Safeguarding Guidelines

Practical guidance for parish youth groups supported by the Carlo Acutis Association

> **How to use these guidelines**
> These guidelines turn the CAA Safeguarding Policy into day-to-day practice. Read them alongside the Safeguarding Policy, the Codes of Conduct, the Session Risk Assessment, the Incident Form and the Privacy Policy in this pack. All youth groups must follow the safeguarding policies of their parish, their diocese and the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA); this pack complements those procedures and does not replace them.

Introduction

The Carlo Acutis Association (CAA) is committed to creating safe, respectful and faith-filled environments where young people can grow in confidence, friendship and relationship with Christ. Safeguarding is central to everything we do, and this pack brings together the policies, guidance and expectations for parishes starting or running a youth group with CAA support.

1. Safeguarding principles

Every child and young person has the right to be:

- safe, protected and listened to;
- treated with respect, dignity and fairness;
- supported by trusted adults who act with integrity;
- included and valued within the parish community.

Core principles from the CAA Safeguarding Policy:

- safeguarding is everyone's responsibility;
- good communication, openness and transparency protect young people;
- all adult volunteers complete safeguarding training and DBS checks before they start;
- children's voices must be heard, respected and taken seriously.

2. Leadership and safeguarding roles

Each parish youth group must have the following in place.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

One for the Juniors and one for the Seniors where both run. Responsibilities include:

- first point of contact for safeguarding concerns within the group;
- keeping an up-to-date list of training and DBS checks, working with the Parish Safeguarding Representative;
- liaising with the Parish Safeguarding Representative;
- making sure records are stored securely;

- supporting leaders in good practice.

Chair of the youth group

- Makes sure safeguarding is always the priority.
- Supports and oversees the DSL.
- Makes sure training, ratios and boundaries are followed.

Parish Safeguarding Representative

- Links the group with the parish and the diocesan safeguarding office.
- Receives concerns from the DSL and makes sure diocesan procedures are followed.

All leaders and volunteers

- Complete the safeguarding training required by the diocese before starting and keep it up to date.
- Read and sign the Code of Conduct for Leaders.
- Follow all boundaries and safety expectations.
- Report concerns immediately.

CAA Safeguarding Officer

- Offers advice, templates and support to groups.
- Does not replace parish or diocesan procedures and does not investigate concerns.

3. Safer recruitment and training

Mandatory steps for all adult volunteers:

- an enhanced DBS check through the parish or diocese;
- safeguarding training through the parish or diocese, renewed as the diocese requires;
- an interview or informal conversation with the Chair or parish priest;
- two references where appropriate;
- signing the Code of Conduct for Leaders;
- a clear explanation of the role, its boundaries and expectations.

No volunteer starts until all checks are complete.

Youth volunteers aged 16 to 17 may assist, but they:

- must never be left alone with children or put in charge of a group;
- do not count towards adult ratios;
- must follow all boundaries;
- receive age-appropriate guidance and sign the Code of Conduct for Youth Members.

4. Code of conduct: the essentials

The full Code of Conduct for Leaders is in this pack. In summary, all leaders and helpers must:

Personal conduct

- model kindness, courtesy and Catholic values;

- keep professional boundaries at all times;
- treat every young person with respect and dignity;
- use appropriate language and behaviour.

Safeguarding boundaries

- never be alone with a child;
- always have at least two responsible adults present;
- have no private messaging or social media contact with young people;
- use only official parish or group communication channels;
- never use physical discipline or aggressive behaviour;
- never invite children into their homes;
- not drink alcohol, vape or smoke during sessions;
- avoid any behaviour that could be misinterpreted.

Leaders re-sign the code every year to confirm they understand and accept it.

5. Safe supervision and ratios

Minimum adult to child ratios:

- under 9 years (Juniors): one adult per six children
- ages 9 to 12: one adult per eight children;
- ages 13 to 18: one adult per ten young people.

There must always be at least two adults present. More supervision is needed when:

- using more than one room;
- running outdoor games;
- managing large groups;
- running high-energy sessions;
- working with mixed age groups.

6. Safe activity planning

Leaders must:

- complete a risk assessment using the CAA Session Risk Assessment template where needed;
- use appropriate spaces with clear visibility;
- supervise outdoor areas and boundaries;
- check equipment is safe and appropriate;
- brief volunteers before each session;
- record any accidents or incidents.

Trips and off-site events need:

- written parental consent;
- supervision that meets the ratios above;

- separate accommodation for boys and girls;
- transport plans that meet parish standards;
- a named first aider present.

7. Communication and online safety

Leaders must:

- use official parish or group email accounts only;
- communicate with parents rather than young people directly;
- never send private messages to young people on any platform;
- keep WhatsApp and other group chats to parents and leaders only;
- use official parish or CAA channels for photos and announcements.

Photos and videos may only be taken and shared with written parental consent.

8. Behaviour and incident recording

Use the Incident Form in this pack. Every record must include:

- the name of the child;
- the date and time;
- a factual description of what happened;
- the names of any witnesses;
- the action taken;
- the name of the leader completing the form.

Records must be stored securely and seen only by the DSL and Parish Safeguarding Representative. Routine behaviour records are kept for up to two years. Records of safeguarding concerns are passed to the Parish Safeguarding Representative and kept in line with diocesan retention guidance, which is usually much longer, so they must never be destroyed locally.

Behaviour concerns should be recorded in a calm, factual and confidential way.

9. Responding to safeguarding concerns

Any concern, no matter how small, must be taken seriously.

1. Listen carefully, stay calm and reassure the child.
2. Do not promise to keep it secret.
3. Record factually what was said, in the child's own words where possible.
4. Report immediately to the DSL, on the same day.
5. The DSL informs the Parish Safeguarding Representative.
6. The DSL follows diocesan and national safeguarding procedures.

If a child is in immediate danger, call 999.

If the concern is about an adult

> If the concern or allegation is about a leader, volunteer, member of clergy or any other adult, report it directly to the Parish Safeguarding Representative or the diocesan safeguarding office. Do not investigate or speak to the adult concerned. If the DSL is unavailable or is the person involved, go straight to the Parish Safeguarding Representative or the diocesan safeguarding office.

10. Safe environment

All youth groups must:

- use child-friendly, safe and supervised spaces;
- make sure toilets are in visible, accessible areas;
- make sure leaders never accompany a child alone;
- keep doors open during sessions;
- store equipment safely;
- keep first aid kits to hand;
- have emergency contact details for every child available at each session.

11. Annual review

Every parish youth group should complete a safeguarding review each year, covering:

- training updates;
- DBS checks;
- boundaries and procedures;
- incidents and what was learned from them;
- updates to policies;
- volunteer refreshers;
- confirmation that the Code of Conduct has been re-signed.

The CAA Safeguarding Officer can support groups with their review. For advice, contact info@carloacutisassociation.com.

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