

# STANDARD 2

PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS,  
CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS

## GUIDANCE

**THESE PIECES OF GUIDANCE ARE TO ASSIST,  
IF NECESSARY, WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF  
STANDARD 2**





THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR  
**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN**  
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IRELAND

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Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2020

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# Roles of Safeguarding Personnel in Relation to this Standard

## Church authority

The role of the Church authority across all the seven standards is outlined in Appendix A. In relation to Standard 2, the Church authority is responsible for:

- Ensuring that appropriate personnel and procedures are in place to recognise and respond to allegations of abuse;
- Ensuring that practice and policy on reporting allegations is compliant with statutory and canonical law. This includes liaising with the Congregations of the Holy See, as appropriate.

## Designated liaison person (DLP)

The role of the DLP as laid out in Appendix A is:

- Hearing safeguarding concerns;
- Passing on safeguarding concerns to the statutory authorities where there are reasonable grounds for concern;
- Managing the case file and all associated documents;
- Liaising with the support person, advisor and the Church authority;
- Informing the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland of an allegation/concern;
- Conducting internal inquiries.

## Support person

The role of the support person across Standards 2 and 3 is outlined in Appendix A. In relation to Standard 2, the support person is responsible for:

- 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;
- Recording the dates of any meetings or contact they have with the complainant, and reporting to the DLP as appropriate. The support person will not be responsible for managing the file, and will pass on written records to the DLP, as appropriate, during regular meetings with the DLP.

## **Advisor**

The role of the advisor across Standards 2 and 4 is outlined in Appendix A. In relation to Standard 2, the advisor is responsible for:

- Meeting the respondent with the DLP and the Church authority in order to support the respondent, keeping them informed of the progress of their case, and helping them to identify and access support;
- Recording any meetings or contact they have with the respondent and reporting to the DLP, as appropriate. The advisor will not be responsible for managing the file, and will pass on written records to the DLP, as appropriate, during regular meetings with the DLP.

## **An Garda Síochána/PSNI**

It is the responsibility of the Gardaí and the PSNI to investigate and establish if a crime has been committed. They will liaise directly with the DLP, as appropriate.

## **Tusla/H SCT**

It is the responsibility of Tusla (the Child and Family Agency) to promote the welfare of children in the Republic of Ireland who are not receiving adequate care and protection (Section 3, Child Care Act 1991). They will liaise with the DLP, as appropriate.

It is the responsibility of the HSCT (Health and Social Care Trust) to assess risk to children in Northern Ireland. They will liaise with the DLP, as appropriate

## **The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland**

The role of the National Board across all the seven standards is outlined in Appendix A. In relation to Standard 2, the National Board will:

- Be advised of safeguarding allegations, suspicions or concerns by the DLP relating to clerics or religious; monitor and report on these allegations; and retain records of this information safely and securely;
- Offer advice and support to the people in the roles listed above and on the previous page, in relation to the safeguarding concerns, suspicions or allegations that have been reported, and on the policy and processes for reporting.

## **Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF)**

The CDF is a congregation of the Roman Catholic Curia. It is responsible for promulgating and defending Catholic doctrine. In Relation to Standard 2 as part Article 26 of the *Vademecum on Certain Points and Procedures in Treating cases of Sexual Abuse of Minors Committed by Clerics* all allegations relating to clerics involving the sexual abuse of children must be reported to both the statutory authorities and the CDF.

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### Storage and Retention of Records Associated with this Standard

The table below lists the types of records that need to be stored appropriately and securely as part of this standard, in accordance with best practice in record-keeping (see Appendix B). The templates for the production of each record, which have been included in the guidance for this standard, are listed in the final column.

Type of Record	Where to Store	Template/Guidance Number/Page Number
Completed child protection referral forms	Diocesan/congregational level	2.1A Template 1 Page 11
Completed Tusla Child Protection and Welfare Forms (only applicable in ROI)	Diocesan/congregational level	Guidance 2.1A Page 7
Completed Retrospective Abuse Report Form (only applicable in ROI)	Diocesan/congregational level	Guidance 2.1A Page 7
Completed notification letters to CDF	Diocesan/congregation level	2.1A Template 2 Page 14
Completed case summary information sheets	Diocesan/congregational level	2.2B Template 2 Page 67
List of Mandated Persons (only applicable in ROI)	Diocesan/congregational level	Guidance 2.1L Page 40
Chronology of allegations	Diocesan/congregational level	2.2B Template 4 Page 69
Assessment reports	Diocesan/congregational level	Guidance 2.2B Page 64
Dates of meetings held with complainant by support person	Diocesan/congregational level	Guidance 2.2B Page 64
Dates of meetings held by advisor with respondent	Diocesan/congregational level	Guidance 2.2B Page 64
Any correspondence relating to the case	Diocesan/congregational level	Guidance 2.2B Page 64
Any third-party information	Diocesan/congregational level	Guidance 2.2B Page 64
Case record narrative	Diocesan/congregational level	2.2B Template 3 Page 68
Notes of any requests for support or relevant safeguarding concerns made to support person by complainant	Diocesan/congregational level	Guidance 2.2B Page 64
Notes of any requests for support or relevant safeguarding concerns made to advisor by respondent	Diocesan/congregational level	Guidance 2.2B Page 64
Minutes of liaison meetings with statutory authorities	Diocesan/congregational level	Guidance 2.2A Page 62

# STANDARD 2

## PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

### 2.1A Guidance on Reporting Allegations of Abuse

Children occupy a central place in the heart of the Christian community. They have a right to be listened to and heard.<sup>1</sup> The paramount consideration in all matters relating to children is their safety and protection from all forms of abuse. To create and maintain a safe environment, Church organisations must respond effectively and ensure all suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations of abuse (as defined in Appendix C) are reported, both within the Church and to statutory authorities. Under the law in Northern Ireland this responsibility is mandatory, similarly in the Republic of Ireland legislation requires mandated persons to report child protection suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations. Canon law also requires the reporting of allegations to the statutory authorities in compliance with the obligations under national law.<sup>2</sup>

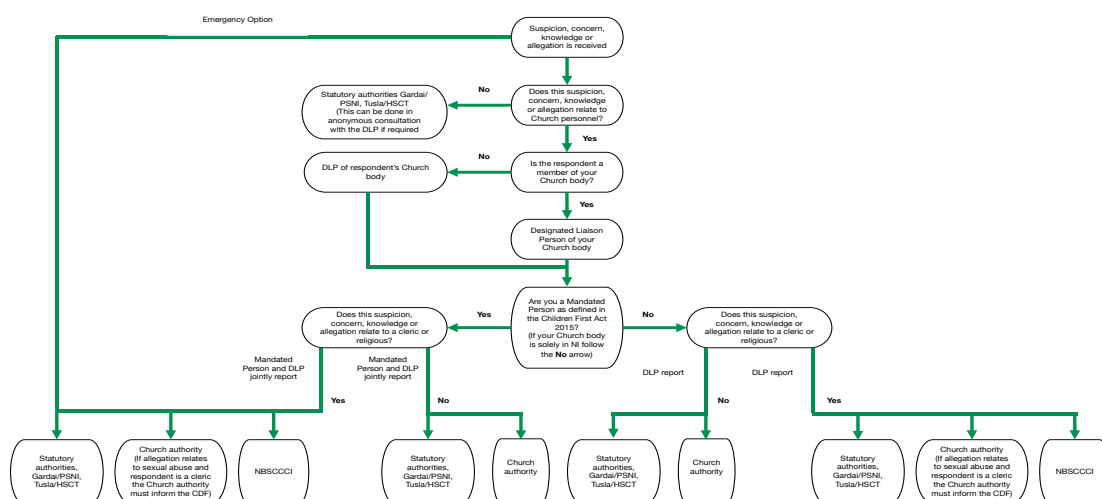
Clerics should note the requirements under Canon law relating to the sacramental Seal of Confession (Guidance 2.1G).

All Church bodies must provide guidance and training on recognition of abuse, and clear procedures on what to do when a child protection concern arises, so that everyone knows how to respond appropriately. This involves knowing who to tell and how to record it. It is important that the local reporting procedures are fully consistent with statutory legislation, regulations and guidance.<sup>3</sup>

Reporting a concern can be a challenging responsibility. The procedure is designed to make sure that everyone is clear what steps to take to ensure that the safety of children is the paramount consideration.

The reporting flow chart below refers to any child protection concern, *including* where the concern is about a situation or person involved in the Church. It is the responsibility of everyone in the Church to ensure that children who may need help and protection are not left at risk of abuse.

Figure 2.1A1



1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, Article 12.

2 Vos estis lux mundi, 2019.

3 Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967; Criminal Justice Act 2006; Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012; Children First Act 2015; Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017; Safeguarding Board Act (Northern Ireland) 2011; Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015; Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998; and National Policy (*Children First: National Guidance 2017*; and *Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2017*).



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1. Following receipt of an allegation, suspicion or concern, the following steps should be taken.

#### **If the respondent is not a member of Church personnel**

- **and the complainant is an adult or child in Northern Ireland-** the person who receives the allegation must report it to the HSCT and PSNI using 2.1A Template 1 (they can consult the DLP anonymously about this).
- **and the complainant is an adult in ROI-** the person who receives the allegation should complete form [http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Retrospective\\_Abuse\\_Report\\_Form\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Retrospective_Abuse_Report_Form_FINAL.pdf) and forward to Tusla or they can use the web portal <http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/web-portal>. The person who receives the allegation should also report to An Garda Síochána using the email address [nbcj\\_scmu@garda.ie](mailto:nbcj_scmu@garda.ie) (they can consult the DLP anonymously about this).
- **and the complainant is a child in ROI-** the person who receives the allegation should complete form [http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child\\_Protection\\_and\\_Welfare\\_Report\\_Form\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child_Protection_and_Welfare_Report_Form_FINAL.pdf) and forward to Tusla or they can use the web portal <http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/web-portal>. The person who receives the allegation should also report to An Garda Síochána using the email address [nbcj\\_scmu@garda.ie](mailto:nbcj_scmu@garda.ie) (they can consult the DLP anonymously about this).

#### **If the respondent is a member of Church personnel but is not a cleric or religious (lay personnel)**

- **and the complainant is an adult or child in Northern Ireland-** the person who receives the allegation must report it to the DLP of the respondent's Church body who will then assess if it meets the threshold for reporting and make the referral to the HSCT and PSNI using 2.1A Template 1. They will also report it to the Church authority.
- **and the complainant is an adult in ROI-** The person who receives the allegation must report it to the DLP of the respondent's Church body who will assess if it meets the threshold for reporting, and complete this form for Tusla [http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Retrospective\\_Abuse\\_Report\\_Form\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Retrospective_Abuse_Report_Form_FINAL.pdf) or use the web portal <http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/web-portal>. The person who receives the allegation should also report to An Garda Síochána using the email address [nbcj\\_scmu@garda.ie](mailto:nbcj_scmu@garda.ie). If the person who received the allegation is a mandated person they will complete the Tusla form jointly with the DLP of the respondent's Church body. The DLP of the respondent's Church body will also report it to the Church authority.
- **and the complainant is a child in ROI-** The person who receives the allegation must report it to the DLP of the respondent's Church body who will assess if it meets the threshold for reporting and complete this form for Tusla [http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child\\_Protection\\_and\\_Welfare\\_Report\\_Form\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child_Protection_and_Welfare_Report_Form_FINAL.pdf) or use the web portal <http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/web-portal>. The person who receives the allegation should also report to An Garda Síochána using the email address [nbcj\\_scmu@garda.ie](mailto:nbcj_scmu@garda.ie). If the person who received the allegation is a mandated person they will complete the Tusla form jointly with the DLP of the respondent's Church body. The DLP of the respondent's Church body will also report it to the Church authority.

#### **If the respondent is a member of Church personnel and is a cleric or religious**

- **and the complainant is an adult or child in Northern Ireland-** the person who receives the allegation must report it to the DLP of the respondent's Church body who will then assess if it meets the threshold for reporting and make the referral to the HSCT and PSNI using 2.1A

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Template 1. They will also report it to the Church authority (who will inform the CDF if the allegation relates to sexual abuse and the respondent is a cleric who is not deceased using 2.1A Template 2) and the National Board using 2.1A Template 1.

