



Church of Ireland  
Safeguarding Board

# ADULT SAFEGUARDING

The Church of Ireland - *Code of Good Practice*

---

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

---

“

IT IS THE POLICY OF THE  
**CHURCH OF IRELAND**  
TO SAFEGUARD ALL  
ADULTS SHARING IN  
ITS MINISTRY AND  
TO PROTECT THEM  
FROM ALL FORMS OF  
HARM AND ABUSE.

”

# CONTENTS

---

**p.4** | *Adult Safeguarding Summary*

## **p.8** | *Section A - Introduction*

**p.8** | Introduction - A Statement of Commitment to Adult Safeguarding

**p.9** | Scope of the Policy

**p.9** | Church of Ireland Safeguarding Board

**p.10** | Bishops and Dioceses

## **p.11** | *Section B - Context*

**p.11** | Legal and Regional Policy

## **p.12** | *Section C - Underpinning Principles*

## **p.15** | *Section D - Definitions*

**p.15** | Definition of Abuse

**p.19** | Definitions of Vulnerable Persons

## **p.20** | *Section E - Prevention in Adult Safeguarding*

**p.20** | Recruitment, Selection and Management of Parish Staff and Volunteers and Garda Vetting Responsibilities

**p.22** | Managing Staff and Volunteers

## **p.25** | *Section F - Recognising & responding to Adult Safeguarding Concerns*

**p.25** | Responding to Disclosure of Possible Abuse

**p.28** | Safeguarding Officer Role

**p.28** | Diocesan Adult Safeguarding Panel

- p.28** | Reporting Procedures for Concerns about Adults who may be at Risk of Harm and/or in Need of Protection
- p.29** | Recording Concerns and Storage of Information
- p.30** | Confidentiality
- p.30** | Consent and Capacity
- p.31** | Raising a Concern about someone in a Position of Trust in the Church
- p.32** | How the Church will Respond

### **p.33** | *Section G - Risk Assessment*

### **p.34** | *Section H - Complaints*

### **p.35** | *Section I - Record Keeping*

### **p.36** | *Section J - Promoting Safer Practice when working with Vulnerable Persons*

- p.36** | Code of Behaviour when working with Adults at Risk
- p.38** | Breaching the Code

### **p.39** | *Section K - Useful Contacts & References*

# *Adult Safeguarding*

## **SUMMARY**

---

Safeguarding is everyone's business. This policy applies to all bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers. This summary is not a replacement policy but acts as an aide-mémoire to ensure the policy is fully implemented. This policy must be read and put into practice in its entirety.

The Church of Ireland Safeguarding Board oversees the working of the Safeguarding Officers and ensures that up-to-date policies are in place for the Church of Ireland.

Bishops and dioceses have responsibility under the Church of Ireland Constitution to ensure that the Adult Safeguarding Policy is implemented and adhered to in parishes. Each diocese is required to appoint an Adult Safeguarding Panel.

Select vestries and Incumbents have responsibility for ensuring best practice and that the code of behaviour is adhered to in the parish.

There are 5 underpinning principles to adult safeguarding:

- *A rights-based approach*
- *An empowering approach*
- *A person centred approach*
- *A consent-driven approach*
- *A collaborative approach*
- *A confidential based approach*

The following forms of abuse are identified:

- *Physical*
- *Sexual violence*
- *Psychological / emotional*
- *Financial*
- *Institutional*
- *Neglect and acts of omissions*
- *Discriminatory abuse*
- *Exploitation*
- *Spiritual Abuse*

Good practice is required for recruitment, selection and management of parish staff and volunteers who work with adults.

Taking no action when an issue arises is not an option. All bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers must be equipped to recognise and respond to adult safeguarding concerns.

The Safeguarding Officer (RI) provides strategic leadership, advice and oversight in relation to adult safeguarding; s/he is supported by an Adult Safeguarding Panel in each diocese.

All concerns must be reported to the Diocesan Adult Safeguarding Panel, Safeguarding Officer or to the authorities if immediate action is required.

The Safeguarding Officer (RI) must be informed of all reports and cases.

All disclosures of abuse must be reported to the authorities and the Safeguarding Officer (RI).

All activities must have a written risk assessment carried out prior to the activity taking place. Weekly activities can be risk-assessed annually.

There is a Code of Behaviour for those working with vulnerable persons that must be adhered to.

## Definitions

**Staff** means anyone with a formal contract of employment who is employed and paid by a parish, the RCB, or any other Church of Ireland organisation to undertake relevant work or activities relating to children (see [www.sg.ireland.anglican.org](http://www.sg.ireland.anglican.org)).

**Clergy:** ‘the term “member of the clergy” or “clergy” shall, unless otherwise specifically provided, mean a deacon or priest of the Church of Ireland or of a church in full communion with that Church.’

**Constitution** shall mean the Constitution of the Church of Ireland.

**Incumbent:** In addition to the ordinary meaning of ‘incumbent’ within the law of the Church of Ireland (being a beneficed member of the clergy), the term shall, for the purposes of the implementation of this policy also include licensed clergy, or other officiating clergy (such as Clergy with Permission to Officiate), lay ministers (such as a Church Army Officer), who are in charge of a parish, including those temporarily in charge during a vacancy in an incumbency. The term shall not include a deacon serving in an internship.

**Volunteer** means anyone in a position of responsibility or assisting with a group or organisation providing activities to children, or care or supervision of children, and who is not paid for this involvement.

**Diocesan Panel** means the representatives appointed to oversee the implementation of Adult Safeguarding in each diocese.

**Parish Panel** means the representatives appointed to oversee the implementation of Safeguarding Trust: the Church of Ireland Code of Good Practice for Ministry with Children in each parish or those appointed to discharge the same function at diocesan or central level.

**Parish** shall, in addition to the ordinary meaning of the term, include groups or unions of parishes, cathedrals (whether a parish or not), trustee churches, and also other non-parochial ecclesiastical units (e.g. church plants) in which a licensed member of the clergy of the Church of Ireland officiates as determined by the bishop and diocesan council.

**Statutory Authorities** refers to HSE which is the statutory body responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children and to the Garda who are empowered under legislation to investigate these matters.

**Select Vestry** refers to the select vestry of parishes and cathedrals howsoever described, and the Trustee body of every Trustee church howsoever described.

**RCB or Representative Body** refer to the Representative Church Body, located in Church of Ireland House, Church Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin 6, D06 CF67.

# *Section A*

## **INTRODUCTION**

---

### **Statement of Commitment to Adult Safeguarding**

The Church of Ireland Adult Safeguarding Code of Good Practice applies to all bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers but especially those who have regular contact with adults who may be more at risk of harm or abuse because of their personal or life circumstances.

The guidance applies to all aspects of ministry in the Church of Ireland whether within a church building or within parishioners homes. It is the responsibility of everyone in the Church of Ireland to ensure that adults at risk of harm due to their personal characteristics and / or life circumstances are not left at risk of abuse. Church organisations have a duty to promote the safety and welfare of vulnerable persons. The Church of Ireland takes seriously all concerns, allegations, suspicions and disclosures of abuse and requires such to be reported to the statutory authorities, according to the requirements of the Regional Adult Safeguarding Policy.

