Survivor Engagement and Support Policy

Divine Retreat Centre UK

Policy date: 01 September 2026

This policy explains how Divine Retreat Centre UK will listen to and support a person who says they have experienced abuse, exploitation, harassment, neglect or other harm connected with the Centre or its activities. It applies in residential retreat settings and outreach work, including Ramsgate, Pantasaph and Slough. It sets out a practical, compassionate response while keeping safeguarding referrals, investigations and statutory decisions with the bodies legally responsible for them.

Document control

Policy owner	Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
Approval	Trustees of Divine Retreat Centre UK (approval date to be recorded)
Effective date	01 September 2026, subject to trustee approval
Review	At least annually, by 01 September 2027, and sooner after a serious incident or change in law or guidance
Related procedures	Safeguarding Children and Adults; Allegations Against Workers; Complaints; Whistleblowing; Data Protection and Retention; Health and Safety; Retreat and Outreach Risk Assessments

1. Purpose

The Centre recognises that people may disclose harm during prayer, pastoral conversations, retreats, accommodation, transport, events or outreach. The purpose of this policy is to give survivors a safe, respectful route to be heard, offer meaningful choices and support, reduce the risk of further harm, and ensure concerns are referred and recorded responsibly.

The Centre will not require a survivor to prove what happened before being treated with respect or offered support. This policy does not replace the Centre's safeguarding procedures, statutory reporting duties, police or local authority processes, specialist clinical advice, or legal advice. Where another procedure or law requires action, it takes precedence.

2. Principles

Believe and listen without blame: receive what is said calmly, respectfully and without challenge, interrogation or assumptions.

Choice and control: explain options, ask what would help, agree next steps with the survivor wherever lawful and safe, and avoid unnecessary retelling.

Safety and prevention: assess immediate risks, take proportionate steps to prevent contact or further harm, and refer concerns promptly.

Do no further harm: avoid pressure, retaliation, spiritual coercion, victim-blaming, or promises the Centre cannot keep.

Privacy with clear limits: share information only when needed, with appropriate people, and explain in advance where possible that absolute confidentiality cannot be promised.

Fairness and inclusion: make reasonable adjustments and respond accessibly, including for disability, language, culture, age, sex, sexuality, faith, trauma responses and communication needs.

Accountability: the survivor's support and the organisation's safeguarding response are related but distinct. The Centre will not investigate criminal allegations itself.

Faith-sensitive care: prayer, sacramental ministry or contact with clergy is offered only if wanted. Faith must never be used to discourage reporting, reconciliation, silence or continued contact with a person alleged to have caused harm.

3. Scope

This policy covers current and historic harm where there is a connection to the Centre, including alleged conduct by clergy, religious, employees, volunteers, retreat leaders, contractors, visitors or other participants. It applies to trustees, staff, volunteers and anyone acting for the Centre, including work at Ramsgate, Pantasaph and Slough outreach, off-site events, transport, online contact and residential activities.

It applies to adults and children. A child is anyone under 18. Adult safeguarding referrals should use the relevant local authority pathway; in England and Wales, the Care Act 2014 section 42 criteria guide the local authority's statutory enquiry duty. The Centre should refer concerns even where it is uncertain whether the legal threshold is met.

The policy is not a substitute for the separate policies needed to prevent abuse, manage allegations against workers, protect children and adults at risk, or govern complaints and data handling.

4. Definitions

Survivor: A person who says they have experienced harm or abuse. The person may prefer another term; use the wording they choose.

Harm or abuse: Any actual, alleged or suspected physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, financial or discriminatory abuse; exploitation, harassment, coercive or controlling behaviour, neglect, bullying, or inappropriate use of power or trust.

Survivor-led response: A response that centres the survivor's stated needs, choices, pace and preferred communication, while explaining and acting on safety and legal duties. It does not give the survivor control over statutory decisions.

