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# **SVD IBP Safeguarding Policy** **- British District**

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# Policy Overview

The British District of the Irish–British Province (IBP) of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) is committed to safeguarding all children and adults. This commitment is rooted in the belief that every person is made in the image of God, and in the Church’s recognition of the dignity, value, and uniqueness of every human life.

All members of the SVD IBP British District are expected to uphold the highest standards of protection, love, respect, and encouragement. Following safeguarding reviews in 2020, the District implements a One Church Approach, responding promptly and compassionately to victim/survivors.

## Scope

This policy applies to all members of the SVD IBP British District, regardless of role or activity.

All members have a responsibility to prevent abuse, whether by action or omission. Abuse includes, but is not limited to:

- Physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, or psychological harm
- Neglect, self-neglect, or organisational abuse
- Financial, material, or domestic abuse
- Verbal abuse, discrimination, radicalisation, or modern slavery

Safeguarding concerns must be recognised promptly and responded to in line with this policy and the associated safeguarding procedures of the SVD IBP British District, including immediate action where there is a risk of harm.

## Training

### Role-Specific Training

1. All SVD IBP British District members will undergo safeguarding training appropriate to their role.
  - Members in parish or diocesan appointments will follow diocesan training requirements.
  - Trustees will complete RLSS training designed specifically for Trustee responsibilities, ensuring full understanding of governance and safeguarding expectations.

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2. All members will undertake refresher training every three years.
  3. Members' feedback on completed training will be actively sought to evaluate effectiveness and identify additional training needs. This feedback will be used to develop an ongoing training plan to address gaps or future needs.
  4. Training compliance for all members, including Trustees, will be monitored and reported periodically to the Provincial Council, ensuring any shortfalls are addressed promptly.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Provincial Council**

- Maintain governance and oversight of safeguarding in line with this policy and national guidelines.
- Ensure Trustees are sighted on training compliance, safeguarding developments, and any identified gaps.

### **Provincial / District Superior**

- Ensure that safeguarding policies, procedures, and best practices are in place and effectively implemented.
- Delegate operational functions to the Safeguarding Committee / Safeguarding Lead as appropriate.

### **Safeguarding Committee / Safeguarding Lead**

- Oversee safeguarding policy implementation and compliance.
- Liaise with RLSS and ensure Trustees and members receive role-appropriate safeguarding training.
- Maintain records of safeguarding training completion and identify future training requirements.

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## All Members

- Familiarise themselves with this policy, associated procedures, and relevant safeguarding guidance.
- Report any safeguarding concerns promptly to the Safeguarding Lead, Committee, Provincial, or District Superior.

## Practice Guidance

### Action on Concerns

Action must be taken when a child or adult is believed to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, including:

- Individuals at serious risk of harm from themselves or others
- Individuals who pose a serious risk to others
- Children or vulnerable adults at risk from others
- Concerns regarding mental capacity

All action must comply with the Church's mandatory reporting requirements. This includes concerns about Church personnel who may have committed, or be at risk of committing, a crime or harm, or are unsuitable for their role.

### Emergency Situations:

- If there is an immediate or current risk of harm to a person, the police or other statutory emergency services must be contacted immediately, without delay.
- RLSS must still be notified of the concern, but emergency action must not be deferred to RLSS.
- This ensures that urgent protection and safeguarding measures are enacted immediately to protect the individual at risk.

## Procedure

If SVD IBP British District becomes aware of a safeguarding concern:

1. Immediate Risk – If there is a current or imminent risk of harm:

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- Call the police or relevant statutory emergency service immediately.
  - Take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of the person at risk.

2. Notification to RLSS – After addressing any immediate risk:

- Contact the RLSS Safeguarding Team and provide all records of the concern.
- Inform the person who raised the concern that RLSS has been notified.

## **RLSS Responsibilities**

- Inform the victim/survivor of next steps and options, with indicative timescales.
- Contact relevant statutory bodies within 24 hours if there is no immediate emergency.
- Maintain accurate, auditable records of all actions, calls, and meetings.
- Update the SVD IBP British District and provide ongoing support as needed.

## **Whistleblowing**

- Any individual with a safeguarding concern can raise it without fear of victimisation or disadvantage.
- Concerns relating to malpractice, illegal acts, or omissions should also be referred to RLSS.
- Investigations will be conducted where appropriate, with written feedback and rationale provided.

## **Recording and Storage**

- Case files must be accurate, up-to-date, and stored securely.
- Where RLSS manages a case, they will ensure all records are auditable and securely maintained.

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## Safer Recruitment Guidance

- Congregation members, lay staff, and volunteers will undergo appropriate DBS checks, including enhanced DBS.
- Appointments are based on experience, skills, and role requirements.
- Documentation will be securely stored and confidential.
- Appointments will not be confirmed until satisfactory DBS and references are received.
- Opportunities for self-disclosure of relevant convictions are provided to all applicants, in line with DBS Code of Practice.

## Policy Review

- This policy is approved by the District Superior or Safeguarding Lead, and Safeguarding Committee.
- Subsequent reviews: every three years or sooner if required.

Policy last updated: 20 January 2026

Name: Fr Nicodemus Lobo Ratu SVD

Date of next review: 20 January 2029

Date: 20 January 2026