All adults have a fundamental right to be respected, nurtured, cared for and protected from harm or the risk of harm. These basic rights are embedded in both our gospel values and within international and domestic laws. Concerns and allegations, historical and current, must be taken seriously, swiftly reported, appropriately recorded and dealt with according to clear procedures as required by the law.

Anyone who has suffered abuse should receive a compassionate and just response and should be supported to engage with the relevant statutory organisations where they can report allegations of abuse. In addition, victims and survivors should be offered pastoral care to help rebuild their life.

We must ensure that appropriate recruitment and vetting procedures are in place so that all staff and volunteers holding positions working with vulnerable persons are carefully selected, screened, trained and supervised in accordance with best practice guidelines. Codes of conduct provide clear guidelines on what is and what is not acceptable behaviour.

Within the church community there are a variety of fellowship meetings, recreational, social, and sporting activities available to adults. Those with responsibility in the Church of Ireland must assure themselves that adults who participate in their organisations do so safely and in an environment which promotes best safeguarding practice.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse (HSE, 2014) places a responsibility on organisations to uphold the rights of all adults to live a life free from harm from abuse, exploitation and neglect. In conforming to this regional policy, the Church of Ireland commits itself to promoting a culture of zero-tolerance of harm to adults. This Code of Good Practice therefore aims to focus on the recognition of adults who may be at risk and the circumstances which may increase risk; knowing how adult abuse, exploitation or neglect manifests itself;

and being willing to report safeguarding concerns. This extends to recognising and reporting harm experienced anywhere, including in the person's own home, in any care setting, in the community, and within organised community or voluntary activities including any activity run in or by the Church.

This Church of Ireland Code of Good Practice provides a framework for those participating within the life of the Church on how to recognise, respond and report any concerns of an adult safeguarding nature. This Code of Good Practice sits alongside Safeguarding Trust and Dignity in Church Life Charter to support and protect all those participating within the life of the Church of Ireland as clergy, employees or volunteers.

## **Scope of the Policy**

The Church of Ireland is committed to promoting and supporting an environment where everyone is able to worship and participate in the life of the Church in safety. Therefore the Church will:

- *Never commit, condone or stay silent about any form of abuse of an adult at risk*
- *Robustly and consistently implement the safeguarding policy and procedures and play its part in supporting anyone who may be affected by abuse*
- *Promote a culture which listens to adults at risk*
- *Ensure that when concerns are raised they are taken seriously and dealt with appropriately*
- *Raise awareness within the church that there is no excuse for abuse of adults at risk including domestic and sexual violence*
- *Signpost adults at risk to services to enable them to access information or specialist support*
- *Appropriately recruit, train and support all those in a position of trust*

This Code of Good Practice sets out the context for implementing Adult Safeguarding; the types and nature of abuse; the role of the Safeguarding Board; recruitment and vetting procedures; reporting of allegations and issues of concern.

## **Church of Ireland Safeguarding Board**

The Church of Ireland Safeguarding Board is authorised by the Standing Committee of the General Synod to ensure that those within church ministry are aware of their special duty of care towards Children and Adults at Risk and therefore encourage a culture of collective responsibility to work in partnership with other statutory, community and voluntary organisations.

The Safeguarding Board will promote human rights which are embedded in both our gospel values and within international and domestic laws to protect those at risk of harm.

The Safeguarding Board is committed to learning from experience and by a process of continuous improvement to monitor and challenge the effectiveness of the Church of Ireland's safeguarding arrangements.

The Safeguarding Board is in place to oversee the implementation and review of this policy. This is a living document and will be reviewed every second year and amended as required by the Safeguarding Board. Any amendments due to the review will be submitted to Standing Committee for approval.

## **Bishops and Dioceses**

Each bishop and diocese is required by the Constitution of the Church of Ireland to ensure that the Adult Safeguarding Code of Good Practice is implemented and adhered to throughout the Church.

Diocesan Councils through their Secretaries will be responsible for issuing to the Honorary Secretary of each select vestry, a standard form which will be completed and returned by the select vestry, confirming on an annual basis that the Adult Safeguarding Code of Good Practice is being implemented by the select vestry in each parish. This is the declaration of compliance.

Diocesan Councils will be required to report that every parish has completed the declaration of compliance on an annual basis (usually by the end of June) to the Safeguarding Board.

## Section B

# CONTEXT

---

### Legislation

Unlike Child Protection, Adult Safeguarding does not have a single piece of legislation under which there are statutory responsibilities on agencies to respond to concerns of abuse.

**Key relevant legislation within the Republic of Ireland is as follows:**

- *National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012*
- *Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information of Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012*

*The Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015* is soon to become practice and proposes three types of decision making support options to respond to a wide range of support needs that people may have in relation to decision making capacity.

### Regional Policy

In 2014, the HSE produced the national policy and procedures 'Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse'.

This policy states:

*The Social Care Division is committed to the safeguarding of vulnerable persons from abuse. It acknowledges that all adults have the right to be safe and to live a life free from abuse. All persons are entitled to this right, regardless of their circumstances. It is the responsibility of all service providers, statutory and non-statutory, to ensure that, service users are treated with respect and dignity, have their welfare promoted and receive support in an environment in which every effort is made to promote welfare and to prevent abuse.*

*All services must have a publicly declared 'No Tolerance' approach to any form of abuse and must promote a culture which supports this ethos. All policies and procedures must promote welfare, reflect inclusion and transparency in the provision of services, and promote a culture of safeguarding. A core governance responsibility of all services is to ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures and associated practices are in place and appropriate to the services provided.*

## Section C

# UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

---

All Adult Safeguarding activity must be guided by five underpinning principles and are also central to the Church's Christian values and ethics.

**A Rights-Based Approach:** To promote and respect an adult's right to be safe and secure; to freedom from harm and coercion; to equality of treatment; to the protection of the law; to privacy; to confidentiality; and freedom from discrimination.

Agencies and professionals who intervene in the lives of vulnerable persons should be guided by current best practice, the law and respect for rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights<sup>1</sup> acting in accordance with relevant UN and EU Conventions<sup>2</sup> on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UN Principles for Older Person's 1991<sup>3</sup>. Any intervention to safeguard vulnerable person should be human rights compliant. It should be reasonable, justified, proportionate to the perceived level of risk and perceived impact of harm, carried out appropriately, and should avoid restricting the individual's rights and freedoms as far as possible. It cannot be arbitrary or unfair, and all adults should be offered the same services on an equal basis.

**An Empowering Approach:** To empower adults to make informed choices about their lives, to maximise their opportunities to participate in wider society, to keep themselves safe and free from harm and enabled to manage their own decisions in respect of exposure to risk.

---

<sup>1</sup> The European Convention on Human Rights can be accessed at: [http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The Human Rights Act 1998 can be accessed at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents>

<sup>3</sup> Relevant Conventions include *The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, *the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*, and *the EU Istanbul Convention on domestic and sexual violence against women*

For vulnerable persons, empowerment is a process through which individuals are: enabled to recognise, avoid and stop harm; facilitated to make decisions based on informed choices including provision of support for those who lack capacity to make decisions; assisted to balance taking risks with quality of life decisions; supported and enabled to seek redress; and, for adults who have been harmed, a process whereby they are enabled to recover their self-confidence and self-determination and make informed choices about how they wish to live their lives.

