

# 1

## At a glance

### At a glance – safeguarding children in the Catholic Diocese of Cloyne

The work of safeguarding children in the Catholic Diocese of Cloyne is comprehensive, well structured, planned, ongoing and facilitated by:

- 1. Approved policies:** our policy- *Safeguarding Children in the Diocese of Cloyne* and its procedures are approved by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church.
- 2. A solid structure to implement the policies** – with the main responsibility on the Bishop, Cloyne Diocesan Safeguarding Committee, Diocesan Garda Vetting Signatory, Designated Liaison Person(s), Parish Priests, Parish Safeguarding Representatives, trained Church personnel, staff and volunteers and Parish Safeguarding Committees.
- 3. Clear procedures for recognising, responding to and reporting** concerns - including: Definitions, signs and symptoms to facilitate recognising abuse. Comprehensive guidance about how to respond to someone who raises an allegation or concern– including a list of Do' & Don'ts.
- 4. Prevention strategies** – Strict and mandatory recruitment and selection procedures, including Code of behaviour for Church personnel, staff and volunteers, code of behaviour for children, and a range of other preventative mechanisms, including sacristy registers which must be signed.
- 5. Training and education facilitated by qualified trainers**, which is ongoing and is provided for each role under the guidance of the Diocesan Training Coordinator and under the direction of the NBSCCI.
- 6. Communication mechanisms** including written and electronic communication, parish information meetings, consultative meetings, annual newsletters and Biennial Safeguarding Children Conferences and a website specifically dedicated to safeguarding children – [www.safeguardingchildrenclayne.ie](http://www.safeguardingchildrenclayne.ie)
- 7. Dedicated notice boards** in each church and sacristy containing the diocesan safeguarding children policy statement and contact details (in various languages) for those who wish to raise a safeguarding children concern or allegation and contact details of agencies that provide help and support.
- 8. Implementation and monitoring strategies** which include- annual plans of action, deadlines, annual parish audits, Certificates of Full Compliance and published Annual Reports.

- 9. Provision of services by CDSCC to priests and parishes** including advice, resources, training, garda vetting and various documents – Empowering Children to Speak out, Sample Parish Policy, Code of behaviour for Church personnel, staff and volunteers – basics for working with children.
- 10. A dedicated Diocesan Safeguarding Children Office** – specifically for the administrative and communication work associated with safeguarding children in the diocese.
- 11. Updating policies and implementation strategies** to comply with newly evolving methodologies and with changes in government legislation and with revised directives from the National Board.
- 12. A clear vision** – 100% implementation of 100% procedures and guidelines in 100% of parishes.

## 2

**The Reporting Procedures outlined below showing different reporting options for a member of the Church or anyone else who wishes to report a concern/allegation about a child or regarding anyone else. These procedures are listed in diocesan policy *Safeguarding Children in the Diocese of Cloyne*:**

### **2.3 Reporting procedures and key principles**

#### **Key Principles**

The safety of the child is always paramount.

Investigation is a task for the professional Safeguarding Children agencies, following a referral to them of the concerns about the child. It is important that everyone in the organisation is aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether abuse has occurred.