- **and the complainant is an adult in ROI-** The person who receives the allegation must report it to the DLP of the respondent's Church body who will assess if it meets the threshold for reporting, and complete this form for Tusla [http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Retrospective\\_Abuse\\_Report\\_Form\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Retrospective_Abuse_Report_Form_FINAL.pdf) or use the web portal <http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/web-portal>. The person who receives the allegation should also report to An Garda Síochána using the email address [nbcj\\_scmu@garda.ie](mailto:nbcj_scmu@garda.ie). If the person who received the allegation is a mandated person they will complete the Tusla form jointly with the DLP of the respondent's Church body. The DLP of the respondent's Church body will also report it to the Church authority (who will inform the CDF if the allegation relates to sexual abuse and the respondent is a cleric who is not deceased using 2.1A Template 2) and the National Board using 2.1A Template 1.
- **and the complainant is a child in ROI-** The person who receives the allegation must report it to the DLP of the respondent's Church body who will assess if it meets the threshold for reporting and complete this form for Tusla [http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child\\_Protection\\_and\\_Welfare\\_Report\\_Form\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child_Protection_and_Welfare_Report_Form_FINAL.pdf) or use the web portal <http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/web-portal>. The person who receives the allegation should also report to An Garda Síochána using the email address [nbcj\\_scmu@garda.ie](mailto:nbcj_scmu@garda.ie). If the person who received the allegation is a mandated person they will complete these forms jointly with the DLP of the respondent's Church body. The DLP of the respondent's Church body will also report it to the Church authority (who will inform the CDF if the allegation relates to sexual abuse and the respondent is a cleric who is not deceased using 2.1A Template 2) and the National Board using 2.1A Template 1.

**Please note the steps outlined above are the procedures to be followed if the respondent is alive. The statutory authorities to be informed in the Republic of Ireland may differ if the respondent is deceased, for further information see Guidance 2.1M.**

If there is any uncertainty about whether the allegation/concern meets the threshold for reporting, a consultation should take place with the relevant DLP (anonymously if required) who may consult with the statutory authorities, who will advise on the requirements for notification. It is important to remember that the web portal is only for Tusla, and will not allow you to print out forms. It is therefore advisable to complete the form manually so it can be forwarded to An Garda Síochána and retained in the case file (Guidance 2.2B).

**Remember – it is not your role to investigate.**

2. 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 take notes at the time, make a written record as soon as possible afterwards or before the end of the day. Record the time, date, location, persons present and how the allegation was received, e.g. by telephone, face-to-face conversation, letter, etc. This initial recorded information will be transferred to the appropriate forms and will become the first entry in a file of information about the case that will be retained by the relevant DLP. Please always sign and date the record.
3. The record would also normally include:
  - Accurate identifying information of the complainant, as far as it is known. This should include the name, address and age of the complainant when the alleged abuse occurred;
  - Where the person who has raised a concern/allegation is a child, details of parents/guardians should also be given;
  - Name of the individual against whom the concern/allegation is being raised, and any other identifying

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information;

- Dates when the concern arose, or when the incident occurred;
- The person's own words they used to describe the event or incident. Do not make assumptions about the intended meaning of the words used;
- Details of any action already taken about the incident/concern/allegation;
- Do not be selective. Include details that to you may seem irrelevant. This may prove invaluable at a later stage in an investigation. All original records, including rough notes, should be passed immediately to the relevant DLP. Any copies of retained records should be kept secure and confidential.

In cases of emergency (and/or outside normal business hours), where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, an urgent report must be made to Tusla/HSCT, as well as to the DLP of the respondent's Church body. Where the appropriate Tusla/HSCT staff are not available, An Garda Síochána/PSNI must be contacted to ensure that **under no circumstances a child is left in a dangerous situation pending Tusla/Health and Social Services intervention** (see emergency option in Figure 2.1A1).

4. In all cases, consideration should also be given as to whether an immediate referral is necessary in order to preserve and safeguard against the possibility of any loss, deterioration or destruction of forensic or other potential evidence (see emergency option arrow in Figure 2.1A1).
5. Explain to the person raising the concern what will happen next. You should inform the person making the suspicion, concern or allegation that their identity and the identity of the respondent and complainant will be shared with the statutory authorities. The incident/concern should not be shared with anyone other than those who need to know, apart from the statutory authorities and appropriate Church authorities detailed in these procedures.
6. Written confirmation should be given to the person making the referral to the DLP of the respondent's Church body that the information has been passed on to the statutory authorities. If this has not happened, an explanation should be recorded (this will not be possible when dealing with anonymous allegations).

The appropriateness of the response given to a complainant is vital to ensure that they feel heard and taken seriously.

Further guidance is provided below for:

- An adult making an allegation (Guidance 2.1B);
- A child making an allegation (Guidance 2.1C);
- An anonymous allegation (Guidance 2.1D);
- Someone who admits abusing a child (Guidance 2.1E);
- Someone who makes an allegation that does not relate to Church personnel (Guidance 2.1F);
- Managing child protection allegations, suspicions, concerns, knowledge, acts or omissions of Bishops or their equivalents (Guidance 2.1I);
- Allegations against lay Church personnel (Guidance 2.1K);
- Mandated Persons (Guidance 2.1L);
- Responding to allegations against a deceased cleric or religious (Guidance 2.1M);
- Managing child protection allegations, suspicions, concerns, knowledge, acts or omissions of Church authorities (who are not or have never been supreme moderators (or equivalent) (Guidance 2.1N);
- Guidance on managing allegations, suspicions, knowledge and concerns that a cleric or religious has abused a child through child pornography (2.1O).

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#### 2.1A Template 1: Child Protection Referral Form

When completing this form any information which you feel would directly identify the respondent or complainant should be removed.

<p><b>About the suspicion/concern/knowledge/allegation</b></p> <p>Date of suspicion/concern/knowledge/allegation:</p> <p>Date information received:</p> <p>Date sent to NBSCCCI:</p>
<p><b>Details of Complainant</b></p> <p>DOB:</p> <p>Age at the time of the suspicion/concern/knowledge/allegation</p>
<p><b>Details of respondent(Name must be anonymised when notifying the National Board)</b></p> <p>Name:</p> <p>Name of Church body at time of the suspicion/concern/knowledge/allegation:</p> <p>Name of current Church body (if different from above):</p> <p>DOB/age:</p> <p>Date of death if applicable:</p> <p>Relationship to complainant (parent/priest/teacher etc.):</p> <p>Role in Church body (priest in parish/brother/sister/teacher in school):</p> <p>Current contact with children if known (e.g. sits on board of governors of school, runs youth activities etc.):</p> <p>Any additional information:</p>

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#### Details of suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation

(Include dates/times the incident occurred, the type of abuse that is being alleged (sexual, physical, emotional or neglect); any witnesses (anonymised), if known; and whether the complainant knows this referral is being made?)

#### Referral to the statutory authorities

Has the matter been referred to the statutory authorities?

Yes

No

If the answer to the question above is **yes**, please complete the details below. If the answer is no, please explain why the matter was not referred to the statutory authorities.

#### Tusla/HSCT

Date referred:

Time referred:

Name of person it was referred to:

Designation:

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

#### Gardaí/PSNI

Date referred:

Time referred:

Name of person it was referred to:

Designation:

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

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#### Referral to a member of the Church (ONLY COMPLETE IF THE ALLEGATION RELATES TO CHURCH PERSONNEL)

Has the matter been referred to the Church authority?

Yes

No

Name of Church body:

Date referred:

Time referred:

Name of person it was referred to:

Designation:

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

#### Next steps (ONLY COMPLETE IF THIS ALLEGATION RELATES TO A CLERIC OR RELIGIOUS)

What actions have been taken (if any) by the Church, in relation to the respondent, to safeguard children following receipt of this information?

#### Sign off for DLP

DLP name:

DLP address:

DLP telephone:

DLP email:

DLP signature:

#### Sign off for Mandated Persons (ROI only)

**This section must be completed if the person making the referral is a mandated person (as defined in Children First 2015)**

Name:

Signature:

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### GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

## 2.1A Template 2 : Template Letter to CDF for Referring Sexual Abuse Allegations Against Clerics who are not Deceased

Promoter for Justice

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

Palazzo del Sant'Uffizio

00120 Città del Vaticano

Your Excellency

This is to advise you, in line with Article 26 of the Vademecum, 2020, that I have received an allegation of child sexual abuse on [INSERT DATE].

The allegation relates to Father [INSERT NAME] who was born on [INSERT DATE OF BIRTH]..

The allegation was received from [INSERT NAME OF PERSON WHO RECEIVED THE ALLEGATION] and states that on [INSERT DATE] Father [INSERT NAME OF RESEPDENT] sexually abused them.

I have reported the allegation to the Police and civil authority agencies in this jurisdiction. I have also reported the matter to the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church (without identifying information, in line with data protection legislation)

Fr [INSERT NAME] is alive and as active investigations are in process restrictions have/have not [DELETE AS APPROPRIATE] been placed on his public ministry.

I will notify you further once the preliminary investigation under canon 1717 is complete.

Yours Sincerely

[INSERT SIGNATURE OF CHURCH AUTHORITY]

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#### 2.1B Guidance on Responding to an Adult Making an Allegation of Abuse

The role of the DLP is to receive all safeguarding concerns relating to Church personnel and to pass on to the statutory authorities those that reach the threshold (see Glossary). This is in line with national legislation and policy as outlined in Guidance 2.1A. It is often very difficult for people to talk about abuse, so it is important to make sure that a safe environment of listening carefully and actively is created, in which a complainant feels able to disclose as much as they can remember. This will help those people whose responsibility it is to investigate the incident to do so as thoroughly as possible.

People may tell you about:

- Abuse that happened to them when they were a child;
- Something they have been told by someone else and that they strongly believe is true (disclosure);
- Seeing signs of abuse, such as physical injuries on a child;
- Something they have witnessed that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Where information is given in person, consider the following:

- Adopt a listening style that 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;
- 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 their own pace;
- Check with the person to make sure that you have understood what they actually said. Do not suggest words – use theirs;
- Make no promises that cannot be kept, particularly in relation to confidentiality, but listen carefully to what is being sought in this regard;
- Explain the referral procedures to the person;
- Offer the services of a support person, if the support person is not present;
- Do not make any comments about the respondent; do not make assumptions or speculate;
- Be aware that a person's ability to recount their concern or allegation will depend on their age, culture, nationality or any disability that may affect speech or language;
- Avoid statements about your reaction to the information given;
- Do not question beyond checking what has been said. It is the responsibility of Tusla/HSCT and An Garda Síochána/PSNI to investigate. There should be no probing for detail beyond that which has been freely given;
- Do not offer wording or language to the person making the allegation that may assist in the provision of an account of the concern or allegation.



## STANDARD 2

### PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

#### 2.1C Guidance on Responding to a Child Making an Allegation of Abuse

The Church aims to create and maintain a safe environment for children and young people. This includes being open and willing to listen to and respond appropriately to allegations of abuse that come directly from children. However, Church personnel should not intentionally instigate a meeting with a child in order to receive a disclosure or take a statement from them – that is the role of Tulsa/HSCT.

However, in the event that a child tells you directly about abuse happening to them, the following general guidelines should be adhered to:

- Remain calm;
- Listen to the child carefully and in a manner that conveys that they are being heard and taken seriously;
- Give the child the opportunity to tell their story in their own time;
- Ask questions only for clarification;
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling you;
- Do not make promises that you cannot keep;
- Explain to the child what you are going to do, i.e. pass the information on to the statutory authorities, explain to them about the limits of confidentiality, etc.;
- It is good practice to inform the child's parents/guardians that a report is being made however, the legislation does not require you to. But you/the DLP should consult with Tulsa/HSCT regarding the appropriateness of informing the child's parents/guardians and who should do this.
- If the allegation/disclosure is about Church personnel, explain to the child (and their parents/guardians) that the matter will be reported to the statutory authorities and Church authorities.

