WEST MINSTER CATHEDRAL

SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES AND INFORMATION

Last updated: December 2025

INTRODUCTION

Westminster Cathedral, the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Most Precious Blood, is the mother church of the Diocese of Westminster and is the seat of the Archbishop of Westminster. It is also the parish church for the large and diverse community who live and work in the surrounding area and it is also visited by a large number of tourists throughout the year.

The Cathedral is committed to safeguarding as an integral aspect of the life and ministry of the Church and adheres to the policies of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA). We affirm the 'One Church' approach to safeguarding children, young people, and adults at risk through the promotion of a sustained and sustainable culture of constant vigilance.

There are two Cathedral Safeguarding Representatives who are volunteers and are trained by the Diocesan Safeguarding Department in accordance with the policies of CSSA. They advise on and administer DBS checks and certification, and promote a safeguarding culture through education and advice. They liaise closely with the Diocesan Safeguarding Department and report to the Dean of the Cathedral who is chair of the Cathedral Safeguarding Committee.

The Safeguarding Committee meets once a quarter and the membership includes: the Cathedral Dean, the two Safeguarding Representatives, the Cathedral Manager, the Cathedral Complex Security Manager, representatives of the Diocesan Safeguarding Services, the Cathedral Precentor, the Master of Music and the Deputy Head (Pastoral) of the Westminster Cathedral Choir School. The PA to the Dean acts as secretary and records and keeps the minutes of all meetings.

SAFER RECRUITMENT

The Cathedral, as part of its commitment to safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk applies a robust selection process in the recruitment of any individual who will work in any role whether paid or on a voluntary basis, whose role will bring them into contact with children, young persons or other vulnerable adults. There must be no reliance on untested trust; an interview is conducted with all candidates to assess their suitability for the role and two references will be obtained, their identity verified and where appropriate a DBS certificate obtained.

Every position must have a full job description outlining the expectations of the role and line management responsibility. The Cathedral Safeguarding Representative should be consulted on the need for a DBS certificate and the level of check required. If in doubt the advice of the Diocesan Safeguarding Services should be sought. If an offer of employment is taken up or the person is engaged on a voluntary basis, they should be handed a copy of the Westminster Cathedral Safeguarding Procedures and Information Policy.

(Further information on safer recruitment procedures and policies in the Catholic Church may be found at: catholicsafeguarding.org.uk).

DBS CERTIFICATES

Where an offer of employment in the Cathedral or Clergy House is made, the need for a DBS certificate will be determined by the requirements of the role for which the person has

been recruited and whether they will, through their duties, come into contact with a child, young person or adult at risk regularly. This will be undertaken during pre-employment procedures by the Diocesan HR Department and the DBS Administrator.

If the person is being engaged on a voluntary basis the need for a DBS certificate and which level will be determined before they are engaged and will be dependent on the level of expected contact with a child, young person or adult at risk. No volunteer will start in their role until an appropriate DBS check is finalised and the certificate cleared.

The advice of the Cathedral Safeguarding Representative should be sought in cases of doubt and they will also assist the applicant with the procedure if a DBS certificate is required. At least two references should be obtained; these should not be from a priest of their parish or a family member.

DBS certificates must be renewed every three years (sooner if there is a role change which may require a different level of certificate). Applicants should be encouraged to register for the DBS Update Service which is free of charge for volunteers and this streamlines their future application.

CATHEDRAL CHAPLAINS AND VISITING CLERGY

The Dean and the College of Chaplains (Priests appointed to the Cathedral) who reside and regularly minister in Westminster Cathedral must have an up to date enhanced DBS Certificate as well as undertake the mandated ongoing 'safeguarding' training.

VISITING CLERGY

Visiting clergy, who are not priests or deacons of, or ministering in, the Diocese of Westminster, who come to the Cathedral Sacristy asking to concelebrate or celebrate Mass, or to take a formal part in any other service, must have valid credentials* and present it either to the Presider or to one of the Cathedral Chaplains.

The details of the visiting priests celebrating or concelebrating Mass must be entered into the Visiting Clergy Mass Register which is retained in the Sacristy, and the Register must be initialled by the Chaplain who verified validity of the documents. Visiting clergy, who are priests or deacons of, or ministering in, the Diocese of Westminster, are not required to sign the Register.

