

DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY OF ST VINCENT DE PAUL

FIRST SCOTTISH REDRESS REPORT

JANUARY 2023

The Congregation of the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul was founded in the 17th century to serve all people in need *“with compassion, gentleness, cordiality, respect and devotion.”* CONSTITUTION 10b. In recent years we have heard that many who were in our care as children, did not experience this, but rather suffered and are still suffering today. We acknowledge this, have given our heartfelt and sincere apology for this and today strive to support survivors of abuse in any way we can.

Since the Redress Scheme began, we have responded to one hundred and fourteen requests for information, regarding dates of admission and length of stay in our establishments in Scotland. These requests have come from a variety of sources: Wellbeing Scotland, Birthlink, Solicitors and Individuals. Subsequently, we have also verified these requests for the Redress Team and whether or not an individual has received any previous payment.

When responding to these requests, we have ensured that the vast majority have been dealt with, within twenty-four hours of receipt. This is out of respect for the individual persons, as we are aware that our verification of information is the very first step in a long process.

The swiftness of our response has been possible, as we have a dedicated Safeguarding Office with two members of staff: a safeguarding administrator and a safeguarding representative. The records for Smyllum are digitalised and for other establishments, the Archivist is at hand to answer any queries.

In addition to our public apology to all of those affected by abuse at any establishment under our control, wherever it has been made known to us that an individual survivor would welcome an individual apology from us directly, that apology has been willingly given, and on each occasion Sister Ellen Flynn, Provincial has written to the survivor in question. In each of the apologies, Sr. Ellen has offered a face to face meeting, if it would help with the healing process for the survivors, however to date this has not been sought.

Many years ago, a new Memorial Stone was erected in St Mary's Cemetery, Lanark as a replacement of a very old one for children who died in Smyllum and are buried there. We maintain this Memorial and in recent years have installed three benches around this memorial inscribed to those who died. This is in respect of those visiting it, as we are very aware that many are ageing and now find it difficult to stand for a prolonged period of time.

An annual Service of Remembrance is held at the Memorial, organised by the Chairperson of INCAS and attended by approximately thirty survivors, family members and several Daughters of Charity. We now invite those attending this Service to the local Parish Hall for refreshments to give everyone an opportunity of sitting down and having a chat. Lady Rae, Chair of the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency attended the Memorial Service in August 2022 and spend much time in conversation with survivors whilst having refreshments. Representatives from the Redress Team also attended which was greatly appreciated by all. Thus this gathering enables survivors not only to remember those who have died, but gives them an opportunity to meet together in comfortable surroundings, as well as the space to converse with the Sisters if they so wish. We hope that this, for some, may lead to reconciliation and healing.

An important aspect regarding this memorial Service, is that it is always open to, and attended by survivors from across Scotland and not reserved to those who had been in care in Smyllum. As Daughters of Charity, we strive to respond to anyone who has suffered abuse and open to exploring new ways of offering pastoral, emotional or practical support.

A small number of survivors appreciate ongoing emotional and practical help, through phone calls, visits and email. Wherever it has been made known to us that such emotional, psychological or practical support would be welcome, we have provided that, and have borne any cost associated with doing so. To date, at the recipient's request, such support has been provided on a confidential basis. Such support has been provided during the year which this Report relates to, and we would earnestly invite any further survivors who would welcome such support to make contact with us.

While this year no opportunity has presented itself to advise or assist any survivor seeking to trace or be reunited with family members, and so no specific action of that sort has been taken, our Archivist is willing and able to assist with such enquiries should they be received,

and we would welcome an approach from any individual who considers that they might benefit from that support.

The Daughters of Charity are actively engaged in the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency, as well as the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency for England & Wales.

We have a Safeguarding Policy which is updated as and when necessary as well as reviewed annually by the Trustees in conjunction with the Safeguarding Team, comprising of the safeguarding Representative, Sr Eileen Glancy and the Safeguarding Administrator, Siobhan Fairclough. One of the Trustees (the Chair, Sr. Ellen Flynn) is the named safeguarding lead and liaises with the Safeguarding Team on a regular basis.

Each local community of the Daughters of Charity has a copy of this Policy and each active sister is obliged to read and understand it. In Scotland, the sisters also have knowledge and understanding of 'In God's Image' (version 2) – the Instruction on Safeguarding for Implementation in all Catholic Organisations in Scotland.

Annual safeguarding training is undertaken by all active sisters, employees and volunteers to ensure that those involved in any type of service, approach and interact with all people safely, with respect, compassion, and understanding.

This Report hopefully indicate that the Daughters of Charity are today striving to respond *“with compassion, gentleness, cordiality, respect and devotion.”* to all survivors of Abuse and are committed to doing so in the years that lie ahead.

We are working tirelessly to ensure that we respond to survivors who wish to engage with us and are open to any suggestions as to how this can be facilitated into the future. We desire to listen with compassion, to respond with gentleness and cordiality and to respect the wishes of survivors.