

Guidance for Associations of the Faithful Ministering in the Diocese of Down and Connor



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The Diocese of Down and Connor welcome other organisations/groups/ who seek to minister with children and young people and promote good child safeguarding practice within the Catholic Church in Ireland. We need to be assured that all reasonable steps have been taken to safeguard children and young people. The responsibility for complying with good safeguarding practice (including safe recruitment and vetting) rests with the Association of the Faithful and not with the Church body.

The **Diocese of Down and Connor** as a member of the NBSCCCI adheres to the Safeguarding policy “**A Safe and Welcoming Church Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024**”. Any group operating under the name or auspices of the Church body must comply with these requirements.

It is a requirement that all groups working with children and young people in the Church body and/or using facilities owned by the Church body are insured, and that they have a child safeguarding policy in place.

The general principle is that the obligation to comply with requirements relating to insurance and child safeguarding rests with the Association of the Faithful and not with the Church Body.

It is the responsibility of the Association of the Faithful to ensure that they comply with all applicable child safeguarding and protection legislation and guidelines.

As an Association of the Faithful, you must have your own child safeguarding policy and procedures. You are also responsible for liaising with HSCT (Health and Social Care Trust), or another reputable body ie NSPCC or Volunteer Now to ensure that the policy and procedures meet the statutory requirements.

As an Association of the Faithful, you must have appropriate insurance for the ministry you are engaged in.

The Church body must have confirmation in writing from you that you have a child safeguarding policy in place. It is not the role of the Church body to validate the adequacy of the policy; that is the responsibility of HSCT or other reputable body.

The Diocese of Down and Connor requires confirmation in writing that you have appropriate insurance in place, which includes the following:

- The name of your insurers.
- The policy number.
- The period of cover of the policy.
- The limit of indemnity.

We would ask that you complete the Agreement Form. If any response is not applicable (N/A), please provide details of why this does not apply to your organisation.

If you feel your application requires further information, please attach on an additional page. Please indicate when additional information is provided in support of your application.

Adult Safeguarding

The Diocese of Down and Connor works to an adult safeguarding policy in all aspects of its pastoral interaction. This policy sets out how the Diocese expects those who work in its parishes whether as clerics, religious, or volunteers, to behave in their dealings with those adults they encounter in the course of their work for, or on behalf of the parishes of the Diocese.

The Diocesan policy is underpinned by the requirements of international law, domestic law, statutory policy and procedures (primarily **Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership Policy, DHSS&PS 2015**). Embedded in these requirements is the recognition that all clergy, religious and laity have a fundamental right to be respected, nurtured, cared for and protected from harm, this includes all those providing ministry as part of the Association of the Faithful.

There is an expectation that all agencies who engage with the Dioceses work to the ethos and principles of adult safeguarding.

Management of Allegations, suspicions, concerns and knowledge for Associations of the Faithful with their own safeguarding policy and procedures

An Association of the Faithful ministers with the permission of the Church authority.

In order for everyone to be satisfied that child safeguarding remains a priority, there are obligations on the Association to inform the Church authority of allegations of abuse and of how it is addressing these.

From a governance perspective, the Bishop of a Diocese must be advised of allegations against Church personnel ministering within the Diocese. The following situations must be governed by written agreements, which set out the legal basis for sharing information.

In line with data protection legislation, there should be a written agreement between the Association lead and the Diocese, which confirms what information can be shared when an allegation is made.

The following sets out the types of ministry within

which an allegation can be made and how these may be dealt with:

a) Allegations made against an Association of the Faithful Missionary who is ministering on behalf of a Diocese

In these situations, the Association Missionary is accountable to the Diocese as well as the Association.

- The DLP of the Association should therefore make a joint report to the statutory authorities with the DLP of the Diocese.
- The Bishop, who has overall responsibility for pastoral ministry in the Diocese, must be consulted by the Association of the Faithful Lead (through the Diocesan Safeguarding Director/DLP) and a joint decision reached about whether the respondent should be withdrawn from ministry.
- An agreement should be reached between the Bishop and the Association of the Faithful Lead about safeguarding action that needs to be taken in the short, medium and long term (through the Diocesan Safeguarding Director/DLP).
- The Association of the Faithful Lead should confirm in writing to the Bishop (through the Director of Safeguarding/DLP) the restrictions on the Lay Faithful Ministry Missionary that have been applied, and the disciplinary action that has been taken.
- The Association of the Faithful Lead should advise the Bishop (through the Director of Safeguarding/DLP) of the details of care offered to the complainant.
- Any return to ministry by the respondent can only take place with the agreement of the Bishop.

b) Management of Knowledge Allegations Suspicions or Concerns

In situations where the Association's Missionaries become aware of child safeguarding suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations, these should be

reported immediately to the Association's DLP and at the same time notified to the Diocesan DLP.

- The Association's DLP should make a joint report to the statutory authorities with the DLP of the Diocese.

Relevant Forms

SO20

USEFUL RESOURCES

- **A Safe and Welcoming Church Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024**
- **Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership Policy, DHSS&PS 2015**