Safeguarding Policy

For parish youth groups supported by the Carlo Acutis Association

About this policy

This policy sets out the safeguarding standards the Carlo Acutis Association (CAA) expects of every parish youth group it supports. It supports, and does not replace, the safeguarding policies of your parish and diocese or the standards of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA). Where a parish or diocesan requirement is stricter than this policy, the stricter requirement always applies.

1. Introduction

Parish youth groups supported by CAA are committed to providing a safe, welcoming and respectful environment for all children and young people. We recognise our responsibility to safeguard and promote their wellbeing, in line with UK law and the safeguarding policies of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

This policy outlines the procedures we follow to protect children and young people taking part in our activities. It applies to all leaders, volunteers, youth volunteers and participants.

2. Scope

Parish youth groups

Each youth group remains under the pastoral authority of its parish priest and the safeguarding arrangements of its parish and diocese. The group adopts this policy as its own and the parish is responsible for safeguarding at its sessions.

CAA-organised activities

Where CAA itself organises an event, gathering, retreat or training session, CAA is responsible for safeguarding at that activity, working alongside the procedures of the parish or venue where it takes place.

3. Safeguarding principles

- Every young person is valued, respected and has the right to a safe environment.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Children's voices are heard, respected and taken seriously.
- We promote a culture of openness where concerns are raised and acted on.
- We follow safer recruitment practices for every adult volunteer.
- All leaders and volunteers are trained in safeguarding before they start.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Parish priest

Holds overall pastoral responsibility for the youth group and its safeguarding arrangements.

Parish Safeguarding Representative

Supports the group on safeguarding, holds records of checks and training, and is the link to the diocesan safeguarding office.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Each group appoints a DSL, with one for the Juniors and one for the Seniors where both run. The DSL is the first point of contact for concerns within the group; makes sure they are reported correctly and liaises with the Parish Safeguarding Representative.

Leaders and volunteers

All adult leaders and volunteers must complete safeguarding training and safer recruitment checks before they start, understand their responsibilities and follow the Code of Conduct for Leaders.

Youth volunteers aged 16 to 17

Youth volunteers may assist with activities but are never given sole responsibility for a group, are never left alone with children and do not count towards adult ratios.

CAA Safeguarding Officer

Supports groups with guidance, templates and advice on good practice. The CAA Safeguarding Officer does not replace parish or diocesan procedures and does not investigate concerns or allegations.

5. Safer recruitment

Before any adult volunteer starts working with children or young people:

- an enhanced DBS check is completed through the parish or diocese;
- safeguarding training is completed through the parish or diocese;
- the volunteer has an interview or informal conversation with the group Chair or parish priest;
- references are taken where appropriate;
- the volunteer reads and signs the Code of Conduct for Leaders.

No one may start in a role until these checks are complete.

6. Safe supervision and ratios

To keep everyone safe:

- at least two DBS-checked adults aged 18 or over are present at every session;
- minimum adult to child ratios are met:
  - under 9 years (Juniors): 1 adult per 6 children
  - 9 to 12 years: 1 adult per 8 children
  - 13 to 18 years: 1 adult per 10 young people
- a risk assessment, using the CAA Session Risk Assessment template, decides whether more supervision is needed.

7. Code of conduct

All adults involved in the group must follow the Code of Conduct for Leaders, which includes that they:

- treat all children and young people with respect and dignity;
- are never alone with a child or young person;
- never invite a child or young person to their home or personal space;
- keep appropriate boundaries in all communication, with no private messages or personal social media contact;
- report any safeguarding concern immediately.

8. Responding to safeguarding concerns

- **Immediate danger:** if a child or young person is at immediate risk of harm, call 999.
- **Concerns about a child:** report to the group DSL straight away and on the same day. The DSL informs the Parish Safeguarding Representative and follows diocesan procedures.
- **Concerns about an adult:** any concern or allegation about a leader, volunteer, member of clergy or other adult is reported directly to the Parish Safeguarding Representative or the diocesan safeguarding office. Leaders must not investigate or question the adult concerned.
- **If the DSL is unavailable or involved:** go directly to the Parish Safeguarding Representative or the diocesan safeguarding office.
- **Recording:** write down what was seen or said, factually and as soon as possible, using the Incident Form.

For advice on good practice, groups can contact the CAA Safeguarding Officer. Where a concern arises at a CAA-organised activity, CAA must also be told.

9. Bullying

We have a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, whether in person or online. All incidents will be addressed and appropriate action taken.

10. Safe use of technology

- Leaders must not use personal social media accounts to contact young people.
- Emails and messages are sent through official parish or group accounts and go to parents, not young people directly.
- Group chats, such as WhatsApp, are for parents and leaders only.
- Photos and videos are only taken and shared with written parental consent.

11. Trips and off-site activities

- Parents give written consent for all trips and residential stays.
- Accommodation is separate for boys and girls and supervised by trained leaders.
- A risk assessment is completed for every trip.

12. First aid and medication

- A trained first aider is present at all sessions and events.
- Medication is managed in line with written parental instructions and recorded.

13. Records and data

Safeguarding records, consent forms and incident forms are stored securely and seen only by those who need them, normally the DSL and Parish Safeguarding Representative. They are kept in line with the group's Privacy Policy and the diocese's retention guidance.

14. Review

This policy is reviewed every year, and sooner if the law, CSSA standards or diocesan procedures change.

Key contacts

Contact	Details
Group DSL (Juniors)	_____
Group DSL (Seniors)	_____
Parish Safeguarding Representative	_____
Parish priest	_____
Diocesan safeguarding office	0121 230 6240 / safeguarding@rcaob.org.uk
CAA Safeguarding Officer	Maggie Fox, info@carloacutisassociation.com
Emergency	999
Police (non-emergency)	101
NSPCC Helpline	0808 800 5000
Childline (for young people)	0800 1111

Adoption

Adopted by	Details
Youth group and parish	_____
Parish priest (name and signature)	_____
Date adopted	_____
Next review date	_____

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