



Child Safeguarding Statement of Diocese of Achonry

This statement has been prepared to comply with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015 and is derived from Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016. The policy of the Catholic Church in Ireland is based on standards of practice which contain indicators that assist in reaching these standards. These indicators can be used in assessing and managing risk.

Name and contact details of the service provider

Diocese of Achonry
Bishop's House, Convent Road
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Phone: 094 9860034

Statement

As a constituent member of the Catholic Church in Ireland, we recognise and uphold the dignity and rights of all children, are committed to ensuring their safety and well-being and will work in partnership with parents/guardians to do this. We recognise each child as a gift from God, and we value and encourage the participation of children in all activities that enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development.

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

Nature of service and principles to safeguard children from harm

The Diocese of Achonry as a constituent member of the Catholic Church in Ireland exists to promote the teachings of the Catholic Church. This includes the following ministry with children, as defined in Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016:

- Altar Servers
- Children's Choirs/Mixed Choirs
- Children's Liturgy Groups
- Children's Prayer Groups
- Sacramental Preparation groups
- Youth Ministry groups
- Retreats and pilgrimages.
- **This list is not exhaustive**

As outlined in the Safeguarding Children 2016 Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland we are committed to the following principles:

1. Mandatory Reporting

Each of us has a duty to notify the statutory authorities of suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations that a child is being or has been abused:

- physically
- emotionally
- sexually
- through neglect

Suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations may relate to possible abuse by a member of Church personnel, but they can also relate to incidents in the child's family, or elsewhere in the community.

2. Caring for the welfare of all children and the adults who work with them

Measures to create and maintain environments that are safe for children, that prevent abuse, and that create nurturing, caring conditions within the Church for children and the adults who work with them, will continue to be strengthened and reviewed. This will be done through training support, communications and quality assurance.

3. Responding appropriately to child protection suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations.

Anyone who brings any suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation of current or past abuse of a child to the notice of the Church will be responded to sensitively, respectfully, actively and in a timely manner, in line with statutory child protection procedures and Church requirements.

All Church personnel have a responsibility to report suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations of child abuse that reach the threshold for reporting to the statutory authorities. The Designated Liaison Person can assist with this process. These reports will be made irrespective of the status of the person (lay, cleric or religious) who is suspected of having been abusive to a child. If the allegation relates to a lay member of Church personnel, in addition to notifying the statutory authorities, the allegation must be reported to the Church authority. If the allegation relates to a cleric or religious, in addition to notifying the statutory authorities, the allegation must also be reported to the Church authority and the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

All Church personnel will cooperate with the statutory authorities in all cases.

In responding to complaints of child sexual abuse relating to clergy and all those in forms of consecrated life, Church authorities will act in accordance with the requirements of civil law and canon law, and so will respect the rights and uphold the safeguards afforded in these, both to the complainant and respondent.

4. Caring pastorally for complainants and other affected persons

Those who have suffered child abuse by Church personnel will receive a compassionate and just response, and will be offered appropriate pastoral care, counselling and support as they seek to rebuild their lives. An appropriate pastoral response to the family, parish, congregation or order and to the wider community will be provided, with due regard to the right of privacy of those directly involved, and to the administration of justice.

5. Caring pastorally for respondents and other affected persons

This Church body in its response to suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations of child sexual abuse will respect the rights under civil law and canon law of an accused cleric or religious or other Church personnel. A legal presumption of innocence will be maintained during the statutory and Church inquiry processes. As the processes develop, additional assessment, therapy and support services may be offered to the respondent.

The Church authority will take responsibility for ensuring that any cleric or religious who is considered to constitute a danger to children is managed according to a risk management plan.

All requisite steps will be taken to restore the good name and reputation of anyone who has been wrongly accused of abusing a child.

Respondents belong to families and diocesan or religious communities. The Church authority will be mindful of the need to provide support to members of families and communities affected by the respondent's changed situation.

Risk Assessment

The table below sets out the identified risks to the safety of children and young people involved in Church activities in the Diocese of Achonry and the steps taken to minimise the risks of abuse.

