ACSL
AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING LTD

A safe Church for everyone

NATIONAL CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS

EDITION 2

Safeguarding children and adults at risk

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE, PART 1:

Leadership, monitoring and improvement

Engaging with children, adults, families and communities

ACSL
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Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd acknowledges the lifelong trauma of abuse victims, survivors and their families, the failure of the Catholic Church to protect, believe and respond justly to children and adults at risk, and the consequent breaches of community trust.

Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd is committed to fostering a culture of safety and care for children and adults at risk.

Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd respectfully acknowledges all Traditional Custodians of the land and waters of Australia. We pay respect to their Elders, past and present, and young leaders of today and the future. ACSL commits itself to the ongoing work of reconciliation with our Aboriginal families and communities.

The Path of Healing and Protection, Lani Balzan

The Path of Healing and Protection, a contemporary Aboriginal artwork created by Aboriginal Artist and Wiradjuri woman, Lani Balzan, tells the story of ACSL's mission: to create a culture of safety, care, and respect within the Catholic Church in Australia, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The artwork celebrates inclusion, restorative practice, and the concept of safe spaces while representing the transformative journey of healing and spirituality.

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NATIONAL CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS EDITION 2 IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE, PART 1

The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS Edition 2) Implementation Guide is split across two guides. Part 1 of the guide covers two capability areas and five standards:

Leadership, monitoring and improvement

Standards 1, 9

Engaging with children, adults, families and communities

Standards 2, 3, 4

Part 2 of the Implementation Guide covers Right people, right role and right knowledge (Standards 5 & 7) and Systems, policies and procedures (Standards 6, 8 & 10).

INTRODUCTION

'Safeguarding means living safely, free from abuse or neglect. It means people's choices are heard and respected. Safeguarding is everybody's business. We need to be aware of safeguarding adults and take action to make sure that nobody experiences abuse or neglect, particularly those who are vulnerable.'
(Safeguarding Ireland[1])

In this NCSS Implementation Guide, Edition 2 – Part 1, **'safeguarding' refers to proactive measures designed to protect the health, wellbeing, and human rights of individuals. These measures allow children, young people and adults to live free from abuse, harm and neglect. Within the life of the Church, safeguarding includes pastoral, liturgical and spiritual responses through engagement in the Sacraments and the life of the Church.**

Federal and state governments require every organisation, small group and individual be aware of their responsibility to protect those most vulnerable from harm, in the home, at work and in society. A full explanation of the term 'organisation' and how it is used in the context of this updated Implementation Guide, is outlined is outlined on p.9 in an explanatory note.

Safeguarding children and adults does not just happen. Safeguarding organisations take deliberate steps to protect children and adults at risk from physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, and psychological abuse and harm. These organisations put safety and wellbeing first and embed a commitment to safeguarding into every aspect of the organisation.

The second edition of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS or the Standards) published in 2022 was designed to ensure Catholic entities implement 'best practice' in all aspects of safeguarding, in the creation and maintenance of safe environments for all children and adults. The Standards now specifically incorporate the concept of safeguarding for adults at risk, in keeping with the findings of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and from the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. These are outlined extensively in the NCCS Edition 2 Compendium.

The inclusion of adults at risk into the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (Standards) acknowledges that everyone has the right to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of society. Safeguarding adults at risk requires a person-centred approach, which encourages their full and effective participation and freedom to make their own choices in circumstances which are appropriate.
(NCSS Ed.2 Compendium)

This Implementation Guide is designed to help each Church entity and those who are in ministry or who work (paid or unpaid) with children and adults to meet their expanded safeguarding responsibilities and to apply these Standards in their own ministries and/or services.

[1] Safeguarding Ireland: https://www.safeguardingireland.org/safeguarding

Abuse, neglect, exploitation, and harm experienced by children, young people and adults at risk is still prevalent within organisations, families, care givers and our community. This is confirmed by recent reports including the Australian Child Maltreatment Study (April 2023), the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmania government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings (September 2023) and the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (September 2023). The safety of children and adults at risk clearly remains one of the key responsibilities of our organisations now and into the future. The clear message is that child abuse and the abuse and exploitation of adults at risk is an ever-present reality in our community. We are not just addressing a wrong of the past: we are required, as a Catholic Church community in our everyday lives as children of God, to fulfil God's deep desire for all of us to have every opportunity to live our best possible lives.

> ***'Child maltreatment is a major problem affecting Australia's children and youth – it is not just something that happened in the past …. child maltreatment is associated with severe mental health problems and behavioural harms, both in childhood and adulthood'***
> (Executive Summary, the Australian Child Maltreatment Study, April 2023)

The Standards, alongside the Australian Catholic Church's own codes of conduct, such as Integrity in Our Common Mission[2], other protocols such as the National Response Protocol, and universal Church law, work in harmony with current legislation. The Guide aims to further support organisations in their safeguarding responsibilities while reiterating essential requirements to adhere to all Commonwealth and other state and territory legislation and regulations that underpin safeguarding. Together, these Standards hold the Catholic Church to the highest degree of accountability, transparency, integrity, and professionalism. They represent best safeguarding practice for Church Authorities to apply to parishes, schools, social services and other ministries and services. The Guide also builds on and acknowledges the excellence in safeguarding policy and practice demonstrated by many of our Catholic Service organisations who have worked with state and territory governments to embed and champion safeguarding in their leadership, amongst their staff and throughout their organisation, benefiting children, families, and communities.

The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards acknowledge that many Catholic entities are operating in highly regulated environments – in early learning, community services, health, ageing, and disability supports where safeguarding practices are well embedded. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse also acknowledged the high standard of services in these organisations, while making recommendations to the Catholic leadership about the importance of embedding a safeguarding culture across the Church's activities. The NCSS extend these requirements and set an ambitious safeguarding agenda and culture for all Catholic Church organisations.

What is different about the new Implementation Guide?

Several changes have been made to the Guide following feedback and reflection on efforts to date, to ensure the Standards present safeguarding best practice. It encourages a shift away from compliance to a more developmental model focusing on good practices and bringing about cultural change.

[2] In 2023 the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference have updated two documents, 'Integrity in the Service of the Church' and 'Integrity in Ministry' into a new framework, 'Integrity in Our Common Mission'. Integrity in Our Common Mission requires all Church authorities, Catholic organisations, Catholic institutions and ministries to develop, or else adopt, their own codes of conduct in accordance with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards and other professional standards. Codes of conduct must comply with civil laws. They should also go further than compliance to create a mission ecosystem of culture, relationships, stewardship and formation. Integrity in Our Common Mission commits the whole Catholic Church in Australia to this shared way of life. https://www.acsltd.org.au/our-common-mission/

How we use the term 'organisation' and 'personnel' in this Guide:

Organisation: While Edition 2 of the NCSS uses the term *'entities'* to refer to a diocese, religious institute, ministerial PJP (including their agencies), this Guide uses the word *'organisation'* throughout, rather than the more formal term 'Church entity'. *'Organisation'* should therefore be read as being inclusive of all Church entities, whether you are a religious order, a parish, a diocese, a ministry and/or service (school, hospital, aged care facility, social service or other community-based organisation). This is to make the language less formal and to speak more directly to all personnel who are involved with ensuring the safety of children and adults.

Personnel: In the context of the NCSS, personnel refers to a cleric, religious or other person who is employed by the organisation or engaged on a contract, subcontract, voluntary or unpaid basis.

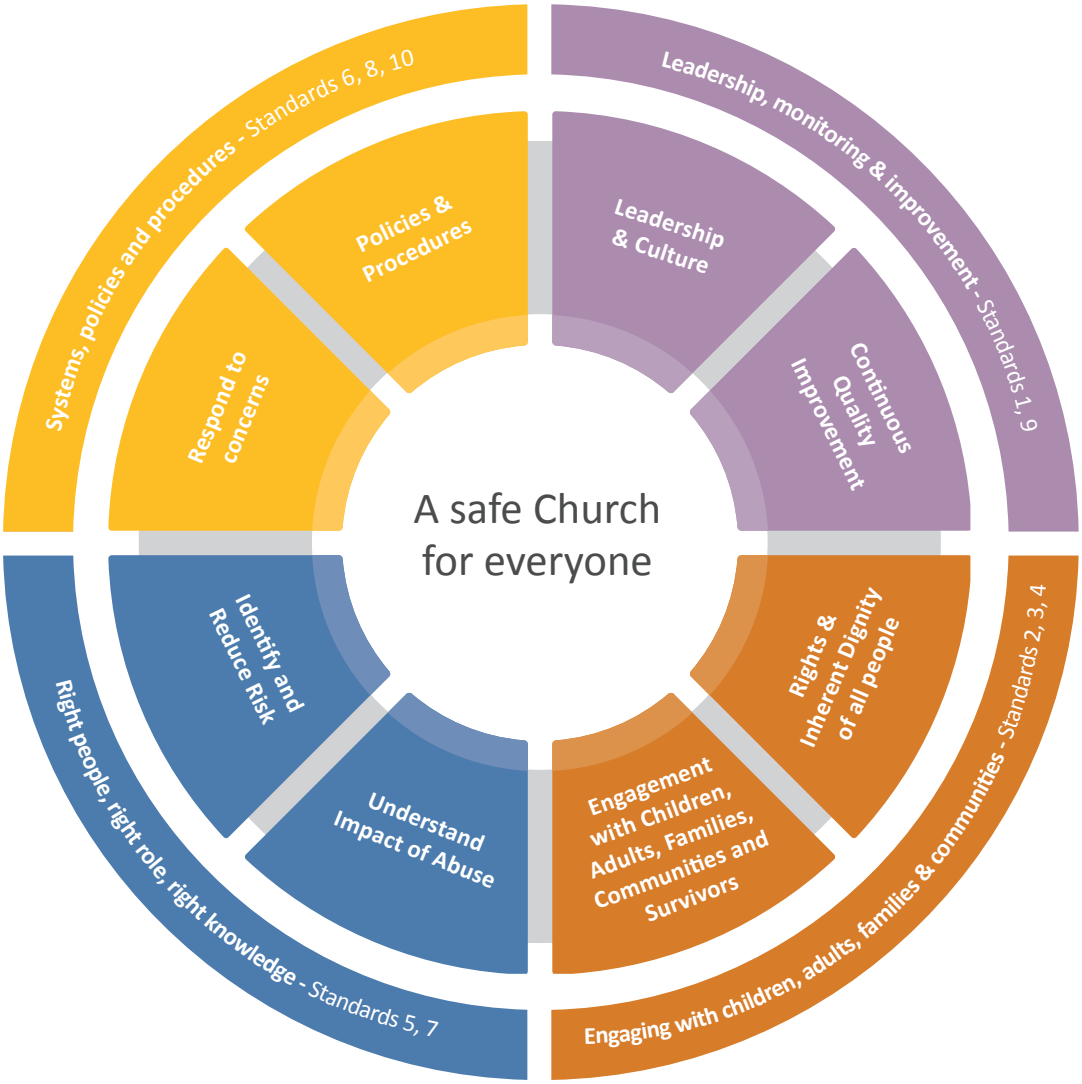
The Guide provides:

- Practical help on what organisations can do to implement the Standards and reflect on what is working and what still needs to be done.
- Support to organisations to embed the three core values of ongoing safeguarding practice into each of the 10 standards. These are:
    - being victim and survivor centred which means considering and lawfully promoting the needs, rights and wishes of survivors to support their recovery;
    - trauma-informed; and
    - culturally safe.
- Ongoing focus on promoting safe and effective service provision to support individuals who have experienced or been impacted by child sexual abuse.
- Consistency of our Standards with the recently released *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030* ('The Minimum Practice Standards: Specialist and Community Support Services Responding to Child Sexual Abuse (Standards'[3]).
- Practical tips for your organisation to better understand the risk of abuse to children and adults and its impact.
- Acknowledgement of emerging risks that pose harm to children and adults at risk, such as peer-to-peer abuse, cyberbullying and other on-line abuse; and a reminder for organisations to reassess how well governance, policies and procedures address these emerging challenges. Part 2 of the Implementation Guide which includes **Standard 8 – Safe Physical and Online Environments –** will explore in more detail these emerging challenges for safeguarding.
- Suggestions to help organisations think about current practices, to ask questions, and find areas where you can actively engage in real change to improve the safety of children and adults at risk.
- Scenarios, which while fictional, are inspired by real life safeguarding challenges in our community. These scenarios reflect unique ministry environments, to showcase how different types of organisations can implement the Standards and establish systems to prevent, detect and respond to abuse and build strong safeguarding cultures.
- Some suggestions for further resources to assist in the implementation of each Standard. These are not exhaustive lists, and many quality resources exist that are not listed in this Guide, but the ones listed may be helpful starting reference points.

