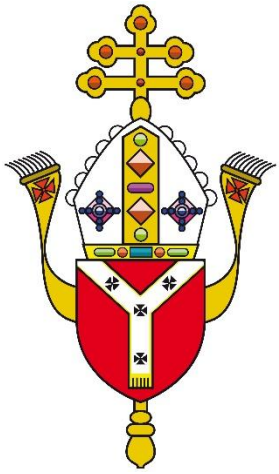
DIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER



LOURDES PILGRIMAGE POLICY STATEMENT

SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES

Policy prepared by:	Pilgrimage Co-Ordinator and Pilgrimage Safeguarding Representative
Third Party Policy:	No
Approval of Lourdes Pilgrimage Review Committee	
Approval of the Safeguarding Committee	
Approval of The Directors of the Trustee	
Review Date	Reviewed June 2026 March 2027

This document must be read in conjunction with the RCDOW Safeguarding Policy https://www.rcdow.org.uk and the Sanctuary of Lourdes Charter for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons (2023) https://www.lourdes-france.org

The organisation of the pilgrimage involves aspects such as accommodation, transport, food, facilities, content of the programme, team structures and training of helpers. The combination of all of these factors is designed in the hope that all pilgrims have a positive experience of their pilgrimage to Lourdes. The need to have an agreed "Pilgrimage Safeguarding Procedure" is another way of assisting this aspiration.

The procedure benefits the pilgrimage in five main ways:

- Best practice guidelines are in place to prevent the risk of abuse to a child, young person, adult at risk, Hospitalité, or another pilgrim. Their human rights are respected and upheld.
- All Hospitalité are better equipped to create a safe environment for a child, young person or adult at risk.
- All Hospitalité are more aware of appropriate action in the event of information, concern or an allegation of abuse. A proportionate, timely, professional and ethical response is made to any individual who may be experiencing abuse.
- The risk for and reputation of all Hospitalité will be protected.
- The organisation risk and reputation of the pilgrimage, the Diocese and the Church will be protected.

The policies and guidelines contained in this document are designed to assist the organisation of the pilgrimage, to give confidence and guidance to all pilgrims and to be compliant with the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) Guidance and procedures. This procedure does not address the detailed medical procedures required to care for assisted pilgrims.

1. Definitions

Below are definitions of those terms for the purposes of this policy and guideline:

ROLE	DEFINITION
CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON	This is defined as a person aged under 18 years.
ADULT AT RISK	The term 'adult at risk' refers to any person aged 18 years and over, who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or serious exploitation.
HOSPITALITÉ	Hospitalité are volunteer helpers who provide care and support to pilgrims including the Assisted Pilgrims, who may be Children or Adults at Risk. For the purposes of this document, the term Hospitalité has been used to also encompass priests, deacons, chaplains, doctors and nurses.
ASSISTED PILGRIMS	Assisted Pilgrims are those pilgrims who join the Pilgrimage and have a need for a level of assistance from the Hospitalité.
PILGRIMAGE DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD	The Pilgrimage Designated Safeguarding Lead, known as the Pilgrimage Safeguarding Representative (PSR) is a volunteer who has specifically been identified to deal with any information, concerns, allegations of abuse on the pilgrimage in any form.
DIOCESE HEAD OF SAFEGUARDING	The Head of Safeguarding, or their designated deputy, will be available to the PSR 24/7 throughout the period of the pilgrimage.
LOURDES PILGRIMAGE YOUTH DIRECTOR	The Pilgrimage Youth Director is a member of the Hospitalité with specific responsibility for the management of the youth volunteers.
BRANCARDIER	A French word for stretcher bearer, in modern terms it means a member of the Hospitalité who is a non-medical helper for assisted pilgrims.