Safeguarding concern: Information suggesting that a child or adult may be at risk of abuse or neglect, or that a worker or representative may have harmed someone or breached safeguarding boundaries.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): The named person appointed by trustees to coordinate safeguarding, referrals, records and support arrangements. A deputy must be available when the DSL is absent or implicated.

5. Survivor-led response

The first person receiving a disclosure should be kind, steady and practical. They should:

- Listen in a private, safe setting where possible. Let the person speak in their own words and at their own pace; do not press for detail or ask leading questions.
- Thank them for telling you. Say clearly that the harm is not their fault and that the Centre will take the concern seriously.
- Ask what name, pronouns and form of contact they prefer, whether it is safe to contact them, and whether they want a support person or interpreter. Check accessibility needs.
- Explain the limits of confidentiality before sharing information. Do not promise secrecy, a particular outcome, an investigation result or that they will never need to repeat information.
- Ask about immediate safety and urgent needs, including medical care, a safe place to stay, contact with the person named, and risk to a child or another person.
- Offer the survivor choices about support, communication and practical arrangements. Record their preferences and any choice to decline an offer, without treating that as a reason to close safeguarding action.
- Explain who will be told, what may happen next and when they can expect an update. Agree a safe method and time to follow up.
- Pass the concern to the DSL or deputy promptly. If either may be implicated, report directly to the independent trustee safeguarding lead or relevant external authority.

Do not investigate, confront the person named, mediate, arrange a face-to-face meeting, or ask the survivor to participate in reconciliation. Do not conduct a pastoral or spiritual intervention that could affect evidence or put pressure on the survivor. Preserve relevant messages or records without circulating them.

6. Immediate safety and safeguarding referrals

6.1 Urgent danger or urgent healthcare

If anyone is in immediate danger, call 999. For urgent medical care use 999 or attend A&E as appropriate. For urgent mental health crisis support, use NHS 111 and follow the local crisis pathway; if there is immediate risk to life, call 999. Do not leave a person at immediate risk alone where it is safe to stay with them, and do not place staff or volunteers in danger.

6.2 Children

Where the survivor or another person at risk is under 18, contact children's social care or the local authority safeguarding children front door promptly, and the police where a crime or immediate danger is suspected. Follow local procedures for the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) when an allegation concerns someone who works with children. In Wales, use the relevant local authority children's services and Wales safeguarding arrangements; do not assume the English LADO route applies identically.

6.3 Adults at risk

Refer concerns to the adult safeguarding team in the local authority where the adult is located. Explain the concern, the adult's views and wishes, immediate risks and steps already taken. In England and Wales, the Care Act 2014 section 42 duty belongs to the local authority where its

criteria apply; the Centre must not decide that a referral is unnecessary simply because the person has capacity or declines support. Respect an adult's decisions as far as possible and seek advice where serious risk, coercion, impaired capacity or risk to others is present.

6.4 Allegations about a worker or representative

Immediately notify the DSL and follow the allegations procedure. The DSL must consider referral to children's social care/LADO, adult safeguarding, police, the Charity Commission and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) where applicable. Trustees retain oversight. If the DSL or trustee lead is implicated, bypass them and refer directly to the police, local authority, Charity Commission or other appropriate regulator.

The Centre must make any required referrals or reports promptly. A survivor's wishes are important but do not override a legal reporting duty or action needed to protect a child, the survivor or another person from serious harm. Where the person is an adult and no legal duty or serious-risk basis requires disclosure, seek their informed agreement before referral wherever practicable. If information is shared without agreement, record the reason and tell the survivor unless doing so would increase risk or prejudice an investigation.

6.5 Site and retreat arrangements

At residential retreats, the DSL or duty manager should consider rooming, access, transport, supervision and safe contact arrangements. At Ramsgate, Pantasaph and Slough outreach, the activity lead should identify the local authority and emergency routes before each programme and know who acts as safeguarding lead on site. Do not move a survivor to an unsafe location or require them to leave a retreat as a condition of support. Any change to a participant's attendance or access must be risk-assessed, proportionate and coordinated with safeguarding leads.

