



## SAFEGUARDING POLICY

### Context

Compassion Ireland believes that everyone who comes into contact with the organisation has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Compassion Ireland is committed to protecting people, particularly children, vulnerable adults and beneficiaries of Compassion's programme, from any harm, including harm arising from the conduct of employees or associated personnel.

### Purpose

This policy sets out the commitments made by Compassion Ireland and informs employees and associated personnel of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. It aims to address child safeguarding, adult safeguarding, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. These key areas of safeguarding may have different policies and procedures associated with them (*see Associated Policies*).

This policy does not cover the other safeguarding issues which include:

1. Sexual harassment in the workplace, which is dealt with under Compassion Ireland's **'Anti-Bullying & Anti-Harassment and Policy'**.
2. Child protection in terms of Compassion's beneficiaries, which is covered by Compassion Ireland's **'Child Protection Management Policy'**.
3. The design and implementation of Compassion's programme and activities which is covered by Compassion International's Global Programme.
4. Safeguarding concerns in the wider community not perpetrated by Compassion Ireland or its employees and associated personnel.

### Scope

This policy applies to all Compassion Ireland employees and associated personnel, i.e., volunteers, trustees, ambassadors, independent contractors, those who interact or visit face-to-face with beneficiaries and to third party organisations and suppliers working on its behalf.

### Definitions

Beneficiary	Any child, youth, Mother Child Unit (MCU) individual or group that receives the benefit of Compassion assistance or program.
Child or Youth	Child – A human being from birth to the age of 11. At the age of 12 the term Youth is applied. Youth – A human being from 12 to 22 (22 is the maximum age for Compassion beneficiaries)
Harm	Psychological*, physical and any other infringement of an individual's rights. <i>*Emotional or psychological abuse, including (but not limited to) humiliating and degrading treatment such as bad name calling, constant criticism, belittling and persistent shaming</i>

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)	The term derives from the United Nations Secretary General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13). It is used by the humanitarian and development community to refer to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse of affected populations by employees or associated personnel.
Safeguarding	Taking all reasonable steps to prevent harm, particularly sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment from occurring; to protect people, especially vulnerable adults, and children, from that harm; and to respond appropriately when harm does occur.
Sexual abuse	The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.
Sexual exploitation	Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. This definition includes human trafficking and modern slavery.
Survivor	The person who has been abused or exploited. The term 'survivor' is often used in preference to 'victim' as it implies strength, resilience and the capacity to survive.
Vulnerable Person	A person, other than a child, who: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia,</li> <li>has an intellectual disability,</li> <li>is suffering from a physical impairment, whether as a result of injury, illness, or age, or</li> <li>has a physical disability, which is of such a nature or degree:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>as to restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against harm by another person, or</li> <li>that results in the person requiring assistance with the activities of daily living including dressing, eating, walking, washing, and bathing.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

### Guiding Principles for Safeguarding

Compassion Ireland employees and associated personnel come into contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults through:

- Engaging in the advancement of the Christian faith to congregations which have children and vulnerable persons present at the church services and Christian events
- Communication and interactions through our Engagement Centre
- Access to beneficiary personal data
- Correspondence with children through the child sponsorship programme
- Visits to Compassion's projects overseas

Compassion Ireland will not tolerate abuse and exploitation by its employees or associated personnel. It commits to addressing safeguarding throughout its work, through the three pillars of **prevention, reporting and response**.

### Prevention

#### **Compassion Ireland's responsibilities:**

Compassion Ireland will:

- Ensure all employees and associated personnel have access to, are familiar with, and know their responsibilities within this policy;
- Design and undertake all its activities in a way that protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with the organisation;
- Implement stringent safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing, and deploying employees and associated personnel;
- Risk assesses all roles and ensure vetting procedures include taking up two suitable and satisfactory character references as a condition of employment or engagement.
- Ensure employees receive training on safeguarding at a level commensurate with their role in the organisation; and
- Follow up on reports of safeguarding concerns promptly and according to due process.

#### **Employee and associated personnel responsibilities:**

##### **Child safeguarding**

Compassion Ireland employees and associated personnel must commit to fully abide by all elements of Compassion International's '**Statement of Commitment to Child Protection and Code of Conduct**' and '**Compassion Ireland's Code of Conduct**'.

##### **Adult safeguarding**

Compassion Ireland employees and associated personnel must not:

- Sexually abuse or exploit any adult;
- Subject any adult to physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect.