It is good practice in this situation to have another adult with you. If this is not possible, see Guidance 1.4D.

This is in line with national legislation and policy as outlined in Guidance 2.1A.

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### PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

## 2.1D Guidance on Responding to an Anonymous Allegation of Abuse Against Church Personnel

Anonymous allegations are to be carefully considered. They are frustrating, but they cannot be disregarded. The complainant should be informed that anonymity might significantly restrict the ability of professionals to access information or to intervene to protect a child, and they need to be encouraged to be as open as possible. The complainant can be given time and encouragement to reconsider their stance on maintaining anonymity.

These allegations most likely will take the following formats:

### 1. No named complainant and no named respondent

- This information should be first passed to the DLP. If the DLP is unsure whether or not the information received reaches the threshold, they should consult with the statutory authorities (Appendix D) and follow their advice.

### 2. Named respondent but no named complainant

- In most instances the anonymous reporter does give the name of the respondent. It must be remembered that the person named in this way has the right to be considered innocent of any wrongdoing and to their good name, so great care needs to be taken to protect and uphold these rights, while attempting to deal effectively with the situation.
- Anxiety and fear may persuade some people not to immediately reveal their identity. It can be difficult to act on information given under these circumstances, unless at some point the name of the person raising the concern or making an allegation becomes known.
- This information should be passed to the DLP of the respondent's Church body, who will consult with the statutory authorities (Appendix D) (on a no name basis if required) to ascertain if the threshold has been reached. If the threshold has been reached the DLP will formally notify the statutory authorities and follow the processes outlined in Standard 4. If the threshold has not been reached or the statutory authorities have concluded their investigation the procedures outlined in Guidance 4.3A should be followed.

### 3. Named complainant but no named respondent

- This information should be passed to the DLP, who will consult with the statutory authorities (Appendix D) (on a no name basis if required) to ascertain if the threshold has been reached. If the threshold has been reached the DLP will formally notify the statutory authorities and follow their advice as to how to proceed, without the name of the respondent.

This is in line with national legislation and policy as outlined in Guidance 2.1A.

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### PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

#### **2.1E Guidance on Responding to Someone (Lay or Religious) who Admits to 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 the allegation does not relate to Church personnel you must refer the matter to Tusla/HSCT, and An Garda Síochána/PSNI. You can consult with the DLP of your Church body anonymously regarding the allegation and for advice on what procedure to follow.

If the allegation relates to Church personnel you should refer this to the DLP of the respondent's Church body who will follow the procedures for referral to Tusla/HSCT, and An Garda Síochána/PSNI, and the Church authority. If the allegation relates to the sexual abuse of a child by a cleric who is not deceased the Church authority must also inform the CDF using 2.1A Template 2. If you are in the Republic of Ireland and are a Mandated Person (Guidance 2.1L) this will take the form of a joint report.

For additional information and guidance on how to interact with respondents (cleric and religious), please refer to Standard 4.

This is in line with national legislation and policy as outlined in Guidance 2.1A.

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### PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

#### 2.1F Guidance on Responding to Someone who Makes an Allegation that does not Relate to Church Personnel

Whether or not a child protection concern involves a person in the Church, it is vital to remember that the safety and well-being of any child should be the paramount consideration in any investigation, and **children must never be put at further risk of harm by delay or inaction.**

If an allegation is raised in this way, you must refer the matter to Tusla/HSCT, and An Garda Síochána/PSNI. You can consult with the DLP anonymously regarding the allegation and for advice on what procedure to follow.

It is important to consult with Tusla/HSCT, and An Garda Síochána/PSNI about retention and storage of records relating to this allegation.

This is in line with national legislation and policy as outlined in Guidance 2.1A.

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### PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

## 2.1G Guidance on Child Safeguarding and the Sacrament of Reconciliation

### The Sacramental Seal

All suspicions, concerns and allegations of child abuse must be reported to the statutory authorities through the reporting procedure outlined in Guidance 2.1A.

Canon law requires the maintenance of trust in the Sacrament of Reconciliation guaranteeing absolute confidentiality, allowing for no exceptions. This is known as the Seal of Confession and guarantees to the penitent that anything revealed to the confessor will not be divulged to anyone else. This is outlined in Canon 983, as shown below:

*The sacramental seal is inviolable; therefore it is absolutely forbidden for a confessor to betray in any way a penitent in words or in any manner and for any reason.*

### Definition of Confession

Canon law provides a clear definition of what is deemed to be appropriate with regards to the hearing of Confession. This should be used as the definition to clarify when Confession has taken place:

- Canon 964 §1: The proper place to hear sacramental Confessions is a church or oratory;
- §2: The Conference of Bishops is to establish norms regarding the confessional; it is to take care, however, that there are always confessionals with a fixed grate between the penitent and the confessor in an open place, so that the faithful who wish to can use them freely;
- §3: Confessions are not to be heard outside a confessional without a just cause.

### Procedures for a penitent who discloses abuse during Confession

If a penitent discloses abuse during Confession, the confessor should:

#### In the case of an abused penitent who is a child:

- a. Sensitively reassure the child or young person that they were right to tell you;
- b. Remind them that whatever is disclosed in Confession will not be repeated outside the confessional by the confessor;
- c. The confessor should encourage the child or young person to disclose the abuse to an adult they trust (e.g. a relative, teacher, friend) and to have that person report the abuse;
- d. If the penitent expresses a wish to discuss this issue outside the confessional, make it clear to them that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed regarding issues of child abuse once outside the confessional. The confessor should then follow the procedures outlined in Guidance 2.1A.

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#### **In the case of an abused penitent:**

- a. Remind the penitent that whatever is disclosed in Confession will not be repeated outside of the Sacrament of Reconciliation by the confessor;
- b. Advise them of the importance of contacting the statutory authorities, who deal with these issues;
- c. If the penitent expresses a wish to discuss this issue outside the confessional, make it clear to them that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed regarding issues of child abuse once outside the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The confessor should then follow the procedures outlined in Guidance 2.1A.

#### **In the case of an abusing penitent:**

- a. Remind the penitent that whatever is disclosed in Confession will not be repeated outside of the Sacrament of Reconciliation by the confessor;
- b. Strongly advise them to seek professional help (e.g. counselling, consultation with their GP) and to go to the statutory authorities;
- c. If the penitent expresses a wish to discuss this issue outside the confessional, make it clear to them that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed regarding issues of child abuse once outside the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The confessor should then follow the procedures outlined in Guidance 2.1A.

#### **Safeguarding Children during the Sacrament of Reconciliation**

When children attend the Sacrament of Reconciliation, all efforts should be made to provide a safe and open environment (Standard 1), which maintains the sacramental seal.

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## PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

### 2.1H Guidance on Responding to a Complainant who is Dissatisfied with how their Allegation has been Handled by the Church Authority

#### What is covered by this guidance?

This guidance is to be followed when a complainant expresses dissatisfaction with how their allegation has been managed by a Church body.

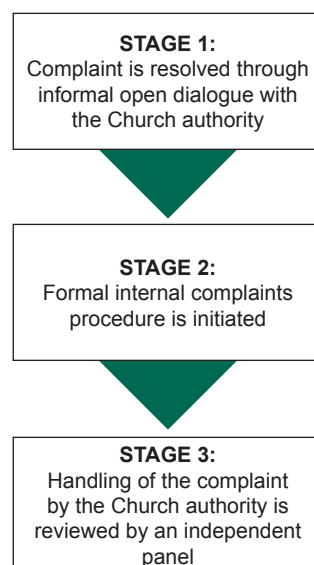
If an allegation is made that a Church authority acted in a way which intends to interfere with or avoid civil or canonical investigation or if the allegation relates to an act or omission in relation to these investigations a complaint should be made. (Guidance 2.1I and 2.1N)<sup>4</sup>.

#### Introduction

If a complainant is dissatisfied with how their allegation of abuse has been handled by the Church authority, it is important that an open and transparent system – akin to an appeals system – is in place to deal with their stated dissatisfaction. Complaints that cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the Church authority should be examined objectively by persons not involved with the original decisions or actions. Such examinations should have regard not only for the Church’s child safeguarding policy and procedures, but also for considerations of equity and good administrative practice.

This guidance is not a reinvestigation of the allegation, but a method of attempting to resolve complaints relating to how the allegation was handled by the Church authority.

This process should have three distinct stages. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome at the completion of a stage, then the next stage is initiated in the ongoing attempt to resolve the complaint.



<sup>4</sup> Vos estis lux mundi, 2019, Article 1.

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#### Stage 1

All complaints of this nature should be resolved, if possible, through an open dialogue between the Church personnel involved and the complainant. Church personnel should use their best endeavours to resolve the complaint at this stage. However, if resolution is not achieved or the complainant is not happy with the outcome of discussions, then the Church personnel involved should advise the complainant that it is open to them to pursue the complaint, explaining Stage 2 of the complaints process. A written communication for and on behalf of the personnel involved, confirming the availability of Stage 2 of the process, should be sent to the complainant.

If at this point the complainant feels that the handling of their complaint relates to action by a Church authority which intends to interfere with or avoid civil or canonical investigation or if the allegation relates to an act of omission in relation to these investigations, the current process should be halted and a complaint as outlined in Guidance 2.1I and 2.1N should be initiated.

#### Stage 2

- I. The complainant should write to the Church authority, setting out what their complaint is and how they would like it to be addressed.
- II. A letter acknowledging receipt of the complaint should be sent by the Church authority to the complainant within seven days, enclosing a copy of the Church authority's complaints procedure.
- III. All complaints should be thoroughly investigated by a complaints officer, who is someone other than the person who dealt with the complainant's original allegation of abuse, and who is appropriately appointed by and responsible to the Church authority.
- IV. This complaints officer may organise a meeting with the complainant to discuss and hopefully resolve the complaint. The complainant may invite a person to accompany them to any arranged meeting. Only if a meeting is not possible and/or the complainant does not wish to attend a meeting, this communication with the complainant may also take place by telephone. This direct communication with the complainant should take place, if possible, within fourteen days of the letter acknowledging receipt of the complaint.
- V. Within seven days of the meeting or discussion with the complainant, the complaints officer will send written minutes to the complainant of what was discussed, and of any actions that were agreed upon.
- VI. If the complainant is not agreeable to a meeting or discussion, or for some reason cannot participate in either, the complaints officer will issue a detailed written response to the complainant within twenty-one days of acknowledging receipt of the letter of complaint, setting out suggestions for resolving the matter.
- VII. Whatever process is used, the Church authority should ensure that no more than eight weeks is taken to consider the complaint and to propose a resolution to the complainant.
- VIII. If there is no resolution at Stage 2, and if the complainant wishes to proceed further, a written request for a review can be sent to the National Board. This option of progressing to Stage 3 should be confirmed in writing to the complainant.
- IX. If at this point the complainant feels that the handling of their complaint relates to action by



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a Church authority which intends to interfere with or avoid civil or canonical investigation or if the allegation relates to an act of omission in relation to these investigations, the current process should be halted and a complaint as outlined in Guidance 2.1I and 2.1N should be initiated.

#### Stage 3

- I. The National Board, as required under the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the company, Coimirce can conduct a stage 3 review of a complaint as set out in Article 4(V) as follows:

‘Reviewing and Reporting on the handling of complaints by any Constituent concerning the safeguarding of children in accordance with protocols for the purposes of sub-paragraph (iv).’

