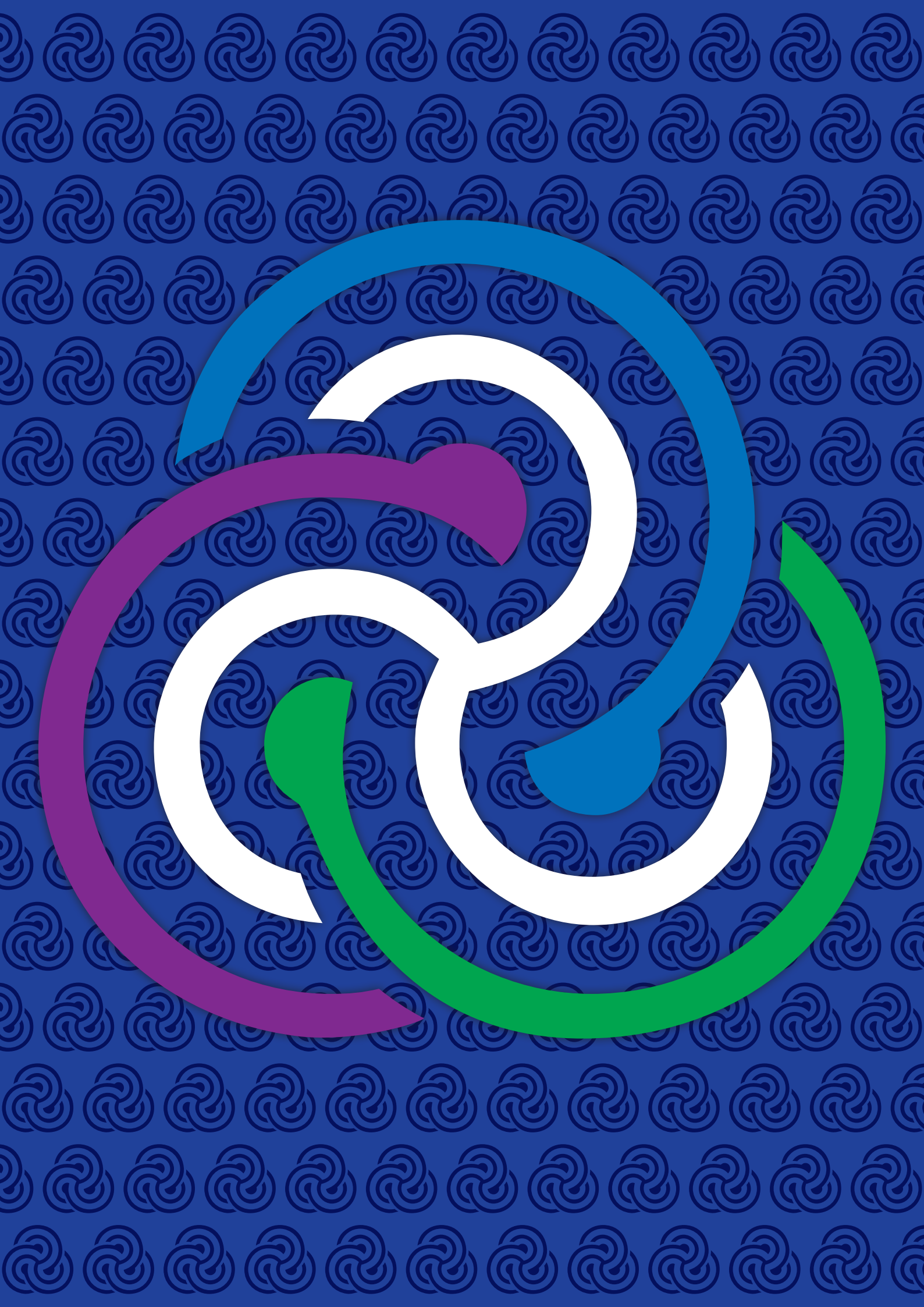




**CHILD**  
**SAFEGUARDING**  
**POLICY**

**CHILD**  
**SAFEGUARDING**  
**POLICY**

**CHURCH OF IRELAND**  
**2026**



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**AND WHAT DOES THE  
LORD REQUIRE OF  
YOU? TO ACT JUSTLY  
AND TO LOVE MERCY  
AND TO WALK HUMBLLY  
WITH YOUR GOD.**

**MICAH 6:8**



# FOREWORD

**One of the chief characteristics of humility is that of taking a modest view of one's own importance and one's own gifts. Humility in the Church is marked by a striving to 'correct what is amiss and to supply what is lacking' by working with a common purpose in mind.**

Just as in any area of discipleship that requires constant evaluation, in an organisation it also means developing policies and procedures to ensure that what is learned is systematically applied. In today's world we are challenged to humility in evaluating our practice and striving to do more to protect children in the ministry of our Church.