HANDMAID	This term in Lourdes is generally used for non-medical helpers providing care and support to assisted pilgrims staying in the Accueil.
ACCUEIL	A French term meaning welcome or reception, which in Lourdes generally refers to the care facility used for assisted pilgrims, e.g. Accueil St. Frai.
PILGRIMAGE DIRECTOR	A member of the clergy appointed by the Archbishop of Westminster to oversee the logistical and pastoral running of the pilgrimage.
PRÉSIDENT D'HOSPITALITÉ	A member of the Hospitalité volunteers with overall leadership responsibility, principally for operational and logistical organisation of the pilgrimage.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Responsibilities of the Lourdes Pilgrimage Youth Director

- Leading the Redcap Teams in the day-to-day running of the business of the pilgrimage.
- Reviewing the operational performance and strategic direction of the Pilgrimage along with the Pilgrimage President and Director.
- To manage the Redcap teams.
- To designate an appropriate adult(s) to act in '*Loco Parentis'* for volunteer Redcaps under 18 years who are unaccompanied.
- To designate the Train Manager, who is a member of the Hospitalité, and assists all train pilgrims and manages the Team Leaders on the train. To decide or to guide courses of action in operations by Pilgrimage Hospitalité

2.2 Responsibilities of the Pilgrimage Designated Safeguarding Lead (Pilgrimage Safeguarding Representative)

- Promote a culture in which safeguarding can be openly discussed and provide support for those raising concerns.
- Listen sensitively to all those reporting concerns
- Identify sources and the level of risk.
- Ensure that any information given is recorded and that the Diocese Safeguarding Service is contacted to inform them of the concern or harm.
- If an individual is at immediate risk of serious harm, the PSR will contact the French police. The Diocese Safeguarding Service will also be informed.
- The wishes of the person harmed will be considered whenever possible.
- Safely store any documentation relating to incidents of harm, using body maps to record any injuries where appropriate.
- Report any incidents of abuse to the relevant parties.
- The PSR will use incident reporting, lessons learned and auditing measures to improve the quality of provision.
- The PSR recognises their responsibility in relation to confidentiality and will share information appropriately.
- The PSR will ensure that any action that is taken is assessed, proportionate and reflective of the risk presented.
- Advise and support staff and volunteers on the pilgrimage, for them to behave in accordance with their code of conduct and to create a safe environment.

- Ensure, along with the pilgrimage management team, that volunteers receive safeguarding training relevant to their roles, to enhance their knowledge.
- Actively promote the Diocese's Whistleblowing Policy.
- The Safeguarding service will provide support to the Pilgrimage Safeguarding representative to ensure proactive safeguarding during the pilgrimage and be available to discuss safeguarding concerns when required. This may be in person if a member of the safeguarding service is present on the pilgrimage or through telephone or electronic contact.

2.3 Volunteer Responsibilities

- Be able to recognise and report incidences of harm.
- Report concerns of harm or poor practices that may lead to harm.
- Adhere to their Code of Conduct
- Remain up to date with training.
- Follow policy and procedures.
- Know how and when to use the whistleblowing procedures.

2.4 Redcap Team leader, Group Leader and Chief Redcap Responsibilities

See separate Job descriptions for detail.

- Team leader will have a number of Redcaps to supervise and report to the group leader - a team might be operating with a number of pilgrims in a specific hotel or location e.g., Accueil St Frai or with the Caritas St Joseph's group
- Group leader will support and lead a group of secondary school aged children and above and report to the Chief Redcap
- Chief Redcap will oversee them all
- Their responsibilities include those for Volunteers – see above.
- In addition, they will ensure the safe supervision of all Redcaps, both day and night.
- They will sign the Redcap Team leader Code of Conduct and adhere to the Roles and responsibilities for Redcap group leaders and team leader.