VISITING CLERGY AT SPECIAL SERVICES

Any clergy wishing to celebrate or concelebrate Mass, or to take a formal part in Special Services in the Cathedral, must contact the Precentor in advance of the service. The Precentor will check the priest's valid credentials and he will keep a record of the verification,

* Valid credentials are defined by The Bishops of England and Wales, in collaboration with the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) in their policies and procedures concerning the temporary ministry of clergy. A current *Celebret* is needed from Priests incardinated in England & Wales or from Priests from elsewhere coming for a single event when their ministry is supervised. Priests who are coming for a single event from outside England & Wales when their ministry is unsupervised need to have a valid *Testimonial of Suitability for Ministry* in addition to a *Celebret*. Priests who are coming for occasional supply or an extended placement need to have a valid *Celebret* and *Testimonial of Suitability for Ministry*. These policies and procedures apply to all RC clergy who are, or will be, engaging on a temporary basis in any form of public ministry within the territory of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. *(Email communication from the Vicar General to all clergy 07.07.2024)*

if sent electronically.

On their arrival all clergy, who are not priests and deacons of, or ministering in, the Diocese of Westminster, must confirm their identity to the Precentor or to one of the Cathedral Chaplains before the service and sign the Visiting Clergy Mass Register in the Sacristy, and the Register must be initialled by the Chaplain who verified their identity.

SUPPLY PRIESTS

All priests coming from outside for an occasional supply or an extended placement need to have valid credentials and provide them to the Dean either electronically before their arrival or immediately upon their arrival. The Dean will also ensure that Supply Priests residing in Clergy House are presented on arrival with copies of *Westminster Cathedral Safeguarding Procedures and Information,* and *Caring Safely for Others: Pastoral Standards and Safe Conduct in Ministry*, and will ask them to familiarise themselves with both documents.

The Supply Priests intending to remain in the Cathedral for longer than six months need to make contact with the Safeguarding Service for DBS and training purposes.

WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL CHOIR AND CHOIR SCHOOL

The Cathedral has a world-renowned choir which was founded early in the Cathedral's existence which consists of approximately twenty-five boy choristers and ten adult, male lay clerks (and deputies) who sing regularly at Mass and other services in the Cathedral. The boys are boarders at Westminster Cathedral Choir School together with approximately two hundred and forty day-boys aged between 4 and 13, (the choristers are aged between 8 and 13 years).

The Westminster Cathedral Choir works under the direction of the Master of Music and his staff. The Master of Music acts in partnership with staff at WCCS and meets weekly with the School's senior management to discuss safeguarding and pastoral matters, as well as chorister recruitment and scheduling. The Designated Safeguarding Lead in the School is the Deputy Head (Pastoral), and s/he is also a member of the Westminster Cathedral Safeguarding Committee.

As well as receiving individual and group singing lessons and singing in the Cathedral at Mass and other services, the choristers rehearse in the Song School, the Clergy House Library and the office of the Master of Music. They also rehearse with the Lay Clerks during the week and before full choir services in the Song School.

There is minimal contact between the lay clerks and the choristers and any contact is under supervision of the Master of Music or a designated member of his staff, although responsibility for the chorister's welfare and safeguarding rests with the school. The School therefore will ensure that the choristers are always accompanied by an adult when on the Cathedral premises.

All lay clerks, and their deputies, members of the Cathedral Music Department and Cathedral staff who are in regular contact with the choristers are required to have a current DBS certificate, and apart from following the Diocesan Safeguarding Procedures, must follow and adhere to the following School policies when working with the choristers: Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (including the Code of Conduct for Staff), Responsibilities of all academic staff, Rewards and sanctions, Anti-bullying, The Conditions of Service agreement

between WCCS and the Cathedral Music Department (as outlined alongside the terms and conditions of employment for members of the Cathedral Music Department).

In addition to the Diocesan Code of Conduct, the Cathedral employees who work in regulated activity with the choristers are expected to maintain the same professional standards as the teaching staff in the School. All lay clerks and members of the Cathedral Music Department also receive annual safeguarding training, delivered by the Deputy Head (Pastoral). This covers the School's Code of Conduct, reporting disclosures and the different types of abuse.