- II. At the conclusion of Stage 2 above, if the complainant wishes to use this function, the complainant should set out in writing to the chair of the National Board the nature of the original complaint about how their allegation was dealt with, how they experienced Stage 1 and Stage 2 of this complaints process, and how they would now like their complaint addressed.
- III. The request to the National Board for a review should be made within three months of the conclusion of the Church authority’s internal complaints procedure (Stage 1 and Stage 2).
- IV. The chair of the National Board will advise the Church authority that the request has been made and permission sought to refer the complaint onto an independent complaints panel.
- V. Any review will be an independent evaluation of whether the proper child protection procedures have been followed, and whether the appropriate standards and best practice guidance have been adhered to.
- VI. The chair of the National Board will refer the complaint to the chair of the independent panel, who will appoint an appropriate person or persons to conduct this review.
- VII. To assist this review process, the relevant Church authority should make available to the complaints panel all written information about how the complainant’s original allegation of abuse was investigated, as well as the written records of how Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the complaints process was conducted, and of the proposals made for a resolution of the complaint.
- VIII. To assist this review process, the relevant Church authority should make available for interview all Church personnel involved in the handling of the original allegation.
- IX. Having examined all written information concerning the complaint, the reviewer can use discretion about the form and extent of any review or to discontinue the process, giving the reason.
- X. If, during the review, there are concerns about the abuse of a child, the reviewer will revert to the Church authority for their required action under Standard 2.
- XI. The reviewers will keep notation of all meetings and will ask all those interviewed to sign

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- a declaration that these are an accurate record of their discussion. These notes may be shared with all involved parties, at the discretion of the reviewer.
- XII. The reviewer will compile a written report on their findings and recommendations. This report will then be shared with the National Board prior to submission to all parties.
- XIII. With the approval of the National Board, the chair of the complaints panel will submit the written report to all involved parties, with recommendations of actions to be taken within specified time frames. The sending out of this report marks the completion of Stage 3 of the complaints process.
- XIV. If throughout this process the reviewer, independent panel or the National Board feel that the evidence presented during the course amounts to the delict outlined in the Introduction session. This will be reported following Guidance 2.1I and 2.1N.
- XV. If at this point the complainant thinks that the handling of their complaint relates to action by a Church authority which intended to interfere with or avoid civil or canonical investigation or if the allegation relates to an act of omission in relation to these investigations, the current process should be halted and a complaint as outlined in Guidance 2.1I and 2.1N should be initiated.

The Church authority will bear all reasonable costs of the review.

The chair of the complaints panel and associated reviewers will be selected by the National Board in consultation with Church authorities.

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### **2.1I Guidance on Managing Child Protection Allegations, Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge about Bishops or their Equivalents<sup>5</sup>**

GUIDANCE TO BE INSERTED ONCE CONFIRMED

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## 2.1J Guidance on Cross-Referencing Safeguarding Policies

### Introduction

All Church personnel are required to follow the policy for the Catholic Church in Ireland and adhere to the seven safeguarding standards. However, there are a number of instances where other child safeguarding policies need to be considered in terms of child safeguarding. These are detailed below.

### 1. When religious or clerics are ministering on behalf of a diocese

If a religious or cleric ministers for a Church body outside of that to which they belong, they are bound by the procedures of that Church body, including safeguarding and notification of allegations. Therefore, if a suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation is raised with that member while in the ministry of that Church body, they must report it using the safeguarding procedure of that Church body.

If there is an allegation against the member while working with another Church body, the following will be observed:

- If the allegation relates to an incident that took place in the Church body (other than that to which the cleric or religious belongs), the reporting procedures will be initiated by the DLP of that Church body in accordance with their safeguarding procedures. In this instance, the name of the DLP of the Church body for whom the respondent is ministering should be displayed as the contact person for reporting suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations (Guidance 6.2A);
- The respondent will either directly inform their own Church authority, or give permission for the DLP of the organisation to inform the Church authority of which the respondent is a member;
- Any decision to suspend the member from that Church body rests with the management of the Church body for whom the cleric or religious is ministering;
- Any decision to remove the member from ministry rests with the Church authority to which the cleric or religious belongs;
- Internal Church processes regarding the care and management of the respondent (Standard 4) will be followed upon conclusion of any criminal investigation and other organisational disciplinary proceedings.

If there is an allegation against the member, which is outside of the ministry undertaken as part of the Church body (other than that to which the cleric or religious belongs), the following will be observed:

- The DLP of the Church body to which the respondent belongs will report using the flow chart outlined in Guidance 2.1A. In this instance, the name of the DLP of the Church body to whom the respondent belongs should be displayed as the contact person for suspicions, concerns,

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knowledge or allegations (Guidance 6.2A);

- Church procedures will be followed in relation to preliminary investigation and management of the respondent, following the guidance outlined in Standard 4;
- Consideration will be given to the appropriateness of sharing the information about the allegation with the other organisations. Advice from Tusla/HSCT should be sought and discussed with the respondent, whose permission may be required to share the information.

#### **2. When working/volunteering for another organisation**

If a member of Church personnel works for another external organisation, they are bound by the policies and procedures of that organisation, which include safeguarding and notification of allegations. Therefore, if a suspicion, concern or allegation is raised with that member while in the employment of that organisation, they must report it using the safeguarding procedures of the organisation.

If there is an allegation against the member while working with that organisation, the following will be observed:

- If the allegation relates to that organisation, the reporting procedures will be initiated by the DLP of that organisation in accordance with their safeguarding procedures;
- The respondent will either directly inform their Church authority or give permission for the DLP of the organisation to inform their Church authority;
- Any decision to suspend the member from that organisation rests with the management of the organisation;
- Any decision to remove the member from ministry rests with the Church authority;
- Internal Church processes regarding the care and management of the respondent (Standard 4) will be followed upon conclusion of any criminal investigation and other organisational disciplinary proceedings.

If there is an allegation against the member, which is outside of the work undertaken as part of the organisation, the following will be observed:

- The DLP of the Church body will report using the flow chart outlined in Guidance 2.1A;
- Church procedures will be followed in relation to preliminary investigation and management of the respondent, following the guidance outlined in Standard 4;
- Consideration will be given to the appropriateness of sharing the information about the allegation with the other organisation; advice from Tusla/HSCT should be sought and discussed with the respondent, whose permission may be required to share the information.

#### **3. If children and young people are using Church property as part of Church-related activity with staff or volunteers from an external organisation**

This situation can occur in a number of different ways, including schools visiting the church as part of sacramental preparation, altar servers going from school to the church and back again, school choirs practising in the church, and youth groups on retreat in Church property that are being facilitated by Church personnel.

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Each of these situations is individual and should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The Church authority should agree with the external organisation in writing:

- Whose safeguarding policy applies and when;
- Who is responsible for the children and when;
- Which DLP will take responsibility for reporting allegations.

This should be recorded and stored appropriately using the guidance in Appendix B.

#### **4. If the Church authority presides over communities outside Ireland**

If this occurs, the policy of the Catholic Church in Ireland and the associated indicators applicable under the seven safeguarding standards should apply alongside local legislation. If there is a concern about reporting allegations of abuse to the local statutory authorities, advice should be sought from the National Board as to how to proceed.

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## 2.1K Guidance on Responding to Allegations of Abuse Against Lay Church Personnel

All allegations of child abuse against a lay member of Church personnel which have been brought to the attention of any member of the particular Church body must be referred to the DLP of the respondent's Church body. The role of the DLP is to listen to all safeguarding concerns and to pass on to the statutory authorities those that reach the threshold for reporting (Guidance 2.1A). If there is any suggestion that the lay member of Church personnel has abused a child as part of their ministry, appropriate support should be offered to the complainant and their family.

The procedures for managing the continued involvement (if appropriate) of the lay volunteer or paid staff in the Church's ministry are set out below. This procedure does not relate to safeguarding concerns which are not allegations of abuse (for advice on this see Guidance 1.7A).

### Step 1: Reporting

#### **Allegation received against lay Church personnel (volunteer or paid employee):**

- The DLP of the respondent's Church body assesses whether the allegation meets the threshold and reports it to the statutory authorities, and to the relevant Church authority.
- If the allegation relates to the respondent's ministry in the Church advice from the statutory authorities should be sought about who should inform the respondent that the allegation has been made.
- If a decision is made to inform the respondent prior to notifying or consulting the statutory authorities, their response should be recorded and passed on to the statutory authorities.
- If the allegation relates to the respondent's actions outside the Church body, responsibility for informing them that an allegation has been made rests with the statutory authorities.

### Step 2: Church action following notification

#### **Volunteers**

- If the allegation is made against a volunteer, the parish priest/superior/Church authority should consult with the DLP of the respondent's Church body about whether the volunteer should remain in role during the investigation by the statutory authorities. Factors that influence this decision will include:
  - the volunteer's role in the Church (if known);
  - their level of contact with children and an assessment of any risk that arises from this;
  - the degree of credibility of the allegation.

The DLP may wish to consult with the statutory authorities for guidance.

- The Church authority should consider appointing a person to offer pastoral support to the volunteer during any statutory investigation.
- Following the conclusion of any statutory authority investigation and assessment, where there is no case to answer and there are no outstanding child safeguarding concerns, if the volunteer has stepped aside they may be reinstated.

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- If there is a case to answer the volunteer should be asked to permanently resign from the role.
- If the DPP/CPS decides to prosecute, the volunteer should be asked to permanently vacate their Church role.
- The Church authority should consider the need to conduct a review of safeguarding arrangements in the particular area where the volunteer was working, following conclusion of the statutory authority investigations. The purpose is to review whether all appropriate safeguards were in place and to take any corrective action required.

#### **Paid Employees**

- If the allegation is made against a paid employee, the parish priest/superior/Church authority should consult with the DLP of the respondent's Church body about whether the employee should remain in role during statutory authority investigations and assessments. Factors that influence this decision will include:
  - the employee's role in the Church; (if known);
  - whether the allegation relates to the employee's role in the Church;
  - their level of contact with children and an assessment of any risk that arises from this;
  - the degree of credibility of the allegation.

The DLP may wish to consult with social services for guidance.

- If a decision is made to suspend the employee, HR advice should be sought.
- Any suspension during the process of statutory authority investigations, and during any internal disciplinary action that may follow, should be with full pay.
- The Church authority should consider offering a pastoral support person to the employee.
- Following notification of a prosecution and/or conviction, a disciplinary process should be initiated.
- An investigator should be appointed by the Church authority (possibly DLP) to gather any evidence and provide a report to the Church authority.
- If the Church authority determines, based on the evidence that further action is required, the employee should be invited to attend a disciplinary meeting and may be supported at the meeting by a union representative or a friend; (as this is not a legal process a lawyer will not be permitted to support the employee).
- Any disciplinary hearing should be conducted by a panel of 3 individuals and be chaired by the Church authority.
- Any finding should be notified to the employee in writing.
- If the panel considers that the employee has committed gross misconduct, HR advice should be sought on how to dismiss the employee from their post.
- If the statutory authorities investigation results in no further action, an assessment of whether any misconduct has been committed should be undertaken by a suitably qualified person appointed by the Church authority.

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- A disciplinary panel should be established to consider the investigating person's report and consider the future employment of the employee.
- The employee can be represented by a union representative or a friend at any disciplinary hearing.
- If a decision is made to reinstate the employee, appropriate support should be offered for a return to work.
- If a decision is made to dismiss the employee, and if the employee is resident or has worked in Northern Ireland, a referral must be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in accordance with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007. The DBS website provides further information on checks, referrals and barred lists.
- Any appeal by the employee who has been disciplined/dismissed should be made in writing to a higher Church authority in the Church body, or by an independent person appointed by the Church authority.

This is in line with national legislation and policy as outlined in Guidance 2.1A.

#### **Further guidance for employers**

Guidance for employers dealing with an allegation of abuse can be found in:

ROI: Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children – Appendix 9  
Guidance for employers dealing with an allegation of abuse.

Northern Ireland: Co-operating to Safeguard Children 2016 (Section 7.2.10).



## STANDARD 2

### PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

#### 2.1L Guidance on Mandated Persons (only applies in the Republic of Ireland)

Mandated persons (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) are people who have contact with children and/or families and who, because of their qualifications, training and/or employment role, are in a key position to help protect children from harm. Mandated persons include professionals working with children in the education, health, justice, youth and childcare sectors. Certain professionals who may not work directly with children, such as those in adult counselling or psychiatry, are also mandated persons. The list also includes registered foster carers and members of the clergy or pastoral care workers of a Church or other religious community.

Each Church body should consult the full list of categories who are classified as mandated persons under Schedule 2 of the Children First Act 2015 to establish which members of Church personnel are classified as mandated persons. To assist with this task it should be understood that:

- All clerics and religious are to be considered mandated persons.
- Volunteers are not mandated persons under the Children First Act 2015. However DLPs or Deputy DLPs who are volunteers are classed as mandated persons under Church standards.