**A Person-Centred Approach:** To promote and facilitate full participation of adults in all decisions affecting their lives taking full account of their views, wishes and feelings and, where appropriate, the views of others who have an interest in his or her safety and well-being.

A person-centred approach is a way of working with an individual to identify how he or she wishes to live their life and what support they require. A person-centred approach to adult safeguarding demonstrates respect for the rights of the individual at its core, in particular, respect for the right of the individual to make their own informed choices and decisions. A person-centred approach should result in the individual making informed choices about how he or she wants to live and about what services and supports will best assist them, with cognitive and communication support being provided where necessary. Where the person lacks capacity to make a decision, best interest decisions should be made by professionals which take all available information into account, including information about previously expressed preferences or choices made by the person being safeguarded.

**A Consent-Driven Approach:** To make a presumption that the adult has the ability to give or withhold consent; to make informed choices; to help inform choice through the provision of information, and the identification of options and alternatives; to have particular regard to the needs of individuals who require support with communication, advocacy or who lack the capacity to consent; and intervening in the life of an adult against his or her wishes only in particular circumstances, for very specific purposes and always in accordance with the law.

Consideration of consent is central to adult safeguarding in determining the ability of a vulnerable person to make lifestyle choices, including choosing to remain in a situation where they risk being harmed; determining whether a particular act or transaction is harmful or consensual; and determining to what extent the adult can and should be asked to take decisions about how best to deal with a given safeguarding situation. For consent to be valid, the decision needs to be informed, made by an individual with capacity to make the decision and made free from coercion, constraint or undue influence. Each decision must be considered on its own merits as an adult may possess capacity to make some decisions but not others and/or the adult's lack of capacity to make decisions may be temporary rather than permanent. A consent-driven approach to adult safeguarding will always involve making a presumption that the adult at the centre of a safeguarding decision or action has the capacity to give or withhold consent unless it is established otherwise.

**A Collaborative Approach:** To acknowledge that adult safeguarding will be most effective when it has the full support of the wider public and of safeguarding partners across the statutory, voluntary, community, independent and faith sectors working together and is delivered in a way where roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability are clearly defined and understood. Working in partnership and a person-centred approach will work hand-in-hand.

Harm resulting from abuse, exploitation or neglect can be experienced by adults in a range of circumstances, regardless of gender, age, class or ethnicity. Vulnerable persons, suitably supported, must be central to the partnership, either as participants in preventative activities or protection intervention, or as contributors to decision-making in connection with the development of safeguarding policy, strategy and procedures. Where it is not possible for a vulnerable person to contribute directly as a participant or contributor, consideration must be given as to how they can be suitably supported to ensure that they are involved at an appropriate level. Successful adult safeguarding requires effective arrangements for all involved to work together. The strength of a collaborative approach will depend on the commitment and support from the highest level to safeguarding adults.

## *Section D*

# DEFINITIONS

---

Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse - National policy and procedures 2014, have established the following definitions for practice in the statutory, independent and community and voluntary sectors.

The risk of harm occurs in all communities irrespective of age, gender or socio-economic status. Many adults at risk regularly come into contact with our church family and community whether that be through Sunday worship; pastoral visiting; organisations providing activities for both children and families and individual adults. There are times when those in ministry meet adults at times of crisis and trauma or sometimes they recognise that something is not quite as it appears. A supportive conversation may enable some elements of disclosure of domestic abuse; financial abuse; emotional or other forms of harm. Those in ministry are well placed to support adults at risk and empower them to make choices about how to keep themselves safe by minimising their own exposure to the risks that are present in their lives.

Therefore it is important that those in ministry understand what constitutes abuse of vulnerable persons. By understanding the nature of abuse and recognizing possible indicators of harm, those in ministry will be in a more informed position to support and guide individuals to seek advice and information to change their circumstances should they wish to do so. While statutory services provide necessary protection responses, community and voluntary sector organisations are also well placed to provide specialist supports to alleged victims of harm and abuse. Likewise it is important to recognise the value of the spiritual counselling the Church can provide to vulnerable persons in the adult safeguarding process.

### **Definition of Abuse**

*Abuse may be defined as any act, or failure to act, which results in a breach of a vulnerable person's human rights, civil liberties, physical and mental integrity, dignity or general well being, whether intended or through negligence, including sexual relationships or financial transactions to which the person does not or cannot validly consent, or which are deliberately exploitative. Abuse may take a variety of forms.*

The main forms of abuse are:

#### ***Physical Abuse***

*Physical abuse includes hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.*

### ***Sexual Abuse***

*Sexual abuse includes rape and sexual assault, or sexual acts to which the vulnerable person has not consented, or could not consent, or into which he or she was compelled to consent.*

### ***Psychological Abuse***

*Psychological abuse includes emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.*

### ***Financial or Material Abuse***

*Financial or material abuse includes theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.*

### ***Neglect and Acts of Omission***

*Neglect and acts of omission includes ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating*

### ***Discriminatory Abuse***

*Discriminatory abuse includes ageism, racism, sexism, that is based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.*

***Possible signs*** - *the person not receiving the care services they require, their carer being overly critical or making insulting remarks about the person, the person being made to dress differently from how he/she wishes.*

### ***Spiritual Abuse***

*Spiritual Abuse including denying access to sacraments and to the practice of their faith.*

***Possible signs*** - *person not receiving sacraments, being absent from liturgies. (Please note that these signs do not necessarily mean that abuse is definitely taking place)*

### ***Institutional Abuse***

*Institutional abuse may occur within residential care and acute settings including nursing homes, acute hospitals and any other inpatient settings, and may involve poor standards of care, rigid routines and inadequate responses to complex needs.*

*Each individual set of circumstances will require a professional HSE assessment to determine the appropriate response and consider if any underlying factors require a protection response.*

This list of types of harmful conduct is neither exhaustive, nor listed here in any order of priority. There are other indicators which should not be ignored. It is also possible that if a person is being harmed in one way, he/she may very well be experiencing harm in other ways.

### ***Related Definitions***

There are related definitions which interface with Adult Safeguarding, each of which have their own associated adult protection processes in place.