[3] Minimum Practice Standards: Specialist and Community Support Services Responding to Child Sexual Abuse | National Office for Child Safety available at: https://www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/minimum-practice-standards-specialist-and-community-support-services-responding-child-sexual-abuse#

1. THE DESIGN OF THE REVISED GUIDE

This Implementation Guide is structured to reflect the interrelationship and interdependence of the 10 Standards that now also incorporate a focus on adults at risk. The 10 Standards are grouped into four capability areas according to common safeguarding principles. The four capability groupings and how they work together holistically are represented below:



Each of the four capability groupings of the Standards will form a chapter of the Implementation Guide.

Two of the four capability groupings form Part 1 of the Guide. These are:

Leadership, monitoring and improvement incorporating Committed Leadership, Governance and Culture **(Standard 1)** and Continuous Improvement **(Standard 9).**

Engaging with children, adults, families and communities, incorporating Children and Adults are Safe, Informed and Participate **(Standard 2),** Partnering with Families, Carers and Communities **(Standard 3)** and Equity is Promoted and Diversity is Respected **(Standard 4).**

2. READING THE GUIDE

Standards are grouped under Capability Areas. Each standard in this Guide – 1, 2, 3, 4 & 9 – follows a similar format structure:

This is the National Catholic Safeguarding Standard that Catholic organisations should seek to develop and embed.

Standard 1: Committed leadership, governance and culture

The safeguarding of children and adults is embedded in the entity's leadership, governance and culture.

These are the key focus areas for organisations in implementing the particular standard. These align with the NCSS criteria. They are not numbered in this Guide but the focus areas can be tracked to each NCSS criteria. The Guide does not address individual NCSS indicators but incorporates an overall approach to meeting the Standard.

Standard 1
Key focus areas for what is expected

- Your *Safeguarding Commitment Statement and Safeguarding Policy* that takes a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, is endorsed by the leadership body and publicly available via the web and displayed in public areas.
- Your promote this commitment to safeguarding, and the dignity and rights of everyone, as everyone's responsibility.

These are actions that organisations can employ to achieve the requirements of the Standard. Areas of focus for each Standard are also covered in this section.

Examples of Actions that apply the Standard

- Every member of the Leadership Team and governance body undertakes safeguarding training and champions the organisations commitment to child and adult safety.
- Safeguarding Committees are established with independent members.
- Leaders, members, staff, and volunteers champion and model safeguarding culture. They express support for children and adult safety, act when they have concerns about the safety of children and adults as part of everyday practice.

This section lists key organisational documents that organisations implementing the Standard would commonly use. It is not an exhaustive list but rather a high level overview of the instruments that can help safeguard children and adults at risk in Catholic organisation settings.

DOCUMENTING THE STANDARD

- *Safeguarding Policy* taking a zero-tolerance approach to abuse. While the safeguarding policy promotes the dignity and rights of everyone, your safeguarding policies, procedures, and practices will focus on children and adults at risk.
- *Organisational Safeguarding Commitment Statement* addressing both children and adults at risk.

Each Standard contains a fictional scenario that describes a situation in which an organisation might respond to the NCSS in real-life. While the scenarios are centred around one standard in particular, the NCSS are interrelated, so most fictional scenarios deal with the application of several interdependent standards.

CASE STUDY: Making safeguarding a priority in planning a community event

The parish council has decided to hold a Spring Fair and calls for volunteers to form an organising committee. Ten enthusiastic people turn up to the first meeting and begin planning the fair. They make a list of the proposed activities and stalls:

- *Jumping castle*
- *Facepainting*
- *Go-karts*
- *Plant stalls*
- *Tea rooms*
- *car boot sale*
- *barbeque*
- *wheelbarrow race*
- *puppet show*
- *craft stalls*

Reflective questions prompt organisations to consider how well embedded their current application of the standard is and challenge leaders and those responsible for safeguarding to consider how they can go beyond current practice to improve safety for everyone.

Questions for organisations to help clarify your safeguarding commitment

- How well do our leaders champion a child and adult safeguarding culture?
- How do our leaders set expectations of how personnel behave towards children and adults at risk?

3. THE INCLUSION OF ADULTS AT RISK

'Adults at risk' have been included as a key priority group in Edition 2 of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. Family violence, coercive control, exploitation, physical and psychological abuse, financial abuse as well as sexual abuse are common elements of abuse and neglect experienced by adults in our community.

Adult at risk

means any person aged 18 years and over who is at increased risk of experiencing abuse, such as people:

- who are elderly
- with a disability
- who suffer from mental illness
- who have diminished capacity
- who have cognitive impairment
- who have suffered previous abuse
- who are experiencing transient risks
- who in receiving a ministry or service are subject to a power imbalance
- who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- who are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background
- who are of diverse sexuality
- who have any other impairment or adversity that makes it difficult for them to protect themselves from abuse.

This Guide provides additional impetus and support for organisations to implement effective policy and practice action to safeguard adults at risk, while recognising that legislation, policy and regulation to safeguard adults at risk, remains underdeveloped, poorly integrated and understood across our society. There is, however, an emerging consensus, in Australia and internationally, about the urgency to develop a more comprehensive approach to safeguarding for adults at risk to prevent ongoing and systemic abuse. This Guide responds to that urgency as major reforms relating to legislation, regulation, policy, practice, and service delivery continue to be recommended by key government inquiries.[4]

The Guide brings together emerging knowledge and research to better inform organisations and support best practice in safeguarding adults at risk. It highlights that the potential for abuse of adults occurs in any situation where there are power imbalances and one or more adults is dependent, or made dependent, on another or other persons. While the emphasis is on establishing safeguarding requirements for all adults, there are particular risk factors that cause some adults to be more susceptible to abuse. For example, the 2023 Final Report of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability[5] documented that 'people with disability have long experienced violence, abuse and neglect at much higher rates than the rest of the community' and yet, as the Final Report notes, that still a decade after the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the prevalence of assaults, abuse and neglect and the squalid living conditions in some disability housing remain shocking. The Commissioners regarded, the 'inherent dignity, individual autonomy and independence of all people with disability as fundamental to Australia becoming a more inclusive society.'

[4] *'We recommend all State and Territories enact Adult Safeguarding laws….The role of adult safeguarding functions should be articulated in a national adult safeguarding framework. The framework should provide common definitions and a mandate for each state and territory adult safeguarding body to systematically collect, analyse and publicly report data about violence against, and abuse, neglect and exploitation of, adults with disability in family and community settings, including private homes and public places.'* **Final Report of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.** Executive Summary, *Our Vision for an inclusive Australia and Recommendations,* p173, 2023

[5] Commonwealth of Australia, **Final Report of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability,** Final Report Volume 3, Nature and Extent of violence, abuse, Neglect and Exploitation, 2023

'Much of the potential for abuse, neglect and exploitation of adults at risk, especially in subtle forms, is rooted in a culture that accepts and condones certain attitudes, practices and behaviours that deprive people of their basic human rights. Challenging and changing this culture, both within institutions and across society as a whole, is an integral part of safeguarding.' ('Identifying risks Sharing responsibilities' - A Case for a Comprehensive Approach to Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults, Safeguarding Ireland Discussion Paper May 2022)

It is also important to recognise and appreciate the spiritual power imbalance that can put adults at risk when they seek spiritual advice, especially at vulnerable times in their lives. This advice can come from a person representing faith/spirituality/God or when seeking safety in the ministerial role of a priest or religious.

All organisations are encouraged to be at the forefront of challenging and changing some of the cultural and societal factors that allow for the normalisation of the persistent exploitation of abuse of adults at risk in our community. This requires a heightened awareness of the abuse, control and neglect experienced by adults at risk, and may require specific training and new and expanded approaches to safeguarding. Society requires a new way of thinking and changing attitudes if we are to provide adults at risk the safeguarding and protection that is their right, they deserve and should expect.

4. CULTURAL SAFETY

Cultural safety is a core value for organisations working with diverse communities, especially refugees, migrants, and our First Nations people. For our Catholic community, with support from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC), we can connect safeguarding and cultural safety with spirituality in a meaningful way.

Cultural safety is emerging as a particularly important concept in contemporary safeguarding standards for safeguarding Aboriginal children and young people, however, it extends to the safeguarding of all Aboriginal people. Recognising and respecting Aboriginal cultural rights is understood to be crucial to ensuring the safety and well-being of all Aboriginal people. This is why the principle of cultural safety underpins the safeguarding policies and practices of each Standard of the Guide.

'It is important to understand that cultural safety is a journey of understanding and truth telling and that the organisations policies and practice will need to change to reflect this.' (Interim Compliance Guidance for Organisations for Tasmania's Child and Youth Safe Standards and Universal Principle for Aboriginal Cultural Safety, Tasmanian Government, Department of Justice, October 2023)

In its report, the 2023 *Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings* found that child sexual abuse wrongly and unequally affects Aboriginal children and young people. Adult victims/survivors also need access to safe cultural spaces and culturally appropriate support to help them heal in a way that recognises the impact of intergenerational trauma.[6] (Ibid Tas Report 2023 Executive Summary)

[6] Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Setting, September 2023, https://www.commissionofinquiry.tas.gov.au/report

Cultural safety is about creating an environment that is safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It has been defined as providing 'a safe, nurturing and positive environment where they are comfortable with being themselves, expressing their culture… their spiritual and belief systems, and they are supported by the carer… (who) respects their Aboriginality and therefore encourages their sense of self and identity' (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC).[7]

Applying cultural safety consistently across all levels of your organisation is a way to address racism and discrimination that still exist across many services today impacting children and families, and in some cases leading to a loss of confidence in an organisation.[8] The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC) provides valuable resources and support through providing First Nations people with a voice and a central place within the Catholic Church.

Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical Laudato Si' has a deep respect for indigenous people and their culture. The pope highlights the need to learn and draw from indigenous views of the world in which we all live:

'It is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. For them, land is not a commodity but a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values.' (Laudato Si', para 146)

[7] SNAICC, **Cultural Safety,** 2021

[8] National Office for Child Safety, **Keeping our kids safe: Cultural Safety and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations,** p 9, 2021 https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/SNAICC-VACCA-OCS-ChildSafeReport-LR-with-alt-tags-May2021.pdf

5. UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA & TAKING A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

Trauma is an event or events in which a person is threatened or feels threatened. Trauma also describes the impacts of the event or events on a person and the ongoing impact on a victim-survivor's psychological wellbeing.

Trauma is very common.[9] It is estimated that 75% of Australian adults have experienced a trauma event at some point in their lives.[10] People can experience trauma in lots of different situations. We know that childhood trauma, including exposure to abuse and poor organisational responses, can take a great toll on a child's development and affect their sense of safety and security. Organisations may not know whether the children or adults at risk they engage with have experienced trauma. Adopting a trauma-informed approach aims to safeguard individuals from further harm.

Certain life situations and difference can make trauma more common. People with disability of all ages experience and witness trauma more often than people without disability. LGBTQIA+ people also experience high levels of trauma, which is often due to discrimination.[11]

Research and evidence tell us that many people in our community experience trauma at some period in their lives. For example, more than one in four Australians have experienced child sexual abuse, either within or outside institutions.[12] This represents an extraordinary number of people who are living with the devastating consequences of sexual violation. By including other forms of abuse, the number of Australians impacted by abuse would be much higher. This has led to a new focus on the trauma-informed approach within organisations which involves understanding, recognising, and responding to the effects of trauma and stress on a person. This approach creates a universal safeguarding culture and environment and provides greater protection and responsiveness to the needs of children and adults throughout different stages of their lives.

This acknowledgement also extends to staff, clergy and religious personnel, who may have experienced abuse and trauma in their own lives. The Church Authority, in its duty of care for its members, must ensure that disclosures of abuse and or trauma, for example, during supervision, mentoring or training, are appropriately followed up through access to appropriate legal, pastoral and professional counselling and other intervention processes.

