



diocese
of limerick
our catholic community

Diocese of Limerick

Safeguarding Children

Standard 6

Communicating the Churches' Safeguarding Message

This document is updated on a regular basis

Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

(Standard 6)

Responsibilities of Safeguarding Personnel in Relation to Standard 6 are:

The Bishop:

- Will ensure that practice and policy with regard to communication is compliant with civil and canon law.

Safeguarding Committee:

- Producing a three-year child safeguarding plan. Part of this plan will include evidence that a communications plan is developed and implemented across the Church body. To do this, an annual child safeguarding communications plan needs to be developed;
- Coordinating local safeguarding representatives in the development of a communications plan. This coordination involves consultation with key stakeholders, including children and guardians, regarding the plan.

Parish Safeguarding Representative:

- Working with the safeguarding committee to consult with key members of the community, including children, guardians and other personnel who have been identified by the safeguarding committee in the compilation of a communications plan;
- Checking that methods of communication are effective and in place. This information should be communicated to the safeguarding committee as part of the consultation and evaluation phases of developing and reviewing a communications plan.

Communication Plan

Step 1: Reviewing current policies, procedures and practice

As part of the Diocesan 'Safeguarding Children, 3 Year Strategic Plan', an effective communications plan is in place. This plan emphasises the central position of the Diocesan safeguarding standards, policy and procedures. These Procedures are essential to the implementation of Church standards, and it is critical that everybody, including children and young people, know and understand their purpose and know how to use them.

A range of communications methods will in place, the following checklist suggests some ideas for the safeguarding committee to consider.

Does the Diocese:

- Have a written communications plan, stating what you wish to communicate, to whom, by whom, and how often?
- Display the name and contact details of the designated liaison person (DLP) during Church run youth activities?
- Place information on the diocesan website about safeguarding children?
- Ensure that communications between the Church and parents/guardians/carers/children/community leaders take account of language or communication differences?
- Ensure that parents/guardians, children and relevant others know about your child safeguarding and child protection policies and reporting procedures?
- Have a process for enabling people, including children and young people, to make a complaint and ensure that this process is publicised so that everyone knows about it?
- Involve parents/guardians, as well as children, in developing codes of behaviour, e.g. about anti-bullying?
- Devise ways of obtaining feedback from parents/guardians/carers/children/the Church community to find out what you are doing well, and what is not working?

Step 2: Gathering further information

Using the information in Step 1, the Church body should gather any further information necessary to develop a communications plan that reflects transparency, openness, accountability and responsibility. The aim of this plan is to make information available about all aspects of policy and practice, which keep children safe in Church and related activities.

To develop this plan, the safeguarding committee needs to develop information on the following:

Who are the target groups? The safeguarding committee should consult with relevant

Personnel to establish the target audiences for inclusion in the wider safeguarding plan. It is likely that the main target groups with whom a Church body needs to communicate regarding its child safeguarding policy and procedures are:

- Church personnel;
- Lay faithful;
- Children/parents/guardians/carers;
- Parish staff and volunteers;
- External organisations, e.g. Tusla, An Garda Síochána;
- Other relevant external agencies, the general public and the media.

What are the safeguarding messages? Although child safeguarding messages must be consistent, the information needed may change depending on your target audience. Child safeguarding messages may include:

- Information on what is meant by child safeguarding;
- Information on the child safeguarding policy;
- Information on the procedures for reporting allegations, suspicions and concerns;
- Contact details of the DLP;
- For children and parents/guardians: how to keep safe; what to do if you, or someone you know, is in danger of being harmed; sources of advice and support;
- roles of agencies involved in child safeguarding; how the referral process works;
- For Church personnel: how to deliver best practice; safe recruitment; dealing with allegations; accessing advice and support; availability of training; contact details for relevant child safeguarding personnel.

How are you going to promote child safeguarding? Before deciding how you will do this, it is important to consider the most effective methods for reaching out to key groups of people.

