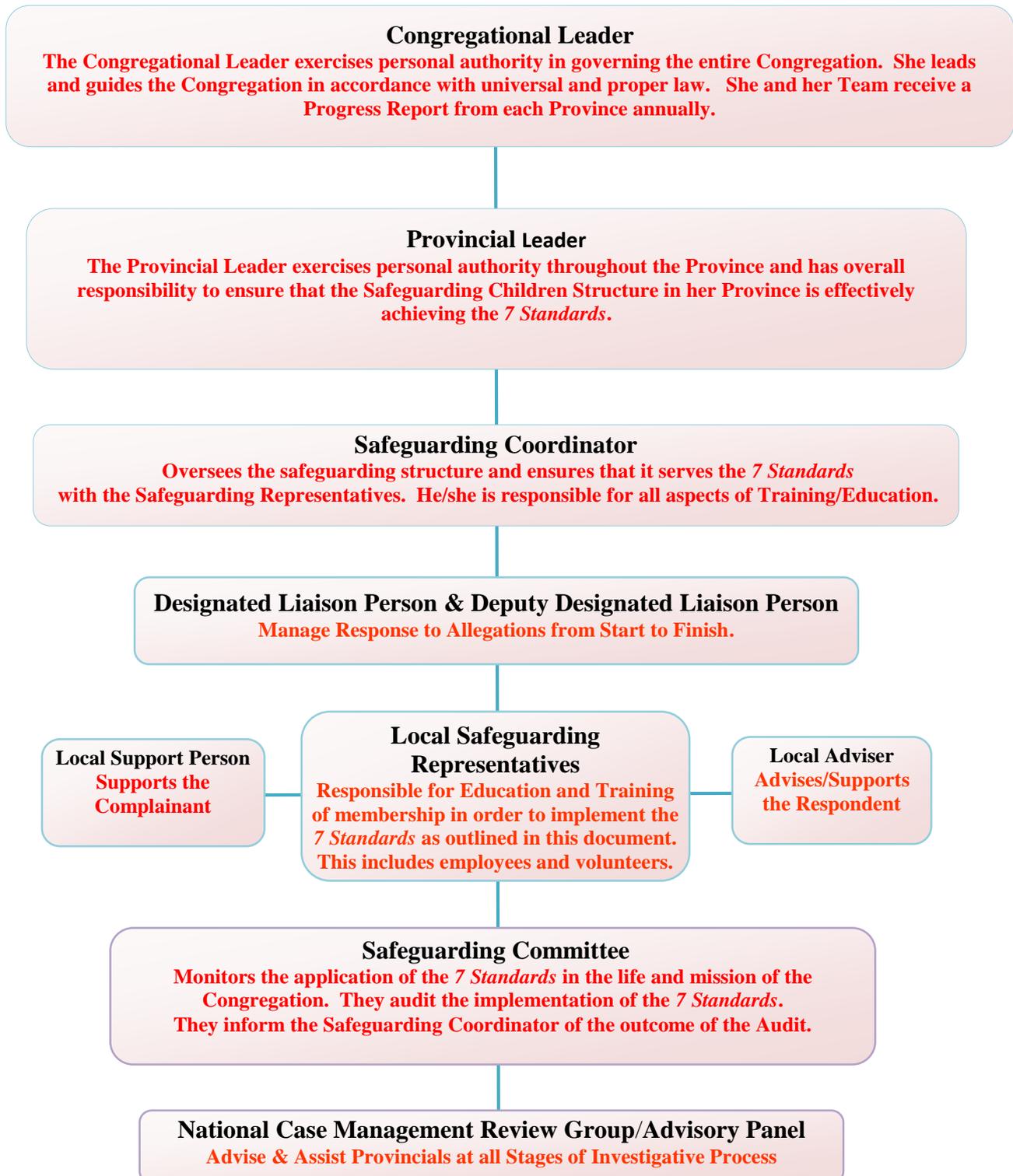
Standard 6: Access to Advice and Support

- copies of information for children about sources of support
- information about training, advice and support for all
- copy of outreach programme for those abused and their families.

Standard 7: Implementing and Monitoring Standards

- action plan for implementing the Standards
- record of a date planned for review and who is responsible
- summary of the number of incidents of abuse and number of complaints.

Annual Progress Report



Note: In Provinces where a Manager is appointed, he/she fulfils the combined roles of the Safeguarding Coordinator and the Designated Liaison Person.

Congregational Leadership

- Is the Safeguarding Structure up and running?

- What is in place?

- How is it working?

- Where are the gaps, if any?

- What are the next steps?

Provincial Leadership

- Is the safeguarding Structure up and running?

- What is in place?

- How is it working?

- Where are the gaps, if any?

- What are the next steps?

Designated Person and Deputy Designated Person

- Is the Safeguarding Structure up and running?

- What is in place?

- How is it working?

- Where are the gaps, if any?

- What are the next steps?

Local Safeguarding Representatives

- Is the Safeguarding Structure up and running?

- What is in place?

- How is it working?

- Where are the gaps, if any?

- What are the next steps?

Local Support Person

- Is there a Local Support Person: Yes____ No____
- Is the Local Support Person contracted when there is a need : Yes____ No____
- Are there any gaps?

Local Adviser

- Is there a local Adviser : Yes____ No____
- Is the Local Adviser contracted when there is a need : Yes____ No____
- Are there any gaps?

Safeguarding Committee

- Is the Safeguarding Structure up and running?

- What is in place?

- How is it working?

- Where are the gaps if any?

- What are the next steps?

National Case Management Review Group

- Have you availed of their expertise during the year: Yes____ No____
- If so, how was your experience?