### ***Domestic Violence and Abuse***

*Domestic violence or abuse is ‘threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member’. Domestic violence and abuse is essentially a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by the exercise of control and the misuse of power by one person over another. It is usually frequent and persistent. It can include violence by a son, daughter, mother, father, husband, wife, life partner or any other person who has a close relationship with the victim. It occurs right across society, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnic or religious group, sexual orientation, wealth, disability or geography.*

*The response to any adult facing this situation will usually require a referral to specialist services. Specialist services will then decide if the case needs to be referred to a HSE for action under the safeguarding procedures.*

### ***Human Trafficking / Modern Slavery***

*Human trafficking/modern slavery involves the acquisition and movement of people by improper means, such as force, threat or deception, for the purposes of exploiting them. It can take many forms, such as domestic servitude, forced criminality, forced labour, sexual exploitation and organ harvesting. Victims of human trafficking/ modern slavery can come from all walks of life; they can be male or female, children or adults, and they may come from migrant or indigenous communities.*

*The response to adults at risk experiencing human trafficking/modern slavery will always be to report the incident to the Garda.*

### ***Hate Crime***

*Hate crime is any incident which constitutes a criminal offence perceived by the victim or any other person as being motivated by prejudice, discrimination or hate towards a person’s actual or perceived race, religious belief, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion or gender identity.*

*The response to adults at risk experiencing hate crime will usually be to report the incident to the Garda.*

### ***Who might abuse***

This could be anyone who has contact with the vulnerable person. It could be a partner, spouse, child, relative, friend, advocate, informal carer, a member of the clergy or religious order, a healthcare, social care or other worker, a peer or, less commonly, a stranger.

### ***Domestic/Familial Abuse***

This is the abuse of a vulnerable adult by a family member such as partner, son, daughter, sibling or extended family member.

### ***Professional Abuse***

The misuse of power and abuse of trust by professionals, the failure of professionals to act on suspected abuse/crimes, poor care practice or neglect in services, resource shortfalls or service pressures that lead to service failure and culpability as a result of poor management systems.

Possible forms of professional abuse include:

- *Entering into inappropriate relationships with a vulnerable adult*
- *Failure to refer disclosure of abuse*
- *Poor, ill-informed or outmoded care practice*
- *Failure to support a vulnerable adult to access health/care treatment*
- *Denying a vulnerable adult access to professional support and services such as advocacy*
- *Inappropriate response to challenging behaviours*
- *Failure to whistleblow on issues when internal procedures to highlight issues are exhausted*

### ***Peer Abuse***

This is the abuse of one vulnerable adult by another vulnerable adult within a care setting. It can occur in group or communal settings, such as day care centres, clubs, residential care homes, nursing homes or other institutional settings.

### ***Stranger Abuse***

A vulnerable adult may be abused by someone who they do not know such as a stranger, a member of the public or a person who deliberately targets vulnerable people.

## **Definition of a Vulnerable Person**

The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012-2016 defines Vulnerable Adult as follows:

“Vulnerable Person” means a person, other than a child, who:

- a) *is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia,*
- b) *has an intellectual disability,*
- c) *is suffering from a physical impairment, whether as a result of injury, illness or age, or*
- d) *has a physical disability, which is of such a nature or degree as to restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against harm by another person, or that results in the person requiring assistance with the activities of daily living including dressing, eating, walking, washing and bathing.*

# *Section E*

## **PREVENTION IN ADULT SAFEGUARDING**

---

### **Recruitment, Selection and Management of Parish Staff and Volunteers and Garda Vetting Responsibilities**

#### **Key areas:**

- *The importance of good recruitment, selection and management procedures*
- *Summary of the process of recruiting staff and volunteers working with adults at risk and in need of protection*
- *Managing the roles*
- *Complaints and grievances*

#### **Good recruitment, selection and management procedures will:**

- *Help screen out and discourage those who are not suitable from joining the organisation.*
- *Ensure clergy, paid staff and volunteers have clear rules and boundaries and feel supported in their roles*
- *Assure relevant carers that all possible measures are being taken to ensure only suitable people will be recruited to work with adults at risk or in need of protection.*

#### **Summary of the process of recruiting staff and volunteers working with adults at risk or in need of protection**

Recruitment and selection procedures must be applied equally to all staff and volunteers and this includes:

- *Those who have been part of the parish for many years and are taking up a new role with adults at risk or in need of protection*

The following steps are necessary to ensure good practice:

#### ***Defining the role***

A role description should be drawn up for volunteers. This can be done generically for volunteer roles within the parish.

For a paid role a specific job description should be created.

#### ***Advertising to role***

Paid roles must be advertised as per employment good practice. For volunteers, an announcement in church or in the parish magazine may be sufficient.

### ***Application Form***

All applicants must be asked to complete an application form relevant to the extent of the role being undertaken.

### ***Declaration***

All applicants are asked to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with vulnerable adults.

### ***Interview***

All potential staff and volunteers must be interviewed by the Incumbent and at least one member of the Select Vestry sometimes in conjunction with other relevant individuals such as a leader-in-charge or external persons with relevant qualifications/experience. The level of formality of an interview should reflect the role being undertaken. An interview for a pastoral visitor should be fairly informal; however an interview for a paid member of staff should be more formal and comply with employment regulations.

If a role is a diocesan level role then potential staff members and volunteers must be interviewed by the Diocesan Adult Safeguarding Panel.

### ***References***

References should be taken up from at least two people who are not family members and, ideally, one of whom should have first-hand knowledge of the applicant's previous work or contact with adults at risk or in need of protection. References should be taken up in writing and should be followed up orally.

### ***Garda Vetting***

As this process can change, follow the latest procedure outlined on the Church of Ireland website: [www.ireland.anglican.org/safeguarding](http://www.ireland.anglican.org/safeguarding)

*Please note that a member of staff or volunteer cannot begin work until the organisation has received a satisfactory vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau. This also applies to bishops and clergy and a satisfactory vetting disclosure must be received from the National Vetting Bureau prior to ordination and/ or installation and/or the granting of a licence to officiate or permission to officiate.*

### ***Record keeping***

Details of the selection and recruitment procedure should be recorded and securely stored as per current data protection regulations.

### ***Ratifying the Appointment***

At the conclusion of the selection and recruitment process the Select Vestry recommends an individual to take up the role of post. A contract of employment (in the case of a member of staff) or a volunteer agreement (in the case of a volunteer) is signed by the individual and Incumbent on behalf of the Select Vestry. A contract of employment with a paid member of staff should be drawn up by the parish solicitors.

### ***Staff or Volunteers from Abroad***

Background checks are not possible for many overseas applicants. Staff and volunteers from abroad may produce certificates of good conduct from their home church or statutory agencies in their country of origin. Such certificates must be treated with extreme caution as there is no way to confirm their validity. As with any other criminal conviction certificate, it can only provide 'known' information. The requirement to obtain a satisfactory vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau in advance of commencement of work also applies in respect of staff or volunteers from abroad.

Panels must make every effort to verify the suitability of candidates by careful use of references and interview. **NB** What constitutes an offence in the Republic of Ireland (and would be seen as adult abuse) may elsewhere. References therefore need to be viewed with this in mind.

It is strongly advisable also to require candidates to sign a sworn declaration that there is nothing in their background which would prevent their working with adults at risk or in need of protection.

## **Managing Staff and Volunteers**

Good management of volunteers and paid staff will contribute to safe activities for all. Good management will also create an atmosphere where staff or volunteers feel valued, are listened to and where issues can be dealt with quickly by systems already in place.

Effective management for all staff and volunteers should include:

### ***Induction***

New staff and volunteers must have training provided by the Select Vestry that includes basic awareness and understanding of adult safeguarding issues. The training should explain the procedures and guidelines and also include an introduction to the activities and ethos of the group they have joined. Staff and volunteers should be made aware of what is expected and required of them and the boundaries or limits within which they must operate.

