



Minsteracres
Retreat Centre

People Policy No 1

Policy and Procedure

Safeguarding Policy

Latest revision: November 2020

Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

Minsteracres Retreat Centre recognises that children or vulnerable adults may be subject to harm or abuse, which is never acceptable. As a Christian and values-led organisation, Minsteracres Retreat Centre must take steps to prevent abuse wherever it can, respond to the needs of all children and vulnerable adults it comes into contact with, and whenever it suspects they are being abused.

All children whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from all forms of abuse. This is stated in both UK legislation (The Children Act 1989) and in international law (The UN Convention on the Rights of the Children, 1989), Article 19 states that:

“Parties shall protect the children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse”.

This policy states what Minsteracres Retreat Centre will do to minimise the risks, and what steps Minsteracres Retreat Centre will take, to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults using our services and/or premises.

What is safeguarding?

Every human being has a value and dignity which we, as Christians, acknowledge as coming directly from God’s creation of male and female in his own image and likeness. This implies a duty to value all people and therefore to support them and protect them from harm.

In the Church this is demonstrated by the provision of carefully planned activities for children, young people and adults; supporting families under stress; caring for those hurt by abuse in the past; ministering to and managing those who have caused harm.

It is because of these varied ministries that we need to provide a safe environment for all which promotes and supports their wellbeing. This will include carefully selecting and appointing those who work with children, young people or vulnerable adults, and responding robustly where concerns arise.

The main Government guidance setting out duties and responsibilities for all agencies and organisations who work with Children and Families is ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ which was published by the Department for Education and Skills in April, 2006 and was revised in 2018 by the Department for Children, School and Families following a report by Lord Laming. It provides guidance under the Children Acts 1989 and 2004.

‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ refers directly to Faith Communities and sets out the responsibilities and expectations of all churches and faith communities in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare.

It recognises that churches provide a wide range of services for children and that religious leaders, staff and volunteers have an important role in safeguarding and supporting children and families.

Children may be in need of protection from abuse or maltreatment in their own home or in other environments including the church itself. Wherever a child is at risk or concerns are raised about a child, all adults have a duty to act to safeguard that child and to promote his or her welfare.

The need to safeguard children is not confined to any particular age group or groups in the community and all concerns should be responded to equally, always bearing in mind that the welfare of the child is paramount.

In all research and in reviews where a child has died or been seriously injured as a result of abuse, the same messages to all organisations come back time and again – namely, the importance of adults responding promptly to concerns, listening to children with respect and most importantly, communicating effectively with one another within and between organisations and agencies.

All churches and faith communities are expected to have in place arrangements which include:

- Procedures to respond to and report concerns
- Codes of practice
- Safe recruitment procedures

In the same way arrangements must be in place to respond to concerns about any form of abuse or maltreatment of a vulnerable adult. The principles contained in 'No Secrets' (Department of Health 2000) and 'Safeguarding Adults : A National Framework for Good Practice (ADSS 2005)' must be followed with the acknowledgement that the Catholic Church in England and Wales must not act alone but in partnership with all other agencies to combat the abuse of vulnerable adults

Diocesan Safeguarding Commission

The Diocese has a Safeguarding Commission chaired by an independent lay person with extensive safeguarding experience in working with children and vulnerable adults.

Other members of the Commission come from a range of relevant professional backgrounds in social care, health, family law, police, probations, criminal law and canon law.

The Commission guides the work of the Safeguarding Team and is accountable to the Bishop and Trustees.

Links/useful contacts

Minsteracres Retreat Centre Safeguarding Representative, contact the Operations Manager, Geoffrey Bockett on 01434 673 248 or gbockett@minsteracres.org

St Elizabeth's Parish Safeguarding Representative, contact Tracy Stanforth on 01661 842 300 or safeguarding@minsteracres.org

Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service Tel: 02079 011920 or 07855 123398
www.csas.uk.net

NSPCC Tel: 0800 800 500
www.nspcc.org.uk

ChildLine Tel: 0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk

Action on Elder Abuse Tel: 0808 808 8141
www.elderabuse.org.uk

Age UK Tel: 0207 278 1114
www.ageuk.org.uk

Northumbria Police * Tel: 01661 872555

Durham Police * Tel: 0345 60 60 365

Cleveland Police * Tel: 01642 326326

** In an emergency ring 999*

Contact numbers for the 10 Local Authority Children's and Adult's Services in our Diocese can be found in your local Phone Directory.

Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247
www.cedar.uk.net

Family Action 020 7254 6251
www.family-action.org.uk

Definitions

“**Child**” refers to anyone under the age of 18.

“**Vulnerable adult**” is a person: “**Who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of disability, age or illness; and is or may be unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation**” which is taken from the 1997 Consultation “Who Decides?” issued by the Lord Chancellor’s Department.” This definition of an Adult covers all people over 18 years of age.

“**Community**” refers to anyone invited to become a member of the resident community at Minsteracres Retreat Centre whether on a short-term or long-term basis.

“**Staff**” refers to all those persons to whom this policy applies and includes staff plus other individuals that Minsteracres Retreat Centre engages to work such as consultants, researchers, photographers etc.

“**Visitor**” refers to anyone who is neither a member of the community, nor staff, nor volunteers. Sensible supervision or oversight of all visitors will be implemented and especially if there is any relevant contact with groups of people covered by this Safeguarding Policy.

“**Volunteers**” refers to any and all people who undertake voluntary duties at Minsteracres in any capacity whatsoever.

“**Direct contact with children and vulnerable adults**” refers to being in the presence of a child, children, or vulnerable adults in the context of Minsteracres Retreat Centre’s retreats and outreach.

“**Indirect contact with children and vulnerable adults**” refers to having access to information on a child, children, or vulnerable adults in the context of Minsteracres Retreat Centre’s work, such as photographs and case studies.

Types of abuse

Type of abuse	Children	Adults
Physical	x	x
Verbal	x	x
Emotional	x	x
Sexual	x	x
Neglect	x	x
Psychological	x	x
Financial	x	x
Discriminatory	x	x
Domestic	x	x
Institutional	x	x
Spiritual	x	x

Objectives

To ensure that:

- The welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount and to provide children and vulnerable adults with appropriate safety and protection while at Minsteracres Retreat Centre;
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately;
- All community, staff and volunteers, are able to make informed and confident responses to specific safeguarding issues;
- There is a thorough and clearly defined method of recruiting and selecting community, staff and volunteers, which is applied consistently and which takes into account the need for protecting children and vulnerable adults.
- The access that visitors have to Minsteracres takes into account the need to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

Who is responsible for implementing this policy?

The Board have the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that this policy is in place and is implemented. The Director [for Community members] and Operations Manager [for Staff and Volunteers] are responsible for ensuring that the process and procedures are applied.

The Board should provide an annual report which details the operation of the policy – including any information on DBS where the applicant was appointed, number of allegations and summary outcomes.

Review Date: *December 2020*

Reviewer: *Director / Safeguarding officer*

Sign off: Chair of the Board: _____

Cross Reference: *Health and Safety Policy, Risk Assessment Register*

A. Recruitment and Selection of Community, Staff and Volunteers

Minsteracres Retreat Centre recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children or vulnerable adults. All reasonable steps will be taken so that unsuitable people are prevented from coming into contact with children and vulnerable adults.

The recruitment of all community, staff and volunteers (paid or not), having direct or indirect contact with children and vulnerable adults, will be through a thorough and standardised process including a relevant application for a DBS Disclosure.

1. The process includes the following:

- A standard or enhanced disclosure (depending on the level of contact with children and vulnerable adults) through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). The requirement to undertake a Disclosure check will depend on the nature of the post [**Annex 1**].

In accordance with DBS guidelines, Minsteracres Retreat Centre will use the services of an Umbrella Body (The Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle) to administer, process and secure a DBS Disclosure on an applicant's behalf [**Annex 2**]. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle complies with the [DBS Code of Practice](#)

- If the geographical jurisdiction of the UK Disclosure and Barring Service does not apply, then the potential community member, staff member or volunteer shall obtain equivalent documentation from the relevant service in their own country if their stay is short-term and no longer than 3 months. If their stay is longer than this they will be required to complete the UK DBS process.
- The requirement for the potential community member, staff member or volunteer to sign a personal declaration stating any criminal convictions, including those considered "spent" is required by completing a **Safeguarding Self Declaration** form. New filtering rules will now pertain to all DBS disclosures. These can be found at **Annex 3**.
- The requirement for the potential community member, staff member or volunteer to read, understand and accept compliance with Minsteracres Retreat Centre's Safeguarding Policy and guidelines as part of their terms and conditions of engagement/ employment. This process will include signing a Safeguarding Agreement which is provided by the Safeguarding Office and a copy kept at Minsteracres as a condition of their position at Minsteracres