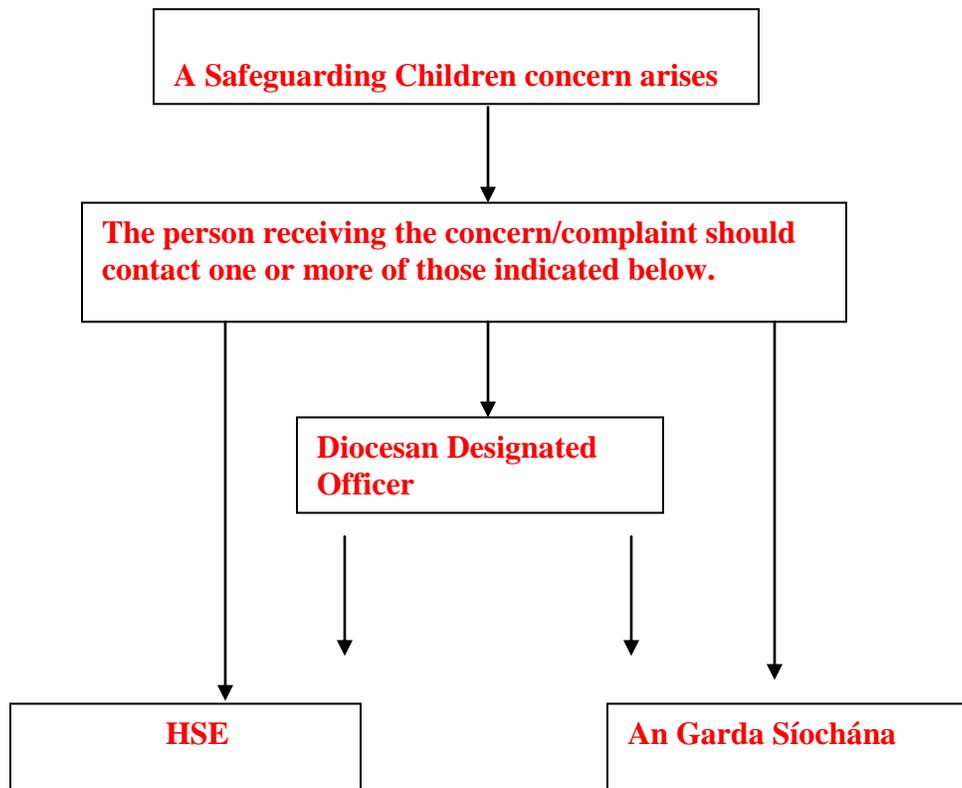
It is diocesan policy to report all concerns of a child protection nature to the civil authorities. There are structures in place to enable reporting within the church context. (See reporting diagram).

It is important to maintain confidentiality –you only reveal the details to those to whom you are making the report. Please refer to Confidentiality Statement (Section 2.8).

## Reporting Procedures

These procedures set out the action that must be taken by a Church staff/volunteer if any concern, allegation, suspicion or disclosure, relating to safeguarding children is made.

The flow chart outlines the overall reporting picture. More detailed guidance on reporting is provided in Example A and Example B.



Procedures to follow for all Church staff and volunteers, and anyone else wishing to raise a concern, in which a member of Church staff or volunteer is the person against whom the allegation is being made.

### Reporting Procedures -Example A

All Church staff and volunteers who wish to raise a concern, in which any member of Church staff or volunteer is the person against whom the allegation is being made, will normally:

**1. Report the concern to the  
Diocesan Designated Officer**

**2 The Designated Officer will**

**(a) Pass on the information, as appropriate to the  
Gardai, HSE, and s/he will:**

**(b) Notify, as appropriate the  
Bishop and Congregational Leader**

**(c) Confirm in writing to the referrer of the information that the concern has been passed  
to the civil authorities, and if not why not**

**OR**

All Church staff and volunteers and anyone else who wishes to raise a concern, in which any member of Church staff or volunteer is the person against whom the allegation is being made, may report the matter, as appropriate to the Gardai, HSE.

**\*Please refer also to the Reporting Procedures - Example B outlined below.**

### **Reporting Procedures –Example B**

All Church staff and volunteers, and anyone else who wishes to raise a concern, in which a member of Church staff or volunteer is not the person against whom the allegation is being made, will normally:

**Report the matter, as appropriate to the Gardai, HSE.**

## **2.4 Reporting procedures: information for people who wish to raise a child safeguarding concern**

There are a number of ways that you might become aware of actual or likely occurrence of abuse.

- You might be or have experienced it yourself
- Someone might tell you
- You might see physical injuries that have no satisfactory explanation
- A child's behaviour may indicate that s/he might be being abused
- Something about the behaviour of an adult in the Church, perhaps in the way they relate to a child, makes you feel uncomfortable in some way
- You might observe abuse

### **To whom should I talk?**

If you wish to talk to someone about a concern or suspicion of abuse it is important to do so as soon as possible. You will be listened to and what you say will be taken seriously.

If you have suffered abuse in the past, again, please tell someone about the abuse. You will be listened to and what you have to say will be taken seriously.

Understandably, many people find it difficult to tell anyone about the abuse they have suffered. It may be many years after the event before a disclosure is made, perhaps when the victim is an adult. Even then, the Church will act.

If you want to raise a concern or voice your suspicions, or make an allegation or disclosure, you can choose who to talk to. You may choose to contact the HSE or local Garda Síochána.