Trauma-informed approaches

- Always consider that anyone in the organisation may have experienced trauma and design processes to account for this. Training programs aimed at lifting the understanding of trauma awareness of staff and volunteers, leading to vigilance around non-verbal signs of current and past abuse, are encouraged.
- Minimise the risks of re-traumatisation and promote healing.
- Apply the core principles of safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment:
  (See diagram on next page)
    - Recognise coping strategies and behaviours as attempts to cope and not as misbehaviour. Traumatised children, for example, can adopt strategies to cope with what has happened, including anger, swearing, silence, isolating themselves, acting younger or older than their age, and drug and alcohol use. The Australian Childhood Foundation's publication of 'Top 9 Informed Principles of Trauma Informed Care' is a valuable resource for understanding trauma and non-verbal cues and behaviour.[13]
    - Focus on the whole context in which a service or activity is conducted (for example, culture, attitudes and practices) and not just on what is provided (Blue Knot Foundation).[14]

[9] Blue Knot Foundation **Understanding Trauma and Abuse,** Website https://blueknot.org.au/resources/understanding-trauma-and-abuse/

[10] Productivity Commission estimates using ABS 2009

[11] Blue Knot Foundation. **Understanding Trauma Fact Sheet,** July 2021 https://blueknot.org.au/resources/blue-knot-fact-sheets/trauma-classification/understanding-trauma/

[12] Australian Child Maltreatment Study 2023, available at: https://www.acms.au/resources/the-prevalence-and-impact-of-child-maltreatment-in-australia-findings-from-the-australian-child-maltreatment-study-2023-brief-report/

[13] Australian Childhood Foundation https://professionals.childhood.org.au/prosody/2015/04/trauma-informed-care/

[14] Blue Knot Foundation, Building a Trauma Informed World https://blueknot.org.au/resources/building-a-trauma-informed-world/

Core principles of a trauma-informed approach

Safety	Trustworthiness	Choice	Collaboration	Empowerment
Safety includes providing physical, emotional and cultural safety. When people do not feel safe, they may struggle to regulate their emotions.	Trustworthiness means developing trusting relationships. This can include being clear about what is going to happen and setting boundaries, being consistent and reliable, and staying calm and being reassuring.	Choice and consent have often been denied to people who have experienced trauma. Providing as many suitable choices as possible for the child or adult empowers them and shows them that they matter.	Collaboration also shows children and adults that they have power and a say in what happens. Communicating clearly in age and developmental-appropriate language and allowing time and space for decisions is important.	Empowerment supports children and adults to develop a sense of control and agency in their life. Showing them that what they say and feel matters and treating them with respect will empower them, as will responding in a way that is culturally appropriate and respectful of diversity.

Recognised trauma-informed models are available to provide knowledge and guidance for organisations and personnel. Look to include one in your approach, for example the *Sanctuary* model.[15]

[15] In Australia, the McKillop Institute has the license for the Sanctuary Model which is a workplace culture-change program that teaches people how to cope more effectively with adversity and stress and aims to prevent trauma symptoms. The Sanctuary model introduces a number of workplace practice to create positive cultural change. https://www.mackillopinstitute.org.au/programs/sanctuary/

6. TRANSITORY RISK

The Standards also encourage personnel in our organisations to be aware that all adults may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation at certain periods in their life, including when they seek support from Church organisations.

- This is sometimes referred to as *'transient'* or *'transitory risk'.* Personnel engaging with adults who are experiencing transitory risk need to put measures and controls in place to create safe engagement, acknowledging the circumstances of those experiencing transitory risk. Examples of people experiencing transitory risk, and who therefore may be vulnerable, could include:
    - grieving after the death of a spouse or loved one;
    - divorce or the ending of a relationship;
    - family violence;
    - recently arrived refugees;
    - experiencing homelessness;
    - mental illness;
    - or other recent trauma.
- Trauma needs to be understood as a potentially common experience for people at certain times in their lives, and this includes for personnel and volunteers.

Some personnel will have more interaction with adults who may be in this 'transitory risk' period, and these circumstances require additional attention to ensure safeguarding measures are in place to reduce risk for all. Examples of heightened risk environments could be:

- supporting individuals in isolated settings or one to one contact such as home visiting;
- attending to the needs of the sick and elderly;
- transporting individuals to activities; or
- lay ministers giving Holy Communion in the home.

Research identifies that abuse occurs more frequently in organisations in 'unsupervised areas, outside of operating hours and often during mentoring/tutoring or extracurricular activities'[16] (Darling and Hackett 2020, p.5).

[16] Darling, A & Hackett, S. (2020). Situational factors in female perpetrated child sexual abuse in organisations: implications for prevention. Journal of Sexual Aggression. 26(1), 5-22

7. MEANINGFUL AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES

The Guide encourages organisations to implement approaches that give prominence to listening to the voices of children and adults at risk and to partnering with families and communities to strengthen the impact of the Standards. Engaging with communities not only improves outcomes for individuals, but also brings change in the community itself, improving the social fabric that provides us with a sense of belonging and connection. Both the Australian Institute of Family Studies[17] and the Australian Institute of Child Protection Studies[18] at the Australian Catholic University provide excellent resources, including tools for organisations around partnering and engaging with families and children and listening to the voices of children and young people.

'Protective participation' or 'Protection through Participation'[19] is fundamental to the way organisations are encouraged to work with children, families and the community. Protective participation describes processes that provide opportunities for children, young people and adults at risk to inform, shape and provide feedback on strategies to promote their safety, prevent abuse and appropriately respond when they are harmed. It appreciates people's strengths as well as their vulnerabilities and is guided by their individual needs and wishes. It builds peoples skills and capabilities and their confidence in adults and institutions, increasing their sense of safety. It also positively supports staff and the institutions where they work, including schools, aged care centres etc.

Working together with families and carers is an essential protective strategy. It builds family and community resilience. However, it needs to be acknowledged that sometimes families can be unsafe for children, young people and adults at risk. This assessment requires personnel to follow all safeguarding protocols and regulations; to seek advice from Safeguarding Officers or Coordinators; and to make appropriate referrals and reports.

[17] Australian Institute of Family Studies, 'Community Engagement' paper 2020

[18] Australian Institute of Child Protection Studies, ACU, Safeguarding Children Portal https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/

[19] 'Protection through Participation' is a term coined by Moore (2017) and the Child Safety Studies team at the Institute of Child Protection Studies at the Australian Catholic University (Moore, McArthur, Death, et al. 2016; Moore, McArthur, Heerde, et al. 2016; Moore et al. 2015; Robinson, 2016)

8. FURTHER INTEGRATING THE PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING INTO OUR STANDARDS

The principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) are at the centre of the vision, values, and approaches to implementing the Standards. CST provides 'a vision for a just society in which the dignity of all people is recognised, and those who are vulnerable are cared for. It consists of an interrelated body of Catholic social thought and principles which can be used to reflect on and guide how we relate to one another in our local and global communities' (Catholic Social Services Australia).

It also includes insights from the Scriptures as well as understanding from the thinking, reflections, and lived experience of people.[20]

The lived experience of all people who have experienced trauma, abuse, discrimination, exploitation, neglect should be valued, and their contribution sought and included in the ways we make our organisations safe for all. This need is reflected in actions and strategies identified to highlight participation and inclusion within the Guide.

> ***'An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal – always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it.'***
> (Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium)

[20] Catholic Social Services Australia, Catholic Social Teaching (website) https://cssa.org.au/resources/catholic-social-teaching/

LEADERSHIP, MONITORING AND IMPROVEMENT

STANDARDS 1 & 9

These Standards ensure that a safeguarding culture is embedded in every aspect of Church life – in dioceses, parishes religious congregations, ministries, schools, social, health aged and community services.

Standard 1 establishes the safeguarding framework by describing what policies, procedures and practices need to be in place to work towards a safe Church for everyone.

Standard 9 assesses what internal review processes are in place to ensure the safeguarding framework maintains currency.

Together, they ask our Church leadership and governance structures to emphasise transparency and accountability, set clear expectations, regularly monitor, and review policies and practices, make improvements, and importantly take actions to provide a safe environment for all people, especially children and adults at risk.

STANDARD 1:
COMMITTED LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND CULTURE

The safeguarding of children and adults is embedded in the leadership, governance, and culture of each organisation.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of all organisations to make sure their personnel, operations, and programmes do no harm to children and adults at risk nor expose them to abuse or exploitation. Leaders play a vital role in ensuring the safety of children and adults at risk. They make sure there are clear rules and procedures, and they continually find ways to improve and prioritise the best interests of children and adults at risk at every level of the organisation. Committed leadership understands that safeguarding requires constant vigilance and attention to the oversight of all elements of safeguarding policy and day to day practice. Leadership in safeguarding is reflected in practical ways —in the kind of people leaders recruit; the behaviour they reward, support and challenge; the matters they focus their attention on; and the way they respond to challenging events.

This requires an understanding of not only the trauma caused by abuse but also how it occurs and is maintained. The challenge for Catholic leadership today is to continue the focus on what is in place, but to also look to the horizon; to be alert to emerging risks as our society changes and becomes more complex. Some of these emerging safeguarding risks are highlighted in this Guide, especially the emerging and often unspoken and unacknowledged risks to adults at risk, peer-to-peer abuse, and online abuse and harm.

Standard 1 aim: Organisations prioritise the safety of children and adults at risk in what they say and do.

Why is this Standard important: Having a leadership team that is committed to building a safeguarding culture means children and adults at risk are less likely to be exposed to harm and abuse. A safeguarding culture is a set of values and practices that guide the attitudes and behaviour of all personnel as they share the responsibility for keeping people safe.

Standard 1 sets the foundations for having a child and adult safe organisation and underpins all the Standards.

Key focus areas for what is expected

- A *Safeguarding Commitment Statement* and *Safeguarding Policy* that takes a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, is endorsed by the leadership body and is publicly available via the web and displayed in public areas. Organisations should explicitly affirm their zero tolerance for abuse within their *Safeguarding Policy and Safeguarding Commitment Statement* and ensure that their processes reflect this steadfast commitment.
- You promote this commitment to safeguarding, and the dignity and rights of everyone, as everyone's responsibility.
- Your governance arrangements and processes include an effective and clear *Safeguarding Policy* that applies across all your organisation's activities, including, where relevant, in countries outside Australia.
- Your *Code of Conduct* provides clear guidance to all personnel on expected standards of behaviour and responsibilities and outlines how power imbalances can occur in ministries and services.
- Your *Risk Management Plan* is a critical component of your overall governance and its focus on risk. It provides strategies to prevent, identify and respond to any risks to children and adults, especially those with diminished capacity, including when adults at risk make informed choices (dignity of risk), both within Australian and all overseas ministries.
- Your personnel all understand and meet the standards required for information sharing and maintaining good records.

Examples of actions that apply the Standard

- Every member of your leadership team and governance body undertakes safeguarding training and champions the organisation's commitment to child and adult safety.
- Safeguarding Committees are established with independent members.
- Leaders, members, staff, and volunteers champion and model safeguarding culture. They express support for children and adult safety and act when they have concerns about their safety.
- Your *Safeguarding Policy* is approved and endorsed by the Church Authority and is publicly available and easily accessible, including being easy to access from your website.
- Your *Safeguarding Policy* is specific to the context and location of your ministry, services and activities (examples include within a Church building, community work, pilgrimages, camps, home visiting, trips and holidays etc).
- Your *Safeguarding Commitment Statement* on the safety of children and adults, is available and accessible to everyone and feedback is encouraged.
- Your *Code of Conduct* outlines the expected behaviour of all personnel (including staff and volunteers) with children and adults at risk.
- A Safeguarding Committee and Safeguarding Coordinator/s are appointed and operate within clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- Senior leaders regularly review safeguarding policies and practices.
- Your *Risk Management Plan* focuses on identifying, preventing, and minimising risks to children and adults.

Church Authority

means:

- a diocesan bishop or archbishop, an ordinary of an Ordinariate and the prelate of a Personal Prelature of the Latin Church and an eparch of an eparchy of an Eastern Church;
- the competent authority, howsoever titled, exercising the ministry of governance for religious institutes in Australia in accordance with their Constitutions;
- for Ministerial Public Juridic Persons the competent authority in accordance with the statutes; or
- for any other Church entity, the senior authority within the organisation in accordance with its rules.