2.5 Redcap Responsibilities

See Redcaps' Code of Conduct

2.6 Chief Brancardier

The Chief Brancardier oversees the non-medical volunteer teams working in the Accueil St Frai and is responsible for the operational management of these teams, including recruitment and training, and for organising the arrangements for the assisted pilgrims staying in St. Frai. The Chief Brancardier liaises with all other volunteer teams, including the medical team and Hospitalité leads, to ensure the safe care and transport of assisted pilgrims to and from Lourdes and during the pilgrimage.

2.7 Chief Handmaid

The Chief Handmaid, and their deputies, lead the non-medical volunteers working in Accueil St. Frai on a day-to-day basis during the pilgrimage. They participate in volunteer recruitment and training prior to the pilgrimage. They also assess the needs of assisted pilgrims prior to the pilgrimage along with the medical team so that the individual's needs are known and can be provided for on the pilgrimage. They will support the St. Frai volunteers to be able to provide appropriate care for the assisted pilgrims in their charge. They work closely with the Chief Brancardier and medical team to care for the assisted pilgrims during the pilgrimage and when travelling to and from Lourdes.

2.8 Medical Team

The medical team are qualified practising professionals (registered and validated by their UK professional organisation) who volunteer with the pilgrimage to provide medical care to the assisted pilgrims in St. Frai or those other pilgrims who may need medical help during the pilgrimage. They are led by the Chief Doctor and Chief Nurse. They also register with the Medical Bureau in Lourdes.

2.9 General Principles

- We are compliant with national safer recruitment and employment practices, thus ensuring that our volunteer staff are fit to work with children, young people, adults at risk and assisted pilgrims, including the requirements of the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- All are aware if they feel they cannot follow the regular reporting procedure, they must use the whistleblowing process.
- Any investigation of allegations will dovetail with Diocesan procedures.

3. Planning the Pilgrimage

3.1 Risk Assessment and Management

- The assessment of the risk of abuse of individuals is integral in all pilgrimage assessment and planning processes. The assessment of this risk is dynamic and ongoing; regularly reviewed so that adjustments can be made in response to changes in the levels and nature of risk.
- The Pilgrimage Administrator, along with the Pilgrimage Director and President of Hospitalité will coordinate all risk assessments and maintain the risk register.

- The Pilgrimage Administrator will implement the accident reporting and near miss procedure.

3.2 Safe Recruitment and preparation

3.2.1 All persons registered as Hospitalité:

- All pilgrimage personnel, paid or volunteers, who have access to children, young people or adults at risk must guard against the potential for abuse through a rigorous selection process, supervision, preparation and on-going awareness of the behaviour of those providing care and support.
- All will have a clear role description
- All Hospitalité serving on the pilgrimage in a role which requires a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) certificate will need to have a satisfactory DBS in place before the start of the pilgrimage. Returning volunteers will need to have their DBS updated regularly in line with the Diocesan policy.
- All Hospitalité must receive appropriate preparation prior to the Pilgrimage to ensure that they have:
  - a good understanding of the policy and guidelines.
  - the skills to pass this understanding onto others.
  - the skills to offer appropriate support and supervision for hotel and Accueil pilgrims.
- The role of the Hospitalité is clearly defined on the Pilgrimage application form and in the Group Leaders' Guide. This will be reinforced through appropriate preparation on New Helpers' Day and/or Briefing Day and TAG (Team and Group) Leaders' meetings.
- Each Helper will agree to the Code of Conduct

3.2.2 For those assisted pilgrims who have self-appointed carers:

These will only offer care to the specific named pilgrim, who is responsible for their safe recruitment, preparation and training.