2. Interview

Potential candidates for any position at Minsteracres, whether paid employment or voluntary, will undergo a standardised interview process appropriate to that position, which will include some or all of the following:

- Specific questions at interview on children and vulnerable adult protection and the candidate's commitment to, and respect for, children and vulnerable adult protection policies, practices and procedures as well as the applicant's motivation for working with children and vulnerable adults.
- Attentiveness by the interview panel to anything suspicious in employment history (including gaps).
- The requirement to substantiate qualifications.
- As part of the DBS application process, the requirement to provide three forms of identification. These may include a full birth certificate, passport or driving licence and national insurance number. At least one piece of identification must include the candidate's current address and evidence of previous names to ensure that they are not applying under a false identity. This complies with the requirements outlined in Section 8 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996.

3. Induction

All community members, staff and volunteers, will receive an induction to reinforce Minsteracres Retreat Centre's vision and values. The member of staff will also be given the opportunity to familiarise him or herself with Minsteracres Retreat Centre's Safeguarding Policy.

B Education and Training

Anyone who will have unsupervised contact must be fully trained in Minsteracres Retreat Centre's behaviour protocols and guidelines and must be clear on who to contact in the event of reporting any concerns.

Anyone with regular access to children and vulnerable adults is expected to take part in children and vulnerable adults' protection awareness training in order to:

- analyse their own practice against established good practice, and to ensure that their practice is likely to protect them against false allegations;
- recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse;
- respond to concerns expressed by children and vulnerable adults; and

- work safely and effectively with children and vulnerable adults.

This training may be provided by a voluntary organisation (for example NSPCC, or by a local statutory agency). Online training is also available from the Safeguarding Office of the RC Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. Minsteracres Retreat Centre undertakes to ensure that such training is available for all positions within their first six months of employment/engagement.

C. Management Structure

There will be a specific management process adopted in order to facilitate the implementation of the Children and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy and Procedure.

Any and all concerns **must** be reported to the designated Safeguarding Officers—see **Annex 7** for a description. These are **Geoff Bockett** the Operations Manager and **Tracy Stanforth**, the Parish Safeguarding Representative.

Minsteracres Retreat Centre will create an atmosphere of support and encouragement for those who feel it necessary to report concerns. Minsteracres Retreat Centre will continue to promote a positive environment for giving and receiving feedback.

All community, staff and volunteers will reflect the organisation’s core principles and values, upholding a professional approach toward children and vulnerable adult protection issues, and demonstrating awareness of matters of abuse.

Although the Board Trustees and Director have overall responsibility to ensure the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy, there will be designated people to whom people can talk about children and vulnerable adult protection matters. These are known as the Safeguarding Representatives as described above.

Their responsibilities must include:

- Promoting awareness and implementation of the policy throughout the organisation.
- Monitoring implementation of the policy and reporting annually to the Board.
- Maintaining knowledge of best practice and statutory requirements.

D. Behaviour Protocols

In order to reduce the likelihood of abuse taking place, everyone who holds a position at Minsteracres Retreat Centre, whether paid or not, will be bound by a **Code of Conduct**. The Code of Conduct includes guidance on appropriate and expected standards of behaviour for adults towards children and vulnerable adults, and also of children and vulnerable adults towards other children and vulnerable adults [**Annex 4**].

The Code shall be easily accessible for all organisational representatives. Organisational representatives will promote copies of the Code of Practice in all situations where the organisation is responsible for bringing children and vulnerable adults into contact with adults.

The Code of Conduct should be interpreted in a spirit of transparency and common sense, with the best interests of the children and vulnerable adults as the primary consideration.

Everyone who holds a position at Minsteracres will be given Safeguarding Guidelines and a summary of Safeguarding good practice in the form of a memo card.

E. Communication Guidelines

Access to printed and electronic personal information about children and vulnerable adults is covered by the Data Protection Act. It should, however, be explicit that the duty of care towards children and vulnerable adults is more important than the duty of confidentiality within Data Protection legislation.