Tips for promoting your Safeguarding Commitment Statement

- Display it on your website.
- Include it in your organisation's values or mission statement.
- Put it in public documents including job advertisements.
- Display it publicly at facilities that community members, families and children use, as well as staff and volunteer break rooms.
- Mention it in relevant public communication speeches, in presentations, newsletters and advertisements.
- Promote child and adult safety widely through awards, posters and other materials.
- Add the NCSS Commitment badge to your website, email signature and social media.

We are committed to the NATIONAL CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS

NCSS Commitment Badge - Contact ACSL to use the badge.

Features of good safeguarding practice

- All roles are risk-assessed prior to recruitment and selection processes (interview process, referee checks) have a safeguarding focus.
- Roles and responsibilities for safeguarding are clearly defined.
- Decision-making processes clearly demonstrate how children and adults at risk are a priority.
- Clear procedures and processes exist and are readily accessible.
- Ongoing staff training programs are well established, ensuring opportunities for new staff and for refresher programs that continually include updated policy and legislative changes.

Actions that will help embed good safeguarding practice

- Be specific in identifying and naming safeguarding risks in your organisation.
- Regularly communicate your collective responsibility for safeguarding.
- Promote a safeguarding culture by consulting widely with staff, volunteers, children, adults at risk, families, and carers to ensure everyone has input into the organisation.
- Develop relationships with other organisations that support child and adult safe practices.
- Work collaboratively with victims and survivors of abuse.
- Engage with a professional safeguarding network to support staff and the way they work.
- Hold forums within your organisation to consult on policies and practice that relate to safeguarding.
- Ensure that overseas ministries are included in all these safeguarding approaches.

Understand the risks posed by your context and environment

Make sure your safeguarding policy covers all properties, locations and activities such as:

- where personnel are alone with children and/or adults at risk;
- in private settings;
- in intimate care routines with children or adults at risk;
- in overnight settings;
- in immersion programs and
- on overseas pilgrimages.

Good practice when developing a Code of Conduct:

- Work to build your safeguarding commitment, not just compliance.
- Make your Code of Conduct relevant to your environment and activities and use it as a reference for managing complex problems and events.
- Research the Code of Conduct in organisations such as Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA)[21] for guidance and tips on integrating your Code with Catholic Social Teachings.
- Ensure your personnel are trained on and that they each sign and agree to the Code.
- Reinforce the Code of Conduct as a living document as often as possible, for example, by revisiting it in annual appraisals, or by taking one part of the Code as a discussion point in staff meetings.
- Outline what happens if the Code is breached.
- Demonstrate how the Code applies to the vulnerable groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; individuals who are elderly, homeless, are living with disability, are suffering from an illness, including mental illness; and individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.[22]

Policies and procedures for information and record keeping

Your organisation's policies and procedures should help personnel understand that record keeping is a legal obligation and that the principles for records and record keeping in the NCSS are consistent with the Australian Standards (AS 4390) recommendations by the Royal Commission. They should cover the following:

- requirements for data collection;
- confidentiality, use of information and data storage;
- record storage, maintenance, security, and access;
- record retention requirements, including meeting relevant legislation and any minimum year requirements for management of abuse/ complaints related records; and
- obligations under the Privacy Act (1988).

DOCUMENTING THE STANDARD

- A *Safeguarding Policy* that takes a zero-tolerance approach to abuse. While the *Safeguarding Policy* promotes the dignity and rights of everyone, your safeguarding policies, procedures, and practices will focus on children and adults at risk.
- *Organisational Safeguarding Commitment Statement* addressing both children and adults at risk.
- *Code of Conduct* setting clear behavioural standard towards children and adults at risk.
- *Risk Management Plan* and strategies that cover all parish and ministry activities.
- Complaint handling, information sharing, record keeping and reporting policies.

[21] Catholic Social Service Australia, **Code of Conduct and Ethics Webpage,** 2023: https://cssa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/CSSA_Code-of-Conduct-and-Ethics_Web_2023-1.pdf

[22] Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; individuals who are elderly, homeless, are living with disability, are suffering from an illness, including mental illness; individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

SCENARIO: MAKING SAFEGUARDING A PRIORITY IN PLANNING A COMMUNITY EVENT

The parish council has decided to hold a Spring Fair and calls for volunteers to form an organising committee. Ten enthusiastic people turn up to the first meeting and begin planning the fair. They make a list of the proposed activities and stalls:

- Jumping castle
- Facepainting
- Go-karts
- Plant stalls
- Tea rooms
- car boot sale
- barbeque
- wheelbarrow race
- puppet show
- craft stalls

The group also decides to invite local stall holders to have a stall for a small fee. As the time gets closer and stalls are being confirmed, their minds turn to their Risk Management Plan. The group identifies the risks to manage as:

- first aid
- traffic management and parking
- power cables for the jumping castle
- tents and seating
- money and change for stalls
- food handling
- weather
- rubbish

After much work, the group presents their risk management plan to the parish council. They anticipate that the event will attract more than 2000 people, including children.

The Parish Safeguarding Officer points out that their risk management plan is focused on workplace health and safety issues but doesn't include any safeguarding of people. He suggested that for 2000 people plus stalls and activities, there would need to be at least 40 volunteers, not including stall operators. Had they recruited enough volunteers?

He also asks the group to prepare responses to the following questions:

1. How many people have been allocated as 'event safeguarding officers', and how will they be identified?

2. Can the volunteers easily communicate with each other such as through a WhatsApp group?

3. Do the volunteer event safeguarding officers, where required, have Working With Children's Checks?

4. Do all the volunteers know their roles?

5. Who is coordinating the volunteers and are they being provided with training, including safeguarding awareness training?

6. Who is coordinating the stall holders?

7. Have the volunteers been provided with about a simple, event-specific Code of Conduct, that explicitly states advice about how to respond to concerning behaviour? An easy, simple to understand document (followed by discussion) about expectations of adults through an agreed code of behaviour will be important for the event.

8. Have they been taken through and asked to sign the Diocesan Code of Conduct?

9. What arrangements are being made for toilet access, cleaning, and supervision. Will there be accessible toilets and provision for gender neutral toilets?

10. Is there an incident/coordination space with first aid facilities and incident/accident reporting procedure?

11. Has the group considered activities that will encourage children and people with disabilities to participate?

12. Has the group thought about how the new Sudanese arrivals in the community could be included?

13. Has the group thought about acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

The Parish Safeguarding Officer met with the group to help them respond to the issues he raised. He provided safeguarding awareness training and helped the group work on their risk management safeguarding plan. The designated MC was provided with detailed instructions, which included the wording for acknowledgment of local country. They then allocated specific roles to the members of the group. Designated volunteer event safeguarding officers for the day would wear high viz jackets and were not given any other responsibilities, other than to move around the fair, being mindful of where there might be safeguarding risks. The designated volunteer coordinator created a spreadsheet of volunteer contacts and WWCC numbers and created the WhatsApp group. She used this group to provide safeguarding prompts and posters in the lead up to the Fair and to remind people of their roles. All volunteers were provided with a distinctive coloured lanyard and name tag.

It was agreed that 'on the spot' volunteers would only be assigned to assist with the hospitality stalls and as kitchenhands under supervision.

It was realised that extra toilets needed to be hired for the day. These were located in line of sight of the information and first aid tent where St John's Ambulance set up. A roster for cleaning and restocking them was developed.

David was assigned the role of stallholder coordinator. He adjusted the stallholder registration form to include the parish Safeguarding Commitment Statement and advised that they must agree to the diocesan Code of Conduct. His role at the Fair was to monitor the stalls to ensure that they were set up with safeguarding in mind. Where there were children-only activities, volunteers were rostered to supervise those activities and rotated throughout the day.

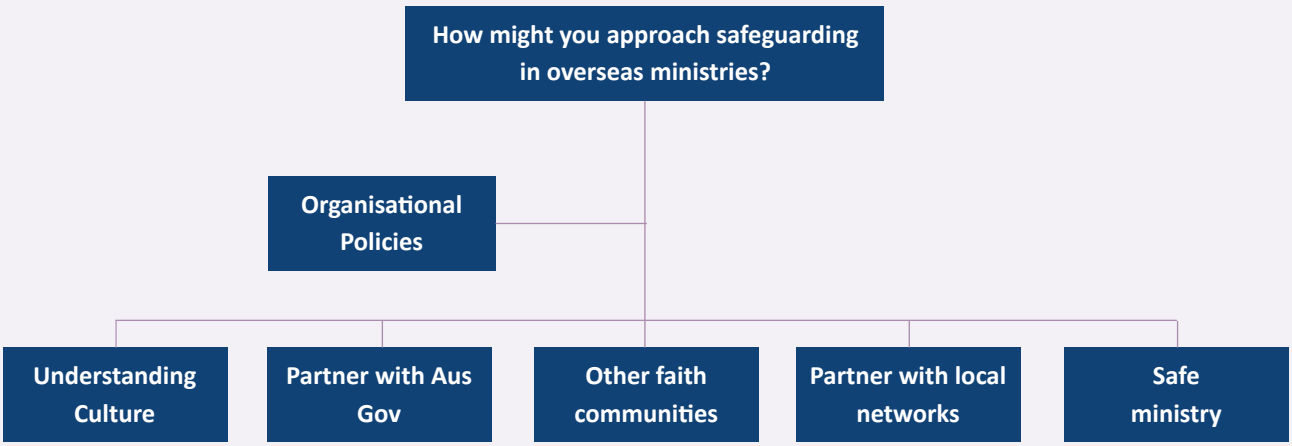
It was hard for the group to work out how to be more culturally inclusive. Four Sudanese families had recently been welcomed into the church community, so it was proposed that they be invited to have a stall and display some cultural items and participate in the fair.

The Spring Fair was a wonderful success and was to become an annual event. The committee met for a debrief session to reflect on the lessons learnt and how to improve for next year. They sought feedback from the parish and stall holders to help refine the risk management plan. A new strategy would be including safeguarding awareness training for parish volunteers as a regular event in the parish. The committee also developed an 'events manual 'to be used as the basis of organising other parish events, with checklists and templates to promote good practice in managing risks and building safeguarding capacity across the parish.

SCENARIO: SAFEGUARDING GOOD PRACTICE IN OVERSEAS CONTEXTS – QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU GET STARTED

You are the leader of the religious congregation that is based in Australia but also has members working in several countries in Oceania. Your congregation has been asked by the local bishop of a diocese in a country you have members working in to provide personnel that will manage a boarding house attached to a school. The school is for young people whose families live in a mountainous area who need to board to further their education.

The teaching activities will be undertaken by the local government and the request to the congregation is to provide 'residential personnel' who will meet the accommodation and support needs of the students. The students are aged between 18 to 25. As the leader, it is your responsibility to ensure a culture of safeguarding and appropriate safeguarding measures will be implemented throughout the residential accommodation to create a safe environment for the young people. A suggested model:



1. How might you get started?
Does your congregation have a similar ministry in Australia or overseas? If yes, can you draw upon resources and the skills of personnel in these ministries? If not, then is it possible for you to connect with other agencies engaged in this ministry, for instance, boarding school operators in Australia. How will your charism assist you in this ministry?

2. Organisational policies
If you have a similar ministry, consult your existing safeguarding policies and procedures to determine if, and how, they can be adapted to this new ministry context. If not, can you reach out to another organisation managing a similar program, to provide you with their policy and operational manuals? Review these to assess how they fit with your situation.

3. Understanding culture
Are there any local or cultural factors and expectations that apply to the young adults who would be attending the boarding house? What social and cultural factors need to be considered when planning this new ministry? For instance, do people of this age group normally still live with their families or are likely to be married at this age? How is education valued in the community?

What is the current awareness about the proposed ministry within the community? Has there been community consultation about the boarding house? How has the community been able to provide feedback about the project? How might you communicate with the students, families and wider community about your congregation's role in helping to source personnel for the boarding house?

4. Partner with Australian government
The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) holds information about non-government agencies that are working in each country. These NGOs may have local knowledge that will be beneficial to your ministry, both about host country responsibilities and responsibilities to DFAT. The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) may also provide assistance.

5. Other faith-based organisations
Which, if any, other churches, or faith-based organisations are providing ministries in the country or in this ministry context? What learnings can you take from their cultural engagement?

6. Partner with local networks, including social and recreational networks
Are there other organisations providing boarding houses in this country which might also be engaging with adults at risk? What other social and recreational activities for young adults and students are available in the area? How will the students relate to the community outside of the boarding house, to promote inclusion in the local community and prevent isolation? Could you engage with other organisations as a future community of practice?