On completion of this process the Church authority must retain a list of all mandated persons, and ensure this is kept up to date. In developing this list Tusla have advised that there should be a clear statement of the type of roles that a Church body are listing as mandated persons, then a number of mandated persons that are in the Church body should be included against each role (i.e Clerics (25), Pastoral Workers (50), Religious (15) etc).

The Children First Act 2015 does not impose criminal sanctions on mandated persons who fail to make a report to Tusla. However, there are possible consequences for a failure to report. There are a number of administrative actions that Tusla could take if, after an investigation, it emerges that a mandated person did not make a mandated report and a child was subsequently left at risk or harmed.

Tusla may:

- Make a complaint to the Fitness to Practice Committee of a regulatory body of which the mandated person is a member.
- Pass information about the mandated person's failure to make a report to the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána. This information could therefore be disclosed to current or future employers of the mandated person when they are next vetted.

The Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 requires that any person who has information about a serious offence against a child, which may result in charges or prosecution, must report this to An Garda Síochána. Failure to report under the Act is a criminal offence under that legislation. This obligation is in addition to any obligations under the Children First Act 2015.<sup>1</sup>

This is in line with national legislation and policy as outlined in Guidance 2.1A.

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<sup>1</sup> This piece of guidance has been adapted from the Children First Guidance documents published by DCYA, 2017.

## STANDARD 2

### PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

#### 2.1M Guidance on Responding to Allegations Against a Deceased Member of Church Personnel

If an allegation relates to a member of Church personnel who is deceased, the requirement to report to the statutory agencies is different:

ROI- Children First Guidance states “ In cases of retrospective abuse, a report needs to be made where there is a current or potential future risk to children from the person against whom there is an allegation. The term retrospective abuse refers to abuse that an adult discloses that took place during their childhood.” If the respondent is deceased then they cannot pose a risk to children and therefore Tusla do not need to be informed.

NI- In NI all allegations against clerics and religious should be shared with the DLP of the respondent’s Church body who will assess whether it meets the threshold for reporting, and will then pass this to the HSCT and PSNI.

In either case the DLP of the respondent’s Church body may determine that Tusla/HSCT should be informed as they have a role in offering support to children and families affected by abuse.

In summary if the allegation relates to a member of Church personnel who is deceased

- **and the complainant is an adult or child in Northern Ireland-** the person who receives the allegation must report it to the DLP of the respondent’s Church body who will then assess if it meets the threshold for reporting and make the referral to the HSCT and PSNI using 2.1A Template 1. They will also report it to the Church authority and the National Board using 2.1A Template 1(for clerics and religious only).
- **and the complainant is an adult in ROI-** The person who receives the allegation must report it to the DLP of the respondent’s Church body who will assess if it meets the threshold for reporting, and report it to An Garda Síochána by emailing [nbcj\\_scmu@garda.ie](mailto:nbcj_scmu@garda.ie). If the person who received the allegation is a mandated person they will complete the form jointly with the DLP of the respondent’s Church body. The DLP of the respondent’s Church body will also report it to the Church authority and the National Board using 2.1A Template 1 (for clerics and religious only).
- **and the complainant is a child in ROI-** The person who receives the allegation must report it to the DLP of the respondent’s Church body who will assess if it meets the threshold for reporting and notify An Garda Síochána by emailing [nbcj\\_scmu@garda.ie](mailto:nbcj_scmu@garda.ie). If the person who received the allegation is a mandated person they will complete the form jointly with the DLP of the respondent’s Church body. The DLP of the respondent’s Church body will also report it to the Church authority and the National Board using 2.1A Template 1(for clerics and religious only).

In both jurisdictions in Ireland

- The HSCT/Tusla have a statutory duty to provide support to children and their families (including adult carers).
- An Garda Síochána/PSNI have a statutory duty to assess whether a criminal offence has occurred.
- The Church authority has a responsibility to provide a pastoral response to the complainant (see Standard 3), and consideration should be given to any further action by the Church authority (see Standard 4).

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### PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

## 2.1N Guidance on Managing Child Protection Allegations, Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge, Acts or Omissions of Church Authorities or those who hold or have held leadership within Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (both Men and Women)

### What is covered by this guidance?

This guidance relates to the reporting and management of allegations against those in a position of authority – i.e. Major Superiors (Provincial) (men and women) or whoever is representing him or her (e.g.) Regional Leader if the Provincial's base is outside of Ireland. This guidance also covers supreme moderators of institutes or societies of diocesan right and their equivalents.

### Types of Allegations

The possible allegations that can be made against a Church authority as defined above include:

- Abuse of children and vulnerable adults.
- Production, exhibition, possession or distribution of child pornography.
- Sexual activity with another by force, by violence or threat or through abuse of authority.
- Acts or omissions intended to interfere with or avoid civil or canonical investigations against a cleric or religious.

The role of the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is to listen to all child safeguarding concerns and to pass on to the statutory authorities those that reach the threshold of reporting, in accordance with Guidance 2.1A. For other religious Church authorities this guidance should be followed.

### Step 1: Reporting

If the allegation is against a Major Superior (Provincial) or the one representing him or her (e.g. Regional Leader), and the threshold for reporting has been reached, the DLP of the respondent's Church body should inform the following:

- The statutory authorities;
- The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (without identifying information).
- The Supreme Moderator of the relevant Institute of Consecrated Life or Society of Apostolic Life.
- Person representing the Major Superior.

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### PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

#### **Step 2: Responding**

Any allegation relating to a Major Superior must be forwarded to the Supreme Moderator.

Following receipt of an allegation, if it meets the threshold for reporting, the Supreme Moderator must ensure that the statutory authorities are informed and that their consent is sought prior to taking any canonical action or informing the respondent that an allegation has been made (so as not to interfere with any criminal or civil law investigations).

Depending on the nature of the allegation, the Supreme Moderator will have to consider:

- What restrictions if any are placed on the Provincial's ministry?
- Who to share information with.
- The appropriate person to conduct any inquiries.
- How to respond to the complainant.

The Supreme Moderator may consult the Pontifical Representative and the relevant Dicastery for direction, or seek the advice of the National Board's Case Management Committee (NCMC).

Action following the conclusion of any statutory inquiry investigation

The Church process, which will have been paused to allow the statutory inquiries to proceed, must be restarted and the respondent informed of the process to be followed.

If it is clear that the concern is manifestly false, the respondent should be informed and confirmed as being in good standing; if a Dicastery has been consulted they should be informed that there will be no further action.

Otherwise the next part of the canonical investigation must take place.

#### **a) Procedure for responding canonically to allegations against a clerical Church authority**

Follow the canon law process as outlined in Standard 4 (preliminary investigation).

The Supreme Moderator should appoint an appropriate person to conduct inquiries and produce a report

The Supreme Moderator should send their votum, based on that report to the relevant dicastery for direction on the next stage of the process.

#### **b) For non-ordained religious Church authority**

The Supreme Moderator should appoint an appropriate person to conduct inquiries and produce a report.

The Supreme Moderator, in consultation with his General Council which should be composed of at least four members (not including the Supreme Moderator) will consider the report, in line with the constitution of the Order.

Together, all must seriously and attentively study the material with a view to verifying the existence of the offence, the imputability of the respondent, the impact on the one abused

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### PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

(justice), and the impact on the wider community of the faithful (scandal). After weighing up all these dimensions, the council must vote collegially.

For dismissal process follow Canons 694-704.

The Supreme Moderator and General Council may vote to dismiss the member as they believe, based on the evidence, that the allegation is proven. An absolute majority of those voting is required and sufficient.

The Supreme Moderator, along with the General Council, may decide that the allegation is not credible and therefore the respondent should be returned to ministry as a member in good standing.

Or,

The Supreme Moderator and the General Council may decide that the allegation is credible but due to circumstances they may allow the respondent remain part of the congregation.

a. If the respondent is dismissed and the Church retains no responsibility for them, the decree of dismissal must then be drawn up in accordance with Canon 700 and communicated at once to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. If there are doubts or anxieties at any stage of the procedure, the congregation may be consulted, but, unlike the case for clerics, there is no authorisation needed to initiate this process.

b. If the respondent remains a part of the congregation, a permanent management plan is created, including the provision of monitoring (Guidance 4.4A).

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### PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

## 2.10 Guidance on Managing Allegations, Suspicious, Knowledge and Concerns that a Cleric or Religious has Abused a Child Through Child Pornography

This guidance is concerned with the production, exhibition, possession or distribution, including by electronic means, of child pornography, as well as by the recruitment of or inducement of a minor or a vulnerable person to participate in pornographic exhibitions is a crime in civil and in canon law (see Appendix C). For further information regarding other risks to children online see GAP paper 1.

### Definition

In canon law “child pornography” means: any representation of a minor, regardless of the means used, involved in explicit sexual activities, whether real or simulated, and any representation of sexual organs of minors for primarily sexual purposes.

A listing of the main Acts, Statutory Orders and Regulations is outlined in the Table below:

Republic of Ireland	
Title	Main Provisions
Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017	<p>This most recent piece of legislation has in its introductory description that it is An Act to give effect to Directive No. 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011.</p> <p>The following offences are defined in the 2017 Act, along with the punishments available to a court if a person is found to be guilty of any of them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtaining, providing etc. a child for purpose of sexual exploitation ('child' is person under 18 years);</li> <li>• Invitation etc. to sexual touching ('child' is a person under 15 years);</li> <li>• Sexual activity in presence of child ('child' is a person under 17 years);</li> <li>• Causing child to watch sexual activity ('child' is a person under 17 years);</li> <li>• Meeting child for purpose of sexual exploitation ('child' is a person under 17 years);</li> <li>• Use of information and communication technology to facilitate sexual exploitation of child ('child' is a person under 17 years);</li> <li>• Amendment of S.2 of Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998 – extended definition of 'child pornography';</li> <li>• Amendment of S.3 of Act of 1998 – extended definition of 'sexual exploitation';</li> <li>• Amending S.4 of Act of 1998 – changed definition of actions involved in organising etc. child prostitution or production of child pornography;</li> <li>• Amending S.5 of Act of 1998 – changed definition of producing, distributing, etc. child pornography;</li> <li>• Amending S.5 of Act of 1998 – adding to definition of participation of child in pornographic performance;</li> <li>• Amending S.6 of Act of 1998 – changed definition of possession of child pornography;</li> </ul>

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### PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

<p>Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amending S.5 of Act of 1998 – changed definition of producing, distributing, etc. child pornography;</li> <li>• Amending S.5 of Act of 1998 – adding to definition of participation of child in pornographic performance;</li> <li>• Amending S.6 of Act of 1998 – changed definition of possession of child pornography;</li> <li>• Amending S.1 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006 – changed definition of ‘person in authority’;</li> <li>• Amending S. 2 of Act of 2006 – changed definition of sexual act with child under 15 years of age;</li> <li>• Amending S.3 of Act of 2006 – changed definition of sexual act with child under 17 years of age;</li> </ul> <p>There are further minor amendments of other previous legislation contained in the 2017 Act.</p>
<p>Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998</p>	<p>The Child Trafficking and Pornography Act 1998, which is amended by Section 6 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Act 2007, deals with a number of offences involving children under the age of 17. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child trafficking and taking a child for sexual exploitation.</li> <li>• Meeting a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation.</li> <li>• Allowing a child to be used for child pornography.</li> <li>• Producing, distributing, printing or publishing child pornography.</li> <li>• Possession of child pornography.</li> </ul>
<p>Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006</p>	<p>This Act defines the offences of Defilement of child under 15 years of age, and Defilement of child under the age of 17 years. The Act of 2006 also amends a number of previous Acts.</p>

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### PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

