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РУССКАЯ ПРАВОСЛАВНАЯ ЦЕРКОВЬ ЗАГРАНИЦЕЙ

Russian Orthodox Church outside of Russia

#  ЦЕРКОВЬ СВ. НОВОМУЧЕНИЦЫ ВЕЛ. КН. ЕЛИСАВЕТЫ

##  Church of St Elisabeth the New Martyr

Registered Charity Number XT16848

www.newmartyr.info

10/02/2025

**Parish Safeguarding Policy**

The Parish of St Elisabeth the New Martyr, Wallasey has received a new and updated Diocesan Safeguarding Policy on 10th February 2025. It was distributed on that day to the clergy and officers of the parish and can be found at <https://orthodox-europe.org/english/diocese/chancellery/key-documents/>

The Safeguarding Policy of the Parish of St Elisabeth the New Martyr and its associated mission parishes of St John the Forerunner in Durham and St Chad of Lichfield in Telford and the Mission of St Nicholas in Liverpool. The Parish is not constituted in Law in the United Kingdom as a Charity but is registered by HMRC : Number XT16848 under its official name ‘The Parish of St Elisabeth the Newmartyr (ROCOR)’, it is part of the Diocese of Great Britain and Western Europe (ROCOR) established according to the normal rules governing Charitable Organisations, with Charity registration number 1192243. It maintains a Safeguarding Policy, the text of which is found in the link above.

Policy History: This policy originated with the 2010 Safeguarding Policy of the London Cathedral, updated and modified many times in the years since. It is normally presented for review annually. The current form (below) was blessed by the Ruling Bishop in 2019, further revised in 2024, and approved by the Diocesan Council in February 2025.

Parish Safeguarding Policy 1. Introduction 1.1.The Parish of St Elisabeth the New Martyr and its associated missions seek to ensure that all people in her care — especially children and any who are vulnerable — are looked after with diligence and care, and provided with aid through prayer, pastoral support, sacramental and other ministries, and activities provided by clergy and lay members of the Church. In addition to our Christian responsibilities and day to day work, we have statutory responsibilities under UK Law in relation to the protection of children and vulnerable adults. This policy is 1 designed to ensure that the Parish can meet those responsibilities, including identification of those in positions of trust, and those who are undertaking regulated activity and require a DBS certificate.

**1.2.Definitions**

**1.2.1.1.** **Vulnerable People and /or** **Children:** The definition of ‘a child’ is anyone under the age of 18.3 1.2.1.2. Adults: The definition of ‘a vulnerable adult’ (in some civil documentation called an adult ‘at risk’) is a person aged 18 or older who possesses a physical, mental or emotional infirmity which impairs the person’s ability to provide for his or her basic care without assistance, and as a result of that need is impaired in the ability to provide for his or her basic care without assistance; and/or is experiencing (or is at risk of) abuse or neglect, and has an impaired ability to protect himself or herself from maltreatment.

**1.2.2.** Abuse: The definition of abuse includes, but is not limited to: physical, sexual, verbal or psychological pain or injury; an act of neglect or an omission to act; or the persuasion a vulnerable person to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented, or cannot reasonably consent.

**1.2.3.** **Staff and Volunteers**

**1.2.3.1.**For the purposes of this policy, the term ‘Staff’ refers to all non-clergy (laypersons) in paid positions by the Parish; and also includes all members of the Clergy, whether paid or not, serving in the parish.

**1.2.3.2.** The term ‘Volunteer’ refers to any person who, on a volunteer (unpaid) basis holds a position of authority in the Parishes (e.g. Parish Council members, trustees), or who serves in contexts that bring him or her into contact with children or vulnerable adults (e.g. school teachers, choir directors).