All children and vulnerable adults have the right to be accurately represented through both words and images. Minsteracres Retreat Centre's portrayal of any children and vulnerable adults must not be manipulated or sensationalised in any way.

Minsteracres Retreat Centre **must** have written and informed consent/the permission of the children and vulnerable adults, children and vulnerable adults' parents/guardians, to use the image for publicity, fundraising, awareness raising or other purpose (which should be made clear to the individual or organisation giving consent).

- F.** There is a process for reporting and reacting to witnessed, suspected or alleged children or vulnerable adult abuse and/or violation of the Safeguarding Policy (Annex 6).

1. Allegations from children and vulnerable adults

When a child or vulnerable adult informs a member of the community or staff that he/she is uncomfortable or concerned with a specific person's behaviour towards them, another child, or vulnerable adult, the 'Allegations from a Child or Vulnerable Adults' process must be followed **[Annex 6]**.

2. Allegations from another source

Minsteracres Retreat Centre must take all appropriate steps within its power to protect children and vulnerable adults in question from further harm. If the concerns involve immediate harm to a child or vulnerable adult, the member of

community/staff must act without delay, as inaction may place the children and vulnerable adults in further danger.

All members of community, staff and volunteers must act immediately and report their suspicions, however uncertain, to the designated Safeguarding Officers in accordance with the Reporting Procedure **[Annex 5]**.

3. Types of Action

The designated Safeguarding Representatives may in turn seek guidance on further action from local social services and the police.

It is the policy of the Catholic Church in England and Wales to report all allegations of abuse to statutory authorities (Social Services, Police or NSPCC), regardless of whether the abuse occurred recently or in the past, or whether the accused person is living or deceased. Police and Social Services reporting procedures will then be followed.

If it is decided that external reporting is not appropriate, then there must be a clear rationale for that decision which must be recorded. The decision not to report must be approved in writing by a member of the Board of Trustees who is not a member of the Community.

Relevant contact details for children and vulnerable adult protection services, local social services departments, police, emergency medical help and helplines will be made readily available to organisational representatives.

4. Maintaining Records

Minsteracres Retreat Centre has a standardised system for reporting incidents, concerns and referrals, which ensures that such information is stored securely.

Pursuant to the Data Protection Act, managers have a particular responsibility in maintaining the confidentiality of these records and must ensure that their records, or any information they contain, are made available only to relevant parties.

5. Violation of the Policy

No visitors to Minsteracres Retreat Centre should be allowed unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults. All community, staff and volunteers should challenge anyone they don't recognise who is within the boundaries of the Retreat Centre. This is especially the case in the vicinity of children or vulnerable adults who are either staying or visiting Minsteracres Retreat Centre.

If an allegation of a violation of the policies, guidelines, principles or practices of Safeguarding is made concerning a named individual from a verifiable source against any member of the community or staff, they may be suspended '*without prejudice*' from all activity and association with Minsteracres Retreat Centre pending the

outcome of an impartial investigation. During this time, and in the case of staff, they will continue to receive full pay and support from Minsteracres Retreat Centre.

If, following the investigation, it is decided that there is no case to answer then the member of the community, staff or volunteer will be reinstated or return to work.

If, following the investigation, it is decided that there is a case to answer against a member of the community, staff or volunteer, then disciplinary action under the Managing Conduct policy will be recommended.

Minsteracres Retreat Centre will also take other action, which may be appropriate under the circumstances. This may mean for example for:

- Informing the Disclosure and Barring Service of the UK Government
- Volunteers – ending the relationship with Minsteracres Retreat Centre
- Partners – withdrawal of funding and/or support
- Contractors – termination of contract

Depending on the circumstances of the case, Minsteracres Retreat Centre will also consider involving authorities, such as the police, to ensure the protection of children and vulnerable adults and adherence to the law where this is appropriate.

Minsteracres Retreat Centre reserves the right to vary the terms of the policy if the legislation is updated or the needs of the organisation change or other circumstances deem it necessary.

