



CATHOLIC SYRO-MALABAR EPARCHY OF GREAT BRITAIN

SAFEGUARDING OFFICE

SAFEGUARDING STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

2023 – 2026

Report Author: Dr. Shibu Velutheppilly (Safeguarding Coordinator).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Implementation Plan sets out the purpose, priorities, and essential activities for safeguarding within the Syro Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain to April 2023. It was created by the Safeguarding Coordinator in discussion with the rest of the safeguarding team and the Sub-Committee of Trustees. The purpose of safeguarding is to prevent, respond to, and repair abuse within the Catholic Church in the Syro Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain.

This endeavour enables the mission of the Church by building trust, respect, and belief in the Church as an institution. The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and the Elliott Review of Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in England and Wales has highlighted the need for transformational reform: to make safeguarding central to each Diocese's mission; to improve safeguarding, particularly with regard to the response to victims/ survivors; to increase accountability; and to evidence good practice. This is an opportunity for the Catholic Syro Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain to take action and to communicate its commitment to safeguarding. The priorities that arise from this need for transformation are to: refocus on safeguarding; ensure appropriate resources and systems; continually learn and develop; and put victims/ survivors at the heart of all we do. The Implementation Plan highlights the actions that are needed to meet the fundamental expectations arising from the national reviews and that the Eparchy should hold. The Plan should ensure that we meet the essential standards expected of us by the new Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency. Actions include: establishing the Sub-Committee; delivering essential training; supporting Parishes/ Missions/ Proposed Missions; having a strategy for victim/ survivor support; having a communications plan; and developing a clear audit process.

The Implementation Plan relies on three elements of resourcing:

1. Input to the supervision of staff and audit of case work – this has already been agreed by Trustees and should be in place by September 2023.
2. A dedicated safeguarding team
3. Trustee input to the Sub-Committee including a Trustee to take up the role of Chair – at least two more Trustees with an interest in and some experiences of safeguarding are needed.

The Sub-Committee commends this Implementation Plan to the Board of Trustees. We ask the Trustees to approve the resources requested in the Structural Plan and to agree on a plan for the recruitment of additional Trustees. We recommend that the Bishop and Trustees communicate the developments in safeguarding to the Church community.

Fr Antony James Chundelikkat (Protosyncellus)

Safeguarding Sub-Committee Chair

INTRODUCTION:

In May 2019 Pope Francis issued an Apostolic Letter entitled *Vox Estis Lux Mundi* (You are the Light of the World) regarding the Church's handling of issues relating to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. At the same time society in England and Wales as a whole was being held to account by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) in respect of how a wide variety of organisations, including faith, groups failed victims and survivors and in many cases placed the needs of the organisation above the need to acknowledge and address the pain and hurt caused to those individuals. This abuse, and failure to tackle it effectively, has occurred over many decades. Abuse in any form must not be tolerated and, for the Church, protecting those hurt by abuse and addressing that pain goes to the heart of Christian values. In addition, the Catholic Church in England and Wales commissioned an independent review in 2020, The Elliot Review. Coming out of the review is a series of recommendations relating to both national and local structures and to both diocesan and consecrated life. We need to effectively respond to this. A key aspect of moving forward is the development of a standards-based approach, set out in the Elliot review, ensuring that effective leadership at all levels, accountability and the maintenance of the highest of standards is achieved across the Eparchy. In cases where we fail to reach these standards, swift and appropriate action must be taken to address any failings or shortcomings.

The Catholic Syro Malabar Eparchy of Great Britain ("CSMEGB") is committed to safeguarding as an integral part of its life and ministry. CSMEGB affirms its commitment to the One Church sustained and consistent approach to safeguarding, and the principle that the best interest and welfare of each child and adult at risk is of paramount importance.

CSMEGB has a zero-tolerance approach to all abuse and is committed to providing a safe environment for everyone.

CSMEGB is fully responsible for all safeguarding matters in parishes / Missions/ Proposed Missions and all other Eparchial organised activities.

The Catholic Syro Malabar Eparchy has its parishes / Missions/ Proposed Missions in England, Wales, and Scotland and the Eparchy is divided into 12 regions, Birmingham, Bristol-Cardiff, Cambridge, Canterbury, Leeds, Leicester, London, Manchester, Oxford, Preston, Scotland and Southampton. In England and Wales CSMEGB follows the National Safeguarding policy provided by the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) [National Safeguarding Policy \(catholicsafeguarding.org.uk\)](https://www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk) and in Scotland follows the safeguarding policy of the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (SCSSA) [Safeguarding Information \(scssa.org.uk\)](https://www.scssa.org.uk)

CSMEGB has a dedicated and professional safeguarding team that has made significant progress in recent years to improve its commitment to safeguarding.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. ENSURING THAT SAFEGUARDING IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS:

We must ensure that safeguarding is everyone's business, it is at the centre of the Church's mission. It is nothing new and should not only be driven by personal and societal needs but should be seen as a theological imperative, an authentic part of ministry and mission, and an exercise in charity and of justice, helping the Church to remain faithful to its mandate.

2. HAVING IN PLACE APPROPRIATE RESOURCES AND SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE SAFEGUARDING:

We must be "organisationally fit", having in place appropriate resources to develop and deliver safeguarding, to support Church leaders at all levels in their responsibilities, and to reach out and support those who have been hurt by abuse, wherever that abuse occurred. We must always respond with dignity and respect and with an informed understanding. We must ensure that all those in the ministry are aware of their responsibilities and are equipped to deal with any concerns that might be raised, as well as being provided with all relevant and appropriate professional support.