**1.2.3.3.** The term ‘Safeguarding Officer’ refers to the individual (whether volunteer or compensated) who is appointed to oversee the effective maintenance of the Parish’s safeguarding responsibilities. This is currently Subdeacon Michael Gazdecki, who may be contacted by email michaelgazdecki@yahoo.co.uk (DBS No 001902013287)

**1.3.Scope.**

**1.3.1.** This policy directly relates to all staff and volunteers of the Parish itself, including the hierarchs, clergy and laity serving on the parish in any capacity as required by the Diocese.

**1.3.2.** This policy also makes reference at all times to the Diocese and is governed by its regulations. This parish has developed its own Safeguarding Policy with modifications relevant to its specific situation, which in a majority of cases is a requirement of the parish’s registration in Law; but it is a Diocesan requirement that these must never contradict, nullify or lessen the moral and legal obligations spelled out in the present Policy, which will apply to staff and volunteers in every parish regardless. The Parish is required to appoint its own local Safeguarding Officer, (see above) who is appointed at the AGM of the Parish annually. The Safeguarding Officer’s name and contact details are to be perpetually provided in a visible location (e.g. a parish notice board), and communicated to the Diocesan Chancellery for records.

**1.3.3.** In terms of its legal framework, this policy is drafted to comply with the statutory regulations of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. As part of the Diocese which incorporates parishes in many countries across western Europe, it is the responsibility of the regional Deans, or other appointed personnel in each place, to ensure that modifications (whether as an appendix or revised policy) are made and maintained so as to comply with the local Law of the land. There are no local modifications to this policy.

**2. General Policy Provisions and Requirements**

**2.1.** The Parish of St Elisabeth the New Martyr recognises that the best protection for all people participating in its life and work is the vigilance and forethought of staff and volunteers in preventing circumstances where an abuse of trust could occur. To that end, the Parish strives to create a safe and secure environment where parishioners, volunteers and staff can pray, worship and work together confidently in mutual respect.

2**.2.** Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks: The Parish undertakes to obtain a DBS check in accordance with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 for volunteers and staff holding roles that include regulated activity (which expressly includes all members of the Clergy), and for other positions where it is deemed appropriate to do so. 2.2.1.It is the responsibility of each Parish’s Parish Council, in concert with its Safeguarding Officer, to ensure that all persons requiring DBS checks are identified, and to ensure that all such checks are carried out and kept up to date.

**2.2.2.** It is the requirement of all Parish Councils to forward to the Diocesan Chancellery, not less than once per year, an up to date listing of every staff member and volunteer in the parish for whom current DBS checks have been obtained.

**2.2.3.** The Diocese maintains a separate Policy on the Employment of Ex-Offenders, to which reference may be made in the course of DBS checks which the Parish of St Elisabeth the New Martyr follows. <https://orthodox-europe.org/english/diocese/chancellery/key-documents/>

**2.3.**In addition to the requirements of DBS checks described above, all Parish volunteers and staff are required to notify the Parish and the Diocese of any police record or other factor that may make him/her unsuitable to work with vulnerable people. This must be done during the application / appointment process for existing factors; any change in such factors that may arise after appointment must be reported by the individual to the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer within 24 hours of that change, or be subject to immediate dismissal.

**2.4.** The Parish will fully cooperate with the Diocese and will ensure that its safeguarding procedures and policies are routinely monitored, developed and maintained, through an annual review headed by the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer and presented to the Diocesan Council. A report on safeguarding will form a standard item on the formal agenda of each Diocesan Assembly. In the interim, any updates or revisions to this policy, or to other safeguarding-related procedures in the Diocese, shall be communicated to all staff and volunteers by various means, including electronic.

**2.5.** Volunteers and staff are responsible for ensuring that they are familiar with this safeguarding policy and the procedures of the Diocese and of their own Parish, and that new staff and volunteers are appropriately inducted. A copy of this policy shall be given to each new staff member and volunteer, which he or she shall be required to sign and return to the Diocesan Chancellery as confirmation of both understanding and acceptance of all it contains

**2.5.1.** All obligations spelled out in this policy (such as mandatory reporting) are absolute requirements, both canonically, spiritually, and in Law. Any staff member or volunteer who fails to act in accordance with the requirements indicated here shall be subject to immediate suspension or termination while the matter is reviewed; clergy who fail to fulfil their obligations spelled out herein are additionally subject to immediate canonical suspension and the matter being referred to a Spiritual Court.