Annex 1

Roles That Require an Enhanced Disclosure through the Disclosure and Barring Service

All members of the community whether full-time or part-time resident

All staff

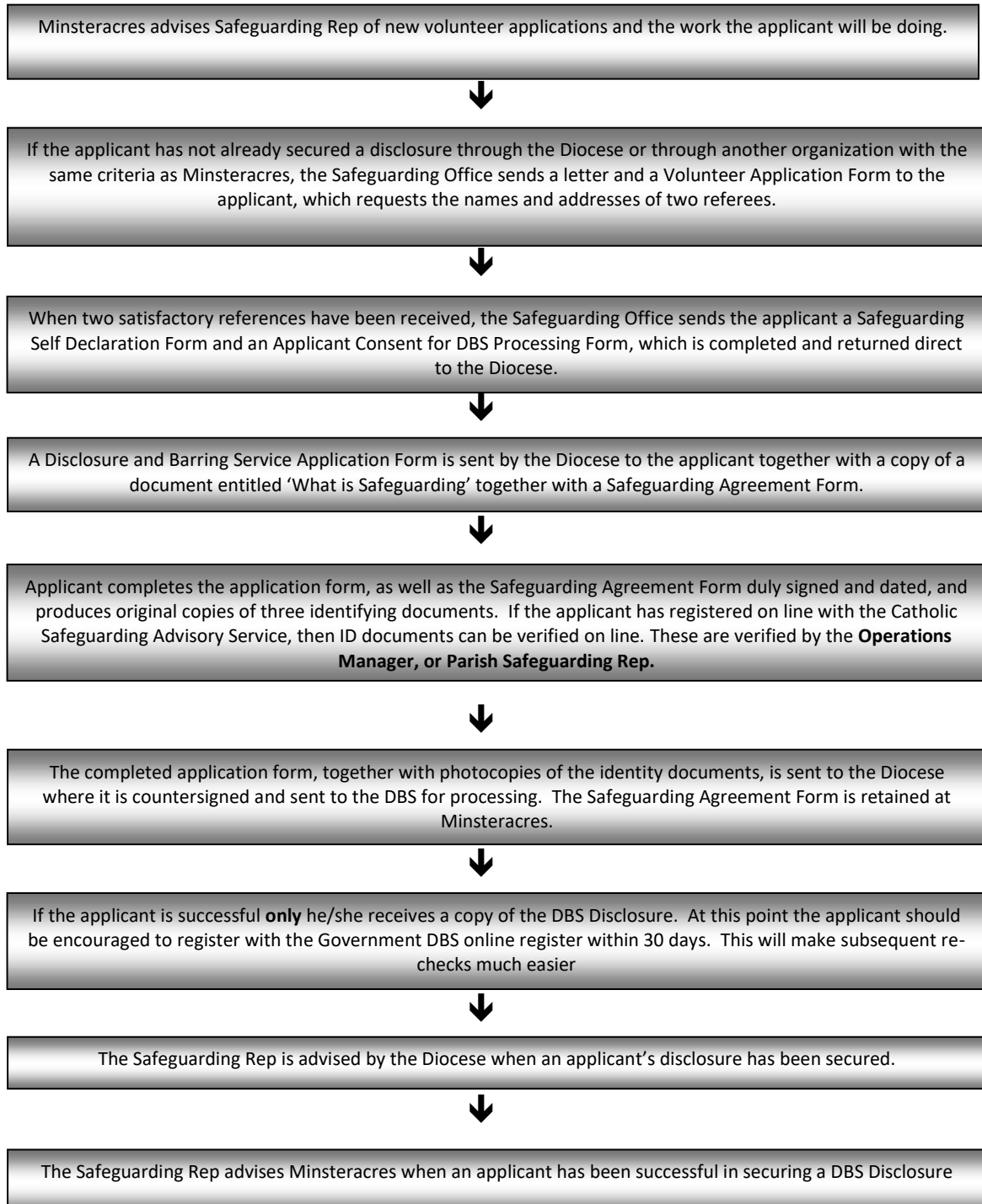
All volunteers

Parishioners with specific roles in the Church or Retreat Centre

The Parish Safeguarding Representative is responsible for administering DBS checks and maintaining DBS volunteer records. Likewise, the Operations Manager is responsible for staff and community DBS checks and records.

