



diocese
of limerick
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Diocese of Limerick

Safeguarding Children

Standard 3

Care and Support of the Complainant

This document is updated on a regular basis

Care and Support for the Complainant (Standard 3)

Roles for Safeguarding Personnel - (Appendix 1).

Responsibilities of Safeguarding Personnel in Relation to Standard 3 are:

The Bishop

- Will ensure that a support person is offered, or that procedures are in place to share the services of a support person if required;
- That practice and policy on the care of the complainant is compliant with statutory and canonical law;
- That complainants are met and facilitated to disclose abuse in an environment that meets their individual needs;
- That complainants are heard in a spirit of acceptance and trust;
- That appropriate assistance is offered to complainants and, as required, to their families;
- That counselling, support and information is given to children and adults who wish to make a complaint of abuse;
- That pastoral care is given to those who have been abused by Church personnel, where this is deemed helpful by the complainant.

Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

- Attending the initial meeting with the complainant, if the complainant is agreeable to the meeting;
- Ensuring that all appropriate internal and external inquiries are instigated;
- Ensuring that relevant information regarding contact with the complainant is recorded and stored appropriately in the case file;
- Keeping the Bishop updated regarding the health and well-being of the complainant;
- Liaising with the support person to ensure that support, advice and pastoral care is offered to the complainant. If relevant safeguarding concerns are raised with the support person by the complainant, the DLP must ensure that these are passed on to the civil authorities and to the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI).

Support Person

- Attending the initial meeting of the complainant with the DLP (if agreed in advance with the complainant) in order to support the complainant; keeping them informed of the progress of their case; and helping them to identify and access support;
- Ensuring that support is provided to complainants and their families, as requested and mutually agreed upon;
- Ensuring the complainant is offered pastoral care that meets their individual needs;
- Offering to arrange a pastoral meeting with the Bishop at an appropriate time during the process, if the complainant wishes;
- Recording any dates of meetings and/or contact they have with the complainant, and passing on relevant information to the DLP, as appropriate. They will not be responsible for managing the file but will pass on written records to the DLP, as appropriate, during regular meetings with them.

Advisory Panel

- Providing advice to the Bishop, if required, with regard to the credibility of the complaint and the appropriateness of providing support to a complainant or their family;
- Creating a written record of its recommendation, and noting the matters upon which it has been asked to advise and the documents it has considered. These records should be passed to the DLP who will store them in the third-party information section of the case file.

NBSCCCI

- Will be advised of safeguarding suspicions, concerns or allegations by the DLP, and retain records of this information;
- Offer advice and support to the people in their various roles, and in relation to care and support for the complainant.

Pastoral Response to Complainants

Awareness of the impact of Abuse on a Complainant

People who have been abused want to be heard and to have their very real pain acknowledged.

Disclosing abuse takes enormous courage and calls for a high level of trust. Child abuse by its very nature can damage trust; it is therefore imperative that when a complainant is ready to tell their story, the listener responds with great sensitivity and compassion.

There will be a complex mix of feelings and emotions where abuse has been at the hands of someone the complainant has trusted, and even more so if the respondent holds a position of spiritual or moral responsibility. This may then include the challenging process of re-establishing relations with a faith community and with God.

Initial Contact

Once an allegation has been received by the DLP, he/she will:

- Make contact with the complainant to arrange a meeting (unless this is against the wishes of the complainant):
- Offer a support person and, with the knowledge and agreement of the complainant, allow the support person to attend the initial meeting or to meet with the complainant immediately thereafter
- Offer the details of the Towards Healing counselling service, or other services as appropriate.
- Inform the complainant that the allegation would be referred to Statutory authorities for advice / or referral.
- Keep the complainant updated on all relevant aspects of the process
- Appropriate assistance is offered to complainants and, as required, to their families
- Counselling, support and information is given to children and adults who wish to make a complaint of abuse

None of the above actions should interfere with any criminal investigation.

Meeting with the Bishop

Once a process of pastoral care and support is in place, the DLP will offer to set up a meeting with the Bishop, if it is the wish of the complainant. It is important that the agenda, time and venue for any such meeting are negotiated by the support person, in consultation with the complainant, the DLP and the Bishop.

It is important that all parties are fully prepared for the meeting. It could be helpful in some instances to arrange to have a facilitator or mediator present, if this is deemed to be in the best interest of the complainant.

It must be understood by all that:

- The overall process of the meeting is to listen to the complainant;
- The meeting is about determining the outcome of the investigation that might ensue.
- Towards the end of this meeting ongoing support can be reviewed and any required changes can be agreed upon.

Ongoing Support

Contact with the support person should always be led by the needs of the complainant.

Meeting the pastoral and support needs of complainants can be best achieved when the Church authority is open to facilitating the needs of the complainant in relation to meeting times and locations and giving them the time to give a complete account of the allegation(s) they wish to bring.

Some complainants may also wish to remain engaged with their Church despite the effect that the abuse may have had on their relationship with it, and, perhaps, with God. Complainants should be supported in making contact with counselling and support services if they so wish.

The support person liaises with the DLP for information sharing and accountability purposes, and should provide them with a summary of dates on which they have met with the complainant.

Financial Compensation

Some complainants may wish to claim financial compensation for the harm they have suffered.

All complainants should be advised of their right to seek legal advice if they wish to pursue a civil case against their alleged abuser and/or the Bishop. Complainants need to be informed of the adversarial nature of litigation and the inevitable process of disclosure involved.

Appropriate Personnel

Those who have alleged child abuse should receive a compassionate response from Church personnel and be offered access to appropriate care, advice and support. The Bishop has access to a support person who is available to those who make an allegation/disclosure of abuse, if the complainant so wishes.