**2.5.1.1.** If a dereliction of reporting obligations is itself deemed to be in violation of civil Law, the Diocese shall report the staff member or volunteer to the relevant authorities.

**2.6.** Training: The Diocesan Safeguarding Officer will work with parochial Safeguarding Officers to ensure that relevant and appropriate training, based in context of a Christian Church, is available to all members of the Diocese who require it (which is essentially the same group who require DBS checks; above, section 2.2). The training refresh cycle will be three years with ad hoc training offered as may be required.

**2.6.1**. Parochial Safeguarding Officers shall keep a written record of all those in the parish who have undergone such training, including dates and records of attendance. This shall be provided to the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer annually, at the same time as the listing of current DBS checks (see above, section 2.2.2).

**3. Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct**

**3.1.** Staff and volunteers working for the Diocese and its parishes are placed in a position of trust with regard to people taking part in its activities. Anyone who abuses that trust will be subject to disciplinary action. To this end, the Parish / Diocese expects its staff and volunteers to abide by this Code of Conduct. Each staff member or volunteer:

**3.1.1.** Will abide by the canonical rules, guiding principles and other regulations of the Parish / Diocese in all activities;

**3.1.2.** Undertakes to maintain, within the Parish / Diocesan procedures, the confidentiality of any information relating to other parishioners made available to him/her in the course of being a Parish / Diocesan staff member/volunteer;

**3.1.3.** Will not knowingly place him/herself in a situation where the staff member/volunteer is alone with a vulnerable person, whether a child or adult, and will endeavour to ensure, as far as possible, that there is another adult in attendance at any such meeting;

**3.1.4.** Will not offer a child or vulnerable adult a lift in a car without the presence of others (groups may be transported where there is suitable insurance cover in place);

**3.1.6.** Will not intentionally behave in any way, physically or verbally, that could be offensive to a vulnerable person;

**3.1.7**. Will remember at all times that interactions between him/herself and vulnerable persons must be such that no reasonable person observing that interaction could construe its nature as abusive;

**3.1.8.** Will without fail or delay report to the appropriate Diocesan and other relevant authorities any observed, reported or suspected maltreatment of a child or vulnerable person. The procedure for this is detailed below.

**4. Specific provision relating to vulnerable adults:** The Parish of St Elisabeth the New Martyr, as part of the Diocese acknowledges every individual’s right (including vulnerable / at-risk adults) to a life which maintains his or her independence and therefore involves a degree of risk. Where the individual chooses to accept this risk, such wishes should be respected within the context of his or her capacity to understand the nature of the decision and its implications.

**5. General procedures for dealing with abuse, mistreatment or neglect of a child or vulnerable person**

**5.1.** Any staff member or volunteer who observes or has cause to suspect, or has credibly reported to him or her by a third party the abuse, mistreatment or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult, or a context of an abuse of trust in the context of Diocesan or Parochial life, is required to report this to the relevant Diocesan authority (generally the Safeguarding Officer ) within 24 hours of the observed act, report, or arousal of suspicion. The Safeguarding Reporting Form, found at the end of this policy, should be used as a template.

**5.1.1.** The report must be made in documentable form, either by hard copy written report or emailed report. This will most often be accompanied by a telephone call to the Diocesan authority, and in cases of perceived urgency must be so; in such cases this must be followed-up with a documentable report within the 24 hours.

**5.1.2.** If the staff member or volunteer perceives there to be an immediate threat or risk of further harm, he or she should report the matter directly to the Police or relevant civil authorities, in concert with also submitting a report to the Diocesan authorities as described above.