This safeguarding policy is an outworking of this evaluation process. We have engaged with colleagues across the Church and in the statutory services to develop this policy and its accompanying guidance. I wish to acknowledge and thank those that have contributed to helping the Church on its continuing safeguarding journey; your expertise and advice have been invaluable.

The safeguarding policy is structured under three key standards: Protecting, Responding and Complying. Protecting sets out the importance of creating a safe environment for children and the adults that work with them to empower children in their faith. Responding outlines the Church's reporting procedures, liaison with the statutory authorities, and the steps to be taken when child safeguarding suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations are received. Complying covers the processes in place to ensure compliance with this policy by the whole Church - in parishes and dioceses where the principal work of the Church takes place.

Each standard sets out the key criteria to assist parishes, dioceses and other relevant church organisations in meeting their obligations around safeguarding children and young people. The policy is accompanied by a range of guidance which is available online. The guidance is there to assist with implementation and is designed to be a living document to be developed and updated in line with new safeguarding situations, changes in practice or legislation.

Whilst a safeguarding policy is very important to provide the Church with a clear direction on how to minister safely with children, it must also become a lived reality. I want to pay tribute to the volunteers, members of staff and members of clergy who work tirelessly to create safe and welcoming spaces for our young people. I encourage you to continue on this journey as we work together to ensure this policy is a lived and real part of our ministry of sharing the word of God.

**Archbishop John McDowell**  
*Chair of the Safeguarding Board*

# PRINCIPLES

**JESUS SAID, “LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME, AND DO NOT HINDER THEM, FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN BELONGS TO SUCH AS THESE.”**

**MATTHEW 19:14**

## **WORKING WITH CHILDREN BASED ON THEOLOGY AND THE TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND**

The words of Jesus remind us that safeguarding children is rooted in God’s love for us. Children are created in God’s image, and the Church has a responsibility to reflect this in how we respect, care for and safeguard children in our church. By grounding our safeguarding practices and policy on this biblical understanding, our church will continue to build a culture of safeguarding that not only complies with the law but ultimately honours God.

## **WORKING WITH CHILDREN BASED ON NATIONAL LAW, THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND AND GOVERNMENT REGULATION**

The Church of Ireland recognises children as rights holders in line with the UNCRC and will uphold the national laws relating to the care and protection of all children regardless of age, disability, gender, race, ethnicity, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, within the jurisdictions in which it ministers (a full list of relevant legislation is set out in Appendix B). Church personnel will:

- Implement procedures and practices which promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm (including mandatory reporting obligations)
- Report child safeguarding suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations which meet the threshold for reporting to the statutory authorities and church bodies
- Work with the statutory and church authorities to ensure that risk of harm to children is managed.

## CARING FOR COMPLAINANTS

The Church of Ireland will ensure that our response to complainants is compassionate and that appropriate pastoral support is offered. Our response will be centred on the unique needs and circumstances of each individual and the right of privacy of those directly involved.

## MANAGING AND CARING FOR RESPONDENTS

The Church of Ireland will ensure a fair and just process for those accused of child abuse. Throughout the statutory and church process we will ensure that the risk to children is appropriately managed and offer appropriate pastoral support to each respondent.

## ENSURING COMPLIANCE

The Church of Ireland will ensure that a robust process of compliance is in place to provide assurance that we are consistently evaluating our child safeguarding practice and procedures and their implementation across dioceses, parishes and relevant church organisations. This also includes procedures to deal with non-compliance.