DBS certificates for members of the Music Department, including Lay Clerks and deputies are arranged by the administration section of the Music Department or for new employees through the diocesan HR Department and Safeguarding Office.

Any incident which occurs or matter of concern must be brought to the immediate attention of the Cathedral Dean or Cathedral Safeguarding Representative and the Deputy Head (Pastoral) of the Choir School or Head Master (where it relates to a boy in the School) who will implement any immediate action, in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures of the School.

ALTAR SERVERS

Westminster Cathedral has a large team of altar servers who assist at various liturgical events and services during the week and particularly on Saturday and Sunday. They range in age from children (who have completed their First Holy Communion) through to senior citizens and are a mixture of men and women. Some serve regularly each week whilst some only assist at the larger liturgical events.

Because of the size and unpredictability of their attendance it is a requirement that all Altar Servers 18 years and over at the Cathedral must have an up to date enhanced DBS certificate in order to safeguard children, young people and adults at risk who serve or with whom they may come in contact.

OTHER GROUPS

In common with most parishes, Westminster Cathedral has volunteers who carry out pastoral duties either in the Cathedral, Clergy House or around the parish.

Catechists, aged 18 years and over, who engage with the sacramental preparation programmes (First Holy Communion and Confirmation) and Children's Liturgy of the Word, are required to have a current DBS certificate.

Catechists, aged 18 years and over, involved with RCIA, because they may come in contact with adults at risk, are encouraged to have a current DBS certificate.

Volunteers for groups such as St Vincent de Paul and the Legion of Mary, who take part in outreach activities with people who are often vulnerable because of their circumstances, and those whose duties may include visiting people in their own homes, require a current DBS certificate.

Other individuals and groups are assessed on a case-by-case basis but the general rule is, that if a person is carrying out a role which will bring them into contact with and perform regulated activities as defined by DBS procedures with a child, young person or adults at risk on a regular basis, they will require a DBS certificate. *(Regular is defined as regularly coming into*

contact with a child, young person or adult at risk at least three times during a calendar month).

EXTERNAL CONTRACTORS AND OTHERS

Westminster Cathedral engages with a number of external providers to supply certain services such as Security, Cleaning and the Cathedral Café. As part of their contract with the Cathedral the contractor must ensure that all their staff are DBS checked, as necessary, that they receive the Regulatory Safeguarding Training, and are aware of and comply with the Westminster Cathedral Safeguarding Policies and Procedures.

ADULTS AT RISK

The Cathedral attracts many people, some who are coming to take part in Mass or other services, some who come to pray privately, some who may be seeking some form of assistance, others who come in to have a moment of solace and place of peace. Some visitors to the Cathedral may be homeless or use it as a place of refuge, some may be suffering from a variety of illnesses including mental health issues. The security staff of the Cathedral as well as volunteer stewards receive training on how best to approach these different groups and the referral services that are available.

ONE-TO-ONE SITUATIONS

One-to-one contact in non-public areas of the Cathedral with children, young people and adults at risk should be avoided if at all possible. However, there are occasions when this cannot be avoided, such as individual singing lessons for choir boys conducted by a member of the Music Department. These contacts should be recorded in the timetable showing the location of the lesson, the start and end times and the member of staff conducting the lesson. If for any reason a teacher is substituted or the location changed, this must be recorded. Consent from either the parent or guardian must be obtained before these lessons commence.

If a safeguarding incident occurs during the lesson, however minor, or the child becomes distressed, this must be reported to the Deputy Head (Pastoral) or Head Master, if concerning a child from the WCCS. The school would then inform the Master of Music and the Cathedral Dean, as appropriate. If the child concerned is not from WCCS, the report must be made to the Cathedral Dean directly or, if unavailable, to the Cathedral Safeguarding Representative.

SOCIAL MEDIA, PHOTOGRAPHY AND CONTACTS WITH CHILDREN

Contact with children and young people must only be made through their parents or guardians, this includes by email, telephone or any other method of communication electronic or otherwise.

If an electronic or social media communication is received directly by an adult from a child or young person, it must not be responded to, but reported as soon as possible to the Dean of the Cathedral, the Deputy Head (Pastoral) or Head Master (if concerning a child from WCCS) and/or the Cathedral Safeguarding Representative. If the child concerned is not from WCCS, the report must be made to the Cathedral Dean directly or, if unavailable, to the Cathedral Safeguarding Representative.

