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# SAEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

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*Flame of Love Movement IRELAND Policy for Volunteers*



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### Section 1 - Introduction



The Movement recognises that there may be people with whom their members may come in contact with who require special care and attention. The Movement values and encourages the participation of vulnerable adults in its prayer and devotional activities. We believe that all members should fulfill their apostolate respecting the rights of the individual in line with gospel values and human rights legislation.

The Movement recognises and upholds the dignity and rights of vulnerable adults and is committed to safeguarding all. The guidance set out in this document provides a framework of how it is recommended that the Movement ministers to vulnerable adults. It identifies what we mean by the term and highlights values and principles which should underpin such necessary work.

These guidelines apply to all those who represent the movement whether they be trustees, working group or ordinary members.

The Movement, through these guidelines, sets out to protect vulnerable adults from harm and exploitation and to uphold their rights by acting in their best interests and with their consent.

## **Section 2 - Guiding Principles**

The Movement is committed to creating a safe, caring and compassionate environment for all but especially those associates defined as "vulnerable".

### *Underpinning Principles*

The Principles which underpin our interaction with vulnerable people are based on gospel values and are rooted in respect for the rights of vulnerable adults who are entitled to:

- To live in safety and be free from abuse or fear of abuse by others
- Be treated with respect, kindness and understanding
- Be supported in receiving the sacraments and spiritual direction
- Be protected from all forms of harm and exploitation.
- Have their emotional, physical and sexual integrity respected.
- Have their ethnicity and gender respected
- Be supported in making their own decisions
- Have allegations of abuse investigated
- Have their consent sought and taken into consideration in notifying civil authorities
- Be offered guidance in seeking help and counselling

### **Section 3 - Legal Framework**

Vulnerable adults are protected against criminal acts in the same way as any other person. Where there is reasonable suspicion that a criminal offence may have occurred, it is the responsibility of the Gardaí/PSNI to investigate and consult with the Director of Public Prosecutions on what action should be taken. The Gardaí/PSNI must always be consulted about criminal matters.

Key relevant legislation within the Republic of Ireland is as follows:

- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012.
- Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information of Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012.

#### ***Definition of a Vulnerable Adult***

The current definition of a vulnerable adult within the Republic of Ireland is taken from “*The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012*” which states:

"Vulnerable Person" means a person, other than a child, who –

- a) is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia,
- b) has an intellectual disability,
- c) is suffering from a physical impairment, whether as a result of injury, illness or age, or
- d) has a physical disability, which is of such a nature or degree as to restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against harm by another person, or that results in the person requiring assistance with the activities of daily living including dressing, eating, walking, washing and bathing.

## Section 4 - Recognising Abuse

### *What is abuse?*

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons.

Abuse can take many forms including the following:

**Physical Abuse** - Including hitting, slapping, pushing, burning, giving a person medicine that may harm them, restraining or disciplining a person in an inappropriate way.

**Psychological Abuse** - Including emotional abuse, verbal abuse, humiliation, bullying and the use of threats.

**Financial or Material Abuse** – Including misusing or stealing the person's property, possessions or benefits, cheating them, using them for financial gain, putting pressure on them about wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions.

**Sexual Abuse** - Including direct or indirect sexual activity where the vulnerable adult cannot or does not consent to it.

**Neglect or Acts of Omission** - Including withdrawing or not giving the help that a vulnerable adult needs, so causing them to suffer.

**Discriminatory Abuse** - Including the abuse of a person because of their ethnic origin, religion, language, age, sexuality, gender or disability.

**Institutional Abuse** - This can happen when an organisation, where the person is living or receiving care from, fails to ensure that the necessary processes and systems are in place to safeguard vulnerable adults and

maintain good standards of care and service. Including - lack of training of staff and volunteers, lack of or poor-quality supervision and management, poor record keeping and liaison with other agencies, low staff morale and high staff turnover.

### ***Initial concerns:***

There may be a need for initial “checking out” with the vulnerable adult if there are concerns, for example, if a member of staff or volunteer notices any of the signs of abuse, it may be appropriate to ask what happened or what is wrong. Care needs to be taken not to investigate; this should be avoided by not asking questions beyond initial checking out and listening to the words of the alleged victim for factual accuracy.

### ***Where might abuse take place?***

Abuse can happen anywhere. Some examples are as follows:

- In someone's own home
- In a carer's home
- Within day care, residential care, nursing care or other institutional settings
- At work or in educational settings
- In rented accommodation or commercial premises
- In public places

### ***Who might abuse?***

This could be anyone who has contact with the vulnerable person. It could be a partner, spouse, child, relative, friend, advocate, informal carer, a member of the clergy or religious order, a healthcare, social care or other worker, a peer or, less commonly, a stranger.

***Domestic/Familial Abuse*** - This is the abuse of a vulnerable adult by a family member such as partner, son, daughter, sibling or

extended family member.

***Professional Abuse*** - The misuse of power and abuse of trust by professionals, the failure of professionals to act on suspected abuse/crimes, poor care practice or neglect in services, resource shortfalls or service pressures that lead to service failure and culpability as a result of poor management systems.