There are some people in the Church who have special safeguarding jobs; they are called Local or Parish Safeguarding Representatives (at least one in every parish) and Designated Officers (at least one in every diocese and religious congregation). Details of your Diocesan/ Congregational Safeguarding Team can be found at the back of your local Church or via the relevant Diocesan or Congregation website. Alternatively, please contact the National Office for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church, and we will be able to give you the contact details.

Alternatively, you may prefer to tell someone in the Church that you already know, such as a priest or a youth leader. They will refer you to sources of support and also let the Designated Officer know that they need to address a child protection matter.

### **What happens next?**

The Designated Officer will contact you to listen further to what you have to say. They will also explain to you what will happen next.

It will be necessary to give details of the matter you are raising, to certain other people externally, including the HSE and An Garda Síochána for their investigation. Once the civil authorities have looked into your concerns, there will be an internal Church Inquiry, the aim of which is to ensure the safety of other children.

All allegations or disclosures will be addressed sensitively, and in a timely manner.

You will also be offered a Support Person to help and advise you of the process as any inquiry progresses.

If you are a child or you are raising a concern about a child, the Designated Officer will not interview a child, as he/she will not be trained to do so.

The Designated Officer will talk with the HSE / An Garda Síochána about what to do next. In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at an immediate and serious risk of harm, the Designated Officer will make an immediate referral to the / An Garda Síochána. You can also contact the Gardai and HSE if you are concerned about a child.

If your concern is about the behaviour or actions of an adult in the Church, then that person will be informed. He or she will be allowed to respond, unless to do so would put the child and others at greater risk. The person may also be asked to stand aside from his or her role while the matter is being investigated.

If the concern relates to abuse that has occurred to you in the past, following the civil authority investigation, the Designated Officer will ask you to provide a description of what happened, including the background and circumstances. You will be given plenty of time to do this.

The Designated Officer is not involved with the statutory investigation, but will keep in contact with the HSE / An Garda Síochána. The Designated Officer will normally be informed when the statutory investigation has concluded. The Church inquiry process will then continue.

What happens next may vary depending on whether the concern raised is about a priest or religious, or a lay employee or volunteer. This is because each is subject to their own internal procedures.

As the process unfolds, you will be regularly informed about what is happening.

For more details regarding the process, please refer to the – *Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland*. You can obtain this by contacting the National Office or visiting [www.safeguarding.ie](http://www.safeguarding.ie)

## **2.5 Responding to concerns, suspicions, allegations and disclosures of abuse involving Church staff and volunteers**

The Catholic Church is committed to promoting the safety, welfare and protection of children and takes all concerns, allegations, suspicions and disclosures of abuse very seriously.

This procedure sets out the action that must be taken if any concern, allegation, suspicion or disclosure is made, whether current or historical, that indicates a member of the Church staff (current or former) has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- committed a criminal offence against a child or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

**Applies to:** All Church staff and volunteers.

### **2.5.1 Initial contact**

**Procedure:** Action to take when you receive a concern, suspicion, disclosure or allegation of abuse

Remember! It is not your role to investigate.

(i) If you receive a concern, suspicion, disclosure or allegation of abuse, you must act immediately and refer the matter to your Designated Officer as soon as possible; the Designated Officer will refer the complaint to the HSE / An Garda Síochána.

(ii) Whenever possible and practical, take notes during the conversation. Always ask permission to do this and explain the importance of recording all information. Where it is not appropriate to make notes at the time, make a written record as soon as possible afterwards and in any case before the end of the day.

(iii) Record the time, date, location (or if the matter has been communicated by letter or telephone), and persons present. The record should be signed and dated by the author. The record would also normally include:

- a. accurate identifying information as far as it is known. This should include the name and address of the person who has raised a concern (as well as their date of birth, and parents'/carers'/ names and addresses where the person who has raised a concern/allegation is a child)
- b. the name of the individual against whom the concern/allegation is being raised and any other identifying information
- c. as much information as possible about the circumstances that led to the concern/allegation being raised, why is the person worried about the welfare and safety of the child or children
- d. dates when the concern arose, or when the incident(s) occurred
- e. circumstances in which the concern arose, or the incident(s) occurred
- f. any explanation offered to account for the risk, injury or concern
- g. the child's own statement using the words they used to describe the events or incident(s), if possible.