No member of the Cathedral Clergy, staff, contractor and/or volunteer is permitted to take pictures or store images of choristers or young altar servers on personal cameras or phones.

If such photographs are required for the needs of the Cathedral, they are to be taken by an officially designated photographer. The photographs must be taken exclusively on the Cathedral's designated cameras or mobile devices, on the camera of the official photographer.

ON-LINE CLASSES/CATECHESIS

Catechetic classes held by the Cathedral may, because of government restrictions or other necessities, be held on line, using video-conferencing facilities. These classes are held in line with CSSA guidelines and recommendations with parents/guardians having completed a consent form.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

If you believe that a child, young person or an adult is at risk, you must report this as soon as possible. In doing so you must be as specific as possible as to the nature of your concern and the evidence or observation on which it is based.

If there is no immediate danger the matter should be reported to the Cathedral Safeguarding Representatives and/or the Dean of the Cathedral. Only if the matter is urgent, and you have tried, but were not able to contact one of the Cathedral Safeguarding Representatives or the Cathedral Dean, the matter should be brought to the attention of the police by calling 999.

If the allegation concerns one of these individuals the Safeguarding Officer of the Diocese should be informed without delay. If the matter concerns a pupil of the Choir School, it must be brought to the attention of the Deputy Head (Pastoral) or Head Master as soon as possible.

Any allegations of abuse will be reported to the police and the Cathedral authorities will work with the appropriate statutory authority. The Cathedral authorities will be open and transparent and assist in bringing to justice anyone who has committed a criminal offence and will provide the necessary individual support to those involved.

When an allegation is made, measures will be put in place to protect any other child, young person and/or adult at risk.

EVERYBODY'S RESPONSIBILITY

It is the duty of all, whether they are clergy, parishioners, staff or volunteers to report any concerns with regard to abuse in whatever form, whether it be to a child, young person or adult at risk, to the appropriate authorities.

The contact details of the Cathedral Safeguarding Representatives are prominently displayed in the Cathedral and in the Sacristy and are included in this document. The contact details for the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator are also included.

Further information and guidance on 'Creating a safer environment' may be found on the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency website (www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk)

The Catholic Church in England and Wales is committed to advancing a culture of safeguarding through education. Online safeguarding modules are available via the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency Learning Portal: https://training.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/.

Further information on how to access these modules can be obtained from one of the Cathedral Safeguarding Representatives.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Diocese of Westminster Head of Safeguarding
Catherine Edginton: catherineedginton@rcdow.org.uk

Cathedral Safeguarding Representatives
Sylvia Vernon: westcathsg@safeguardrcdow.org.uk
Trevor Koschalka: westcathsg2@safeguardrcdow.org.uk

Westminster Cathedral Choir School
Emily Auger (Deputy Head, Pastoral, and DSL): eauger@choirschool.com
Neil McLaughlan (Head Master): nmclaughlan@choirschool.com
Rob O'Brien (Deputy Head, Academic, and Head of Boarding): robrien@choirschool.com

APPENDIX 1: RECEIVING A DISCLOSURE

Cathedral staff and volunteers are trained to give the following advice if they receive a disclosure from a young person or adult at risk:

- provide a safe and reassuring environment for the person to make the disclosure, while not promising confidentiality;
- listen to the disclosure without expressing any personal opinions (such as expressing horror or disbelief);
- if questions are needed, then ask open questions (e.g. 'what happened?') rather than leading questions (e.g. 'Do they kick you often?);
- do not photograph any visible injuries or ask the person to remove any clothing in order to inspect injuries they refer to in their disclosure;
- explain that the information will be passed on to the correct person (i.e. the Cathedral Dean, Cathedral Safeguarding Representatives and the Deputy Head (Pastoral), if it concerns a pupil in the WCCS);
- do not take notes during the disclosure, but make a factual, contemporaneous note immediately after the disclosure, using exact phrases, names, dates and times wherever possible, noting and describing any visible injuries; sign and date the disclosure, or send it to yourself via email;
- where the disclosure includes an online element, do not view or forward illegal images of a child;
- inform the correct person on the day of the disclosure.