3. LEARNING, DEVELOPING AND EVOLVING:

We must continue to learn, develop, and evolve. Recent years have seen significant advancements in our understanding of not only how and why abusers operate but also the devastating and ongoing impact that such abuse has on victims and survivors. In addition, we further understand the traumatic effect on victims and survivors, particularly where complaints are handled badly or ignored. We must continue to be a learning and reflective organisation which constantly looks both outwards and inwards, redefining its approaches as our understanding and organisational consciousness evolves over time.

4. VICTIM AND SURVIVOR CENTRIC APPROACHES:

We must proactively seek out and support those hurt by abuse wherever and in whatever form it occurs, listening to their voice and using it to inform our practice. The Lord is a shelter for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble (Psalms 9:9)

HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS - OUR PLAN FOR THE FUTURE:

Our initial target is to ensure that fundamentals are in place by December 2024 when we will undertake the first annual review of this plan. The plan will be reviewed against standards set by the Catholic Standards Safeguarding Agency and will be modified appropriately should development and

changes in those standards take place. The timeline set out is dependent on several key factors which are central, these being;

1. The Sub-Committee of the Trustees to ensure that there are direct lines of accountability around the delivery of safeguarding.

2. Ensuring that the main safeguarding function of the Eparchy is appropriately resourced to deliver the plan as set out. Without this resourcing being in place, the plan fails. The associated document FUTURE STRUCTURE TO SUPPORT SAFEGUARDING IN THE CATHOLIC SYRO MALABAR EPARCHY OF GREAT BRITAIN sets out the case for this restructuring. With the above two conditions met, the plan set out below is in my professional opinion challenging but achievable.

No	Action Required	Comment	Responsible	Initial Target Date
STRUCTURAL				
1	Trustees to agree plan	Plan to be agreed, hopefully in its entirety	Trustees	April 2023
2	Structural Plan for Safeguarding Office to be agreed	Resourcing and Structural plan to be agreed	Trustees, proposed by the Chair of the Safeguarding Sub-Committee	April 2023
3	Resourcing and structural changes to be made as agreed by Trustees	Implementation of 2 above	Safeguarding Coordinator	April 2023
4	Safeguarding Sub-Committee of Trustees – review and update Trustee representation	Ongoing	Trustees	August 2021
5	Safeguarding Sub-Committee of Trustees – review specialist advisors	Ongoing	chair of Sub-Committee	August 2021
TRAINING				
6	Development of a detailed training plan	Defining training aims. Timescales for the provision and route map moving forward	Safeguarding Coordinator	Need to confirm the date
7	Delivery of training to key parish roles for 2023-2024 (Clergy, Regional Safeguarding Coordinators Safeguarding Reps and volunteers)	Key aspects a. Caring Safely for Others, codes of conduct and boundaries. b. Eparchy Safeguarding Strategy 2023-2026, with key focus on communications and responding to the needs of victims c. Future training requirements	Safeguarding Coordinator	Dec 2023
PARISH DEVELOPMENT				

8	Undertake a Parish/ Mission/Proposed Mission Audit to ensure standards are being adhered to, identify areas of weakness and where additional support is required	Consider best practices elsewhere	Safeguarding Coordinator / Safeguarding Regional Coordinator	Dec 2023
9	Consider all roles in Parish with direct connection with children and adults at risk, agree role description and training requirement for that role	In the interim, implement training and retraining for all roles at point the DBS is required	Safeguarding Coordinator / Safeguarding Regional Coordinator	Nov 2023
10	Development of an Eparchy Standard for delivery of safeguarding in parishes linked to the national standards	Linked to Parish Audit	Safeguarding Coordinator / Safeguarding Regional Coordinator	Nov 2023
SUPPORTING VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS				
11	Develop an agreed strategy for the support of victims and survivors, to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to complaints • Providing additional support • Development of victim support and advisory groups • Working with victim's groups • Communications 	Subject to approval of Trustees and having a specialist support person in post	Safeguarding Coordinator / Safeguarding Regional Coordinator	Dec 2023
12	Develop a communications plan, looking at specifically at <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How we reach out to victims • How we promote all aspects of safeguarding in the Eparchy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Particularly Information provided on the Eparchy website • Information provided in other formats i.e., Denha, Parish / Mission/ Proposed Mission Newsletters, communications from the Bishop's Office, and communications from the Safeguarding Office 		Safeguarding Coordinator / Safeguarding Regional Coordinator	Dec 2023

AUDIT AND SUPERVISION				
13	Develop an internal audit programme to include • case review (ensuring ongoing compliance with standards) • Staff Welfare • Parish Audits	Review operational delivery against standards	Safeguarding Coordinator / Safeguarding Regional Coordinator / Chair Sub-committee	
PLAN REVIEW				
14	The plan is to be reviewed annually and, if appropriate, modified. Also, link to budget setting and feedback from CSSA	A formal review is to be set at the end of the financial year. Any issues in the interim to be picked up by Trustee Sub-Committee	Chair of Sub Committee and Trustees	Review 1 - 31 st March 2024 Review 2 - 31st March 2024 Review 4 (Final) March 2024
15	Produce an Annual Safeguarding Report	Coincide with formal plan review – public document	Chair of Sub-Committee and Safeguarding Coordinator	