7. Safe ministry
Are there guidelines from the host country government, Australian government, other church and/or local agencies on what are expected safeguarding practices? How can you adapt them to your context?

Questions for organisations to help clarify your safeguarding commitment

- How well do our leaders champion a child and adult safeguarding culture?
- How do our leaders set expectations of how personnel behave towards children and adults at risk?
- How do all personnel share the responsibility for keeping children and adults at risk safe?
- How accessible and available are our *Safeguarding Policy* and *Code of Conduct?*
- Are these documents written in language appropriate to the needs of personnel, children, adults, families, and carers? Are there audio-visual resources available?
- Does the *Code of Conduct* adequately consider the needs of all children and adults at risk?
- What do we need to improve so we have a strong child and adult safe culture in our organisation?
- How comprehensive is our *Safeguarding Policy* in reflecting the risks posed to children and adults in all our properties, locations, and activities?

Further resources for Standard 1

ACSL tools and specific guidance

Standard 1 good practice examples from Church organisations

Other sector resources for Standard 1

Integrity in Our Common Mission

NSW Office of the Children's Guardian – Understanding and Identifying Risk

STANDARD 9:
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Organisations regularly review and improve implementation of their systems for keeping children and adults safe.

Continuous review and improvement are core components of all safeguarding approaches, regardless of the types of ministries or services provided. This Standard includes the need to regularly review policies and procedures, testing how they are understood and implemented by personnel. Organisations are encouraged to engage with external review mechanisms to strengthen safeguarding capabilities.

Standard 9 aim: Organisations continually improve their child and adult safety practices.

Why is this Standard important: Building a child and adult safe organisation requires effort, a commitment to learning, and continual improvement to keep children and adults safe. It puts a high priority on the management of risk and to ensure that emerging risks are continually monitored and practices updated.

Safe organisations have on open and transparent culture, they analyse incidents and complaints and learn from their mistakes, putting the safety of children and adults at risk first. An open culture encourages people to discuss difficult issues and identify and learn from mistakes.

Key focus areas for what is expected

- Regularly review and evaluate your safeguarding practices to protect children and adults at risk.
- Analyse all concerns and complaints to identify causes and any systemic failures in your safeguarding practices.
- Church Authorities report on the findings of its relevant safeguarding reviews and audits to personnel.
- Church Authorities make findings publicly available to the community, families and carers.

Examples of actions that apply the Standard

- Committing to and documenting regular safeguarding reviews and audits.
- Ensuring that policies and procedures are implemented and routinely reviewed even though responsible staff may change.
- Using logbooks or version control to show when policies and procedures have been revised and updated.
- Documenting how recommendations on safeguarding practices can be improved and have been implemented.
- Conducting annual reviews and periodic spot audits.
- Engaging an auditor to complete an external safeguarding audit.
- Reporting on the findings of all reviews to staff, volunteers, children and parents, adults at risk, carers and the community.
- Reporting findings and outcomes of reviews on your organisation's website, linking to the report in newsletters, parish bulletins, and other communications.
- Establishing a safeguarding panel or professional standards committee with external experts to give advice.
- Reviewing critical incidents to identify the root cause of the problem, identify risks to children and adults at risk and make improvements.
- Supporting children and adults at risk to provide feedback and acting on this information. This could be formal as well as ongoing and regular feedback through surveys, suggestions boxes and the opportunity for informal direct or ad hoc feedback.
- Considering age appropriate, cultural relevance and different levels of English language skills when reporting, as well as any special needs of adults at risk.
- Entering into a formal arrangement with ACSL to undertake a review or audit and the associated reporting processes established and recommended by ACSL.

DOCUMENTING THE STANDARD

- *Safeguarding Implementation Plan*
- *Self-Assessment plans and schedules*
- *Incident and complaints review procedures*
- *Policy review schedule*
- *Reports* on findings of reviews, audits and critical incidents.

Remember, reviews will look different in different organisations, depending on their engagement with and responsibility for children and adults at risk, their activities, their size, and resources.

SCENARIO: KEEPING SAFEGUARDING CURRENT

Sr Eliza is the leader of a small religious institute in a coastal city. Most of the sisters in the institute are in aged care or assisted living, and the others who still live in the community are in their 70s, 80s and 90s. Many of the religious institute's former ministry programs have now been transferred or incorporated to other Catholic service organisations. Despite this, some of the sisters who still live independently remain engaged in ministry work with a group of people experiencing alcohol addiction. Two of these sisters, Sr Eliza and Sr Beth, regularly visit a boarding house where several men with alcohol dependency live. They have a long-established pastoral relationship with some of these men, who they have been working with for many years.

In more recent times there has been a change in the demographics of residents, with a greater number of people experiencing drug dependency living at the boarding house. This has resulted in a few incidents where the sisters have noticed more volatility and unpredictable behaviour amongst the residents. In light of these incidents, Sr Eliza and other members of the leadership team decide that it is time to revisit the safety of all those involved in the visits. Sr Eliza and the other leaders agree that a good place to start would be a review of their current safeguarding framework. Sr Eliza is aware that Catholic organisations can self-assess against the NCSS through a safeguarding self-assessment portal and decides doing this would help the religious institute understand what policies and procedures they already have in place and what might be missing.

Sr Eliza and Sr Beth take on responsibility for working through the NCSS Self-Assessment Portal together. They can see that while they have some good foundational practices, their policies and procedures overall do not reflect their current ministry environments. In working through the self-assessment, the sisters realise that they do not have a formal incident review system in place. While in the past, incidents at the boarding house have been discussed at meetings, no formal incident records were kept or considered to see if there had been any patterns emerging that might require different risk management strategies. The sisters agree that this is important to put in place, and decide to get in contact with the archdiocese, with whom they have previously undertaken safeguarding training, to see if they have any guidance materials on incident reports. The archdiocese is happy to provide the sisters with templates and suggests that the sisters can look at some online training and resources to help them set up an incident review process.

By completing their self-assessment, the sisters decide it is time to update several of their policies, including their overarching Safeguarding Policy and to create an updated risk assessment for their visits to the boarding house. They also decide to investigate more specific training safely interacting with people experiencing alcohol and drug dependencies. Finally, they set up a review schedule with review dates for their key policies every three years.

Questions for organisations to assess the strength of your systems for reviewing safeguarding policies and procedures and implementing ongoing quality improvement

- How do we stay up to date with current knowledge about child and adult safe practices?
- How would we conduct a root cause analysis after a critical incident?
- How do we best document what we learn from a review or complaint?
- How do we incorporate learning and new knowledge into our practices?
- How would we adapt our safeguarding policies and practices following a complaint?
- Has an external agency reviewed our safeguarding policies and practices?
- How do we involve families, children, adults at risk and the community in our evaluations and make our reports accessible to them? What would this look like and what resources/ assistance would we need to do this effectively?

Further resources for Standard 9

NCSS Self-Assessment Portal

ACSL tools and specific guidance

Standard 9 good practice examples from Church organisations

Other sector resources for Standard 9

ENGAGING WITH CHILDREN, ADULTS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

STANDARDS 2, 3 & 4

Every person has the right to be protected from harm, to be listened to, to be taken seriously, and to have a say in matters that affect them. Empowering children and adults to have a say in decisions that affect them is an integral part of every safe organisation. The NCSS Ed.2, which now includes adults at risk, requires each organisation to strengthen its preparedness and understanding of safeguarding. This includes how organisations relate, respond, protect, and honour the human dignity of elderly people, people with disability and other vulnerable groups. When we connect with families, carers and communities as equal partners and recognise people's diverse needs and circumstances, we create a shared responsibility for safeguarding.

Standard 2 – Children and adults are safe, informed and participate – embeds the rights of children and adults by providing them with information about being safe from abuse, including where to seek help if they feel unsafe. Standard 2 also emphasises that children and adults at risk should be given information and opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

Standard 3 – Partnering with families, carers and communities – highlights that safeguarding occurs in a range of settings. It promotes the importance of an inclusive approach based on the understanding that families, carers and communities have a key role in informing organisations about practices and environments that are safe for children and adults at risk.

Standard 4 – Equity is promoted and diversity is respected – is underpinned by the principle of the inherent dignity of the human person. There is an emphasis on inclusion and empowerment and acknowledging people's diverse needs and circumstances. Providing ministries and services in culturally safe and inclusive ways facilitates self-determination and builds a safeguarding culture.

STANDARD 2: CHILDREN AND ADULTS ARE SAFE, INFORMED AND PARTICIPATE

Children and adults at risk are more likely to raise concerns and issues in an organisation that empowers and listens to them.

Policies and practices that are shaped by their views can better prevent harm. Informing children and adults at risk about their rights means all people in organisations are better able to uphold and respect their rights and encourage them to exercise those rights.

Standard 2 aim: Children and adults at risk are empowered to speak up, are believed and participate in decisions affecting them.

The commitment to the principles of self -determination and 'Dignity of risk' apply to every child and adult who interacts with our Catholic community.

Why is this Standard important: Empowering children and adults at risk to take part in discussions about their safety helps to foster an organisation that is child and adult safe. Safe organisations have strategies in place, so all people are heard and feel free to speak up if they feel unsafe. This is called *'protection through participation'*[23].

[23] Protection through Participation' concept is referenced earlier in the Guide.

Key focus areas for what is expected

- Children and adults at risk are informed about their rights, using age and developmentally appropriate strategies, seeking their views about what makes them feel safe; and are engaged in decisions that affect them.
- Friendships for children are recognised as important and support from peers is encouraged.
- Relationships and social connections for adults at risk are recognised and encouraged.
- Autonomy, self-determination and the maintenance of personal dignity are core values for safeguarding children and adults at risk, including people who are frail, elderly or with diminished capacity.
- Children, adults and families can access appropriate abuse prevention programs and information that is appropriate to their age, development, ability and level of understanding.
- Where relevant, victim/survivors are provided with information, choice, flexibility, and a genuine connection to promote healing, recovery, and resilience.
- Feedback is sought from children and adults at risk.

Examples of actions that apply the Standard

- Ensure children and adults at risk know their rights and that communication between adults and children, and between children and adults at risk, is always open and transparent.
- Research and inquire about effective ways to consult meaningfully with children and adults at risk.
- Involve children and adults at risk in decisions affecting them, listen to them and take their views seriously.
- Recognise and encourage relationships and social connections for adults at risk.
- Promote the Rights of the Child to children, personnel, and the broader community.
- Promote the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability.
- Promote/present information on Catholic Social Teaching and its relationship to the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.
- Create opportunities for children and adults at risk to participate in discussions, express their views and participate actively in the organisation (for example, by creating versions of the Safeguarding Policy and Commitment Statement in their own words).
- Hold forums and conversations with children and adults at risk to hear about key issues affecting them, including their perceptions of safety.
- Include and encourage people of all ages, stages of development and diverse needs and backgrounds in designing and organising programs and activities.
- Ensure your communication is accessible and appropriate to the needs and circumstances of children, adults at risk, considering their age and development, understanding, ability and how they communicate.

Good practice in empowering children and adults at risk and encouraging their participation

- Find positive ways to involve children and adults at risk in your services and activities.
    - Provide forums, events, and activities to listen to the 'voice' of children and adults at risk to inform policy, processes and practice.
    - Discuss with children what makes them feel safe and unsafe and agree on ways for children to complain if they have a concern about themselves or their friends.
    - Invite adults at risk to become members of your governing body or set up a special advisory group.
    - Create a feedback tool to assist adults at risk to provide feedback.
    - Provide adults at risk and their carers with information about safe and respectful relationships.

DOCUMENTING THE STANDARD

- *Safeguarding Policy* promoting the empowerment and participation of children and adults at risk.
- *Risk management strategies* that identify practices that have the potential to disempower children and adults at risk and provide practical ways to respond.
- *Posters and brochures* giving information about support services within the organisation and outside in the community. These should be provided in easy to read and accessible mediums.

SCENARIO: GIVING PEOPLE A SAY IN SERVICES THAT AFFECT THEM

A local mission group within a city diocese operates a weekly meal service for anyone who would like to attend. The food van has been operating in the area for several years and has always used the same location and way of providing meals. One of the long-term homeless women who frequently attends commented to a social worker who helps run the meal service that she did not feel as safe as she used to when visiting the food van. The social worker knows many of the users of the service well as she works frequently with them in a larger outreach program.