3.2.3 Selection of Redcaps:

- Only those aged 16 years and over at the agreed date prior to the pilgrimage will be selected to attend the pilgrimage
- Will be provided with training in how to safely assist pilgrims

- Will not provide assistance to assisted pilgrims that they are not authorised to give e.g. personal care, feeding, financial management
- Will agree to the Code of Conduct
- Will be supervised whilst travelling and throughout the day and night

3.3 Creating a Safe environment

The Pilgrimage have a number of specific procedures which will be read in conjunction with this procedure:

- Use of Approved Messaging Service
- Photography and Filming, Creating a Safer Environment
- Health and Medical Policies and procedures
- Complaint's procedure
- Issues of mental capacity and Consent
- Dealing with misconduct of pilgrims and anyone in a helping role
- Alcohol Consumption
- Providing or seeking support from other Pilgrimage groups

3.4 Children and Young people under 18 years

Any person under 18 years who is not member of the Hospitalité can only be accepted on the pilgrimage if accompanied by a parent/guardian/or other nominated responsible adult

4. During the Pilgrimage

4.1 Roles and responsibilities

- The Leaders will meet on a daily basis to hold briefings to ensure continuity of care and that issues are dealt with in a timely way.
- They will operate in line with their roles and responsibilities as outlined above.
- They will ensure that one named person is in overall charge during the day and night. Arrangements for contacting this person must be known to all leaders, volunteers and pilgrims.

4.2 Responding to Concerns, Information or Allegation

Where an individual discloses or discusses potential abuse or harm they will:

- Respond by staying calm and listening.

- Reassure them that what they say will be taken seriously and explain that they have a duty to report what has been disclosed.
- Record the conversation by writing up notes clearly as soon as possible.
- Report in a timely manner to the PSR

4.3 Responding to Abuse or Neglect

The PSR must:

- Address any immediate safety and protection needs.
- Assess any risks in conjunction with the Safeguarding Service and take steps to ensure that those involved are in no immediate danger.
- Arrange for a trusted companion to stay with the person abused or neglected.
- Assess whether others are at risk of abuse or neglect and take appropriate steps to protect them.
- Arrange for assistance from the medical team if necessary.
- Contact an appropriate emergency service if necessary.
- Make a report to the Police if appropriate. This can be done following consultation with the Diocesan Safeguarding Service.

4.4 Documenting a Disclosure

- Make a note of what the person actually said using his or her own words and phrases.
- Describe the circumstances in which the disclosure came about.
- Note anyone else who was there at the time.
- Where there are cuts, bruises or other marks on the skin, use a body map to indicate their location.
- Make sure the information written is factual.
- Sign and date the report, noting the time and location of the disclosure.

4.5 Abuse by another vulnerable individual

We recognise that we may also have a responsibility towards the person causing harm. In this situation, it is important that the needs of the individual who is the alleged victim are addressed separately from the needs of the person causing harm.

4.6 Consent

When reporting information that concerns the safety of an individual at risk of harm, consent from that person is not required. However, informing the individual of your concerns and a referral is good practice, unless it would put you or your colleagues at risk – or would put the individual at further risk.

4.7 Confidentiality

Information will be shared in a manner that is compliant with the statutory responsibilities. Individuals at risk will be fully informed about the information that is recorded and, as a general rule, be asked for their permission before information is shared with others.

4.8 Children, Young People or Adults at Risk who go missing

The PSR will be notified immediately and a report made to the Police as a matter of urgency.

4.9 Whistleblowing

Volunteer staff are encouraged to share any serious concerns about a colleague's behaviour. This may not be related to an individual at risk. However, they may not be following a code of conduct, could be pushing boundaries beyond normal limits or displaying conduct which is a breach of the law. Generally, any conduct which compromises health and safety or conduct which falls below established standards of practice with individuals at risk. Whistleblowing is an important aspect of the support and protection of individuals at risk of harm. All members of the pilgrimage are aware of, and reminded of, the Diocese's Whistleblowing Policy, which is available for this purpose and can be accessed via the following link. https://rcdow.org.uk/about-us/

4.10 Repatriation

Circumstances for repatriation might include, but are not limited to:

- Repatriation as a result of conduct (setting out the different arrangements for adults and children as those under the age of 18 would need to be accompanied by their parent/legal guardian);
- Repatriation as a result of deteriorating health which makes the return journey difficult;
- Repatriation as a result of death requiring links with the UK Embassy; and repatriation of carers as a result of death or injury

Repatriation as a result of conduct:

During the Pilgrimage, should any concerns arise from the behaviour of any pilgrim, this will initially be reported to the daily meeting of Pilgrimage Leaders. They will decide what sanction to apply.

