

2. An explanation of the structure, role and responsibilities of the Conference of Religious, including when and why it was established and its membership. Role and responsibilities.

2.1. The Conference of Religious is an unincorporated association of religious superiors from the major Catholic religious orders in England and Wales. The Conference of Religious of England and Wales (Charity Commission Number: 277024). The purpose of CoR is twofold, namely: to support Leaders by encouraging collaboration between them on major issues facing religious today and promoting programmes for future formation, and to speak to civil society by addressing current societal issues from a Roman Catholic perspective, acting as a prophetic voice on behalf of religious.

2.2. Background: The Council of Major Religious Superiors comprising two councils, one for men and the other for women, who were leaders of religious institutes recognized by the Roman Catholic Church, was established at the request of Pope Pius XII who, in 1950, urged members of religious around the world to come together in national associations. In 1959 the Councils were recognized under the Canon Law of the Church, by decree of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes. The Second Vatican Council confirmed their existence through the Decree Perfectae Caritatis (1965) and the 1983 Code of Canon Law (CIC) encourages and promotes the establishment of the national associations for religious leaders (CIC §708-709).

2.3. In 1979 the first joint Annual General Meeting for England and Wales took place in Swanwick in Derbyshire, and the statutes for a joint conference which became known as the Conference of Religious of England and Wales were approved at the General Meeting on 22nd September 1981 (Exhibit PS/1). Since then, there has been one Conference.

2.4. Not all leaders of religious congregations or orders choose to join the CoR, which has no authority or power over its membership.