

CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY, MOTHER OF CHRIST

VISITORS' POLICY

Introduction

Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ is committed to ensuring the safety of all children and adults who visit us. For Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ this commitment directly relates to the fact that we are all made in the image of God and the Church's common belief in the preciousness, dignity and uniqueness of every human life. We start from the principle that each person has a right to expect the highest level of protection, love, encouragement and respect. We acknowledge that all members of Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ have a right to maintain contact with family and friends and to receive visits. We welcome visitors except in special circumstances which can include Holy Days, Retreats and in cases where visits would be deemed contrary to the health and wellbeing of our members.

Policy Purpose

This policy forms part of a suite of safeguarding policies aimed at creating a safer Catholic Church. This policy should be read in conjunction with our safeguarding policy and other relevant associated policies and procedures. Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ is committed to creating an open and transparent culture in which all members, staff and volunteers are empowered to highlight and report safeguarding and low level concerns.

Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all workers within the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ Religious, Lay or Voluntary, regardless of their role or the activities they undertake.

Definitions:

- **Visitor:** someone who visits a person or place
- **Member of** Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ] are Religious Members who have taken/ or is in the process of formation to undertake a vow to live a consecrated life
- **Safeguarding children (children and young people under the age of 18)** means to:
    - Protect children from abuse and maltreatment
    - Prevent harm to children's health or development
    - Ensure children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care
    - Take action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes
- **Adult at risk**: An adult 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 themselves or protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation

Visiting Arrangements

Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ endeavour to accommodate visitors at any reasonable time of the day and evening. Where there is a request for visits to take place outside of usual visiting times consideration will be given to the facilitation of these visits if reasonable.

All visitors must make themselves aware of their presence to either staff or members of Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ Community Houses/ sites will have their own local arrangements for signing in, issuing visitor badges etc, fire safety procedures which must be made known to visitors.

Zero Tolerance to Verbal or Physical Abuse

Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ operates a zero tolerance approach to any kind of verbal or physical abuse. Should a visitor display abusive behaviours to staff, volunteers or members of Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ they will be asked to leave.

If a member of Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ becomes distressed, or the visitor is observed displaying concerning behaviours, a member of staff or community leader must be informed and intervene where necessary. The visitor may be asked to adjust their behaviour or leave the premises.

If there are concerns that the visitor is posing a risk of immediate harm to members of Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ staff and visitors then police must be called. All incidents must be clearly recorded, dated and signed. Where there are concerns surrounding safeguarding then this must be referred to RLSS and/or statutory services as appropriate.

There may be occasions when it is necessary to stop or restrict visits by certain people. Should this be required then the restriction must be recorded and discussed with the visitor both orally and in writing. Wherever possible notice must be given to regular visitors. Stopping visits should only be used as a last resort.

Cameras and Recording Devices

Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ members, staff and volunteers must be informed in advance and agreement must be sought in writing for any request to be photographed, filmed or recorded.

Safeguarding of Children/ Young People and Adults at Risk

Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ is committed to safeguarding all children and adults, this extends to Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ members, staff, volunteers and visitors. Should the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ become aware of a safeguarding issue following a visit they should contact RLSS Safeguarding Team and report the concern and all documentation as a priority.

Further information regarding safeguarding can be found within Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ]'s Safeguarding Policy.

Visits by Children

Children may visit Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ] however there must be a clear purpose for this visit and this must be clearly documented. Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ must be made aware of the proposed visit in advance. Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ must consider the following:

- Any visitor under 18 must be accompanied by an adult at all times

- If this is a school facilitated visit then a copy of the school's risk assessment and safeguarding policies must be obtained before the visit is undertaken.

Right to Privacy

Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ recognises their member's right to privacy especially in matters relating to health and legal matters. Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ members have the right to communicate with other professionals in confidence and these visits should be facilitated in accordance with the needs and wishes of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ member.

Celebrity and VIP Visitors

Whilst VIP/celebrity visitors are welcome to visit Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ community houses, sites and services it is imperative that this visit is arranged in advance and must be supervised at all times. The VIP must not have any unsupervised access to children/young people or adults at risk of harm. Following the Lampard Report (2015) recommendations the following must be adhered to:

- Visits must be agreed and arranged in advance with the purpose of the visit understood by all parties
- Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ members, staff and volunteers must be informed in advance of the visit
- If there are children/young people or adults at risk of harm on site for whatever purpose then they and their representatives (i.e. parent/ guardian) must be informed and agree to the visit in advance.
- The VIP must be escorted at all times by community leader or senior staff member. The VIP must never be allowed to have unsupervised access to Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ members, staff, volunteers or children/young people and adults at risk of harm.
- The VIP must not be privy to confidential information.
- Arrangements must not be made for informal follow up visits by the VIP
- Any concerns surrounding the conduct of the VIP must be escalated to community leader, line manager and/or safeguarding lead as appropriate.

Visiting clergy:

Where there are members of the clergy who wish to stay at an Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ site/community house:

- The request to visit the community house must be requested in writing and the purpose clearly stated. If the visitor is undertaking active ministry then it must be clearly documented what form of ministry is being undertaken e.g. celebrating and concelebrating Mass, pastoral duties, spiritual direction.
- If the visiting clergy is undertaking any regulated activity then a current relevant DBS must be provided
- Visiting clergy must be in receipt of a valid celebret and letter of good standing from either their Bishop or Provincial
- The visiting clergy member must declare if they are subject to a Care and Safety Management Plan. This must be suitably risk assessed prior to the commencement of any visit to Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ

Data Protection

Primary responsibility for the management of documents and safeguarding case files lies with the Safeguarding Lead / RLSS, who will ensure an accurate, auditable, and secure record of any safeguarding concerns or allegations referred to Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ are maintained.

This record will include:

- Relevant contact details
- Details of how/when the concern or allegation was received.
- Details of the concern itself
- Relevant historical information
- Identified past and present risk factors
- Any actions or investigation undertaken including those by Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ or RLSS and from statutory agencies.
- Rational for actions and or outcome of case

All records are potential evidence in a criminal proceeding, civil case or statutory/public inquiry and must be stored in a suitable and retrievable format with an auditable record of provenance and integrity.

Associated policies:

- Retreat policy and guidance
- Safeguarding Policy
- Low Level Concerns Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Code of Conduct

Review of this Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Trustee Board annually at our regular Board meetings. Through this process of regular review we aim to improve our services and ensure that any learnings/developments are implemented, within our RLG.

Date of Document Implementation:	**7th October 2026**
Date Review Due:	**7th October 2027**