Annex 2

Flowchart for Disclosure Process through the Safeguarding Office of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle



Notes:

1. ***In the event that the Diocese ascertains that an applicant is unsuitable to be a volunteer at Minsteracres Retreat Centre, then permission to 'appoint' that person will not be granted.***
2. ***Cautions or convictions don't automatically bar someone from either employment or volunteering.***

Annex 3

Filtering rules for Disclosure and Barring

For those 18 or over at the time of the offence:

An adult conviction will be removed from a DBS certificate if:

- 11 years have elapsed since the date of conviction; and
- it is the person's only offence, and
- it did not result in a custodial sentence

Even then, it will only be removed if it does not appear on the list of offences relevant to safeguarding. If a person has more than one offence, then details of all their convictions will always be included.

An adult caution will be removed after 6 years have elapsed since the date of the caution – and if it does not appear on the list of offences relevant to safeguarding.

For those under 18 at the time of the offence:

- The same rules apply as for adult convictions, except that the elapsed time period is 5.5 years
- The same rules apply as for adult cautions, except that the elapsed time period is 2

Annex 4

Safeguarding Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct should be interpreted in a spirit of transparency and common sense, with the best interests of the children and vulnerable adults as the primary consideration.

Minimising risk situations:

- **Do** be accompanied by a second adult whenever possible; **do** meet with children or vulnerable adults in a central, public location whenever possible; **do** immediately note the circumstances of any situation which occurs which may subject to misinterpretation; **do** keep in mind that actions, no matter how well intended, are always subject to misinterpretation by a third party.
- **Do not** place yourself in a compromising or vulnerable position with a single child or vulnerable adult, including in the following situations; in a car (no matter how short the journey); overnight (no matter where the accommodation); in your home or the home of a child or vulnerable adult. Do not show favouritism or spend excessive amounts of time with one child or vulnerable adult.

Sexual behaviour:

- **Do not** engage in or allow sexually provocative games with children and vulnerable adults to take place, kiss, hug, fondle, rub or touch children and vulnerable adults in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way; sleep in the same bed as children and vulnerable adults; do things of a personal nature that children and vulnerable adults could do for him/herself, including bathing, dressing and grooming and encourage any crushes by a child or vulnerable adult.

Physical behaviour:

- **Do** use great sensitivity in initiating any physical contact, always ensuring that it is appropriate, and as a general rule wait for the child to take the initiative.

Psychosocial behaviour:

- **Do** be aware of the power balance between an adult, children and vulnerable adults, and avoid taking any advantage this may provide.
- **Do not** use language that will mentally or emotionally harm any children or vulnerable adults; suggest inappropriate behaviour or relations of any kind; act in any way that intends to embarrass, shame, humiliate, or degrade children or vulnerable adults; encourage any inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour, such as tantrums, by children or vulnerable adults; show discrimination of race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality, or political persuasion.

Peer abuse:

- **Do** be aware of the potential for peer abuse; develop special measures/supervision to protect younger and especially vulnerable children and vulnerable adults; avoid placing children or vulnerable adults in high-risk peer situations (for example unsupervised mixing of older and younger children and vulnerable adults).
- **Do not** allow children or vulnerable adults to engage in sexually provocative games with each other.

