



INFORMATION ON
SAFEGUARDING WITHIN THE
DIOCESE OF DOWN AND
CONNOR

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INTRODUCTION

The practice of Safeguarding within the Diocese of Down and Connor refers to the wide range of services, plans and activities that are put in place to protect children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable to abuse from being exploited or harmed. The Diocese is directed in its Safeguarding practice by statutory and legal requirements. Likewise, it must also demonstrate its Safeguarding compliance with the guidelines and standards, set by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI).

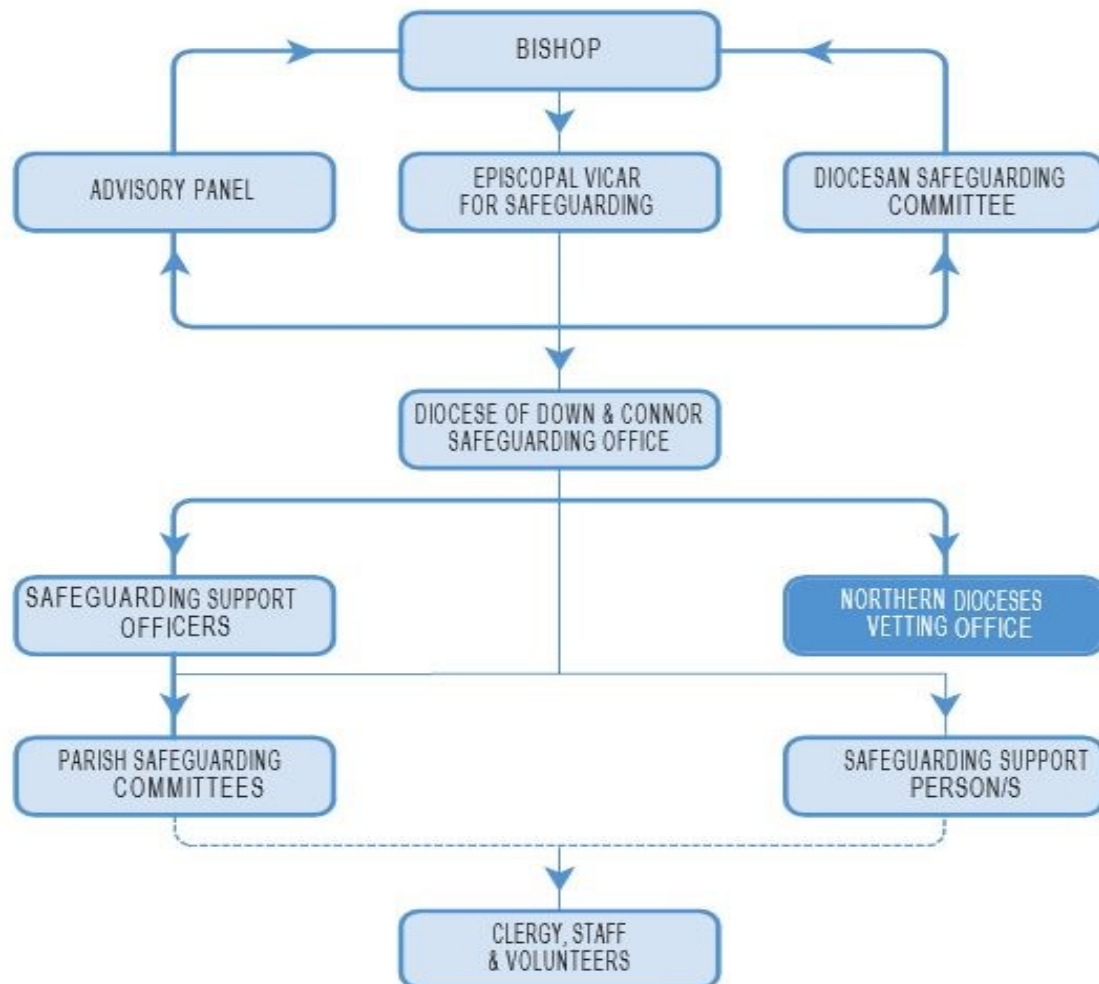
<https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Standards/Safeguarding%20Children%20Policy.pdf>

Promoting a culture of safeguarding remains a priority for the Church, for this Diocese and for every Christian community and parish. Awareness building for safeguarding, developing and grounding awareness, attitudes and behaviours which enhance and strengthen the safety of children, young people and adults at risk of harm is a vital service for the life of the Church itself. It is a service on the part of the Church to local community life and to society at large.

The Diocese of Down and Connor is committed to promoting the welfare of all its children, young people and adults at risk of harm and to encouraging their full participation in the life of the Church. This commitment is realised by the work of our staff, volunteers and priests whose work at parish level ensures a core ethos of Safeguarding in the parishes of the Diocese.

SAFEGUARDING – A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Safeguarding within the Diocese of Down and Connor is a shared responsibility, between clergy, professional staff and parishioners, which is assumed by structure and personnel established at each level within the Diocese.