### ***Probationary Period (Paid Staff) / Trial Period (Volunteers)***

All appointments should be conditional on a satisfactory trial period of work. Every new post should be reviewed within an agreed period of time, usually six months.

## ***Supervision***

It is good practice to set up a supervision system for paid staff and volunteers, which means arranging for a supervisor to see staff and volunteers at regular intervals whether on their own or in small groups. This provides support for staff and volunteers and an opportunity to talk through any questions or difficulties they may have. It also gives the supervisor the opportunity to assess progress and whether any additional training should be provided. The supervisor must be the leader in charge of the group, the Incumbent or a member of the Select Vestry who has been given the responsibility by the vestry.

## ***Fixed Term***

In relation to volunteer roles, it may also be helpful to indicate a particular duration for a role, say 3-5 years, thus allowing a volunteer to step back with dignity if they wish rather than feeling that resignation might be misinterpreted.

## ***Annual Appraisal (Staff) / Review (Volunteer)***

The purpose of this is to review general performance and also give an opportunity to discuss any relevant changes in the personal circumstances of staff and volunteers. The appraisal/review also provides an opportunity to highlight any required future support or skills training. Parishes should aim to provide access to at least one training or development opportunity per year for each member of staff or volunteer.

## ***Complaints and Grievances***

Everyone has the right to complain or report a grievance. All people should be facilitated in raising a concern or complaint. Written complaint and grievance procedures should be in place and communicated to all associated with each organisation e.g. a complaints form, an anonymous comments box or a meeting with a leader-in-charge.

Everyone also has the right to appeal a decision made regarding a complaint or grievance. Parishes should consider how to facilitate this e.g. through a subcommittee of the Select Vestry. In certain circumstances Select Vestries may need to seek legal advice.

It is important that a complaint or grievance, which does not relate to abuse, can be dealt with in a separate procedure.

## ***Grievance Procedure***

This procedure is appropriate for all non-child protection concerns regarding the conduct or practice of staff and volunteers. A grievance procedure should be included within a contract of employment of any paid member of staff.



### ***Staff Records***

It is best practice for written records to be kept of all training completed by staff and volunteers, support and supervision meetings held and all annual appraisals/reviews. Both parties should agree the content of the records and each should have a copy. These records should be stored confidentially and in line with the Church of Ireland data protection policy.

## Section F

# RECOGNISING AND RESPONDING TO ADULT SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

---

Bishops, clergy or volunteers who are concerned about someone who may be experiencing harm or abuse must promptly report these to Diocesan Adult Safeguarding Panel or the Safeguarding Officer (RI).

There are a variety of ways that you could be alerted that an adult is suffering harm:

- *They may disclose to you*
- *Someone else may tell you of their concerns or something that causes you concern*
- *They may show some signs of physical injury for which there does not appear to be a satisfactory or credible explanation*
- *Their demeanour/behaviour may lead you to suspect abuse or neglect*
- *The behaviour of a person close to them makes you feel uncomfortable (this may include a staff member, volunteer, peer or family member); or*
- *Through general good neighbourliness and social guardianship*

***Being alert to potential abuse plays a major role in ensuring that adults are safeguarded and it is important that all concerns about possible abuse are taken seriously and appropriate action is taken.***

## Responding to Disclosure of Possible Abuse

In cases where an adult discloses abuse to a bishop, member of the clergy, member of staff or a volunteer, it is vital that they know how to react appropriately.

All bishops/clergy/staff/volunteers should be made aware of to the following guidelines:

### ***Do***

- *Stay calm*
- *Listen attentively*
- *Express concern and acknowledge what is being said*
- *Reassure the person - tell the person that s/he did the right thing in telling you*
- *Let the person know that the information will be taken seriously and provide details about what will happen next, including the limits and boundaries of confidentiality*
- *If urgent medical/police help is required, call the emergency services;*
- *Ensure the immediate safety of the person*
- *If you think a crime has occurred be aware that medical and forensic evidence might be needed. Consider the need for a timely referral to the Garda and make sure nothing you do will contaminate it*

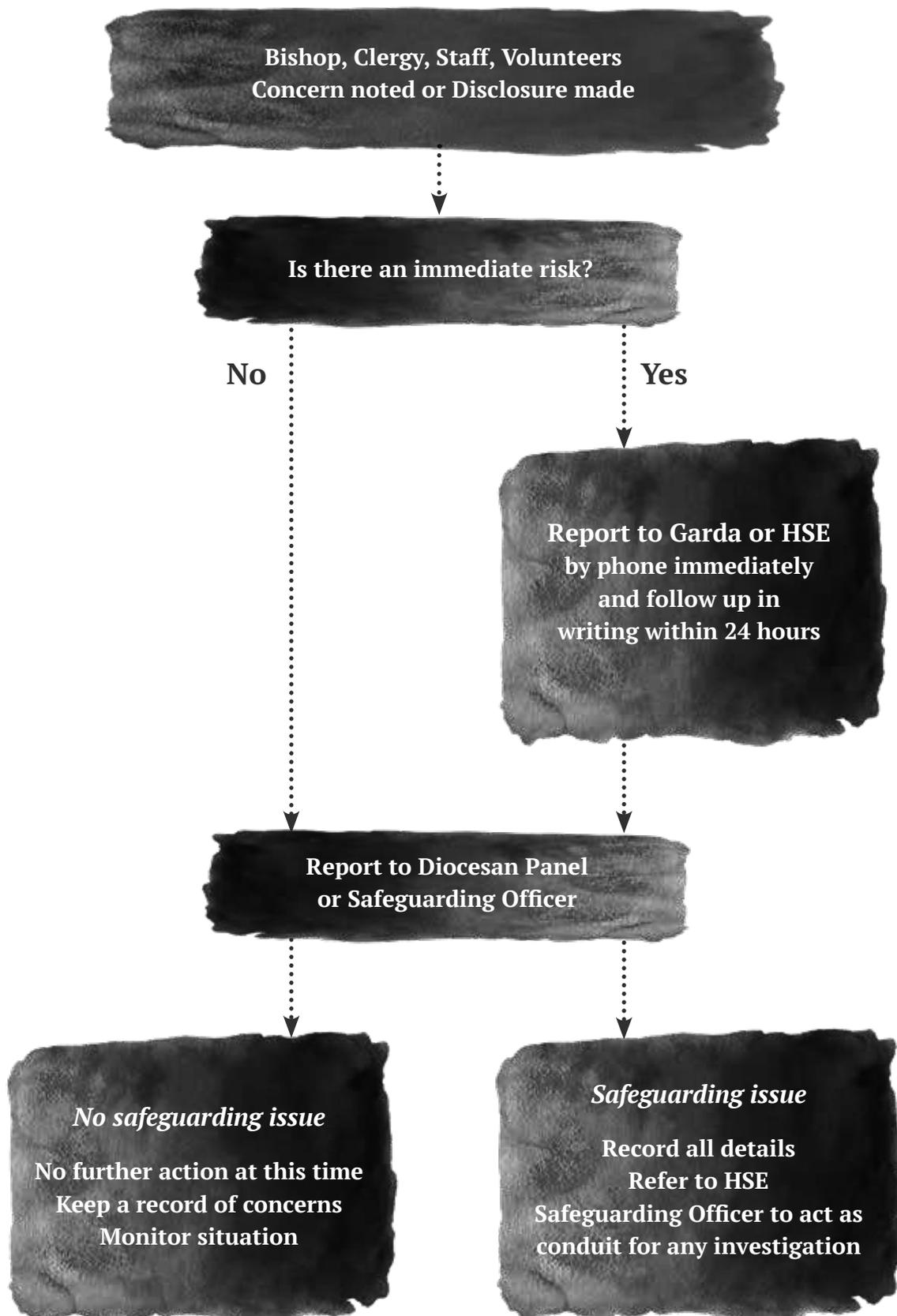
- *Let the person know that they will be kept involved at every stage*
- *Record in writing (date and sign your report) and report to the person in charge/Safeguarding Officer at the earliest possible time*
- *Act without delay*