Risk Identified	Procedure in place to manage risk identified
Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) of a child by Church personnel or visitor to church premises.	Procedures for safe recruitment and creating and maintaining a safe environment as part of indicators 1.1 and 1.4 of the child safeguarding policy available at www.safeguarding.ie
Risk of harm through bullying (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) of a child through bullying by peers	Anti-bullying procedures as part of indicator 1.3 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available at www.safeguarding.ie Procedures to meet Indicator 1.3 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available at www.safeguarding.ie
The environment in which work with children is facilitated fails to protect them from harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015)	Procedures to create and maintain safe environments, including localised hazard assessments as part of indicators 1.4 and 1.8 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available at www.safeguarding.ie
Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) to children involved with external groups who use church property and are unsafe to do so.	External groups who use church property procedures to meet indicator 1.5 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available at www.safeguarding.ie
Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) to a child during outings or trips away (including overnight) from home, from peers, church personnel or strangers.	Procedures to meet Indicator 1.1, 1.4 and 1.8 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available including trips away from home procedures, localised risk assessment and safe recruitment available at www.safeguarding.ie

Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) through the use of digital media (photography, video and social media)	Procedures to meet Indicator 1.9 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available at www.safeguarding.ie
Church personnel fail to report an allegation, suspicion, concern or knowledge appropriately	Procedures for reporting child abuse allegations, suspicions, concerns or knowledge to meet indicator 2.1 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available at www.safeguarding.ie
Church personnel fail to take action during and following any investigation into allegations of abuse against clerics and religious to ensure children are protected from harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015)	Procedures for managing allegations after the civil investigation has concluded to meet indicators 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available at www.safeguarding.ie
Church personnel fail to support those who are victims of abuse	Procedures to support complainants to meet indicators 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available at www.safeguarding.ie
Church personnel fail to understand their responsibilities to safeguard children	Procedures for child safeguarding training and support to meet Indicators 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available at www.safeguarding.ie
Children and their parents do not understand the Church's policy, procedures and structure to safeguard children and protect them from harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015)	Procedures to develop communications, training and support, relating to child safeguarding to meet Indicators 5.5, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available at www.safeguarding.ie
The procedures for safeguarding children from harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) fail to be implemented	Procedures to ensure compliance and implementation of the policy and procedures meet Indicators 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available at www.safeguarding.ie
The Church authority fails to ensure the appointment of a relevant person and maintain a list of mandated persons	Procedures, including safe recruitment, Tusla child safeguarding statement and mandated persons to meet Indicators 1.1, 6.1 and 2.1 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available at www.safeguarding.ie
Risk of harm of a child (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) being disclosed during the Sacrament of Reconciliation	Procedures to meet indicator 2.1 of the Child Safeguarding Policy in relation to the Sacrament of Reconciliation available at www.safeguarding.ie

Localised Risk Assessment

Alongside the risks listed in the table above, all parishes/religious communities of the Diocese of Achonry individually risk assess their activities with children and put in place procedures to manage these risks.

Risk Identified	Procedure in place to manage risk identified
Local activity with children is risk assessed in each location in which the activity takes place as part of Indicator 1.8 of <i>Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016</i>	For full details of localised risks and the procedures in place to manage these please refer to the hazard assessments stored at www.achonrydiocese.org

Procedures

All procedures outlined in the risk assessment above are available at www.safeguarding.ie. The procedures listed above include the following:

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service. This is part of Indicator 2.1 which is available from safeguarding.ie
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children. This is part of Indicator 1.1 available from safeguarding.ie
- Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm. This is part of Indicators 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 available from safeguarding.ie
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla is part of Indicator 2.1 which is available from www.safeguarding.ie
- Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated persons. This is part of Indicator 2.1 which is available from safeguarding.ie
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person. This is part of Indicators 1.1 and 6.1 which is available from safeguarding.ie

Implementation

The Diocese of Achonry is committed to safeguarding children through the implementation of *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*. This Child Safeguarding Statement and our practice supports our desire to keep children safe from harm while in our ministries. As part of our annual audit against the relevant indicators of the child safeguarding standards, we will review the effectiveness of our practice as outlined in this statement and will revise, as appropriate.

Signed: 

Date: 14th October 2022

+Paul Dempsey
Bishop of Achonry

For any queries relating to this statement please contact the relevant person who is:

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