Hearing this, the social worker decides to seek feedback from all participants about how to make the service a safer place and experience for everyone. The social worker lets people know at the beginning of the next scheduled meal service that their team wants to ensure everyone feels safe while attending and would like their input on how to make things better. She reiterates to everyone at the service that they have a right to feel safe and reminds participants that they can report a concern to any of the trained support staff who attend (wearing yellow badges). The social worker also points participants to some flyers on the cutlery table with information about reporting a concern if they are feeling unsafe. The flyers provide information about contacting the police, the safeguarding team at the diocese and other support services if they need.

The social worker lets participants know there are different ways they can contribute feedback about how the service is going. Firstly, she has designed a plain English paper questionnaire that people can complete, with pens, paper and a feedback box at the table with cutlery. As the social worker knows some people who attend struggle with literacy and there are others with English as a second language, there is also a simple pictorial option that can be completed, with four faces ranging from unhappy to happy. The social worker also lets attendees at the service know that anyone is welcome to speak to her face to face to have a chat, or else speak to her colleague Mark, a trained support worker, who is wearing a yellow badge, if they feel more comfortable. When she provides this information at the beginning of the service, she is careful to let people know that all feedback will be considered and can be anonymous, and any changes to the service will be communicated back to participants.

After a few services where feedback was received, the social worker shares this feedback with the mission group in the diocese. Together they review and it becomes clear that the location has become problematic for some people, as its proximity to a local bar area is making at least one participant feel unsafe when she has to leave, as she is encountering a number of intoxicated people nearby and is feeling threatened. Several other responses focused on the food being provided and meal types not changing frequently enough, especially during the colder winter months.

After reviewing the feedback, the team agrees that the risk assessment for the meal service location needs to be updated and then shared with the Diocese's Safeguarding Director to feed into the diocesan risk register. To respond to the feedback, the team works to identify a second location in a still public area but that is not close to bar areas, that is also suitable for the meal service. The team decides to investigate if it will be possible to offer an additional meal service there on alternate nights. Participants would be offered the choice to visit one or the other location. The team also take the feedback about the meals to the kitchen and ask if it's possible to include more variety in the meals.

The mission team agrees that they will let people know at the next meal service that they have heard their concerns and have identified a second location, which they are now looking into. While they won't be able to begin operating in the new location for a few months at least, they are aware of another organisation providing a meal service close by that might suit some participants who were not feeling safe. The social worker and the team let participants know about the other service location and put participants in touch with the other organisation.

Questions for organisations on giving children and adults at risk a say in the way safeguarding policies and procedures operate

- What opportunities do we give children and adults at risk to give their views?
- What does giving children and/or adults at risk a 'voice' mean in our organisation?
- How do we listen and what are our actions after listening?
- Is participation part of our organisation's culture and everyday practice?
- How does our organisation act on feedback from children and adults at risk?
- Are the voices of children and adults at risk included in our policies and procedures – for example, in our Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy, complaints and reporting processes?
- How do we include people of all ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds?
- Do we discourage children and adults at risk from raising particular issues?
- What are some of the biggest challenges we have in implementing this standard and what would it take to improve on this?

Further Resources for Standard 2

ACSL tools and specific guidance

- Children specific - Guide for Engaging Children and Young People in Conversations about Safeguarding

Standard 2 good practice examples from Church organisations

Other sector resources for Standard 2

NAPCAN - Child friendly version of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

UN - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) | Division for Inclusive Social Development (DISD) (un.org)

- Easy read version - IS164 07 Easyread UN Convention on Human Rights (publishing.service.gov.uk)

NSW Office of the Children's Guardian - Empowerment and participation: A guide for organisations working with children and young people

STANDARD 3: PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES, CARERS AND COMMUNITIES

Empowering parents, carers, and communities to participate and take an active role in safeguarding strengthens practices and contributes to a safe environment.

This Standard promotes the importance of an inclusive approach to safeguarding that considers families, carers and legal guardians of adults who have diminished capacity, or cognitive impairment, as being critical partners. It values their knowledge to inform about practices and environments that are safe for children and adults at risk. It is important for your organisation to be open and transparent about your approach to the safety of children and adults at risk and to have this continuous open dialogue with families, carers and the community.

Standard 3 aim: To actively engage with families, supporters and carers and build connection to community to foster a stronger safeguarding culture.

Why is this Standard important: Involving families, carers and community members in decisions that affect children and adults fosters a safe culture. Effective and respectful communication between families and organisations will build a shared understanding of each other's perspective and attitudes. Everyone important in the lives of children and adults at risk can be involved in understanding how and why decisions are made, where to go for information and help, and how to raise concerns. Children and adults feel more valued when this happens, and organisations are more accountable for their safe practices. As communities become more aware of safeguarding, people are better informed about the organisations they are associated with – including the commitment that organisations must keep people safe.

Key focus areas for what is expected

- Parents, carers and/or guardians participate in decisions affecting their child, or adults with diminished capacity.
- Families, carers and communities are partners in all aspects of the organisation's approach to safeguarding and processes are in place to ensure they have a say in safeguarding policies and practices.
- Families, carers and communities are informed about the organisation's operations and governance.
- The organisation takes a leading role in raising community awareness of the dignity and rights of children and adults at risk.

Examples of actions that apply the Standard

- Policies and procedures (including *Code of Conduct*) are clearly communicated to families, carers and the broader community.
- Information about child and adult safeguarding is widely communicated in various formats in brochures, posters, websites and social media.
- Surveys, forums, and other feedback processes are used to gauge the effectiveness of family and community engagement and then acted upon where necessary.
- Communications tools such as *forum agenda, online surveys, suggestion boxes* or other methods are used to facilitate engagement or input into decision-making.
- Families, carers and the community are involved in understanding and supporting the safeguarding culture and practices of your organisation.
- Connections with other organisations and entities to learn about good examples of family and community involvement are promoted.
- Feedback from families and the community is sought, and their suggestions are incorporated into practice where possible and appropriate.

DOCUMENTING THE STANDARD

- The *Safeguarding Policy* reflects the importance of, and encourage the involvement of families, carers and community and describe how it happens. It may include flowcharts, or decision-making trees, as well as risk management templates. Dioceses and ministries should provide information packages on all key safeguarding documents to new personnel.
- The *Complaint Handling Policy* includes how families, carers and community members are involved in the process of managing complaints. It may include reference to support resources for all parties involved, guidance on confidentiality of information, and an outline of how the organisation meets legal and regulatory requirements.

SCENARIO: FAMILIES AND CARERS AS PARTNERS IN SAFEGUARDING

A parish priest in a rural diocese is asked by Geoff, a parishioner who formerly attended mass in person but has recently become unable to due to a physical disability, to begin providing a home eucharist service. Fr Peter, his local priest, already offers a home eucharist service to several parishioners in his community.

When Geoff requests the service, Fr Peter agrees and talks through how the home visit program works. Fr Peter lets Geoff know that it would be important for Geoff's support system to be aware the visits will be happening. Involving families and carers in conversations about safeguarding is part of the parish's approach, but Fr Peter is also aware that engaging with families can sometimes elevate risks or might not be appropriate, so he wants to talk through this with Geoff first to get his perspective.

Geoff explains that his adult children Mark and Emma, who alternate visiting him daily and provide support to him, would appreciate being aware that the visits will be taking place, and agrees it is a good idea. He mentions that his children do not attend mass and are not involved in the parish community so are not familiar with home visit programs from the parish. Fr Peter wants Geoff's children to know that the visits will be happening and assure them that the parish are exercising due diligence in their safeguarding responsibilities.

One thing Fr Peter wants Geoff and his children to know is that with the increased demand for the home eucharist service, it will not always be Fr Peter who is able to come and deliver the eucharist, but other eucharistic ministers from time to time. Fr Peter is particularly interested in hearing from Geoff's family about any requirements Geoff has and to assure them that the people who will be visiting are screened and vetted by the parish and have undergone appropriate safeguarding training. Fr Peter wants to know from Geoff and his children about who to contact in the event of an emergency and any other considerations for the home eucharist visits.

When planning Geoff's home eucharist visits, Fr Peter consults the diocese's home eucharist program risk assessment to help him work through the potential safeguarding implications of the visit. He then completes a simple risk assessment of the home visit program for Geoff's eucharist visits specifically, and records and stores this along the other home eucharist risk assessments.

Fr Peter organises an initial home meeting with Geoff and his children where he provides them with an information pack from the parish that also includes the names, a photo and the contact number for each of the lay ministers who will be on the visit roster. Within the pack there are emergency contact numbers and information about the diocese's parish Safeguarding Policy, Safeguarding Commitment Statement and information about how to report a concern. Fr Peter also explains the procedure to report a concern verbally so that Geoff and his children are well informed. A contact phone number and email address for the diocese's Safeguarding Coordinator is included in the pack.

Geoff's daughter Emma lets Fr Peter know that Geoff doesn't deal well with uncertainty and that she thinks it will be important for Geoff to always know in advance who will be visiting. Fr Peter agrees and advises that the home visit program works on a roster which is provided monthly, but that if there are any changes to the roster that someone from the parish will contact both Emma and Geoff to let them know.

For the first visit Geoff's daughter would like to attend and see how the service is conducted, as this will make her feel assured and honour her father's dignity in receiving the service moving forward. After the first six weeks of providing the eucharistic ministry, Fr Peter and Geoff's children agree that they will have a meeting to assess what is and isn't working with the visits.

With the addition of Geoff into the home eucharist visit roster, Fr Peter tables for discussion with his parish safeguarding committee that a more formal and targeted program for parish eucharist ministers is introduced. He also suggests that group supervision be considered, so that eucharistic ministers can connect more with each other and share their experiences.

The Safeguarding Committee agree and decide to contact the diocesan safeguarding director to see if there is more they can be doing to strengthen their safeguarding practice. They also ask:

- Given the one-to-one interactions between an adult and adult to risk inherent in the current program, are there further risk mitigation strategies that should be considered?
- Is the current training for the eucharistic ministers adequate?
- Is there a safety risk for the volunteers that is not being considered?
- Can the diocese help to organise some group supervision or reflective practice as well as provide support with volunteer performance appraisals, to ensure safeguarding dimensions of the role are being captured?
- Can the diocese connect in with any specialist providers like Dementia Australia or other adults at risk focused organisations to provide some external feedback on the current home eucharist program, to point out how it can be improved?

Questions to assist in increasing the active participation of families, carers and communities in our approach to safeguarding:

- How do we actively involve families, carers and the community in our organisation?
- Are families and communities comfortable asking questions about safeguarding of children and adults at risk in our organisation?
- How do families and the community know who is in our leadership team?
- Are families involved in any of our governance structures, such as committees of management or advisory boards?
- Is our *Code of Conduct* and *Safeguarding Policy* accessible, culturally safe and understandable to families, carers and the community?
- How well do we listen to feedback from families, carers and the community and act upon this information when necessary?
- How do we consider the dignity of risk, giving as much choice and control as possible to allow for the dignity of risk, supporting people to take informed and reasonable risks?
- How do we identify if there are circumstances when it is not in the best interest of a vulnerable person to provide information to families or carers?

Further Resources for Standard 3

ACSL tools and specific guidance

Standard 3 good practice examples from Church organisations

Other sector resources for Standard 3

Elder abuse - Seniors Rights Victoria | Home

STANDARD 4: EQUITY IS PROMOTED, AND DIVERSITY IS RESPECTED

A safeguarding culture pays attention to equity and considers children's and adults' diverse circumstances so that they are safeguarded more effectively.

It recognises that some children and adults are more vulnerable to abuse than others and find it harder to speak up and be heard. By understanding diversity, we create a more inclusive, responsive, and respective environment for all people. Organisations must be accessible to everyone, irrespective of their ability or disability, cultural background, linguistic skills, religious beliefs, sexuality, or gender identity.