**5.1.2.1.** In cases where the degree of threat or potential criminal activity cannot be readily discerned by the staff member or volunteer making the report, he or she will discuss this matter with the Safeguarding Officer, who will aid in determining if contact with the authorities is required or appropriate, and if so may make this contact himself.

**5.2.** If a credible allegation concerns sexual or physical abuse, the staff member or volunteer shall not attempt to investigate: notification must be made immediately (as described above), and the Safeguarding Officer will notify the Police and inform the vulnerable person’s parent/carer.

**5.3.** If the allegation does not concern sexual or physical abuse, and is of a minor enough nature to be addressed locally, it is the Safeguarding Officer’s responsibility to arrange a meeting at the soonest possible time with the vulnerable person for whom concern has been expressed, in order to discuss this with him/her and determine if further action is required. This should be done in the presence of a vulnerable adult’s carer or other appointed representative; in the case of children, it must be done in the presence of a parent (unless there is cause to suspect mistreatment from the parent, in which case a trusted member of the parish may be appointed to attend).

**5.3.1**. At such a meeting, notes should be made to ensure that all relevant facts are passed on. A course of action must be agreed and the decision taken as to who will undertake further discussions with the vulnerable person. Under no circumstances must the person who made the allegation be contacted by anyone other than the Safeguarding Officer, after the disclosure has been passed on.

**5.3.2.** The Safeguarding officer, in appropriate concert with the carer or parent, will then determine the appropriate process of further investigation. Once an allegation has been made, the investigation must be conducted swiftly and with appropriate thoroughness. If it is deemed necessary to make enquiries of a third party, such enquiries should be conducted with discretion.

**6. Disclosure directly by a child or vulnerable adult of abuse by someone else: Steps to be taken**

**6.1.** If a vulnerable person who is a parishioner approaches a staff member or volunteer about an issue of abuse of trust, the matter must be approached with great care.

**6.2.** The Code of Conduct (above, section 3.1.3) specifies that a staff member or volunteer should not place him/herself in a situation where he/she is alone with a vulnerable person; however, it is possible that a parishioner may be unwilling to make disclosures of this nature in anything but a one-to-one situation. The parishioner’s needs must take priority in this situation. Ask if the individual would like someone else to be present – e.g. another adult or a friend – but, if he/she declines, proceed with the interview, taking extra care with your behaviour and body language.

**6.3.** Before the vulnerable person goes into detail, the staff member or volunteer must explain the consequences of his or her knowing, and the action he/she will be required to take. The vulnerable person should be made aware that the staff member/volunteer will offer support and aid, but must and will pass all relevant information to the Safeguarding Officer, or directly to the Ruling Bishop, who may take appropriate action, including fulfilling the requirement of any mandatory reporting to the civil authorities.

**6.4.** The staff member or volunteer must remain calm and listen attentively to the vulnerable person, treating him or her with dignity and respect. No physical contact should be made at any time. The vulnerable person should be allowed to speak without interruption, accepting what is said without the offering of judgements or opinions.

**6.5.** At the end of the meeting, the staff member/volunteer should again explain what will happen next. He/she should attempt to learn when the vulnerable person is next due to see the individual who is the subject of the complaint, which

may aid in making a judgement as to the appropriate timing of follow-up actions.

**6.6.** If the complaint concerns a situation not related directly to the Diocese or Parish (e.g. at home or at school), it must not be disregarded. The staff member/volunteer must still report it to the Safeguarding Officer, who will determine how the matter is to be reported to and handed over to the relevant bodies outside the Diocese.

