

TSSF Safeguarding - Outlines for action : essential overview

1. Keeping Safe - *the practice of safeguarding*

Our overarching Safeguarding concern is care for victims of abuse who may face lifelong consequences. This shapes our responses. We will follow Chelmsford Diocese best practice so that in the conduct of our affairs; the arranging meetings, and in pastoral care; TSSF will keep safe any who may be at risk.

2. Responding to allegations - *the process required*

When attention is drawn to a behaviour that may constitute abuse it is vital to be ready to respond in a prepared and informed fashion.

Such occasions may arise if we witness such behaviour.

- Action or intervention must be taken to protect a potential victim
- Advice should be taken immediately, and certainly within 24 hours, contacting a TSSF Safeguarding Officer

Such an occasion may arise if we are told about or receive a disclosure from a potential victim.

- Action must be taken, first in listening with great care and attention. This always means making it safe for the other person to describe their experience, to listen and take note, to employ open questions, not leading in any fashion.
- Do not embark on any kind of checking, investigating or assessing. Contact TSSF Safeguarding Officer to report your concern and the disclosure as soon as possible within twenty-four hours.

The TSSF Safeguarding Officer will act in response and offer you advice and support.

This action may involve the Police or Statutory Social Services Department.

There will be a decision about what further action is appropriate by way of an investigation to establish the need for formal processes to be undertaken.

In these matters TSSF will follow the policy and practice of Chelmsford Diocese, and in the case of clergy, the Diocese in which they are Licensed

When formal investigations are put in hand it will be normal for any process with Enquirers or Postulants to be suspended. It will also be normal for others agencies in a 'need to know' position to be advised; for example, a Diocesan authority in the case of office holders and clergy

3. Working with Offenders - *practice and agreements*

In cases where an Investigation leads to formal process, legal proceedings and then sentence - custodial or community, the response of the Order will have full regard to legal findings and court judgements and sentencing. In cases that involve clergy the requirements of the Clergy Discipline Measure and the policy of the Diocese will be adhered to by the Third Order.

When a Third Order Enquirer or Postulant is concerned there is no formal commitment of membership in the Order and the process will be discontinued.

In the case of a Novice in Vows, the Noviciate will be suspended and Novice Released. If there is a subsequent request to join the Order there may be a presumption that this would, unnecessarily, create a new and extended Safeguarding risk.

In the case of Professed Tertiaries while a sentence, custodial or other, is being served arrangements will be made for support and pastoral care from a named person, usually from the Area Team. Tertiaries shall not hold any Office in the Order during this time. It is not the role of the Third Order to adopt any punitive responses or attitudes towards a convicted offender. That is the role of the courts who will have weighed matters of remorse, contrition and confession in the matter of sentencing. As sisters and brothers we are bound in life of the Order set out in The Principles.

In working with offenders the responsibilities of the Order are primarily to strive for the safeguarding of victims and potential victims, as well as the care of offenders.

If after a sentence is completed a Professed member of the Third Order continues in Vows it is the duty of the Order to act on the outcomes of a Safeguarding Risk Assessment.

Such an Assessment will be the work of all interested parties meeting and consulting together. Typically this will include police, probation, diocesan and TSSF Safeguarding Officers and a Parish representative. Such a meeting will normally be convened by the organisation with lead responsibility. An offender will be required to sign the Safeguarding Agreement produced. Failure to sign a Safeguarding Agreement will result in Release from Vows in the Order.

Establishing Safeguarding relationships between organisations is crucial. For example, between the Order, a Church, a school or other setting. An offender in a formal role of trust in one organisation may extend risk through their membership in another organisation, for example TSSF.