***Do not***

- *Stop someone disclosing to you*
- *Promise to keep secrets*
- *Press the person for more details or make them repeat the story*
- *Gossip about the disclosure or pass on the information to anyone who does not have a legitimate need to know*
- *Contact the alleged person to have caused the harm*
- *Attempt to investigate yourself*
- *Leave details of your concerns on a voicemail or by email*
- *Delay*

The Diocesan Adult Safeguarding Panel or the Safeguarding Officer (RI) will take any immediate action required to ensure the vulnerable person is safe and make a decision as to when it is appropriate to speak with the adult themselves about the concerns and any proposed actions. They must then report the concerns and any action taken to the social services.

## Flowchart on reporting an issue



## **Safeguarding Officer**

The role of the Designated Officer is set out in 'Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at risk of Abuse'.

The Designated Officer for the Church of Ireland is the Safeguarding Officer (RI). Contact details can be found at <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/about/safeguarding>

The Safeguarding Officer (RI), with the support of the Church of Ireland Safeguarding Board, provides strategic leadership, advice and oversight in relation to adult safeguarding and is responsible for supporting dioceses in ensuring the implementation of this Code of Good Practice. The Safeguarding Officer (RI) is also the main point of contact with HSE and the Garda for all adult safeguarding matters.

The Safeguarding Officer (RI) is responsible for:

- *Receiving concerns or allegations of abuse regarding vulnerable persons*
- *Ensuring the appropriate persons are informed and collaboratively ensuring necessary actions are identified and implemented*
- *Ensuring reporting obligations are met*

All concerns/reports of abuse must be immediately notified to the Safeguarding Officer and in the event of their unavailability to the Diocesan Adult Safeguarding Panel.

## **Diocesan Adult Safeguarding Panel**

The panel will be appointed by the Bishop subject to approval by Diocesan Council. This should be composed of a senior cleric plus two others, with at least one lay member. The panel as far as is practical should comprise persons of different gender. The Adult Safeguarding Panel will work closely with the Safeguarding Officer (RI).

Adult safeguarding issues should not go through the Safeguarding Trust Child Protection Parish Panels but through the Diocesan Adult Safeguarding Panels.

All reports will need to be made to central Safeguarding Officer (RI).

Any cleric, staff member or volunteers may make a report to the Diocesan Adult Safeguarding Panel or to the Safeguarding Officer (RI). The Diocesan Adult Safeguarding Panel will then report to the Safeguarding Officer (RI).

## **Reporting Procedures for Concerns about Adults who may be at Risk of Harm and or in Need of Protection**

It is important to remember that the safety and well-being of adults at risk must be the paramount consideration in any incident and such vulnerable individuals or groups should never be put at further risk of harm by delay or inaction. The Church has a responsibility and will pass on safeguarding concerns to the civil authorities even when it does not concern church personnel directly.

1. *When a concern is noted the information should be raised with the Diocesan Adult Safeguarding Panel or the Safeguarding Officer. **REMEMBER IT IS NOT YOUR ROLE TO INVESTIGATE.** Contact details will be found on the relevant diocesan website and the Church of Ireland website <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/about/safeguarding>*
2. *The Safeguarding Officer (RI) will determine if the matter should be referred to the HSE and / or the Garda.*
3. *Arrangements should be in place to ensure that an absence of a delegated person does not delay reporting to HSE and/or the Garda where there are immediate safety concerns.*
4. *Every safeguarding concern must be taken seriously. The safety and wellbeing of a vulnerable person must be paramount in every investigation and it is important that any actions taken or any delay or inaction does not place the adult at risk of further harm.*
5. *It is important that the adult remains in control of their information and where they are able to give informed consent for a referral to be made that this is agreed.*
6. *Whenever a concern is raised and it is 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 before the end of the day. It is important to sign and date this record.*
7. *Explain to an adult raising a concern what will happen next. Indicate who will be made aware of the information given by them. Leave contact details of the Safeguarding Officer (RI) in case the referrer needs to ask questions later.*

## **Recording Concerns and Storage of Information**

Good record management standards and practices are required for the organisation to ensure confidentiality and that the security of adults' information is respected.

An accurate record should be made of the date and time that the bishop/member of clergy/staff/volunteer became aware of the concerns, the parties who were involved, and any action taken; for example, if first aid was administered. Any questions that bishop/clergy/staff/volunteers ask in 'checking out' the concerns should also be recorded verbatim.

The record should be clear and factual, and recorded at the time or as soon as possible thereafter. Information you have may be valuable to professionals investigating the incident and may at some time in the future be used as evidence in court.

***Details of your conversations and actions should be recorded clearly and signed and dated by you. Information recorded would normally include:***

- a. As much information as possible about the circumstances that led to the concern/allegation being raised; the context of the conversation; any observations; who else was present etc*
- b. The exact words of the individual who reported the concern; and specifically what the person is worried about and why*
- c. Any explanation offered to account for the risk, injury or concern*
- d. Details of any action already taken about the incident/concern/allegation*
- e. Any views expressed by the individual or their carer(s) about the matter*
- f. Detail which, to you, may seem irrelevant. It may prove invaluable at a later stage in an investigation*

All original records must be passed immediately to the Safeguarding Officer (RI). Any copies of records retained must be kept secure and confidential.

All records may be needed in legal proceedings if required.

## **Confidentiality**

Any notes or information held must be stored confidentially and in a secure place (including electronic filing) and shared only with those who need to know about the concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of abuse. Further guidance for faith sector organisations on the management of records, confidentiality and sharing of information is available in the GDPR regulations document on the Church of Ireland Safeguarding website: <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/about/safeguarding><sup>4</sup>

## **Consent and Capacity**

The focus of any intervention must be on promoting a proportionate, measured approach to balancing the risk of harm with respecting an adult's choices and preferred outcome for their own life circumstances. The right of a person with capacity to make decisions and remain in control of their life must be respected. Consideration of 'capacity' and 'consent' are central to adult safeguarding; for example, in determining the ability of an adult to make lifestyle choices, such as choosing to remain in a situation where they risk being harmed or where they choose to take risks. There should always be a presumption of capacity to make decisions unless there is evidence to suggest otherwise; for example: when in a pastoral role you are aware that an individual has a diagnosis of dementia or a moderate to severe learning disability. However, there are also some circumstances when it may be necessary to consider the protection and rights of others, and

---

<sup>4</sup>*Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults: A Shared Responsibility* can be accessed at: <http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/fs/doc/publications/vn-sva-web-full-colour.pdf>

overriding the withholding of consent may be necessary to ensure the protection of others. This decision will be made by the statutory services.

