

Guidance on Reporting Allegations of Abuse



Guidance on Reporting Allegations of Abuse

Children and young people occupy a central place in the heart of the Christian community. They have a right to be listened to and heard. The paramount consideration in all matters relating to children and young people is their safety and protection from all forms of abuse.

It is a requirement of Northern Ireland legislation and Church policy that all allegations, suspicions, and knowledge of abuse are passed to the statutory authorities.

All volunteers who work with children, young people or families - in whatever capacity - have a responsibility to safeguard and protect children and young people as outlined in [Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland \(updated October 2024\)](#).

All staff in statutory/voluntary and community organisations have a responsibility to refer a child and young person to the statutory safeguarding services if they believe or suspect that the child and young person has suffered, or is likely to suffer significant harm ([Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland, Regional Core Child Protection Policy and Procedures](#)).

Church personnel and volunteers must be alert to signs and indicators of harm and know how to respond when concerns are identified. The term safeguarding is intended to be used in its widest sense, encompassing the full range of promotion, prevention and protection activity. A core responsibility of the Diocese of Down and Connor is to create and maintain a safe environment for children and young people across all its parishes and institutions.

Church organisations must respond effectively and ensure all allegations and suspicions of abuse are reported, both within the Church and to statutory

authorities. This responsibility to report is mandatory, and the only exception to this rule is the receipt of any information by a cleric under what is termed as the sacramental Seal of Confession.

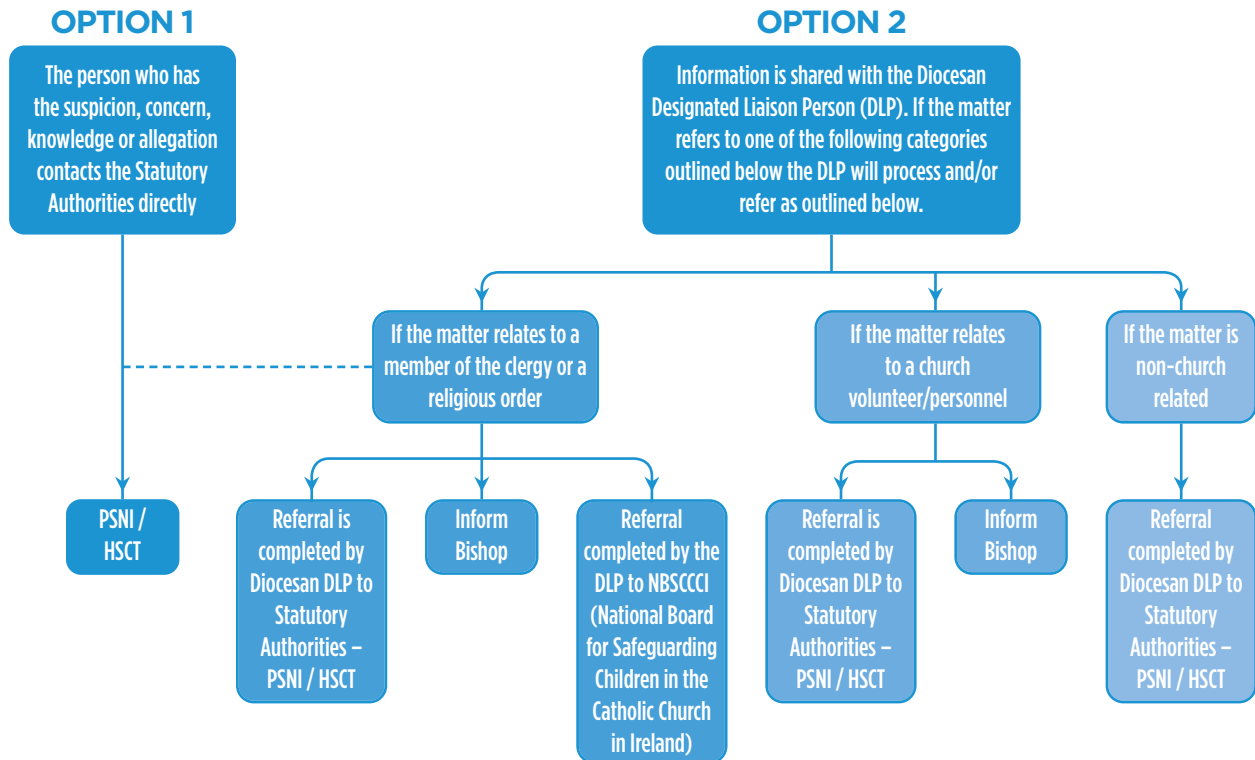
All Church organisations must provide guidance and training on recognition of abuse, and clear procedures on what to do when a child protection concern arises, so that everyone knows how to respond appropriately. This involves knowing who to tell and how to record it. It is important that the local reporting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

Reporting a concern can be a challenging responsibility. The procedure needs to ensure that everyone is clear what steps to take to ensure that the safety of children and young people is the paramount consideration.

The reporting flow chart overleaf 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 and young people who may need help and protection, are not left at risk of abuse.

REPORTING FLOWCHART FOR DIOCESE OF DOWN AND CONNOR

A PERSON WHO HAS A SUSPICION, CONCERN, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATION RELATING TO A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON HAS TWO OPTIONS WITH REGARDS TO REPORTING THIS MATTER



If you have any query about the referral process, please contact the Diocesan DLP who is a qualified social worker and will explain the process in full

The guiding principles about the reporting of abuse or neglect are:

- The safety of the child and young person at risk is paramount.
- If you have a safeguarding concern and are not sure what to do, contact the Diocesan Designated Liaison Person (DLP).
- Reports should be made without delay to the DLP, Health and Social Care Trust Gateway Team.
- If a child and young person is in immediate danger, contact the PSNI directly.

There are two options for the person who has a suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation which are outlined in the reporting flow chart above.

How to make a Complaint

Option 1: Direct Reporting

Church personnel or volunteers have an option of reporting directly to the statutory safeguarding services.

POLICE SERVICE	
Police Service (IN an Emergency)	999
Police Service (NOT an Emergency)	101
<i>Monday to Friday 8.00am – 5.00pm / Saturday and Sunday 9.00am – 5.00pm</i>	
CONCERN ABOUT A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON	
<i>During normal working hours – Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm</i>	
Local Social Services offices	
Belfast HSC Trust	Tel: 028 9050 7000
South Eastern HSC Trust	Tel: 0300 1000 300
Northern HSC Trust	Tel: 0300 1234 333
Southern HSC Trust	Freephone: 0800 7837 745
	Tel: 028 3741 5285
CONCERN ABOUT A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON	
<i>Outside normal working hours, including Bank holidays</i>	
Regional Emergency Social Work Service	Tel: 0800 1979 995
	Email: resws1@belfasttrust.hscni.net

Option 2: Report via Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

Church personnel or volunteers can contact the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) who will refer the matter appropriately depending on the nature of the allegation.

DOWN & CONNOR SAFEGUARDING OFFICE	
<i>During normal working hours – Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm</i>	
Designated Liaison Person (DLP)	Tel: 075 3499 2124
Office Telephone	Tel: 028 9049 2798
Email	office@soddc.org

Relevant Forms

SO21

USEFUL RESOURCES

- **Dept of Health – Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (updated October 2024)**
- **The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Regional Child Protection Policies and Procedures Manual**
- <https://downandconnorsafeguarding.com/report-a-concern/>