Do not make assumptions about the intended meaning of words used

- h. details of any action already taken about the incident/concern/allegation
- i. any views expressed by the child's parent(s) or guardian(s) about the matter.

(iv) Do not be selective. Include detail which to you may seem irrelevant. It may prove invaluable at a later stage in an investigation.

(v). Use the suggested form for this purpose. This initial recording will form the first entry in a file of information about the case which will be retained by the relevant Designated Officer. (See Appendices and also pp 89-92 of the *Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland*.)

(vi) All original records, including rough notes, must be passed immediately to the relevant Designated Officer. Any copies of records retained must be kept secure and confidential.

(vii) Not all persons raising a concern will wish to go through the process described below. Nonetheless, information about the existence of a potential allegation **must** always be communicated to the relevant Designated Officer.

(viii) In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, an immediate report should be made to the HSE as well as to the relevant Designated Officer. Where the appropriate HSE staff are not available, An Garda Síochána should be contacted to ensure that **under no circumstances a child is left in a dangerous situation pending HSE intervention**.

Consideration should, in all cases, also be given to whether an immediate referral is necessary in order to preserve, and safeguard against the possibility of any loss, deterioration or destruction of potential evidence or forensic evidence.

(ix). Explain to the child/person raising the concern what will happen next. Indicate who will be made aware of the information given by them. Leave the contact details of the Designated Officer in case the referrer needs to ask questions later.

(x) **Confidentiality:** It is important not to discuss the incident/concern with anyone other than those detailed in these procedures.

## **2.5.2 Guidance on how to respond to people making an allegation**

It is often very difficult for people to talk about abuse so it is important to make sure that you are patient, listen carefully and actively, and create a safe environment in which they feel able to tell you as much as they can remember. This will help those people whose responsibility it is to investigate the incident(s) do so as thoroughly as possible.

### **(i) People may tell you about:**

- abuse that's happened to them now – current
- abuse that happened to them some time ago – historical
- something they've been told by someone else and that they strongly believe is true
- seeing signs of abuse, such as physical injuries on a child
- something that they have witnessed, such as the behaviour of an adult to a child that made them feel uncomfortable.

### **(ii) Where information is given in person, consider the following.**

- Listen carefully to that person, but do not ask intrusive or leading questions
- Stay calm, take what the person raising the concern says seriously, and reassure them
- Allow the person to continue at his/her own pace

- Check with the person to make sure that you have understood what they actually said. Do not suggest words, but use theirs
- Make no promises that cannot be kept, particularly in relation to secrecy, but listen carefully to what is being sought
- Explain these procedures and the referral procedures to the person
- Offer to accompany the person to the Support Person
- Do not make any comments about the respondent, make assumptions or speculate
- Be aware that a person's ability to recount his or her concern or allegation will depend on age, culture, nationality and upon any disability which may affect use of language and range of vocabulary
- Adopt a listening style which is compassionate, calm and reassuring. If the information given to you shocks, disgusts or distresses you, do not allow these feelings to show. If you do, you may inadvertently dissuade the person from giving any further information
- Avoid statements about your belief or otherwise, of the information given
- Do not question beyond checking what has been said. It is the job of the Health and Social Services / An Garda Síochána to investigate. There must be no probing for detail beyond that which has been freely given

Listening does not mean telling a person to stop when they are freely recalling events, because some facts are only ever told once, the information given must be fully and accurately recorded.

However, it is better that such detail is given directly to a professional from one of the Health and Social Services / An Garda Síochána, to allow proper procedures to be observed and to avoid the distress of having to repeat the account more than once.

*A priest must be clear about the status of such a conversation. Make sure there is no misunderstanding about whether the Seal of Confession applies.*

### **2.5.3 Responding to a child making an allegation of abuse**

Children will occasionally tell an adult they are being abused if they feel they can trust this person. This happens for many reasons but the important thing to remember is if they do tell you they are doing so in the hope that you will act to stop it happening, even if they ask you not to do anything with the information.