It is good practice for those involved in ministry to explain to a vulnerable person that they cannot keep a concern a secret and that there are agencies and organisations that are able to provide the adult with advice and support. Adults should be encouraged to agree with you having a conversation with the Safeguarding Officer to begin to offer support in a meaningful and respectful way that is cognisant of how they want to deal with their situation.

Where an adult who has capacity to make decisions refuses to give permission to report the concern it is important that this is noted and respected. The adult should be informed that their views are important and will be considered but that it is a pastoral responsibility to discuss the matter with the Safeguarding Officer to ensure the safety and wellbeing of others. This may include allegations of a criminal nature which must be reported to the HSE and/or the Garda.

## **Raising a Concern about someone in a Position of Trust in the Church - this includes all Clergy, Staff and Volunteers**

All organisations that provide services for, or work with, adults at risk must have appropriate whistle-blowing procedures, and a culture that enables safeguarding concerns and allegations to be addressed. There should be particular awareness that the welfare of adults at risk is paramount. Whistleblowing as part of the safeguarding procedures is intended to encourage and enable anyone with a serious concern, to raise that concern.

People who work within the Church of Ireland, including but not limited to office holders, bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers, may find it difficult to speak out and raise their concerns as they may feel they are being disloyal to their colleagues or to the Church. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. Whistle-blowers are protected by law from victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage provided the matter in question is raised with genuine concern. The policy extends this protection to volunteers.

It is important that an individual raising concerns put his/her name to an allegation and does not raise it anonymously. Where concerns are expressed anonymously they will be considered, however they are much less powerful and far more difficult to investigate and prove. Concerns can be raised in confidence. At the appropriate time, however, a whistle-blower may be approached to come forward as a witness, in order to bring the matter to a conclusion.

**If an individual has any concerns that someone within the church is engaged in activities or behaviour that is contrary to any part of these safeguarding policies they should, in the first instance, contact the Safeguarding Officer (RI) or the Diocesan Adult Safeguarding Panel.**

**If an individual feels unable to contact the Safeguarding Officer (RI) or the allegation involves this person, then advice should be sought from the Bishop of the Diocese.**

**If an individual feels unable to contact a member of the Church of Ireland they can go directly to the HSE.**

Concerns may be raised verbally in the first instance; however, this should be followed up in writing stating the history of the concern and providing as much detail as possible including any supporting evidence.

The earlier concerns are raised the easier it is to take action.

### ***Whistleblowing***

The Adult Safeguarding Policy runs in conjunction with the Church of Ireland Dignity in Church Life Charter, Safeguarding Trust for working with Children and all other Representative Church Body policies.

- *The Church of Ireland is committed to the highest possible standards of conduct, openness, honesty and accountability*
- *The Church of Ireland takes poor practice or malpractice seriously, giving examples of the types of concerns to be raised, to ensure that a whistleblowing concern is clearly distinguished from a grievance*
- *Bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers have the option to raise concerns outside of line management structures*
- *Bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers are enabled to access confidential advice from an independent source*
- *The Church of Ireland will, where possible, respect the confidentiality of a bishop, member of clergy, staff or volunteer raising a concern through the whistleblowing procedure*
- *It is a disciplinary matter both to victimise a bona fide whistleblower and for someone to maliciously make a false allegation*

There may be situations in which concerns or allegations turn out to be unfounded. It is important that everyone in the organisation knows that if they raise a concern which, through the process of investigation, is not validated, they have not in any way been wrong in their initial action. Responsible action needs to be encouraged in the organisation and whistleblowers should be confident of support. The whistleblowing policy needs to be regularly reviewed to ensure the procedures work in practice. It is everyone's duty to be vigilant in preventing abusive practice.

### **How the Church will Respond**

The Church of Ireland gives an undertaking to minimise any risk to an individual raising a concern in good faith and will support them in doing so. It will not tolerate victimisation, intimidation or negative repercussion of anyone raising a concern in good faith and will take action as required.

## *Section G*

# **RISK ASSESSMENT**

---

A risk assessment of all activities involving adults who are potentially at risk must be carried out on an annual basis by the Select Vestry of every Parish.

Activities that would require a risk assessment include the following (this is no way an exhaustive list but gives an indication of the types of activities involved):

- *Church services*
- *Pastoral visiting*
- *Lunch clubs*
- *Bowling club*
- *Mothers' Union*

Further risk assessments are required for one off events, such as Summer Fair, or external visits, such as a cinema trip.

Risk assessments for all activities must be completed in writing and kept with other Safeguarding documents so they can be available when required.

All incidents and accidents must be recorded in writing. All leaders of groups must be aware of where the incident/accident record is stored and how they can access it when required.

## *Section H*

# **COMPLAINTS**

---

The Church of Ireland has an ethos of inclusion, transparency and openness.

Anyone who has an issue relating to the Church of Ireland in connection with Adult Safeguarding can raise an enquiry or complaint through the Safeguarding Officer or if it is about them then through the Representative Church Body ([www.ireland.anglican.org](http://www.ireland.anglican.org)). Any complaints regarding bishops or clergy in the context of adult safeguarding will be referred to the Complaints Administrator. This will then trigger the complaints procedure as laid out in the Constitution of the Church of Ireland. Should the complaint require further investigation the Complaints Committee will sit to consider the matter. The Church of Ireland Dignity in Church Life Charter also outlines the support available to anyone who wishes to complain about a matter relating to the Church of Ireland.

All leaders-in-charge, volunteers and participants should be made aware of the complaints procedure either through the parish magazine/website or a notice clearly displayed in the church and church halls.

# Section I

## RECORD KEEPING

---

### Confidentiality

Some information should only be shared on a need-to-know basis. It is important to have a clear written statement on confidentiality, when information must be passed on, why and to whom.

A confidentiality policy should be written and include reference to:

- *What information is needed from participants*
- *Storage of information*
- *Access to information*
- *Length of time information is kept*
- *Procedure/guidelines for appropriate sharing of information*

### Record Keeping

The following categories of records should be kept with Data Protection guidelines:

#### ***Staff or Volunteers***

- *All details provided at the time of recruitment*
- *Any record of complaints or incidents involving staff or volunteers*
- *A record that all vetting has been carried out and all relevant checks have been completed*

#### ***Adults at Risk***

- *Membership registration form including medical details, any special needs*
- *Emergency contact numbers or numbers of nearest relative or person*

#### ***Organisation***

- *Attendance register - including staff and volunteers' attendances*
- *Accident book*
- *Incident book*

It is important that all staff and volunteers are aware of and follow a written procedure for record keeping. There should also be an agreed procedure for lodging records for permanent filing in a secured filing cabinet.

Adults must be able to access information held about them at any time and they must be aware of this.