# SCOPE

This policy has been reviewed by the Safeguarding Board and approved by the Standing Committee of the Church of Ireland. The policy applies to all volunteers, members of staff and members of clergy (church personnel) (as outlined in Appendix D) in Church of Ireland dioceses, parishes and relevant church organisations who have been approved by the Church of Ireland Safeguarding Board. All church personnel are bound by this policy including the duty to report child safeguarding suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations which meet the threshold defined in legislation to the statutory authorities. This is a legal requirement in Northern Ireland as part of the Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967. In the Republic of Ireland all members of the clergy alongside people listed in Schedule 2 of the Children First Act 2015 are considered mandated persons.

To assist with implementation of this policy the RCB have produced a range of policies and procedures in the form of guidance, which will be regularly updated. To access the guidance go to <https://safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org/>

# POLICY STATEMENT

The Church of Ireland acknowledges its duty of care to safeguard, protect and promote the welfare of all children sharing in its ministry. We are committed to ensuring that safeguarding reflects statutory responsibilities, government regulation and complies with best practice.

The Church of Ireland pledges to work alongside parents, carers and statutory authorities, to value and support children as important members of our church community, to ensure they have a positive and safe experience in church activities.

This safeguarding policy applies to all church personnel and is recognised in Chapter XVI of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland.

## Whom to contact to discuss safeguarding issues which are not related to abuse

Parish Panel or equivalent:

.....



## Whom to contact if you have a suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation of abuse

RCB Safeguarding Casework Officers:

.....



## If it is an emergency situation or you do not wish to contact the RCB Safeguarding Casework Officer you can contact

Police contact for allegations that do not relate to members of the clergy:

.....

Police contact for allegations that relate to members of the clergy:

.....

Child Protection Service:

.....



For any other safeguarding queries contact [safeguarding@rcbcoi.org](mailto:safeguarding@rcbcoi.org)



**THE**

**STANDARDS**

# STANDARD 1: PROTECTING

**HE WILL COVER YOU  
WITH HIS FEATHERS,  
AND UNDER HIS WINGS  
YOU WILL FIND REFUGE.**

**PSALM 91:4**

## **BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF PROTECTING**

The Bible calls for the protection of the vulnerable and God is understood as a defender of the defenceless, with his people called to follow his example. The Bible includes references to the protection shown to the most vulnerable members of society including children, and safeguarding is not just about prevention, but also about ensuring the holistic well-being of a child – spiritually, physically, emotionally and socially. This requires a proactive approach to creating safe, protected and nurturing environments where children can learn and grow in their faith.

## **WHAT IS THIS STANDARD?**

Dioceses, parishes and relevant church organisations provide an environment for children which is welcoming and safe. Adults who work with children are appropriately recruited and trained to protect children from harm and safeguarding risks are managed.

## INDICATORS

Dioceses, parishes and relevant church organisations **must**:

- 1.1** Ensure the safe recruitment of personnel who work with children including AccessNI checks for those in regulated activity and Garda vetting checks for those undertaking relevant work
- 1.2** Ensure the implementation of effective codes of behaviour for children and the adults that work with them
- 1.3** Ensure that all activities with children (whether in person or online) are assessed and mitigation measures are put in place to manage safeguarding risks
- 1.4** Have clearly written complaints and whistleblowing procedures which are easily accessible
- 1.5** Ensure that all church personnel attend safeguarding training, induction and role specific training relevant to their needs
- 1.6** Have in place a plan and process to ensure the communication of safeguarding to children, their parents and carers, members of the Church and external bodies
- 1.7** Ensure that relevant procedures are in place to manage groups not covered by this policy but using church property to work with children

## RECORDS AND DATA PROTECTION

This standard requires a range of data to be stored to demonstrate compliance with national law and government policy. All data must be held in line with data protection law. For more information on the types of data that must be held, and retention periods go to <https://safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org/>

# STANDARD 2: RESPONDING

**LEARN TO DO RIGHT!**

**SEEK JUSTICE, ENCOURAGE  
THE OPPRESSED.**

**ISAIAH 1:17A**

## BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF RESPONDING

We are often described as the family of God, where we are brothers and sisters in Christ. There is a collective responsibility to protect and nurture all members, especially the young. This familial model provides a powerful framework for creating a culture of trust and transparency where children can thrive safely, and where the Church of Ireland responds to concerns appropriately to protect children from harm.