**7. Procedures for dealing with suspected abuse of trust by staff members (including clergy) and volunteers**

**7.1**. If misconduct is observed or reported, as in the above provisions, and the complaint relates to alleged wrongdoing on the part of a staff member or volunteer of the Diocese or Parish, the following additional procedures apply:

 **7.1.1**. If the suspected misconduct is serious in nature, and in all cases where it involves credible suspicion of sexual or physical abuse, the individual shall immediately be suspended from his or her duties in the parish, and informed so in writing by the Diocesan Bishop or Parish Priest. This suspension does not imply guilt, but provides a necessary halt to future interactions while the matter is properly investigation.

 **7.1.1.1**. In the case of the allegation being against a member of the clergy, this shall be reported immediately to the Ruling Bishop. Clergy against whom credible allegations are received are canonically suspended from all clerical function while the matter is investigated.

**7.1.1.2.** In all cases, the Parish / Diocese will abide by legal obligations of mandatory reporting to civil authorities of those contexts in which this is required by Law.

 **7.1.2**. If the suspected breech of trust is less serious in nature, the staff member/volunteer who is the subject of the complaint shall be informed of the complaint by the Safeguarding Officer or another appointed member of the Diocesan or Parish Council – although not necessarily of the identity of the person who made the complaint – and be given an opportunity to respond to it.

**7.1.3.** When interviewing the staff member/volunteer who is the subject of the complaint, it will be explained that an investigation is being undertaken to establish the facts, and that any decisions taken will be based on the facts identified thereby. Notes shall be taken in order to ensure that details are conveyed accurately; the staff member/volunteer may see such notes in order to confirm the accurate reporting of what he/she has said. The staff member/volunteer must be treated with respect and allowed to state the facts as he/she knows them without interruption.

**7.1.4**. Having considered all the information available, and the views of the Safeguarding Officer and others that may be called upon to address any questions (whilst maintaining confidentiality), the the Safeguarding Officer or other delegated official shall decide on an appropriate course of action. This decision should be communicated first to the Ruling Bishop, then to the staff member/volunteer and then, via the Safeguarding Officer, to the person who made the original disclosure.

**7.1.5.** Whatever the outcome of the investigation, the Safeguarding Officer must complete a Safeguarding Resolution Reporting Form (provided below) and return it, marked ‘Strictly Confidential’, to the Ruling Bishop and to the Diocesan Authorities.

**8. Action to be taken if a staff member or volunteer receives an allegation about himself/ herself**

**8.1.** Keep calm. Do not get involved in an argument which might well make the situation worse.

**8.2.** Immediately inform the Ruling Bishop or his authorised representative. The more quickly that action is taken to investigate the allegations, the sooner the situation will be resolved.

**8.3**. Understand that suspension from duties is a standard reply to credibly-received allegations, and do not react negatively to this practice. Such suspension does not imply guilt, but permits the matter to be addressed without deteriorating.

**8.4**. Record the facts related to the allegation as you understand them, so that these can in due course be used in further discussion or investigation.

**8.5**. Ensure that neither you nor anyone else is placed in a position that might cause further compromise.

**8.6.** Whatever the nature of the complaint, it must be kept confidential. You must not discuss the disclosure with any individual or party other than those identified in the above procedure. Under no circumstances should you attempt to contact the person who has made the complaint.

**8.7**. Await further contact from the Ruling Bishop or his authorised representative.

The Forms used in this process of reporting can be found in Appendix A of the conclusion of the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy at <https://orthodox-europe.org/english/diocese/chancellery/key-documents/>

The Parish Safeguarding Officer should attach to his report all notes taken during the investigation, as well as any supporting documents, and the initial Complaint Report Form (if received).

Father Paul Elliott Parish Rector

Father Justin Venn Assistant Priest

Father Vyacheslav Liokovsky Assistant Priest

Subdeacon Michael Gazdecki Parish Safeguarding Officer

Subdeacon Chad Newman Parish Secretary and Trustee

Irina Burnip Parish Starosta and Trustee

Archpriest Paul Elliott

Chancellor of the Diocese of Great Britain and Ireland (ROCOR)

Rector of St Elisabeth’s Orthodox Church, Wallasey