Northern Ireland	
Title	Main Provisions
<p>Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008</p>	<p>This is a comprehensive statutory instrument that in Section 3 defines a number of sexual offences against children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rape of a child under 13.</li> <li>• Assault of a child under 13 by penetration.</li> <li>• Sexual assault of a child under 13.</li> <li>• Causing or inciting a child under 13 to engage in sexual activity.</li> <li>• Sexual activity with a child (under 16 years).</li> <li>• Causing or inciting a child to engage in sexual activity (under 16 years).</li> <li>• Engaging in sexual activity in the presence of a child (under 13 years; or under 16 years, if not reasonable to believe that child is over 16 years).</li> <li>• Causing a child to watch a sexual act (under 13 years; or under 16 years, if not reasonable to believe that child is over 16 years.)</li> <li>• Arranging or facilitating commission of a sex offence against a child (under 16 years).</li> <li>• Meeting a child following sexual grooming etc. (under 16 years).</li> <li>• Abuse of position of trust: sexual activity with a child (under 13 years; or under 18 years if not reasonable to believe that the child is over 18 years).</li> <li>• Abuse of position of trust: causing a child to watch a sexual act (under 13 years; or under 18 years if not reasonable to believe that the child is over 18 years).</li> <li>• Sexual activity with a child family member (under 18 years).</li> <li>• Inciting a child family member to engage in sexual activity (under 18 years).</li> <li>• Paying for sexual services of a child (under 13 years; or under 18 years if not reasonable to believe that the child is over 18 years).</li> <li>• Causing or inciting child prostitution or pornography (under 13 years; or under 18 years if not reasonable to believe that the child is over 18 years).</li> <li>• Controlling a child prostitute or a child involved in pornography (under 13 years; or under 18 years if not reasonable to believe that the child is over 18 years).</li> <li>• Arranging or facilitating child prostitution or pornography (under 13 years; or under 18 years if not reasonable to believe that the child is over 18 years).</li> <li>• Amending The Protection of Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 (NI 17) on indecent photographs of children – age raised to under 18 years.</li> </ul> <p>There are further minor amendments of other previous legislation contained in the 2008 Order.</p>



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### PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

Protection of Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1978	<p>Section 3 - (1) any person who—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) takes, or permits to be taken any indecent photograph of a child; or</li> <li>(b) distributes or shows such indecent photographs; or</li> <li>(c) has in his possession such indecent photographs with a view to their being distributed or shown by himself or others; or</li> <li>(d) publishes or causes to be published any advertisement likely to be understood as conveying that the advertiser distributes or shows such indecent photographs or intends to do so, shall be guilty of an offence.</li> </ul>
Communications Act 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 127 (1) provides that it is an offence if any person sends a message or other matter by means of a public electronic communications network which is grossly offensive, indecent, obscene or menacing, or if a person causes any such message or matter to be sent.</li> <li>• Section 127 (2) provides that a person is guilty of an offence if, for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another, he sends or causes to be sent by means of a public electronic communications network a message he knows to be false, causes such a message to be sent, or persistently makes use of a public electronic communications network.</li> </ul>

#### Process

If a concern, suspicion, knowledge or allegation is made against a cleric or religious which relates to the abuse of a child through pornography, the process outlined in Guidance 2.1A - Guidance on Reporting Allegations of Abuse, must be followed.

A Church authority who has knowledge, a concern, suspicion or allegation should consult An Garda Síochána/PSNI to establish if an examination of all electronic devices belonging to the respondent can be conducted.

The process of investigation by the statutory authorities must be concluded first.

#### Post investigation by statutory authorities

Upon the conclusion of any statutory investigation, a preliminary investigation/collection of the proofs under canon law should be initiated (See Guidance under Standard 4). If An Garda Síochána/PSNI decide not to pursue such an examination, the permission of the respondent must be sought for a private company to examine electronic means of communication.

If the respondent refuses permission for a search of his use of digital devices, the advice of the Church body's advisory panel or the NCMC should be sought in assessing the risk posed by the respondent.

Evidence obtained from a search of the respondent's digital devices should be included to ascertain if a crime as identified in canon law has been committed.

If the search identifies accessing child pornography, the preliminary investigation/collection of proofs should conclude that the respondent has a case to answer. In such circumstances Guidance 4.3C should be followed for clerics and Guidance 4.3D for religious.

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### PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

If the search does not identify the respondent accessing child pornography, further investigation may be necessary to establish whether there is a case to answer (for clerics -Guidance 4.3A and for religious- 4.3D).

If at the end of the preliminary investigation/collection of proofs there is no case to answer, steps should be taken to restore the respondents good name following Guidance 4.3C for clerics and 4.3D for religious.

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### PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

#### 2.1P Guidance on Protection for Persons Submitting a Report

In line with Guidance 2.1A, there is a requirement to report all allegations, suspicions and concerns of child abuse.

Protection must be provided to all people who report child abuse to the statutory authorities in good faith. Within civil law in the Republic of Ireland, anyone who notifies An Garda Síochána and Tusla of an allegation, suspicion or concern relating to the abuse of a child, who has the best interests of the child in mind is protected from any legal action for defamation.

Equally steps must be taken, as required by canon law to ensure that anyone who reports an allegation should not be treated adversely.

The following sets out the civil and canon law requirements:

##### **Civil Legislation - Republic of Ireland**

People are protected in civil law for reporting abuse, in line with Protections of Persons Reporting Abuse Act 1998 (ROI). Which states that a:

‘person [...] shall not be liable in damages in respect of the communication, whether in writing or otherwise, by him or her to an appropriate person of his or her opinion that—

(a) a child has been or is being assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused, or

(b) a child’s health, development or welfare has been or is being avoidably impaired or neglected,

unless it is proved that he or she has not acted reasonably and in good faith in forming that opinion and communicating it to the appropriate person.’

In addition whistleblowing in the Republic of Ireland is enshrined in legislation entitled the Protected Disclosures Act 2014.

##### **Civil Legislation – Northern Ireland<sup>1</sup>**

In Northern Ireland the law that covers whistleblowing is The Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, (as amended in October 2017).

##### **Canon Law**

There is now a requirement in canon law to ensure that those making a report pursuant to the delicts outlined in Vos estis lux mundi<sup>2</sup> shall not constitute a violation of office confidentiality.

Except as provided for by canons 1390 CIC and 1452 and 1454 CCEO, prejudice, retaliation or discrimination as a consequence of having submitted a report is prohibited.

1 Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967; Criminal Justice Act 2006; Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012; Children First Act 2015; Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017; Safeguarding Board Act (Northern Ireland) 2011; Children’s Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015; Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998; and National Policy (Children First: National Guidance 2017; and Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2017).

2 Vos estis lux mundi, 2019.

## STANDARD 2

### PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.1

Additionally Vos estis lux mundi explicitly forbids any imposition of silence on a person making a report regarding the delicts outlined in Article 1.

## 2.1Q Guidance on Responding to an Allegation Against a Cleric or Non Ordained Religious Belonging to an Irish Diocese or Province, who is Ministering in Another Church body in Another Jurisdiction.

### What this guidance is about

This guidance relates to allegations received where the respondent belongs to a Church body based in Ireland, but is currently ministering for another Church body in a different jurisdiction. For allegations relating to respondents who are in Ireland please refer to Guidance 2.1A.

### Reporting

- Allegations against clerics incardinated into another diocese

The allegation must be reported to the statutory authorities, this should be done by the DLP of the diocese in which the respondent has been incardinated (if the person making the allegation is a mandated person the report should be made jointly with the DLP).

- Allegations against non- incardinated clerics or religious ministering in another Church body (irrespective of jurisdiction)

The first stage is to ensure that the allegation is reported to the statutory authorities, this should be done by the DLP of the respondent's Church body if known (if the person making the allegation is a mandated person the report should be made jointly with the DLP).

If the person who receives the allegation does not know the Church body to which the respondent belongs, the allegation should be reported to the DLP of the Church body where the respondent is currently ministering. If the person making the allegation is a mandated person the report should be made jointly with the DLP.

- National Board

In all situations, the DLP must also report the allegation (without identifying information) to the National Board.

### Statutory action

**Republic of Ireland:** A law criminalizing serious offences committed abroad by Irish citizens or residents came into effect at the end of April 2019. Under the Act, Irish citizens who commit serious offences abroad such as rape, murder, sexual assault and manslaughter, will be liable to be prosecuted under Irish law.

The current legislation provides a legal basis for An Garda Síochána's investigation and subsequent prosecution of a crime committed by a cleric or religious overseas.

An Garda Síochána will determine whether to report the allegation to Police Force in another jurisdiction. When reporting to An Garda Síochána, obtain confirmation in writing that they have reported this to the relevant law enforcement agency.

**Northern Ireland:** There is no similar law in Northern Ireland; therefore the allegation should be reported to the Police in the jurisdiction in which the alleged crime took place. Consultation with the PSNI should take place to determine which Police Force the alleged crime should be reported to; if the PSNI agreed to notify the relevant Police Force confirmation of this action should be provided in writing.

## **Responding**

Where it is possible to consult with the statutory authorities and they advise that Church action will not interfere with a criminal or civil investigation the following steps should be taken:

The Church authority who has canonical responsibility for the respondent should consider if information regarding the allegation and respondent should be shared with the relevant Church authority in the other jurisdiction (Guidance 2.3A) to determine who has responsibility for:

- Informing the respondent
- Determining if restrictions on ministry are required
- Initiating a preliminary investigation and subsequent canonical action
- Informing CDF (if the allegation relates to sexual abuse and the respondent is a cleric)
- Deciding who should respond and offer support and counselling to the complainant.

**2.1R Guidance on Conduct Consisting of Actions or Omissions by Bishops and their Equivalents Intended to Interfere with or Avoid a Criminal or Canonical Investigation against a Cleric or a Religious Regarding the Delicts Against the Sixth Commandment.**

GUIDANCE TO BE INSERTED ONCE CONFIRMED

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## STANDARD 2

PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS,  
CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS







## 2.1S Guidance on Managing Child Safeguarding Allegations, Suspicions, Concerns or Knowledge Received During the Extra Sacramental Internal Forum

### What is meant by the Internal Forum in this context?

The internal forum describes an individual's conscience and their personal relationship with God. The internal challenges, sins and struggles a person discloses in confession, as well as the details of one's personal spiritual life, are considered matters of the internal forum. If someone wishes to confess a sin, the confessional is the appropriate place to receive penance.

Other spaces where the internal forum is shared: in spiritual direction, growth counselling or other mechanism, need to have clarity around the limits of confidentiality. This is especially important in relation to disclosures of child abuse.

Guidance 2.1G deals with responding to allegations in relation to the seal of confession, this guidance covers any allegations received outside of confession as part of sharing, aspects of the internal forum with another member of Church personnel. Some examples may include clerics or religious who facilitate spiritual direction or growth counselling to lay people, other Church personnel or those in formation.

### Explaining the limits of confidentiality in the extra sacramental forum

The person who facilitates the opportunity for exploring the internal forum must advise prior to the ministry beginning:

- That there are limits of confidentiality, these must be explained to the person who wishes to share issues within the internal forum so that there is absolute clarity that the following cannot be kept confidential:
  - Abuse as a child where the perpetrator still has contact with children or adults at risk of harm.
  - A person who may have committed abuse or fearful that they have the propensity to harm.
  - A person currently experiencing abuse, witnessing it or indirectly involved.
  - A person who may view or download indecent images of children or extreme abuse.

The obligation on the person facilitating the ministry is not to investigate but to keep a written record and to report allegations, suspicions, knowledge and concerns to the relevant statutory authorities and/or Church authorities in line with Guidance 2.1A.

- The person providing the spiritual direction or growth counselling should sign an agreement with the person receiving the ministry which outlines the limits of confidentiality and the requirement to report. This form should be retained in line with relevant data protection and retention procedures.
- If an allegation is made during the ministry, the person responsible for the ministry should explain clearly the steps that they must now take and report the allegation, suspicion, concern or knowledge in line with Guidance 2.1A.

## STANDARD 2

### PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION SUSPICIONS, CONCERNS, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATIONS GUIDANCE FOR INDICATOR 2.2

#### 2.2A Guidance on Regular Liaison with Statutory Authorities

Best practice in safeguarding children requires a multiagency approach that allows for exchange of information proportionate to the risk, and in line with relevant legislation. The statutory authorities are Tusla and An Garda Síochána in the Republic of Ireland, and the PSNI and the HSCT in Northern Ireland.