7. Disclosure and reporting

Any staff member, volunteer, trustee or minister who receives a disclosure or observes a concern must report it to the DSL or deputy as soon as possible on the same day, and immediately where risk is urgent. If the DSL is unavailable or implicated, escalate to the named trustee safeguarding lead or an external agency. Reporting within the Centre does not replace a referral to statutory services.

A survivor may report directly to the police, local authority, a regulator or an independent support service. Staff should facilitate this if requested. The Centre will not make a survivor's access to pastoral support conditional on making a police report. The survivor may choose not to make a report themselves; the Centre still assesses its own reporting and safeguarding obligations.

For a disclosure about conduct outside Centre activities, listen and offer support. Refer if a child or adult may be at risk, if a person connected with the Centre may pose a risk, or if another legal or safeguarding duty applies. Seek DSL advice promptly.

8. Support options

The DSL, with the survivor's agreement where possible, should offer a named contact and ask which of the following would be helpful. Support is based on need and risk, subject to reasonable availability; the Centre must not imply that it provides specialist treatment.

- Pastoral contact from a person chosen by the survivor, with an option for a non-clergy contact. Prayer, confession, spiritual direction or sacramental ministry only on request.
- Referral or help contacting a GP, NHS service, sexual assault referral centre (SARC), local authority service, specialist trauma or abuse service, or an independent advocacy service.
- Practical arrangements: safe accommodation or room changes, transport, a support person at meetings, an interpreter, accessibility adjustments, remote contact, or temporary separation from the person named.
- Information about reporting choices, complaints routes, independent advice and relevant support organisations. Do not assume a police report is required to access these services.
- Regular check-ins at a pace chosen with the survivor, with an agreed point of contact if their needs or safety change.

The Centre should not offer counselling, clinical assessment, legal advice or mediation unless provided by a suitably qualified and independent professional under a separate arrangement. The person named in the concern must not provide the survivor's support.

9. Privacy and data protection

Safeguarding information is highly sensitive and may include health, religious belief, sexual-life or criminal-offence data. The Centre will process it only for clear safeguarding and support purposes, under an appropriate UK GDPR lawful basis and, where required, a separate special-category or criminal-offence condition under the Data Protection Act 2018. The data protection lead must confirm and document the applicable basis and any required policy document.

- Explain, in accessible terms, what will be recorded, why it is needed, who may receive it, and the limits of confidentiality.
- Collect only information relevant to safety, support, referral and accountability. Do not circulate identifiable details in general email, group chat or routine retreat records.
- Share on a need-to-know basis with the survivor's agreement where possible. Share without consent only where there is a lawful basis and it is necessary and proportionate, such as to protect a child or person from serious harm, meet a legal duty, or support a lawful police/local authority process.
- Use secure approved systems, access controls and encryption where available. Do not store case notes on personal devices or keep informal duplicate files.
- Keep information separate from routine pastoral, retreat booking or fundraising records. Do not use survivor information for publicity, fundraising, testimony or training without separate, freely given, specific consent and a risk assessment.

The survivor may have data protection rights, subject to legal limits. Requests should be passed to the data protection lead. Never promise that records can be deleted where retention, safeguarding or legal duties require preservation.

10. Records and retention

The person receiving a concern must make a factual, dated record as soon as practicable and send it securely to the DSL. Record:

- the date, time, place, people present and how the concern came to the Centre;

the survivor's words as accurately as possible, distinguishing direct quotation from the recorder's observations or interpretation;

immediate safety concerns, the survivor's wishes, communication and accessibility preferences, and any steps taken;

advice sought, referrals and reports made, who received them and when, decisions and reasons, and the agreed follow-up plan.

Do not investigate by taking repeated statements or include speculation, diagnoses or judgemental language. Correct errors through a dated addition; do not silently overwrite the original. The DSL maintains a restricted safeguarding case record and a separate, minimal log of organisational actions. Retain records under the Centre's approved retention schedule and legal holds, with secure disposal when no longer required. The data protection lead must ensure the schedule specifies retention periods for safeguarding records.

11. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Trustees	Approve and resource this policy; oversee safeguarding risks and compliance; ensure an unconflicted escalation route; consider Charity Commission serious incident reporting and other regulatory duties.
DSL and deputy	Coordinate the response, risk assessment, referrals, support options, case records, follow-up and learning; advise staff; escalate conflicts of interest.
Retreat and outreach leads	Know local emergency and referral pathways; make activities safe; report concerns promptly; implement agreed safety arrangements at Ramsgate, Pantasaph and Slough.
All workers and volunteers	Listen, explain confidentiality limits, act on immediate danger, record and report concerns promptly, maintain boundaries and complete required training.
Data protection lead	Advise on lawful bases, special-category conditions, information sharing, security, retention and data rights; support breach response.
Independent trustee safeguarding lead	Receive concerns involving the DSL or senior leadership and ensure an impartial referral and oversight route.

12. Complaints and review

A survivor may complain about the Centre's response, support, delay, confidentiality, conduct or a worker's behaviour without losing access to support. The complaint may be made to the DSL, the independent trustee safeguarding lead or through the Centre's published complaints procedure. If the complaint concerns the DSL, chief executive or trustee lead, it must be handled by an unconflicted trustee or referred to an appropriate external body.

A complaint is not a substitute for safeguarding or criminal reporting. The Centre must not conduct an internal complaint process in a way that compromises a police or local authority investigation. It should acknowledge the complaint, explain the process and timescale, provide an impartial reviewer, consider reasonable adjustments, give a written outcome and explain any

further internal or external routes. No retaliation or disadvantage is permitted for raising a concern in good faith.

The DSL reports anonymised themes and learning to trustees at least annually. Trustees review this policy at least every year and after a serious incident, near miss, change in statutory guidance or material change in residential/outreach activity. Review should include feedback from survivors where safe and voluntary.

13. Implementation checklist

☐ Trustees approve this policy, name the DSL, deputy and independent trustee safeguarding lead, and publish current contact details.

☐ Confirm each site and outreach activity has an up-to-date contact sheet for emergency services, children's social care, LADO where applicable, and adult safeguarding.

☐ Align this policy with child and adult safeguarding, allegations, complaints, whistleblowing, data protection, record retention and risk assessment procedures.

☐ Brief all clergy, staff, volunteers, contractors and retreat/outreach leaders; provide role-appropriate safeguarding and trauma-aware response training.

☐ Establish a secure safeguarding record system, access controls, lawful basis and special-category condition, retention schedule and breach escalation route.

☐ Set clear referral, on-call and deputy arrangements for evenings, weekends and residential retreats.

☐ Provide survivors with accessible information on how to raise a concern, confidentiality limits, support choices and independent routes.

☐ Review implementation and anonymised learning at least annually and record trustee oversight.

14. Key UK guidance and sources

This policy is designed for activities in England and Wales. Local safeguarding procedures and the law of the relevant UK nation must be checked for each activity. The following official sources informed the framework; they do not replace case-specific advice or local referral procedures:

- Charity Commission, Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees — https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-and-protecting-people-for-charities-and-trustees
- Charity Commission, Guidance on reporting safeguarding concerns in a charity — https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-reporting-safeguarding-concerns-in-a-charity
- Care Act 2014, section 42 (England and Wales) — https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/section/42
- Department of Health and Social Care, Care and support statutory guidance, Chapter 14 — https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance
- ICO, Special category data — https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/lawful-basis/a-guide-to-lawful-basis/special-category-data/

Department for Education, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 — https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

Important notice

This policy is an organisational framework, not legal advice or a substitute for statutory guidance. It does not determine whether an allegation is substantiated, replace statutory reporting, or replace advice from police, local authorities, specialist safeguarding professionals, the Charity Commission, the ICO or qualified legal advisers. If there is immediate danger, call 999.