Methods could include:

- **Diocesan/provincial and parish/local congregation websites** that could host material such as the child safeguarding policy, any additional resources developed in relation to child safeguarding, the annual report on child safeguarding within the Church body, the annual training plan, a safeguarding children newsletter, or signposts to other websites such as the NBSCCCI or the civil authorities;
- **Diocesan/provincial newsletters** providing general information and updates on safeguarding;
- **Parish/local congregational bulletins** with information on child safeguarding events and key contact details;
- **Diocesan/provincial printed publications** such as copies of child safeguarding policies, handbooks and information pamphlets, posters for display in the Church, bookmarks for children with child safeguarding information and contacts, annual reports, a child-friendly version of the child safeguarding policy, etc.;

- **National/local press releases** announcing annual reports, updated resources, etc.;
- **Other innovative methods:** it is important to develop positive messages when promoting child safeguarding within the Church. Use the skills and expertise of key people in the Church body to develop creative ways to put forward the positive child safeguarding message of the Church. This could include suggestion boxes, 'Safeguarding Sundays', meetings of key child safeguarding personnel, questionnaires, and workshops with children and young people.

Who is responsible? Using the information outlined in Step 1 and Step 2, alongside the roles identified in Appendix 1, it is important to identify who is responsible for each method of delivery. Once identified and agreed, this should be written into the role description, in line with best practice in recruitment and selection. These roles could include, for example:

- The child safeguarding committee;
- The parish priest/local superior/community leader;
- The DLP and deputy DLP;
- The local safeguarding representative

It must be understood that within each parish or local congregation, the overall responsibility for implementing the child safeguarding policy remains with the parish priest/local superior/community leader. The overall responsibility for ensuring that each Church body implements effective child safeguarding practice lies with the Bishop.

When will it be achieved? It is important that each plan has clear, realistic and achievable time frames within which each target can be achieved.

Step 3: Writing the plan

Using the information in Steps 1 and 2, it is the responsibility of the safeguarding committee to write the communication plan using a format which identifies, for each target group, what is communicated, how, responsible person/area, when delivered and when reviewed.

This plan will form part of the overall three-year safeguarding plan.

Step 4: Review

It is important to remember that communication is a two-way process. Developing mechanisms for consultation and feedback to review the communication plan is critical to ensure that the child safeguarding message is effectively heard, understood and revised in order to meet the needs of the target groups.

Ensuring that Information Regarding the Church's Child Safeguarding Message is Accessible

A key part of child safeguarding is ensuring that the methods used to communicate information on the Church's child safeguarding message are accessible and appropriate and may include:

- Public poster for adults, with information about what to do if there is a child safeguarding concern, including contact details for appropriate child safeguarding personnel (Page 5). ***This poster, signed by the Bishop, and forwarded to each parish should be displayed in areas with public access, including residences of priests and religious to which children have access.*** There is no requirement to put up this child safeguarding poster in private homes connected with the Church body if no public ministry with children takes place there;
- Child safeguarding leaflets for parents/guardians/adults about how the Church responds to child safeguarding concerns, the management of allegations and access to counselling and support;
- Posters/Leaflets for children about what to do if they have a child safeguarding concern, including contact details for appropriate child safeguarding personnel;
- The child safeguarding policy in concise/reader-friendly accessible formats;
- Relevant events such as 'Designated Safeguarding Sundays'
- The regular dissemination of safeguarding awareness in local church bulletins
- The dissemination of the Diocesan newsletter that detail child safeguarding practices

Communicating appropriately to those whose First Language is not English, and to those who have specific needs

The Bishop is aware of the particular requirements of those whose first language is not English. It is important that informative material is translated into the appropriate language so that all children and their parents/guardians are made aware of the child safeguarding practices in their parish or religious congregation. The Diocesan Safeguarding Children Office will assist in this regard. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) provides additional child safeguarding resources in a range of formats. Their website is www.nspcc.org.uk.

Children who have specific needs because of disability or other vulnerabilities require extra care and attention. They may find it more difficult to access support and advice services because they may not have the communication skills needed to disclose what is happening to them. They may rely on adults to provide for their most intimate care, and so find it challenging to speak about any concerns they may have about such an adult.

A number of services are available in formats that are appropriate to young people with specific needs. These may include:

Childline text support: Childline run a free text service for children and young people. Children often find it easier to text rather than talk on the phone if they have a worry or concern. Information on a range of issues is available through text. **Text ‘Talk’ to 50101;**

It is important when communicating with young people with specific needs that the information on the services above is made accessible by being posted alongside appropriate codes of behaviour about the care of children with specific needs, and that it is also made known to parents and guardians.

Where written information is not appropriate, visual images should be developed to indicate to children how they can raise a concern.