##### Case discussions

1. On an individual case-by-case basis, the Church authority must liaise with the statutory authority agencies to notify them of allegations, and to consider with them the appropriate actions to take in terms of notifying the respondent and of managing risk. **No action by the Church authority should be taken that may interfere with any criminal or statutory inquiries being conducted by state agencies.**
2. Notification of an allegation must be made in writing using the appropriate form outlined in Guidance 2.1A. All fields should be completed, and if the information is not known this should be stated.
3. A copy of this form must be forwarded to the statutory authorities and if it relates to Clerics/ Religious to the National Board (using Guidance 2.1A Template 1), and a copy retained on the case file.
4. Any contacts and/or meetings with statutory authority agencies should be recorded in writing and a copy kept securely in the respondent's case file.
5. Prior to informing the respondent that an allegation has been made, there should be a discussion with the relevant police force (An Garda Síochána/PSNI), whose view on informing the respondent should be sought. The purpose is to ensure that the Church authority is not prejudicing any criminal investigation (see Guidance 4.2A).
6. Prior to proceeding with the preliminary investigation in the case of clergy, or collecting the proofs in the case of a religious, written confirmation should be received from the statutory authorities, stating that their investigations have concluded.  
(For clergy see Guidance 4.3A; for non-ordained religious see Guidance 4.3D.)

##### General meetings

It is acknowledged that the interagency review committees envisaged in the report of the Ferns Inquiry<sup>11</sup> cannot be instituted in the Republic of Ireland due to legal difficulties.<sup>12</sup>

However, at least on an annual basis, the Church authority, the relevant police force (An Garda Síochána/PSNI) and Tusla/HSCT should liaise to discuss general matters relating to safeguarding

<sup>11</sup> Ferns Report, 2005, p. 265.

<sup>12</sup> Oireachtas debate, Tuesday, 22 November 2011, <http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/dail2011112200405?opendocument>.

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children.

The rationale behind such meetings is explained in *Children First*<sup>13</sup> in the Republic of Ireland, and in *Co-operating to Safeguard Children*<sup>14</sup> in Northern Ireland, where the benefits of interagency cooperation and exchange of information in relation to child protection and welfare are explained and encouraged, and in which joint working is considered to extend across the planning, management, provision and delivery of child safeguarding services.

These general meetings should include:

- an update by the Church authority on all allegations notified during the previous year;
- sharing information on the management of respondents;
- strengthening the working relationships between the three organisations.

The meetings should be recorded and the minutes circulated to all participating agencies. Any reference to individual cases should be anonymised or recorded separately and retained on the case management record (Guidance 2.2B).

#### **Contact information**

Contact details for the relevant social work office, central An Garda Síochána office/relevant PSNI contact and the DLP should be displayed in areas where there is public ministry. This information sets out how to raise a concern about a child or make an allegation of child abuse. A summary of these contacts is contained in Appendix D.

<sup>13</sup> *Children First* 2011, Section 3.2 and 4.3.

<sup>14</sup> *Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 20016*, Section 8.0



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#### 2.2B Guidance on Case Management Records

Case management records should provide a complete account of involvement in order to provide evidence of all allegations and actions taken to safeguard children, to assess and manage risk and to monitor practice.

All recorded information should be typed, accurate, factual and concise. It is important to state opinion, assessment or judgement, as distinct from facts.

The records are in relation to a member of Church personnel against whom a suspicion, concern or allegation has been reported, and therefore should be catalogued as such.

Each file should contain:

**1. File index (2.2B Template 1)**

This section should give a detailed list of all of the contents of the file as they are received.

**2. Case summary information sheet (2.2B Template 2)**

This section includes an overview of the case to allow the reader to become familiar at a glance with the details of the complainant and respondent, as well as the roles of key personnel in the safeguarding structure who are involved with the case. It is suggested that there should be a separate case summary information sheet for each complainant and an annual summary is suggested if the case is active.

**3. Case record narrative (2.2B Template 3)**

This section is the account of all actions taken and contact made with all relevant personnel. It should detail all contacts in relation to the case in list format, including by telephone, email, by letter and in person.

**4. Copy of child protection referral forms (Guidance 2.1A, 2.1A Template 1)**

This section should include a copy of the appropriate forms that were sent to the statutory authorities and the National Board.

**5. Chronology of when allegations were made and responses (2.2B Template 4)**

This section should be a list detailing the date and nature of the allegations received from the complainant, and the date and details of the respondent's reply if/when informed.

**6. Assessment reports and management plans**

This section should include hard copies of any assessment reports relating to the respondent, including, for example, psychological assessments, credibility assessments, copies of preliminary investigations, interim and permanent management plans decrees, precepts etc.

**7. Minutes of meetings**

This section should include hard copies of written records of any internal meetings about the case – **which can be shared with the respondent** – with dates of any meetings held with the advisor and any relevant child safeguarding information.

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#### 8. Third-party information

This section should include hard copies of written records relating to information – **which must be kept confidential from the respondent** – such as case management advice, NCMC advice, the initial statement from the complainant, legal advice to the Church authority, correspondence and vota sent to the CDF and the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLS), and dates of any meetings held between the support person and complainant, including relevant child safeguarding information.

#### 9. Correspondence in chronological order

The chronology referenced in this section acts as an aid to assessing risk and to reviewing action taken.

The file should be sectioned as detailed by Points 1–9, with reference to all information logged in the index sheet and referred to in the narrative account.

Third-party and confidential information must be securely placed in the appropriate sections, so they can be easily removed if access to the records is requested by someone who is deemed to have a bona fide interest in the case file.

All record-keeping must be compliant with data protection legislation, and must be stored confidentially in line with Appendix B.

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### 2.2B Template 1: File Index

Details of Document	Date Received/Created	Section of File

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#### 2.2B Template 2: Case Summary Information Sheet

<b>Respondent</b> <b>Contact details</b>	
<b>Parish/congregation</b> <b>Diocese</b>	
<b>Date allegation received</b>	
<b>Brief details</b>	
<b>Church authority</b> <b>Contact details</b>	
<b>Designated liaison person</b> <b>Contact details</b>	
<b>Advisor</b> <b>Contact details</b>	
<b>Complainant</b> <b>Contact details</b>	
<b>Support person</b> <b>Contact details</b>	

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#### 2.2B Template 3: Case Record Narrative

Date	Case Record	Author

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### 2.2B Template 4: Chronology of when Allegations were Made, and Responses Given

Date of allegation received	Details of allegation	Date the allegation was put to the respondent, and by whom	Location of meeting, time and who was present	Response of respondent

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#### 2.2C Guidance on Minute Taking

This guidance is provided for Church personnel who have the task of taking accurate minutes of the decisions of meetings of committees and other working groups involved in child safeguarding at parish, diocesan, and, in the case of a religious order, at provincial level.

A very detailed and free to download guidebook, *Taking Meeting Minutes*, has been produced by the US organisation, Free Management eBooks ([www.free-management-ebooks.com](http://www.free-management-ebooks.com)). This is not a Church-related organisation, but the guide is easy to read and very comprehensive.

The appointed minute taker at a meeting is faced with the challenges of deciding how much to record, and how to write this up in summary form without leaving out important information. They also may wish to take part in the discussions at the meeting and need to be able to do so without too much difficulty. It is not envisaged that a minute taker would simply attend to take notes and otherwise not participate.

It is useful for a committee that meets regularly to appoint a minute taker who will undertake this task for an agreed period of time, perhaps for a year. After this time, the arrangement can then be reviewed and, if necessary, changed for the next year. This ensures that time is not wasted at the beginning of meetings debating who will take the minutes. It will also ensure that minutes are taken for each meeting.

Minutes are a summarised record of what took place at a meeting. They record where and when the meeting took place, who was in attendance, who chaired the meeting, who gave apologies for their inability to attend, what agenda items were discussed, and what decisions were made under each agenda item. They also record a list of resultant actions required, along with the names of people responsible for undertaking these, and any deadline by which they have to complete them.

The minute taker needs to listen keenly to all discussions once the chairperson calls the meeting to order. Occasionally they may need to seek clarification of what was said or agreed rather than risk making an inaccurate record.

The minute taker needs to make rough notes of what was agreed and who is going to do it. They then write these up in an agreed format, check them for accuracy with the chairperson, and distribute them to all members of the committee or working group. At the next committee meeting, the written minutes will be reviewed for accuracy, amended if required and then signed and dated by the chairperson. The minute taker then places these signed minutes into a minutes file for safekeeping and ease of future reference.

The following checklist is taken from the above-mentioned *Taking Meeting Minutes*:

- When and where was the meeting?
- Who attended?
- Who did not attend (apologies)?

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- What topics were discussed?
- What was decided?
- What actions were agreed upon?
- Who is to complete the actions, and by when?
- Were any written materials distributed at the meeting (e.g. discussion document, copy of correspondence, draft working document, etc.)? If so, are copies available?
- Is there anything special that the reader of the minutes should know or do?
- What is the date, time and place of the next meeting?

Below is a suggested template for the presentation of completed minutes:

<b>Minutes of Child Safeguarding Committee Meeting, 1 January 2016 at Parish Hall, Kilnalough</b>			
<b>Attending</b>	Mrs Green, Chairperson, Mr Black, Ms White, Mr Brown, Fr Kelly, Sr O'Brien, Ms Grey		
<b>Apologies</b>	Ms Smith, Mr Jones		
Agenda item	Decisions made	Steps taken	Responsibility of
1. Welcome and apologies			
2. Minutes of previous meeting			
3. Matters arising			
4. Correspondence			
5. Business item			
6. Business item			
7. Business item			
8. Business item			
9. AOB			
10. Date and place of next meeting			

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



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#### 2.2D Guidance for Complainants on Access to Records Held by a Church Body

Article 8 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights states that:

1. Everyone has the right to the protection of personal data concerning him or her.
2. Such data must be processed fairly for specified purposes and on the basis of the consent of the person concerned or some other legitimate basis laid down by law. Everyone has the right of access to data which has been collected concerning him or her, and the right to have it rectified.
3. Compliance with these rules shall be subject to control by an independent authority.

This means that Church authorities must inform a complainant of the Church body's procedures in relation to how the Church body protects personal information; processes the information in a fair way which ensures that the complainant is listened to and that is reported to the statutory authorities; and how the complainants information is processed upon conclusion of a statutory investigation during any subsequent canonical inquiry.

In sharing information with a Church body, a Church authority should advise a complainant that information will be kept secure and only shared with those who need to know.

The Church authority must enable access to any information provided by the complainant and allow the correction of any factual inaccuracies.

- The Church authority should advise a complainant of their rights as follows:
- Access to anything written about by or concerning a complainant should be sought in writing to the data controller under article 15 of GDPR
- This should include any information on electronic or manual formats.
- The complainant should be asked for evidence of their identity
- The complainant should be advised that they can only access data about them and not any other third party
- The data controller must reply within 28 days of receipt of the request
- The Church authority as data controller should invite the complainant to meet so that relevant personal data can be shared.
- The complainant should be advised that they can ask for a copy of the records
- The complainant must be advised that they can ask for the record to be corrected if it is factually incorrect
- The complainant can ask for their records to be destroyed. The Church body has a right to refuse if it is required to retain a record to demonstrate its engagement with the complainant (in line with its data retention and destruction procedure).
- The complainant can ask for restrictions on the processing of their records
- The Church authority as data controller will have to provide reasons for not complying with the complainant's wishes
- GDPR states that the right to obtain a copy of personal data must not adversely affect the rights and freedoms of others. This means that the right cannot be used to access the personal data of other persons, i.e. third parties.

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#### 2.2E Guidance for Respondents on Access to Records Held by a Church Body

Article 8 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights states that:

1. Everyone has the right to the protection of personal data concerning him or her.
2. Such data must be processed fairly for specified purposes and on the basis of the consent of the person concerned or some other legitimate basis laid down by law. Everyone has the right of access to data which has been collected concerning him or her, and the right to have it rectified.
3. Compliance with these rules shall be subject to control by an independent authority.