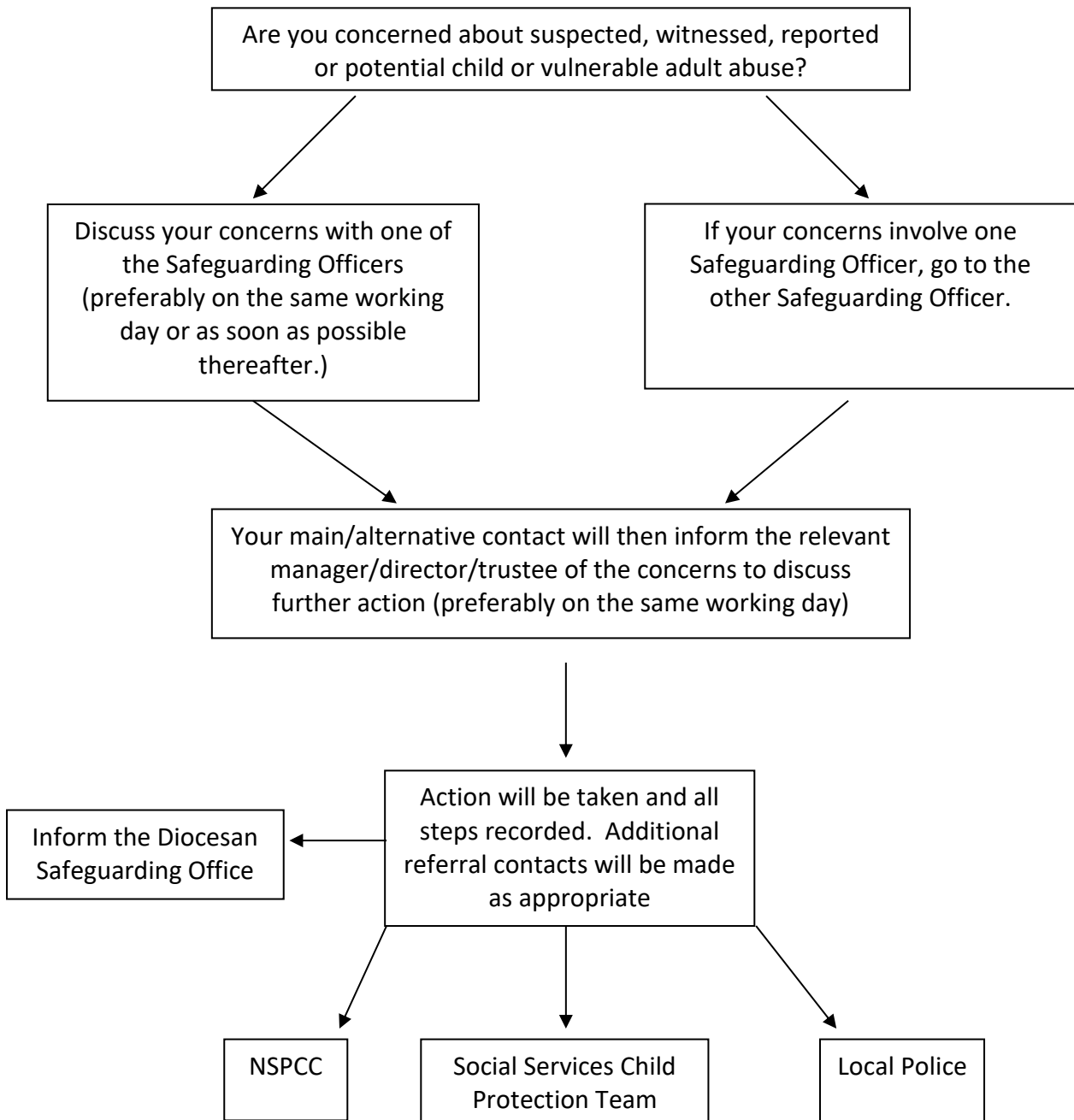
Physical environment:

- **Do** develop clear rules to address specific physical safety issues relative to the local physical environment.

Annex 5

Flowchart to Report Suspected Abuse

Listen, Record, Refer



Annex 6

Allegations by Children or Vulnerable Adults

When a child or vulnerable adult informs you that he/she is uncomfortable or concerned with a specific person's behaviour, either an adult or a child, towards them or another child, the following steps must be taken:

- Reassure them that they were right to report the behaviour.
- Listen carefully and calmly to them and ask minimal questions, just to clarify the allegation so that you will have sufficient information to pass on to the Safeguarding Rep or Police.
- During the conversation, try not to repeat the same questions to the child or vulnerable adult, as this gives the child or vulnerable adult the impression that they did not give correct information the first time and they are not fully believed.
- Do not promise confidentiality to the child or vulnerable adult. Inform the child or vulnerable adult that you must report the incident.
- Take proper steps to ensure the physical safety and psychological wellbeing of the child or vulnerable adult. This may include referring them for medical treatment or to a psychologist.
- Make certain you distinguish between what the child or vulnerable adult has actually said and the inference you may have made. Accuracy is paramount in this stage of the procedure.
- Do not permit personal doubt to prevent you from reporting the allegation to the proper authority.
- Let the child or vulnerable adult know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.

Annex 7

Role and responsibilities of a Safeguarding Representative

There are two Safeguarding Representatives at Minsteracres who meet on a regular basis with the Rector to discuss safeguarding practices. They are Geoff Bockett, the Operations Manager and Tracy Stanforth, the parish Safeguarding rep. Their contact details are available in the Office at Minsteracres Retreat Centre and on a noticeboard at the back of St Elizabeth's Church.