Possible forms of professional abuse include:

- Entering into inappropriate relationships with a vulnerable adult
- Failure to refer disclosure of abuse
- Poor, ill- informed or outmoded care practice
- Failure to support a vulnerable adult to access health/care treatment
- Denying a vulnerable adult access to professional support and services such as advocacy
- Inappropriate response to challenging behaviours
- Failure to whistleblow on issues when internal procedures to highlight issues are exhausted

***Peer Abuse*** - This is the abuse of one vulnerable adult by another vulnerable adult within a care setting. It can occur in group or communal settings, such as day care centres, clubs, residential care homes, nursing homes or other institutional settings.

***Stranger Abuse*** - A vulnerable adult may be abused by someone who they do not know such as a stranger, a member of the public or a person who deliberately targets vulnerable people.



## **Section 5 - Recording and Reporting**

Everyone is entitled to have their civil and human rights upheld and to live a life free from abuse and neglect. All concerns, allegations and disclosures must be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.

It is important for those involved in the Flame of Love movement to know that they are not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred and neither are they responsible for conducting an investigation. This is the role of the appropriate authorities. However, they do need to pass on any concerns they have.

If there are concerns about a vulnerable adult's wellbeing which are not dealt with under vulnerable adult safeguarding procedures they should be reported to the local HSE Department/Health Service. A record of this referral should be retained.

### ***How to Report***

All allegations/concerns/suspicions/knowledge against **Flame of Love members** must be reported without delay to the relevant Diocesan Designated Liaison Persons.

If the allegation/concerns/suspicions relates to a situation at an external location (e.g. retreat centre), the reporting procedure is through the Designated Person/Manager of the relevant institution.

For allegations/concerns/suspicions against **non-Flame of Love members**, the person who is worried about possible harm to a vulnerable adult should report the concerns directly to the civil authorities

All recorded information should be typed, accurate, factual and concise. It is important to state opinion, assessment or judgement, as distinct from facts. The records in relation to a member of the Flame of Love against whom a suspicion, concern or allegation has been reported should be catalogued as such.

- An account of all actions taken and contact made with all relevant personnel and detail all contacts in relation to the case.
- Copy of the completed referral form that was sent to the statutory authorities.
- Chronology of when allegations were made and responses.
- What was shared with Statutory authorities and third-party information

All record-keeping will be compliant with data protection legislation, and must be stored confidentially.

## **Section 6 - Confidentiality**

It is important that Flame of Love members, volunteers and attendees understand the importance of confidentiality. All information relating to concerns/suspicious/allegations about a vulnerable adult should be treated as confidential and should only be communicated on a "need to know" basis. This information should NOT be shared with anyone, inside or outside the Movement, unless they are involved in the case. Only the relevant personnel need to be involved. The Designated Diocesan Liaison Person will advise on "who needs to know" and who should have access to records.

While information about vulnerable adults is confidential, it may be disclosed to external agencies to ensure the care and safety of an individual or others or where a crime is suspected. This includes the disclosure of information to An Garda Síochána or the PSNI and the relevant Health Department for such purposes.

In normal circumstances observing the principle of confidentiality will mean that the information is passed on to others with the consent of the person concerned. However, it should be recognised that in order to safeguard vulnerable adults, it may be necessary, in some circumstances, to share information that might normally be regarded as confidential.

All vulnerable adults, and where appropriate, their carers or representatives need to be made aware that the operation of inter-agency procedures will, on occasion, require the sharing of information in order to safeguard a vulnerable adult or others, or to investigate an alleged or suspected criminal offence.

## **Section 7 - Code of Conduct for Those who Minister to Vulnerable Adults**

When ministering to Vulnerable Adults it is critical that boundaries are respected and that appropriate work practices are established which always place the needs and well-being of the vulnerable adult as the primary concern. Those carrying out ministries should have clearly defined codes of conduct. A balance needs to be struck between the right to protection and the need to allow appropriate interaction between an individual and his/her priest, lay minister or volunteer. It is important for all Church Personnel to:

- Adhere to the protocols and guidelines of any organisation whose premises they are ministering within.
- Treat everyone equally with respect.
- Engage and interact appropriately with vulnerable adults.
- Be aware of the difficulties posed by language barriers and other communication difficulties.
- Respect the dignity of each individual and their right to personal privacy.
- Recognise that particular care is required in moments when you may be discussing sensitive issues with vulnerable adults.
- Avoid situations that might compromise your ministry with vulnerable adults, and which are unacceptable within a relationship of trust. This rule should apply to all such behaviours including those which would constitute an illegal act.
- Respect the religious, cultural, racial and sexual orientation of the vulnerable adult and be open to and aware of diversity in their beliefs and practices and those of their families.
- Provide an example of good conduct you wish others to



follow.

- Operate within Diocesan Guidelines

*The Code outlines unacceptable behaviours as follows.*

**Flame of Love members must never:**

- Physically or emotionally abuse or exploit a vulnerable adult.
- Become involved in either using the vulnerable adult's money on his/her behalf or in giving the vulnerable adult advice in use of his/her money.
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
- Do things of a personal nature for a vulnerable adult that he/she is capable of doing for his/herself or are the responsibility of their family or carer.
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade.
- Discriminate against the person on the basis of religion, race, culture, gender or sexual orientation.
- Form inappropriate relationships with vulnerable adults.
- Gossip about personal details of vulnerable adults and their families.
- Photograph or video a vulnerable adult.

## **Section 8 - Access to Advice and Support**

Designated Liaison Person(s) nominated in each diocese

*HSE regional duty officer*

*An Garda Síochána: Any local Garda Station*

In Northern Ireland  
The local PSNI station  
The local health service

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