This could involve repatriation and if this is decided, the pilgrim will return home at their own cost.

Repatriation as a result of deteriorating health:

This policy and protocol will only be used in circumstances where it is not possible for the sick Assisted Pilgrim to return to the UK via the mode of transport that they used on their outbound journey or the individual has been taken to Lourdes without travel insurance, or the travel insurance has an exclusion with regard to the repatriation.

Repatriation is considered when the clinical condition of the Assisted Pilgrim has deteriorated, and their known or assumed wish is to be in the UK in the case of their death. In a few cases, there is no immediate risk to the pilgrim's life, but they may have developed acute mental health or other needs, and it is felt that these can be most easily be met close to home.

Repatriation as a result of death or serious injury:

The Pilgrimage Leaders will agree who will take responsibility for dealing with this situation, and then liaise with the relevant authorities, Tour Operator and Insurance company.

4.11 Individuals who are not part of the Pilgrimage and Expulsion from the Pilgrimage

Individuals who are not part of the organised pilgrimage group who seek to join the group at any event/activity organised by Westminster pilgrimage will be told that they cannot join the activity. Similarly, if the expulsion from the Pilgrimage is applied, the individual will be informed in writing about the expulsion from group activities and reasons for it.

This will be rigidly applied in both instances to prevent anyone who has not been safely recruited, whose details are unknown or who is in a serious breach of the Pilgrimage of code of conduct having access to the children or adults at risk.

Any concerns about an individual must be referred immediately to the PSR.

4.12 Managing risk when previously unknown risks related to an individual become known during the Pilgrimage

If any such information comes to light, it must be reported immediately to the PSR.

The PSR will evaluate the information in light of the contact the individual has with children and vulnerable adults. The PSR will contact the Safeguarding Service to discuss what action will be taken to address the assessed risk.

5. After the Pilgrimage

5.1 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Referral

There is a statutory requirement for the Diocese to refer an individual to the Disclosure and Barring Service if they consider that the individual is guilty of deliberate misconduct, such that another person was harmed or put at risk of harm.

This decision will be made by the Safeguarding service.

5.2 Debriefing

There will be a debriefing meeting as soon as possible led by the pilgrimage director to use learning to influence policy and procedure in preparation for the next pilgrimage.

The PSR will make a formal report to the Head of Safeguarding after any pilgrimage that includes under 18s and Adults at Risk.

Debrief the Bishop, Religious Leader or where this is not applicable, the Pilgrimage Leader.

The Pilgrimage Director will provide feedback forms to leaders and a selection of helpers and assisted pilgrims, to see their views as to what went well, and what could be improved for next year.

5.3 Safeguarding service

Where safeguarding referrals have been made from the pilgrimage the Safeguarding Service will provide appropriate feedback to the pilgrimage team which enables the team to consider any future needs of a pilgrim / volunteer wishing to join the pilgrimage in subsequent years

6. Review

This policy and its procedures will be annually reviewed:

- in accordance with changes in legislation and guidance on safeguarding or following any changes within the Diocesan Pilgrimage's arrangements.
- or following any issues or concerns raised about safeguarding on the pilgrimage.

Related Documents:

- RCDOW Diocesan Safeguarding Policy
- Sanctuary of Lourdes – Charter for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons (2023)
    - Lourdes Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Lourdes Safeguarding Statement to all Pilgrims
- Code of Conduct – Adults
- Agreement and Code of Conduct – Redcaps
- Roles and Responsibilities for Redcap Group Leaders and Team Leaders
- Chief Redcap Job Description
- Group Leader Job Description
- Team leader Job Description