**If a child begins to tell you about abuse it is important that you**

**Do:**

- stay calm
- listen carefully and take them seriously
- ask questions for clarification only if you are unclear what the child is saying
- allow the child to continue at his/ her own pace
- reassure the child that, in disclosing the abuse, they have done the right thing
- tell them they are not to blame for the abuse

- let them know you will do what you can to help
- report the child's disclosure to your manager or the designated person immediately (or in the absence of the designated, or if the disclosure in any way involves the designated person, then seek advice from the National Safeguarding Board Support Team).

As soon as possible, write down everything that you were told by the child, using their own words to describe the abuse. Sign and date this record and pass it onto the designated person.

**Do not:**

- dismiss the concerns
- panic
- probe for more information/ ask other questions
- promise not to tell anyone or say you'll keep it a secret
- make negative comments about the accused person
- make assumptions or speculate
- disclose details of the allegation to anyone else – even if the allegations involve them in any way.

Find an opportunity to explain that it is likely that this information will need to be shared with others and at the end of the discussion tell them what you plan to do next and with whom this information will be shared.

**Remember:** It is important that everyone in the organisation is aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is **not** responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional safeguarding children agencies following a referral to them of the concerns about the child.

### **2.5.4 Listening to a person who admits abusing a child**

It is necessary to tell a person who admits an offence against a child or young person that such information cannot be kept confidential. If such an admission is made to you, even where the admission relates to something which happened a long time ago, you must refer the matter to the Designated Officer as soon as possible who will follow the procedures for referral to the HSE / An Garda Síochána.

### **2.5.5 Anonymous allegations or concerns**

Anonymous complaints are to be treated carefully. Anxiety and fear may persuade some people not to reveal their identity immediately. It is sometimes difficult to act on information under these procedures unless at some point the name of the person raising the concern/making an allegation becomes known. The person raising the concern should be informed that anonymity might restrict the ability of professionals to access information or to intervene to protect a child. As much openness as possible should be encouraged.

### **3 Making Children aware of their right to be safe**

#### **Preventing harm to children**

This work continued to be promoted via parish information meetings. At these meetings, CDSCC members make a power point presentation and attendees participate in various activities based on hypothetical situations.

Dates for these meetings are agreed with the parish priest and guidance provided regarding who should be invited. (See Appendix 5)

#### **Empowering children to speak out**

*CDSCC places particular emphasis on advising children of their right to be safe and empowering them to speak. A one page document Empowering Children to Speak Out was issued to parishes by CDSCC in October 2011, and provides guidance on what to say to children e.g.*

- *They have the right to be safe*
- *They can raise concerns with specific individuals within the parish Church organization. (See Appendix 4 for Empowering Children to Speak Out document*

The *Empowering Children to Speak Out* document, is also incorporated into *The Code of behavior for Church personnel, staff and volunteers – basics for working with children* and is on the dedicated website [www.safeguardingchildrencloyne.ie](http://www.safeguardingchildrencloyne.ie) under Frequently asked Questions section. All Church personnel, staff and volunteers must read and sign the *Code of behavior for Church personnel, staff and volunteers – basics for working with children*.

#### **Empowering children to speak out leaflet**

CDSCC published a specific information leaflet (2011) for children which must be explained to them by groups leaders etc. This leaflet states:

*At parish level, children should be made aware that:*

- *they have the right to be safe*
- *they can raise concerns with specific individuals within the parish church organisation.*

- *if they feel uncomfortable about raising concerns with the named individual(s) within the Church organisation, they should tell someone they can trust and keep telling them until they are listened to.*
- *they can contact the Diocesan Designated Officer, Gardaí, H.S.E. and that these contact details are on display*
- *there are contact details for other agencies that they can contact e.g. child safeguarding and children's help-lines*
- *the codes of behaviour are on display*

*Consideration should be given to how disabled children can communicate their complaints especially if they have verbal communication difficulties.*

*Remember how vulnerable disabled children are to abuse.*

*This leaflet is available in the Frequently Asked Section of the dedicated website [www.safeguardingchildrencloyne.ie](http://www.safeguardingchildrencloyne.ie) and in the Code of behaviour for Church personnel staff and volunteers – basics for working with children.*

*Empowering children to speak out is specifically promoted in the power point presentations for parish information meetings.*

*Parishes are required to verify via the annual that children have been advised regarding the above and this verification is not given, Certificates of Full Compliance will not be issued.*