The role of a Safeguarding Representative has developed from recommendations in 'A Programme for Action', a Report by Lord Nolan published in September 2001. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales accepted the report in its entirety and policies and structures were established in order to implement the report's recommendations throughout Catholic communities nationally.

Another team of safeguarding experts, led by Baroness Cumberlege, produced a further report entitled 'Safeguarding with Confidence' to the Bishops' Conference in July 2007, detailing how the Nolan recommendations were being embedded within the church and making further recommendations to strengthen arrangements. The Cumberlege Report endorsed that the Catholic Church is now 'essentially a safe place' but that it cannot become complacent. In order to create a safe environment for the young and the vulnerable in our communities, we need to maintain a culture of vigilance – a responsibility which should be shared and embraced by all Catholics.

There are, however, designated people with specific responsibilities in religious orders in all the Dioceses in England and Wales. The Safeguarding Representative's duties fall into the following key categories:

- 1) A central point of contact, whose contact details are available for any safeguarding concerns, disclosures or allegations which parishioners may wish to share. The Safeguarding Representative undertakes training regarding policies and procedures and is aware of who to contact in specific circumstances.
- 2) Promoting good and safe practices in all activities involving children, young people, and vulnerable adults within the parish. This is done by sharing national policies and procedures, and local Diocesan Guidelines, with group leaders and volunteers and ensuring that outside organisations using church premises are aware and compliant with these requirements.
- 3) As the safeguarding link between Parish and Diocese, the Safeguarding Representative works closely with the Parish Priest and reports to the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator. He/she may also be called upon to liaise at a local level to draw up safeguarding plans to safeguard the children and vulnerable people in their parish community in instances where ex-offenders wish to practise their faith.
- 4) To protect children and vulnerable adults in the Catholic Church from any

form of abuse – physical, emotional, verbal or sexual - the Parish Safeguarding Representative is involved in the safe recruitment of volunteers within the parish and has the responsibility for facilitating the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Disclosure procedure at a local level.

Organisations have a legal obligation to apply for a Disclosure Certificate, as part of their recruitment process, where any paid or voluntary role involves meaningful contact with, or responsibility for, children, young people or vulnerable adults. In the parishes this applies to all clergy, as well as employees and volunteers, in a number of roles. The same procedures also apply to members of the clergy including the resident community, members of staff, and volunteers in the Retreat Centre.

Government legislation stipulates that, because the opportunity to develop a relationship of trust is the same, volunteers should be treated in the same way as those applying for a paid post. Thus, for both staff and volunteers and as set out in **Annex 2** the process involves:

- 1) Completion of an application form which is stored securely in the parish;
- 2) Two references are then sought by the Safeguarding Representative;
- 3) Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, an opportunity must be given to self-declare any relevant information (the Safeguarding Representative does not see this form and the information is held securely at the Diocese);
- 4) Application for a DBS Disclosure is made and this must be supported by the verification of three appropriate identity documents;
- 5) A single copy only of the Disclosure Certificate is issued which is sent to the applicant's home address. The applicant can then see the content of their disclosure first, which will give them the opportunity to dispute any information disclosed about them, or to withdraw their application, if they wish to do so. The majority of these certificates are 'clear'; however, if they do contain information, the situation is handled in the strictest confidence. Having a criminal record will not necessarily prevent someone from working in the Catholic Church, and any information which arises as part of the safe recruitment process, is risk assessed by the Diocese in relation to the role applied for. The Safeguarding Representative is then advised that the volunteer may begin their ministry who, in turn, advises Minsteracres;
- 6) From the 17 June 2013 a new Online Update Service was launched which enables individuals to register their Disclosure Certificate within 30 days of the date of issue. This will reduce the need for periodic re-checks for the same role and will enable it to be used by other voluntary organisations for similar roles working within the same workforce, namely children or adults, which requires the same level of disclosure, i.e. Enhanced Level for Regulated Activity. Disclosures issued prior to the 13 June cannot be used to subscribe to the Online Update Service;
- 7) DBS Certificates from other voluntary organisations can be accepted by Minsteracres, provided they have been issued by the DBS after the 17 June 2013, the applicants have registered with the online scheme, and their voluntary post is within the same workforce and disclosure level;

- 8) If applicants do subscribe to the Online Update Service, this will enable the Diocese to undertake regular online status checks of their disclosures rather than requiring everyone to complete an entirely new disclosure application together with the associated forms.