This means that Church authorities must inform a respondent of the Church body's procedures in relation to how the Church body protects personal information; processes the information in a fair way which ensures that the respondent is listened to and that is reported to the statutory authorities; and how the respondents information is processed upon conclusion of a statutory investigation during any subsequent canonical inquiry.

In sharing information with a Church body, a Church authority should advise a respondent that information will be kept secure and only shared with those who need to know.

The Church authority must enable access to any information provided by the respondent and allow the correction of any factual inaccuracies.

- The Church authority should advise a respondent of their rights as follows:
- Access to anything written about, by or concerning a respondent should be sought in writing to the data controller under Article 15 of GDPR
- This should include any information on electronic or manual formats.
- The respondent should be asked for evidence of their identity
- The respondent should be advised that they can only access data about them and not any other third party
- The data controller must reply within 28 days of receipt of the request
- The Church authority as data controller should invite the respondent to meet so that relevant personal data can be shared.
- The respondent should be advised that they can ask for a copy of the records
- The respondent must be advised that they can ask for the record to be corrected if it is factually incorrect
- The respondent can ask for their records to be destroyed. The Church body has a right to refuse if it is required to retain a record to demonstrate its engagement with and about the respondent (in line with its data retention and destruction procedure).
- The respondent can ask for restrictions on the processing of their records
- The Church authority as data controller will have to provide reasons for not complying with the respondent's wishes
- GDPR states that the right to obtain a copy of personal data must not adversely affect the rights and freedoms of others. This means that the right cannot be used to access the personal data of other persons, i.e. third parties.

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#### 2.3A Guidance on Information Sharing

The effective protection of a child often depends on the willingness of people to share and exchange relevant information appropriately. It is critical that there is a clear understanding of the Church authority's professional and legal responsibilities with regard to data protection, confidentiality and the exchange of information.

The deficiencies in both internal and external communication of essential child protection information by various Church authorities has been identified and criticised in a number of statutory reports, including the Ryan Report, the Ferns Report, the Report of the Commission of Investigation into the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin (the Murphy Report), and the Cloyne Report. It is essential that the lessons from these reports are learned, and that improvements result in the sharing of information.

#### **What is meant by information sharing?**

All information regarding child protection suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations which meet the threshold for reporting (current or retrospective) should be shared with the statutory authorities, in the interest of the child. The provision of information to the statutory authorities for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection, and failure to share this information with the statutory authorities is an offence in law.

The importance of confidentiality should be accepted by all working in the Church and should be discussed at induction and should form part of training given to Church personnel. It is important that everyone is clear about their legal and ethical responsibilities relating to the sharing of information, in good faith with the statutory authorities.

Civil law is clear that no undertakings regarding confidentiality can ever be given when allegations of child abuse are made.

Canon law makes an exception in terms of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Guidance 2.1G).

Interagency cooperation is as important at all stages of child protection work. Therefore, Church personnel involved in a suspected, alleged or confirmed child abuse case should consistently make efforts to communicate all relevant information expediently and to remain in contact with the statutory authorities until risk has been assessed and managed.

Information sharing with third parties outside statutory bodies is governed the Data Protection Acts 2018 in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

#### **Situations when information must be shared**

- **Sharing information with the statutory authorities**

All allegations, suspicions concerns or knowledge regarding child abuse that meet the threshold for reporting must be passed to the statutory authorities (Canon law makes an exception to information received in the Sacrament of Reconciliation) (Guidance 2.1A). Where the information

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is given by the complainant disclosures should include names, addresses, details of the allegations, and whether the respondent has made an admission.

Sharing information with statutory authorities for child protection purposes, and in particular to assist investigation of potential offences, is permitted under the Data Protection Acts. Additionally, the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 (ROI) affords protection from civil liability to such persons reporting child protection concerns to statutory authority agencies in good faith.

#### **Situations when information can be shared**

##### **• As part of an investigation by the statutory authorities**

During the course of an investigation, if An Garda Síochána/PSNI request information from a file, every effort should be made to cooperate. However, careful consideration should be given to sharing the following without consent:

- Legal advice obtained by the Church authority may be privileged and may not be shared without the consent of the Church authority;
- Assessment reports may require the permission of the author and the respondent.

Sharing information with statutory agencies attracts the protections cited above only insofar as it relates to child protection. Therefore, if the information goes beyond this area, it will not benefit from these exceptions. Case files are stored in the name of the respondent and may hold other information, for example information about third parties, or suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations relating to other complainants outside the subject of the statutory investigation.

##### **• Sharing information with the National Board**

The National Board, as a data processor to the constituent members of the Church is entitled to access certain information contained on a Church authority's files and records for the purposes of analysing all such data in terms of compliance with best child protection practice, and in order to report upon any issues that arise in relation to that investigation.

Subsequent to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the introduction of the Data Protection Acts (2018 in both jurisdictions) the National Board has clarified when and how personal data can be shared with them as follows:

- Notification of allegation information should be shared on an anonymous basis – using the form 2.1A Template 1. A notification MOU and data processing deed should have been signed by the Church authority and forwarded to the National Board.
- Requests for advice on case management matters from National Office staff requires the exchange of full identifying information and details with the National Board, following signing of an MOU and data processing deed.
- Advice sought from the National Case Management Committee requires full exchange of identifying information and details and an additional data processing deed and MOU.
- Assistance with case file restructuring is a process whereby a member of National Board staff will have access to full case records; requires an additional data processing deed and MOU.

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- Reviews of Safeguarding practice by National Board's reviewers enables the reviewers to access all records, written and verbal to allow an assessment of compliance against the Church's safeguarding standards. This requires an additional data processing deed and MOU.

In relation to notification of allegations, given that key information is shared on an anonymous basis, there is no need for the execution of a data processing deed.

The Data Protection Commission has confirmed to the National Board that for the other services outlined above, the data processing deeds are in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Once the Church authority has signed the relevant MOUs and data processing deeds, information can be shared with the National Board for purpose associated with the deeds outlined above.

The National Board has robust data protection procedures which are in compliance with all relevant legislation, to ensure that data is collected, stored, and destroyed in line with best practice in relation to data protection.

- **Sharing information between Church bodies**

There may be occasions when information relating to an allegation against a cleric or religious between Church bodies is required.

Under canon law, faculties to minister as a priest in public can only be granted by a bishop. While not automatic, there may be occasions where it is appropriate that information is shared between a provincial of an ordained cleric from a religious order/congregation when an allegation of child abuse is made against that priest, so that the bishop can determine whether or not to withdraw faculties.

A cleric or religious ministering in another Church body against whom an allegation has been made may need to be withdrawn from that ministry; in such circumstances information about the allegation may need to be shared between Church authorities

Information relating to a religious living in a community who has had an allegation made against them, or who has been withdrawn from ministry may need to be shared with other community members.

Vos estis lux mundi (2019) requires the sharing of information across a number of Church bodies and relevant dicasteries within the Holy See.

As each of these situations is unique, the decision whether and what to share with another Church body will be on a case-by-case basis. In the first instance, if possible consent should be sought from the data subject to share the information. If this consent is not forthcoming or is not possible to obtain, a decision should be taken about the legal basis for sharing the information. To assist, a privacy impact assessment should be conducted on each occasion where it is determined that information should be shared, by considering the following questions:

- Does the recipient have a lawful basis for receiving this information?
- What is the justification for sharing information?
- How will the information be shared?
- Is the sharing of the information necessary and proportionate for the purpose(s) for which it is

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being shared?

- What are the risks of harm to an identified or unidentified child if such information is not shared?
- What are the risks to the rights and freedoms of the respondent if the information is shared?
- Can permission be obtained from the respondent to share information?
- Should the respondent be informed that the information is being shared?
- Is the respondent in public ministry as a priest and has faculties from the bishop?
- Is the respondent in the public ministry of a Church body?
- Should information about the complainant be redacted?

A summary of the requirements of storage and retention of data, confidentiality and data protection is contained in Appendix B.

#### **Legislation, guidance and case law**

This approach is underpinned by the following:

##### **Legislation**

- **Data Protection:**

The principles of the relevant data protection legislation should be taken into account when considering whether to share information with persons other than the civil authority agencies (see Appendix B).

##### **Republic of Ireland**

- **Data Protection Acts 1988–2003 (ROI) and Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (General Data Protection Regulation)**

Sharing personal data is a form of “processing” within the meaning of the data protection legislation. Article 6(1) of the GDPR states that processing shall be lawful only if and to the extent that at least one of the following lawful bases applies:

(a) the data subject has given consent to the processing of his or her personal data for one or more specified purposes;

(b) processing is necessary for the performance of a contract to which the data subject is party or in order to take steps at the request of the data subject prior to entering into a contract;

(c) processing is necessary for compliance with a legal obligation to which the controller is subject;

(d) processing is necessary in order to protect the vital interests of the data subject or of another natural person;

(e) processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller;

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(f) processing is necessary for the purposes of the legitimate interests pursued by the controller or by a third party, except where such interests are overridden by the interests or fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject which require protection of personal data, in particular where the data subject is a child.

The circumstances in which special categories of personal data (which include personal data revealing a person's religious or philosophical beliefs, data concerning health or data concerning a person's sex life) may be processed are more limited than those outlined above. Such circumstances include where the data subject has consented or where the processing is necessary for the establishment, exercise or defence of legal claims. Another circumstance is where processing is carried out by a not-for-profit body with a religious aim in the course of its legitimate activities, on condition that the processing relates solely to the body's members, former members or persons who have regular contact with the body, and the personal data is not disclosed outside the body without the consent of the data subjects.

Church bodies should determine whether there is a lawful basis, in line with GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 to disclose the information to a third party.

- **Children First Act 2015**

Section 17 of the Children First Act 2015 effectively prevents the disclosure of details of child sexual abuse against a member of a Church body to a third party. In circumstances where details of a child sexual abuse allegation have been made known to the relevant Church body by Tulsa, explicit permission of Tulsa to share that information must be obtained.

- **Protection of Persons Reporting Abuse Act 1998**

This affords protection from civil liability to persons, who report allegations of child abuse in good faith to an 'appropriate person', namely the designated officer of Tulsa or a member of An Garda Síochána, thereby exempting them from liability for defamation as a result of such reportage.

#### **Northern Ireland**

- **Data Protection Act 2018 (UK, including Northern Ireland)**

The Data Protection Act 2018 replaces the 1998 Data Protection Act (UK and Northern Ireland) and follows the same obligations as the Data Protection Act 2018 (ROI). The requirement to conduct a privacy impact assessment prior to sharing information with a third party (non statutory) applies in Northern Ireland, using the same format as detailed above.

- **Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI): Information Sharing Agreement for Safeguarding Children (Draft) (June 2015)**

This agreement establishes clarity on procedures for the lawful, secure and effective exchange of relevant information between all partners, recognising that it is only when relevant information from a number of sources is put together that it becomes clear that a child is at risk, or is suffering significant harm, or is in need of support.

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#### Guidance

##### Republic of Ireland

The Children First guidance in the Republic of Ireland references Information Sharing with a third Party on page 47, but this relates to Tusla sharing information with third parties usually, family and relevant others.

Chapter 3 refers to the responsibilities in relation to mandated assisting and the requirements on mandated persons to engage with Tusla's social work team to assist in the protection of a child. Tusla advise that a mandated assistor, must not share information with a third party unless Tusla considers it appropriate and authorises in writing that the information may be shared.

##### Northern Ireland

There is statutory guidance on interagency cooperation in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland. In Northern Ireland this is Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2016 (revised in 2017). In the Republic of Ireland the relevant guidance is Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017

At Section 8.1 on Interagency Collaboration, the Northern Ireland guidance document states that:

'Effective safeguarding requires strong multiagency collaboration, underpinned by effective communication and information sharing. All professionals, volunteers and agencies involved in child safeguarding must have an understanding of each other's roles, duties, powers, responsibilities and values. They must work collaboratively on an interagency basis, and make best use of resources appropriately, in the best interests of children, young people and their families. (Page 72)'

The Catholic Church on the island of Ireland is expected to embrace best practice standards in child safeguarding, including those on information management, information sharing and interagency cooperation as it functions.