The **Bishop of Down and Connor**, as the Church Authority for the Diocese, carries overall responsibility for all arrangements relating to Safeguarding.

The **Episcopal Vicar for Safeguarding** represents the Bishop in relation to Safeguarding with particular responsibility for liaising with priests in all fields of child protection and Safeguarding.

The **Advisory Panel** advises the Bishop at all stages of the investigative process into specific cases where allegations of clerical abuse, current or historical, have been made. The Bishop is also kept informed about the risk management process

associated with each case. The Panel is responsible for maintaining records of all its recommendations to the Bishop and providing advice and support to other church personnel involved in case management. The Panel members have specific experience, expertise and responsibilities in the management of risk.

The **Diocesan Safeguarding Committee** oversees the work of Safeguarding within the Diocese and ensures full compliance with governance arrangements. The Committee comprises members of the laity and clergy with relevant backgrounds, knowledge and experience of Safeguarding. The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee has overarching responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the Safeguarding Plan and is accountable to the Bishop.

The role of the **Safeguarding Office Team** is to provide professional advice, guidance, support and training to all staff, clergy and volunteers who work within the diocese to ensure that they can meet their Safeguarding responsibilities both legally and morally. The Team also provides support to those who may have suffered abuse or exploitation within a church setting and includes a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) who is responsible for referrals to statutory authorities.

The **Safeguarding Support Person** provides support for those adults who have made allegations or a disclosure of abuse. The Support Person assists and advises the individual of the process as an enquiry progresses and may assist the individual to contact their GP (if they are agreeable) and to access appropriate community services.

Parish Safeguarding Committees (PSCs) are the cornerstone of our parish safeguarding arrangements within the diocese. Each parish has a PSC in place (or shared arrangements with neighbouring parishes). Its role is to create and maintain a safe environment for children, young people and adults; thereby promoting a culture of Safeguarding at parish level.

Safeguarding Support Officers (SSOs) support each PSC within their allocated pastoral community. They provide feedback to PSC's on Safeguarding matters and are the link between the PSC's and the Safeguarding Office.

OUR SAFEGUARDING VISION

Child/young person Safeguarding:

The Diocese of Down and Connor, as part of the Catholic Church in Ireland, recognises and upholds the dignity and rights of all children and young people, and is committed to ensuring their safety and well-being and will work in partnership with parents/guardians to do this.

The Diocese recognises each child/young person as a gift from God and therefore encourages the participation of children and young people in all activities which enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development.

All Church personnel (including clergy, religious, staff and volunteers) have a responsibility to safeguard children and young people through promoting their welfare, health and development in a safe and caring environment that supports their best interests and prevents abuse.

Core Principles

The child/young person's welfare is paramount. The Diocese of Down and Connor fully embraces its role in supporting children and young people to achieve their full potential in an environment where they are protected from exploitation, abuse and maltreatment.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone who engages in the pastoral care of children and young people. The Diocese will carefully select leaders and volunteers in line with safe recruitment practice. It will train clergy, paid staff and volunteers how to act on their responsibility to prevent harm and intervene when it appears that children and young people need protection.

The management of personal information in the Safeguarding Arena at parish and diocesan levels is carried out in accordance with GDPR protocols and Diocesan regulations. Those with a Safeguarding responsibility within the church – clergy, paid staff and volunteers will be trained to collect, handle and share personal information.

Collaboration with external agencies is essential to our Safeguarding Strategy.

The Diocese will adopt a collaborative approach based on openness, transparency and accountability in working with the Health and Social Care Trusts and the PSNI to safeguard children and young people.

Effective communication is central in responding to Safeguarding concerns/complaints.

The Diocese will respond sensitively, respectfully, and without delay to every complaint made which suggests that a child or young person may have been harmed or is likely to be harmed. It shall cooperate with the PSNI and the Health and Social Care Trusts in any investigation, in compliance with domestic legislation and statutory procedures.

The appropriate exercise of power, in a spirit of genuine service, is essential for the provision of pastoral care in the life of the Church.

The Diocese is committed to challenging any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust.

The Church has a moral responsibility to provide pastoral support for all who suffer abuse while in the care of Church personnel. The Diocese has a legal responsibility to report safeguarding matters to the statutory agencies and is committed to providing pastoral care, counselling and other supports to those who have suffered abuse while in the care of Church personnel.

The Diocese has in place governance arrangements to ensure that human rights of children, young people and adults are protected.

The Diocese monitors Safeguarding practice and includes external review as part of good governance and accountability. This process ensures that practice is based on and informed by the best available evidence and implemented in a way that upholds the rights of children, young people and their families.

Adult Safeguarding:

The Diocese of Down and Connor acknowledges that all adults are entitled to live a life free from abuse and exploitation. All adults deserve to be treated with dignity and respect and in a way that promotes equality and diversity. The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee has a responsibility to implement safe practice in relation to Adult Safeguarding arrangements.

Core Principles

The Diocese recognises and adopts the principles which underpin Adult Safeguarding 'Prevention and Protection in Partnership (Department of Health and Department of Justice, July 2015)' which are as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