Our Church is characterised by a multitude of diversity throughout our ministries both within Australia and overseas, amongst our clergy and religious, within our social services and most importantly within our multi-cultural communities and parishes. Organisations that embrace diversity promote the protective factors of resilience and innovation, giving them a greater ability to adapt to change and problem solve.[24]

> ***'I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things.'***
> (Mother Teresa)

Examples of Catholic Social Services embracing and celebrating diversity are highlighted in publications such as 'Our Diversity is a Gift', from Jesuit Social Services[25] and by the central place it holds in the work of MercyCare.[26]

> ***'At our Centres we see diversity and inclusion as a strength, something to learn from and embrace.'***
> (MercyCare)

The Final Report of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability released in September 2023[27] highlights the importance of understanding the intersectionality of diversity. For many people, disability accompanies other vulnerabilities, including being an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander; being culturally or linguistically diverse; being gender diverse; being homeless; or experiencing family violence. The additional layers of diversity which impose additional risks to people's safety and human dignity challenge our attitudes, culture, organisations and systems to make significant change. Upholding and promoting equity and respecting diverse needs is a common thread across all the Standards.

> ***'...the transformation required to make Australia truly inclusive requires us to take account of the history of inclusion that has shaped the settings, systems, and daily lives of people with disability though to today ...too many Australians still experience exclusion and segregation.'***
> (Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation, 2023, Executive Summary, p.13)

[24] Psychology Today, "Why Diversity is really our greatest Strength", September 2022 https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/coaching-corner/202209/why-diversity-is-really-our-greatest-strength

[25] Jesuit Social Services Publication May 2020 'Our Diversity is a Gift' https://jss.org.au/news-and-media/our-thinking/our-diversity-is-a-gift/

[26] MercyCare website 'Creating Diversity and Inclusion' https://www.mercycare.com.au/child-care/about-child-care/diversity-and-inclusion)

[27] Australian Government, Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, Final Report, September 2023

Standard 4 aim: Children and adults at risk are provided opportunities to participate to their full potential.

Why is this Standard important:
The principles of Catholic Social Teaching, particularly the inherent dignity of the human person, underpin the focus of this standard. Participation builds a safeguarding culture where ministries and services are provided in culturally safe and inclusive ways.

Organisations and communities are strengthened when diversity is valued and respected because children and adults can access opportunities to fulfil their potential. Equity is a state of fairness which means everyone has the right to be safe regardless of their circumstances, including their social and economic position, their cultural background, or their abilities.

Key focus areas for what is expected

- The diverse circumstances and backgrounds of children and adults at risk are acknowledged and supported.
- Information, support and complaint processes promote inclusion, are culturally safe, and accessible.
- Some groups who experience higher risks include:
    - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
    - Children, young people and adults living with disability.
    - People from specific religious or culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
    - Those who are very young, the elderly, or frail.
    - People who have been exposed to trauma.
    - People who feel vulnerable because of their gender identity or sexuality.
    - Those who live in a remote area.
    - Those who come from diverse family backgrounds.

Examples of actions that apply the Standard

- Engaging with cultural practices of the members of your community such as celebrating key dates and events, for example, NAIDOC week.
- Providing cultural awareness training to support your personnel's understanding and confidence in working with diverse and vulnerable children, adults and communities.
- Training programs to include an understanding of the factors that increase a person's vulnerability to harm.
- Reflecting in your workplace, as much as is possible, the diversity of your community and the children and adults you work with and support. This could include:
    - Finding out about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups in your area and seeking their involvement.
    - Hosting 'welcome events' that celebrate diversity and significant cultural festivals.
    - Seeking direct input from children and adults with disability about the design and delivery of your services and encourage them to speak up about concerns.
    - Researching and adapting resources for better ways to engage people with disability in your places of worship. For example, the Information Pack for Faith Leaders: Places of Worship.[28]
    - Undertaking awareness training about gender diversity and an inclusive Church.
    - Holding a workshop bringing in professionals to assist personnel and volunteers in understanding neurodiversity in children and adults at risk.
    - Keeping a record of events that demonstrate diversity and inclusion.
    - Holding an event that supports and celebrates diversity in your parish (e.g., Harmony Day, cultural festival etc.).

DOCUMENTING THE STANDARD

- Your *Safeguarding Policy* describes how children and adults at risk have their individual needs recognised and how the organisation will respond to children and adults with vulnerabilities.
- *Complaints Handling Policy* and associated forms.
- Translated versions of key safeguarding documents where relevant.
- Plain language and child friendly versions of key safeguarding documents, e.g., how to make a complaint fact sheet.
- *Your Risk Management Plan* identifies factors that may increase the risk of abuse for children and adults with vulnerabilities and describes how these will be managed.
- You display your *Diversity and Inclusion Plan* in open areas.
- Records of events that demonstrate diversity and inclusion.

[28] EACH, 'Information Pack for Faith Leaders: Places of Workshop', https://www.each.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/EACH-Places-of-Worship-Inclusion-Resource-FINAL-version-1.0-Jan_2022.pdf

SCENARIO: MEETING DIVERSE NEEDS

A youth ministry group for 16 to 18-year-olds is planning an overnight camp. One of the youth ministry leaders notices that Marley, who is 16 and has been one of the regular participants over the past year, seems a bit withdrawn when the group talks about the camp in the Tuesday night meeting. Marley mentions to the group that they might not to go. Jacqui, one of the youth ministry leaders is concerned as she knows Marley usually likes to be involved in all activities.

A few months before the camp, Jacqui finds time with Marley at the end of one of the youth ministry meetings while people are packing up and asks Marley how they are going and what they are looking forward to doing at the camp. Marley at first says everything is fine but they are busy at school so they aren't too sure if they can go. Jacqui says she understands but they would all really like it if they can come, and that the group are planning on rock climbing, which was an activity Marley had initially suggested. As they are talking, Marley mentions that as well as being as being busy at school, they are a bit worried about the accommodation arrangements. Marley identifies as non-binary and is worried as they've experienced some bullying at school on overnight camps. Marley says they are uncertain about sharing a room with people they don't know so well.

Jacqui says she understands and that everyone wants Marley to feel safe and comfortable attending. At the next youth ministry leaders meeting, Jacqui raises with the other youth ministry leaders that a good way to negotiate sleeping arrangements might be to introduce a buddy system and ask people privately who they would like to share with on camp, as Marley was worried that they would be randomly allocated with someone. Marley had indicated to Jacqui that their good friend Harper who is attending is someone they would feel comfortable sharing with.

The youth leaders agree that this could be a good approach and would like to run it by the youth ministry participants and speak with the diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator to see if this seems appropriate. They also agree that it would be a good idea to ask their local Catholic social service agency and other Catholic social service providers for their advice on how they approach gender diversity in ministry activities, and particularly how they make arrangements for overnight stays. They also want to ask their diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator how they can update their risk assessment and safeguarding risk mitigation plan.

The Safeguarding Coordinator advises Jacqui and the other youth ministry leaders that their idea about enabling the youth ministry participants to nominate who they would like to share with is a good approach and is in line with the approach of their local Catholic social service providers, who they have also consulted. The Safeguarding Coordinator suggests that discussing the approach with the youth ministry participants for their perspectives would be a good idea. The Safeguarding Coordinator also advises Jacqui and the team that any changes to the camp's structure will need to be communicated back to the parents, guardians, or carers of the attendees, so they can provide their updated and informed consent.

The youth leaders agree that at the next general youth ministry meeting they will overview how they are working to make the camp a safe environment for everyone and see if the participants like the idea of the buddy system for accommodation arrangements and let them know how they can nominate a buddy. At the meeting, participants say they like the idea.

The youth ministry leaders prepare an updated letter and consent form for parents and guardians to sign. They also decide that this is a good opportunity to highlight safe and respectful relationships to the participants and decide to focus one of their next meetings on Catholic Social Teaching in practice. This provides a way to highlight the inherent dignity of the human person and leads into a conversation about safety on camp. The group revisit the Code of Conduct for Youth Ministry, previously developed by the participants, which emphasises respectful interactions.

The youth leaders talk about the right to always feel safe and overview the ways that anyone can report a concern if they're not feeling safe or if someone is making them feel uncomfortable. The youth leaders remind the participants that there are lots of people they can talk to if they are not feeling safe and mention other community services like Kids Helpline that they can reach out to if they need.

The youth ministry leaders agree that it will be important to follow up about the experience of the safety on the camp with each of the participants afterwards, so they begin scheduling some feedback group discussions and anonymous individual feedback methods for after the camp.

The leaders also agree that Marley's situation highlights the risk of peer-on-peer abuse, an area in which has not received dedicated professional development, but which they know is a prevalent issue for schools and other youth organisations. The group agree that it is an area they feel undereducated in and decide to speak with their Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator to ask about any training they can receive in this area, and what an education approach with the youth participants would look like.

Questions for organisations to ask in committing to promoting equity and respecting diversity:

- How does our organisation identify children and adults at risk and respond to their needs?
- Do our leaders, staff and volunteers understand the link between people's vulnerability and their increased risk of being harmed?
- How does our organisation encourage children and adults to have positive discussions about diversity?
- How are children and adults at risk given the opportunity to communicate their views and needs?
- Are there barriers in our organisation that make the implementation of this Standard difficult? What could improve this?
- Does our workforce reflect the diversity of the children and adults who receive its services? Are there barriers to this and what could help to change this?

Further Resources for Standard 4

ACSL tools and specific guidance

Standard 1 good practice examples from Church organisations

Other sector resources for Standard 4

EACH - Place of Worship & Children with Disability: An information pack for Faith Leaders

Peer-to-peer abuse: Children can abuse other children. This is generally referred to as child-on-child abuse and can take many forms. It can happen both inside and outside of school or college and online. It is most likely to include, but may not be limited to bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying); abuse in intimate personal relationships between children or young people; physical abuse; sexual violence; sexual harassment; non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos; causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent; upskirting and initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (adapted from Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 UK).

GENERAL RESOURCES AND READING

The NCSS Implementation Guide is designed as a companion resource to help all Catholic organisations in thinking through how they can bring the NCSS to life.

NCSS EDITION 2 TEXT RESOURCES

NCSS Edition 2– full text
The NCSS Edition 2, available on ACSL's website, articulates the full requirements of the NCSS at the standard, criteria and indicator level. As such, it is intended to be read alongside this Guide for further detail.
See: NCSS Edition 2

NCSS Edition 2 – Compendium
The NCSS Edition 2 Compendium unpacks the evolution of Edition 2, from public and Church consultation, through to the incorporated learnings from relevant enquiries, government reports and legislation. It also gives voice to the Catholic Social Teaching principles which complement the NCSS.
See: NCSS Edition 2 Compendium

NCSS alignment with relevant legislation
The NCSS Edition 2 has been mapped, where possible, against key state, territory and commonwealth legislation, as well as alignment with Royal Commission recommendations. View the range of mapping materials, covering children and adults at risk – NCSS Alignment tools

KEY SAFEGUARDING ENQUIRIES AND REPORTS

- Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse – Final Report
- Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability – Final Report
- Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety – Final Report

COMMONWEALTH, STATE AND TERRITORY RESOURCES:

Each state and territory has different legislative requirements in relation to safeguarding of children and adults at risk. Child safeguarding legislation is substantially more progressed across each jurisdiction compared to legal frameworks around the protection of adults at risk, which are still emerging. See NCSS Alignment tools for an overview of NCSS alignment with some of the relevant legislation for adults at risk.

Child safeguarding regulators
State and territory governments have invested considerable resources in the establishment of Children's Guardian or Children's Commissioner offices. A range of safeguarding tools and materials have been developed by each office to support organisations within their jurisdiction to meet their legislative requirements.

Commonwealth	National Office for Child Safety National Office for Child Safety
Australian Capital Territory	ACT Human Rights Commission Children & Young People - HRC (act.gov.au)
Northern Territory	Office of the Children's Commissioner Northern Territory Child Safe Organisations | OCC site (nt.gov.au)
New South Wales	NSW Office of the Children's Guardian Home | Office of the Children's Guardian (nsw.gov.au)
Queensland	Growing child safe organisations | Community support | Queensland Government (www.qld.gov.au)
South Australia	Department of Human Services National Principles for child safe organisations | DHS
Tasmania	Department of Justice Child and Youth Safe Standards | carcru (justice.tas.gov.au)
Victoria	Commissioner for Children and Young People CCYP | Resources
Western Australia	Department of Communities Child safe organisations (www.wa.gov.au)

KEY TERMS

Some of the key terms used throughout this Implementation Guide appear below.

A full Glossary of the terms used in the text of the NCSS Ed.2 are available here: [ACSL Glossary - Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (acsltd.org.au).]