Records must be kept in accordance with the Church of Ireland GDPR Policy.

## *Section J*

# **PROMOTING SAFER PRACTICE WHEN WORKING WITH VULNERABLE PERSONS**

---

This policy statement and the good practice guidelines are designed for all members of the Church who have some responsibility for the pastoral care of others. It is intended to help the Church community understand the needs of adults at risk to help improve pastoral care.

The way we behave in the Church is often implied through our faith and values but there may be a need to discuss behaviour with a group and agree what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. This agreement must comply with the code of behaviour below.

### **Code of Behaviour when working with Vulnerable Adults** *(This code must be given to all bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers.)*

Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers should avoid:

- *Spending excessive amounts of time alone with an adult at risk*
- *Taking an adult at risk to your own home*
- *Taking an adult at risk alone on a car journey, unless part of core activities*

Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers should never engage in any of the following behaviours:

- *Abuse, neglect or harm an adult*
- *Rough physical games*
- *Sexually provocative games*
- *Inappropriate comments/jokes*
- *Form inappropriate relationships*
- *Discriminate against individuals and their families who have different cultural backgrounds and beliefs from their own*
- *Take a photograph or video, including by mobile phone, without consent*

Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers should ensure that:

- *Physical contact is person-centred and appropriate to the task required*
- *They understand and support the implementation of a care plan by relevant health professionals, where required*
- *They do not provide intimate care unless in an emergency, if required it is done sensitively and with respect for the individual's dignity and privacy*
- *They involve the individual as far as possible in his/her own care*
- *If they are concerned about anything during care, they report it at the earliest opportunity*

Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers should:

- *Never deny an adult access to his/her money*
- *Never borrow money from, or lend money to, an adult you are working with or caring for*
- *Report any suspicions of financial abuse*
- *Not photograph/video an adult, even by mobile phone, without the adult's valid consent*
- *Ensure that any photographs/videos taken are appropriate*
- *Report any inappropriate use of image*
- *Report any inappropriate or dangerous behaviour on the internet that involves an adult at risk*

It is important that adults at risk are made aware of the dangers associated with new technology, such as social networking sites and the internet, and know to tell someone if they encounter anything that makes them feel unsafe or threatened.

Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers should:

- *Ensure they are familiar with the Church of Ireland's safeguarding policy*
- *Set an example they would wish others to follow*
- *Always respect the person and all their abilities and treat each person with dignity and respect promoting an environment that enhances disclosure*
- *Not make assumptions, for example, that you know the family and there must be more to it*
- *Be respectful when visiting people, taking care to knock before entering a building or a room and being conscious of length of visits. There may be individual occasions where you may decide that a lone visit is not appropriate and in such circumstances it is recommended that the adult or their carer as necessary is notified in advance of the visit and appropriate arrangements are put in place for a family member to be present or a colleague to visit with you*
- *Remember that an adult at risk is still an adult and must never be treated like a child. The choices that an individual makes should be recognised even if they appear risky and they must never be forced or coerced to participate in an activity. It is important to ensure that the choices offered to individuals are fully understood by them*
- *Empower adults at risk to safeguard themselves. They should be listened to, believed, given relevant advice and information and always involved in decisions that affect them as far as it possible*
- *Provide help in such a way as to maximize a person's independence. People with additional needs can and do lead active and fulfilled lives but some may need support and resources to do so. Respect a person's independence and do not encourage them to become dependent on you*
- *Not partake in pastoral care which is beyond an individual's responsibility and/or competence*
- ***Decline to deal with an individual's financial affairs unless legally required to do so***
- ***Not accept material or financial gifts. If it would upset or offend someone for the gift to be refused then the Safeguarding Officer should be informed as soon as possible. This will avoid any accusation or confusion later***
- *Be mindful of the language used, tone of voice, and body language. Positive and appropriate language should be used at all times and if necessary, advice should be sought when the person has specific communication needs*

- *Use touch appropriately and respect an individual's boundaries. Touch can be a way of communicating affection, warmth and comfort. It should be appropriate and generally initiated by the adult and related to their needs*
- *Be mindful of the safety of adults at risk but also of your own safety and protect yourself from allegations of inappropriate behaviour. Behaviour should be open, transparent and accountable. Be aware that however well-intentioned someone's actions are, they may be misinterpreted by others*
- *Afford adults at risk the highest level of privacy and confidentiality possible in the circumstances however promises to keep secrets should not be made*
- *Take care in selecting an appropriate location and setting for a discussion. Offering appropriate care and support is important so, in listening to a person's problem or offering advice. Where possible, other leaders should be made aware of the meeting and other people should be around*
- *Avoid situations within a relationship of trust which could compromise that relationship*
- *Never trivialise abuse or dismiss worries. Allegations and concerns about abuse must be taken seriously. Careful notes should be written of what has been seen or heard and it should be reported straight away*
- *Recognise, record, report; never be afraid to ask for help and advice from your leaders or more experienced staff. The Safeguarding Officer is available to give consultation and advice.*

## **Breaching the Code**

Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers should understand that:

- *If they are unsure of their actions and feel they may have breached the Code, they should consult with their Incumbent, Leader in Charge, Diocesan Adult Safeguarding Panel or the Safeguarding Officer (RI) as relevant*
- *Breaching the Code is a serious issue that will be investigated*
- *Breaching the Code may result in Church disciplinary action and ultimately dismissal if it constitutes harm/risk of harm.*

## Section K

# USEFUL CONTACTS

---

### HSC Contact

Dublin North, Dublin North Central, Dublin West	01 6250447
Laois, Offaly, Longford, Westmeath, Louth and Meath	01 6914632
Kildare, West Wicklow, Dublin West, Dublin South City, Dublin South West	045 920410
Wicklow, Dun Laoghaire and Dublin South East	01 2164511
South Tipperary, Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford, Wexford	056-7784325
Kerry and Cork	021 4923967
Clare, Limerick, North Tipperary and East Limerick	067 46470
Galway, Roscommon and Mayo	091 748488
Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan and Monaghan	071-9834660

### References

*Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings: Guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, the use of special measures and the provision of pre-trial therapy.* Department of Justice (2012).

Action on Elder Abuse: definition of abuse 1993 which can be accessed at:  
<http://www.elderabuse.org.uk/Mainpages/Abuse/abuse.html>

This was later adopted by the World Health Organisation: [http://www.who.int/ageing/projects/elder\\_abuse/en/](http://www.who.int/ageing/projects/elder_abuse/en/)

*Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership*  
Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety and Department of Justice (2015).

'*Keeping Adults Safe: A Shared Responsibility*' can be accessed at: <http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/>

*Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland: A Seven Year Strategy*  
Department of Health and Department of Justice (2016).

*The European Convention on Human Rights* can be accessed at: [http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf)

*The Human Rights Act 1998* can be accessed at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents>

Relevant Conventions include *The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, the *UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW), and the *EU Istanbul Convention* on domestic and sexual violence against women.

*The UN Principles for Older Person's (1991)* can be accessed at: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/46/a46r091.htm>

*Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse - National Policy and Procedures* (2014, HSE).



Church of Ireland  
Safeguarding Board