##### **Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse**

Compassion Ireland employees and associated personnel must not:

- Engage in transactional sex which includes exchange of money, employment, goods and services for sex or sexual favours
- Solicit a romantic/dating relationship or engage in sexual/sexually suggestive behaviour with any beneficiary, regardless of age.

Additionally, Compassion Ireland employees and associated personnel are obliged to:

- Contribute to creating and maintaining an environment that prevents safeguarding violations and promotes the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy;

- Report any concerns or suspicions regarding safeguarding violations by Compassion Ireland employees or associated personnel in accordance with Compassion Ireland's **'Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure'**.

### Reporting

Compassion Ireland will ensure that safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns are made available to all, including members of the public. Clear procedures are also implemented for reporting concerns to statutory agencies that need to know.

Compassion Ireland employees receive training on the definition of abuse and maltreatment, and the different categories of abuse which constitute all forms of physical and/or emotional ill treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation that result in actual or potential harm of children and vulnerable adults. This is outlined in more detail in **Compassion International's Guide to Protecting Children from Abuse**.

Any employee reporting concerns or complaints through formal whistleblowing channels will be protected by Compassion Ireland's **'Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure'**.

Compassion Ireland will also accept complaints from external sources such as members of the public, partners and official bodies.

### How to report a safeguarding concern

Employees who have a complaint or concern relating to safeguarding should always report it to the Child Protection Officer (CPO) if the issue is safeguarding involving children. All other safeguarding concerns should be reported to the Designated Officer. (See contact details below)

### Response

Compassion Ireland will follow up safeguarding reports and concerns according to Compassion Ireland's **'Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure'**, and any applicable legal and statutory obligations.

If there are reasonable grounds for concern that a child in the Republic of Ireland may have been, is being or is at risk of being abused or neglected, a report will always be made to Tusla in accordance with Tusla's [Guide for Reporting of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns](#)

If the concern is deemed a scheduled offence under the Child and Vulnerable Person's Act 2012, then it will also be reported to the Charities Regulator and a member of An Garda Síochána (the national police service of the Republic of Ireland) if:

- The offence is perpetrated in the Republic of Ireland by Compassion Ireland employees or associated personnel
- The offence takes place outside the Republic of Ireland and is perpetrated by a non-Irish citizen who has been ordinarily resident in the Republic of Ireland for 12 months immediately preceding the alleged offence and the survivor is a beneficiary of Compassion.
- The offence takes place outside the Republic of Ireland and is perpetrated by an Irish citizen or persons that are ordinarily resident in Ireland and the survivor is a beneficiary of Compassion.

Appropriate disciplinary measures will be applied to employees found in breach of this policy. The investigation into a breach of this policy will not end in the event that an employee resigns during disciplinary processes.

Compassion Ireland will offer support to survivors of harm caused by employees or associated personnel, regardless of whether a formal internal response is carried out (such as an internal investigation). Decisions regarding support will be led by the survivor.

### Confidentiality

It is essential that confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management should be shared on a need-to-know basis only and should be kept secure at all times.

### Designated Safeguarding Roles

**Mandated Person:** A person appointed by the Board in the role of a **Child Protection Officer** to ensure that child safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented consistently with best practice. The Child Protection Officer is also responsible for receiving and reporting child protection concerns.

Adam Tankard | Email: [childprotection@compassion.ie](mailto:childprotection@compassion.ie)

**Designated Safeguarding Trustee Lead:** A trustee appointed by the Board to lead and oversee the development and implementation of guiding principles and safeguarding procedures

Miriam O'Regan | Email: [safeguardingtrustee@compassion.ie](mailto:safeguardingtrustee@compassion.ie)

**Designate Officer:** The trustee appointed by the Board as the main point of contact for concerns raised about misconduct, alleged dishonest or illegal activity as outlined in the '**Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure**'.

Nigel Locke | Email: [blowingthewhistle@compassion.ie](mailto:blowingthewhistle@compassion.ie)

### Associated Policies and Procedures:

Compassion Ireland's Safeguarding Policy is supported by organisational policies and procedures listed below.

- Anti-Harassment & Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Protection Management Policy
- Child Protection Strategy
- Code of Conduct
- Compassion International's Guide to Protecting Children from Abuse
- Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure

**This policy will be reviewed every THREE years, where there is a change in legislation, or a serious incident.**

Version	Approval date	Approved by	Details
One	4 December 2019	Board of Trustees	Superseded by version 2
Two	4 June 2021	Board of Trustees	