Abuse when used throughout the NCSS Implementation Guide is an inclusive term covering both child and adult abuse (see definitions below).

Accessible language means information is provided in multiple formats for individuals with different levels of English language and, modes of communication, languages, and cognitive abilities.

Abuse of Power means the abuse of position, function or duty to take advantage of another. This can take many forms and include situations where a person has power over another person by virtue of their relationship (for example, employer and employee, teacher and student, coach and athlete, parent or guardian and child, clergy or religious and parishioner) and uses that power to their advantage.

Adult abuse means the improper treatment of a person that results in the actual and/or likelihood of causing physical or emotional harm. Abuse can come in many forms, such as: physical or verbal maltreatment, neglect, injury, assault, violation, rape, unjust practices, crimes, exploitation, or other types of aggression. There are several categories of abuse of adults, such as:

- Sexual abuse*
- Physical abuse*
- Emotional/psychological abuse*
- Neglect*
- Elder abuse*
- Financial abuse*
- Exploitation*

Within the context of the Catholic Church and faith-based entities, it is also important to recognise spiritual abuse* as an additional subtype of abuse.

Adult at risk means any person aged 18 years and over who is at increased risk of experiencing abuse, such as people:

- who are elderly
- with a disability
- who suffer from mental illness
- who have diminished capacity
- who have cognitive impairment
- who have suffered previous abuse
- who are experiencing transient risks
- who in receiving a ministry or service are subject to a power imbalance
- who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- who are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background
- who are of diverse sexuality
- who have any other impairment or adversity that makes it difficult for them to protect themselves from abuse.

Child abuse There are different legal definitions of child abuse in Australia. Definition sourced from the Australian Institute of Family Studies: https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/reportingabuse-and-neglect. Child abuse refers to any behaviour or treatment by parents, caregivers, other adults or older adolescents that results in the actual and/or likelihood of causing physical or emotional harm to a child. Such behaviours may be intentional or unintentional and can include acts of omission (i.e., neglect) and commission. Child abuse and neglect is commonly divided into five subtypes:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional/psychological abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual abuse
- Exposure to family violence.

Church Authority means:

a. a diocesan bishop or archbishop, an ordinary of an Ordinariate and the prelate of a Personal Prelature of the Latin Church and an eparch of an eparchy of an Eastern Church;

b. the competent authority, howsoever titled, exercising the ministry of governance for religious institutes in Australia in accordance with their Constitutions;

c. for Ministerial Public Juridic Persons the competent authority in accordance with the statutes; or

d. for any other Church entity, the senior authority within the organisation in accordance with its rules.

Clergy includes bishops, priests and deacons.

Cleric a member of the clergy.

Cognitive impairment means when a person has trouble remembering, learning new things, concentrating, or making decisions that affect their everyday life, because of their condition. Some causes of long-term or permanent cognitive impairment include dementia, stroke, or brain injury. For further information see: https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/cognitiveimpairment.

Cultural safety means an environment that is safe for people of all ethnicities and cultural identities: where there is no assault, challenge, or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge, and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening.

Dignity or Right to Risk refers to enabling individuals the right (or dignity) to take reasonable risks. It recognises that restricting this right can stifle the individual's growth, self-esteem and the overall quality of life: 'Given that an individual's personal dignity is manifested, in part, by their ability to remain autonomous, and being autonomous engenders risk-taking. Inhibiting an individual's ability to take risks erodes their dignity. Dignity of risk is, therefore, the principle of allowing an individual the dignity afforded by risk-taking, subsequently enhancing their personal growth and quality of life.' (Joseph E Ibrahim and Marie-Claire Davis, 'Impediments to Applying the "Dignity of Risk" Principle in Residential Aged Care Services: "Dignity of Risk" in Residential Aged Care', Australasian Journal on Ageing 32, no. 3 (September 2013): 188–93.

Diminished capacity means if an adult needs to make a decision and is unable to carry out any part of this process (as listed below), they have impaired decision-making capacity. There are three elements to making a decision:

- understanding the nature and effect of the decision;
- freely and voluntarily deciding; and
- communicating the decision in some way.

Diocese means a diocese, archdiocese, ordinariate or personal prelature of the Latin Church and an eparchy of an Eastern Church.

Disability (persons with) means those who have physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. (Article 2, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.)

Diversity means a range of people who have various racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds and various lifestyles, experience, and interests.

Diverse sexuality refers to all the diversities of sex characteristics, sexual orientations, and gender identities, without the need to specify each of the identities, behaviours, or characteristics that form this plurality.

Entity means a diocese, religious institute, ministerial Public Juridic Person (including their agencies) or association recognised as Catholic in accord with canon law.

Emotional abuse (adults) is a common form of abuse that occurs in close relationships. Emotional abuse is defined as abuse that occurs when a person is subjected to behaviours or actions aimed at preventing or controlling their behaviour, with the intent to cause them emotional harm or fear, through manipulation, isolation, or intimidation.

Emotional abuse (children) Emotional abuse of children refers to a parent or caregiver's inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts towards a child and/or a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurturing and emotional availability. Such acts of commission or omission are likely to damage a child's self-esteem or social competence.

Exploitation is the deliberate maltreatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over another person. It is taking advantage of another person or situation usually, but not always, for personal gain.

Elder abuse a single or repeated act or failure to act, including threats, that results in harm or distress to an older person. This occurs where there is an expectation of trust and/or where there is a power imbalance between the party responsible and the older person (Australian Institute of Family Studies).

Guardian refers to the person(s) who has the legal authority to care for the personal and property interests of another person.

Institutional abuse means abuse or poor care within an institution or specific care setting. Possible causes of institutional abuse include:

- a 'closed' culture within an organisation where transparency is discouraged;
- lack of flexibility and choice for people using the service;
- failure to properly check the backgrounds and interview staff;
- inadequate training;
- lack of safeguarding policies and procedures;
- lack of support of staff by management;
- poor supervision; and
- poor standards of care.

Lay/lay person means members of the Catholic Church and Church personnel other than bishops, priests, deacons and religious.

Leaders means personnel who are responsible for important governance decisions within a Church entity and/ or who lead and coordinate Church improvement initiatives.

LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and gender diverse, Intersex, Queer and Asexual). This is an inclusive umbrella abbreviation of diverse sexualities, genders and sex characteristics. In Australia the term has arisen in recognition of common experiences of legal and social marginalisation on the basis of dominant social norms around sex, gender and sexuality. The plus sign indicates that there are many different terms used to describe identity, which are not all covered by the letters LGBTIQA.[29]

Ministry means any activity within, or conducted by, an entity, that is authorised by formal appointment and designed to carry out the apostolic and charitable works of the Catholic Church.

Neglect (adult) is the failure of a carer to provide the necessities of life to a person for whom they are caring.

Neglect (child) refers to a failure by a caregiver to provide the basic requirements for meeting the physical and emotional developmental needs of a child. Physically neglectful behaviours include a failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, supervision, hygiene or medical attention.

Organisation While Edition 2 of the NCSS Standards uses the term 'entities' to refer to a diocese, religious institute, ministerial PJP (including their agencies), this Guide uses the word 'organisation' throughout, rather than the more formal term 'Church entity'. 'Organisation' should therefore be read as being inclusive of all church entities, whether you are a religious order, a parish, a diocese, a ministry and/ or service (school, hospital, aged care facility, social service or other community-based organisation. This is to make the language less formal and to speak more directly to all personnel who are involved with ensuring the safety of children and adults.

Personnel (Church personnel) means a cleric, religious or other person who is employed by the entity or engaged on a contract, subcontract, voluntary or unpaid basis.

[29] Victorian Government, LGBTQIA+ Information Guide to Inclusive Language, 2023

Physical abuse is a non-accidental physically aggressive act which results in physical pain or injury, and which may include physical coercion and physical restraint. Physical abuse may be intentional or may be the inadvertent result of physical punishment.

Professional/pastoral supervision means a professional activity in which personnel are engaged in reflection and learning, under the guidance of a supervisor. Supervision assists personnel in their accountabilities for professional standards, defined competencies for their role and understanding and implementation of organisational policy and procedures. For clerics and religious, professional supervision assists in the maintenance of boundaries of the pastoral relationship and enhances the quality of their ministry.

Reflective practice is a professional development technique that involves thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice. It is expected to be a continuous process, whereby an individual explores an experience to identify what happened and what their role in this experience was, including behaviour, thinking, and related emotions. Reflective practice enables potential changes in approaches to similar future events to be identified, with the aim of improved performance.

Religious means a member of an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life.

Religious institute means an entity within the Catholic Church whose members commit themselves through religious vows to lead a life of poverty, chastity and obedience. Societies of apostolic life resemble religious institutes in that their members also live a life in common. They do not take religious vows but live out the apostolic purpose of the group. In these Standards, the term 'religious institutes' is used to include religious institutes, societies of apostolic life and secular institutes.

Spiritual abuse means abuse of a person that invokes a person's religious beliefs and faith to perpetrate harm. Spiritual abuse can occur as a secondary experience of abuse when abuse is perpetrated by someone in a position of spiritual authority and trust within the Church and can negatively impact a person's spirituality.

Safeguarding refers to proactive measures designed to protect the health, wellbeing, and human rights of individuals. These measures allow children, young people and adults to live free from abuse, harm and neglect. Within the life of the Church, safeguarding includes pastoral, liturgical and spiritual responses through engagement in the Sacraments and the life of the Church.

Safeguarding Committee means a committee established to advise and support the Church Authority on all matters relating to safeguarding, including the development and implementation of a Safeguarding Implementation Plan and coordinating annual self-audits at a local level. Committee members need relevant and varied professional expertise in relation to safeguarding, child protection, organisational culture and structure, policy development, etc. and include lay women and men.

Safeguarding Commitment Statement means a Commitment Statement describing an entity's commitment to keep children and adults safe from harm. It informs the entity's safeguarding culture.

Safeguarding Co-ordinator means an individual who champions safeguarding and co-ordinates the implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards within an entity.

Safeguarding Culture means embedding safeguarding into everything an organisation does. In promoting this culture, young people and adults at risk will understand they will be listened to, supported, and know action will be taken on their behalf.

Safeguarding Implementation Plan means a documented plan which articulates actions to be taken across the entity to ensure safeguarding practices are in place. It includes actions, strategies, responsibilities, delegations, and accountabilities, and tracks review and progress. It is overseen by the Safeguarding Committee.

Safeguarding policies and procedures means any policies or procedures of the entity that address elements of safeguarding children and adults. For example, but not limited to:

- recruitment;
- risk management;
- complaint handling; and,
- acceptable use of online applications.

Sexual abuse (adult) Sexual abuse is a form of sexual assault. Sexual abuse includes rape, indecent assault, sexual harassment, and sexual interference. Sexual activity with an adult who is incapacitated by a mental or physical condition (such as dementia) that impairs his or her ability to grant informed consent, is defined as sexual assault or abuse. Sexual assault or abuse includes where, by force, threats or abuse of authority an individual commits a canonical offence or forces someone to perform or submit to sexual acts. Sexual assault is a crime.

Sexual abuse (child) refers to exposing a child to any form of sexual activity. This may or may not involve physical contact. This may take the form of taking sexually explicit photographs or videos of children, forcing children to watch or take part in sexual acts and forcing or coercing children to have sex or engage in sexual acts with other children or adults.

Spiritual abuse means abuse of a person that invokes a person's religious beliefs and faith to perpetrate harm. Spiritual abuse can occur as a secondary experience of abuse when abuse is perpetrated by someone in a position of spiritual authority and trust within the Church and can negatively impact a person's spirituality.

Transient or transitory Risk means short-term risk, experienced by people at different stages in their life: e.g., when someone is vulnerable due to:

- grief
- bereavement
- relationship breakdown
- homelessness
- unemployment
- financial hardship.

Trauma is an event or events in which a person is threatened or feels threatened. Trauma also describes the impacts of the event or events on a person and the ongoing impact on a victim-survivor's psychological wellbeing.

Trauma-informed and victim-centred support is a strengths-based framework which is founded on five core principles – safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment. Trauma-informed services do no harm: they do not re-traumatise or blame victims for their efforts to manage their traumatic reactions, and they embrace a message of hope and optimism that recovery is possible. In trauma-informed services, trauma survivors are seen as unique individuals who have as best as they can, managed their responses to the experiences.

A safe Church for everyone