## WHAT IS THIS STANDARD?

Dioceses, parishes and relevant church organisations have clear and robust procedures to report child safeguarding suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations which meet the threshold for reporting in line with statutory obligations in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Complainants are offered appropriate pastoral support, and the Church of Ireland ensures a fair process to investigate, manage risks associated with child safeguarding concerns, and to offer support to respondents.

## INDICATORS

Dioceses, parishes and relevant church organisations **must**:

**2.1** Ensure there is effective reporting and risk management procedures for child safeguarding suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations which meet the threshold for reporting. These procedures must be compliant with national and church law and respect the primacy of any investigation by the statutory authorities

**2.2** Ensure that appropriate support and care is in place for the complainant if the respondent is a member of church personnel

**2.3** Ensure that appropriate support and management is in place if the respondent is a member of church personnel

**2.4** Ensure there is effective risk management and mitigation measures in place when the statutory authorities conclude their investigation if the respondent is a member of church personnel

**2.5** Ensure effective practice in line with national and church law on the management of persons of concern taking part in church services or activities

**2.6** Ensure effective information sharing procedures are in place to manage risk to children in line with civil law and statutory guidance

## RECORDS AND DATA PROTECTION

This standard requires a range of data to be stored to demonstrate compliance with national law and government policy. All data must be held in line with data protection law. For more information on the types of data that must be held, and retention periods go to <https://safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org/>

# STANDARD 3: COMPLYING

**AND WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF YOU?  
TO ACT JUSTLY AND TO LOVE MERCY AND TO  
WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD.**

**MICAH 6:8**

## BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF COMPLYING

We are called to be stewards of the gifts God has given us. This stewardship involves accountability to God and ensuring that we are doing all in our power to protect children. This requires humility as we evaluate our practice and compliance, learn from mistakes and failures and strive to improve.

## WHAT IS THIS STANDARD?

Dioceses, parishes and relevant church organisations have in place procedures to review and ensure compliance with these standards and the requirements of the safeguarding policy.

## INDICATORS

Dioceses, parishes and relevant church organisations **must**:

**3.1** Maintain a robust system of compliance with regular audit and reporting

**3.2** Have in place and implement a safeguarding plan to address recommendations or non-compliance with this policy including the provision of training and communication

## RECORDS AND DATA PROTECTION

This standard requires a range of data to be stored to demonstrate compliance with national law and government policy. All data must be held in line with data protection law. For more information on the types of data that must be held, and retention periods go to <https://safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org/>



**THE**

**APPENDICES**

# APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

**ADVISOR** - The role of the advisor is to keep the respondent informed where there is an allegation of abuse against church personnel and to help direct the respondent to relevant supports.

**CASE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (CMC)** - The CMC is an independent body that advises on the management of cases (in line with statutory guidance).

**CHILD** - This refers to anyone under the age of 18.

**CLERGY OR MEMBER OF THE CLERGY** - Unless otherwise specifically provided, this shall mean a deacon or priest of the Church of Ireland or of a Church in full communion with that Church serving in or retired from ministry of the Church of Ireland: beneficed, licensed or with Permission to Officiate.

**CHURCH OF IRELAND SAFEGUARDING BOARD** - The Standing Committee, on behalf of the General Synod, has overall responsibility for the Church's Child Safeguarding Policy and has delegated to the Church of Ireland Safeguarding Board responsibility for implementation. The Representative Body has responsibility, in conjunction with the dioceses, for providing funding to the Safeguarding Board to provide the necessary resources and training supports. The Church of Ireland Safeguarding Board ('the Board') is a committee for which the terms of reference are approved by Standing Committee of General Synod. The role of the Safeguarding Board is to develop and approve safeguarding policy, to monitor implementation and to report to the Standing Committee and the Representative Body as appropriate.

**CHURCH PERSONNEL** - All members of the clergy, staff and volunteers who minister, work or volunteer within the Church of Ireland.

**COMPLAINANT** - The person who is making an allegation of abuse.

**DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING PANEL** - Follows the advice of the RCB Safeguarding Casework Officer to manage associated risks with safeguarding concerns and keeps casework records.

**DIOCESAN SUPPORT TEAM** - This team will undertake the evidence-based triennial audit of the implementation of this safeguarding policy in parishes and diocesan bodies and put in place a plan for diocesan bodies for the implementation of this policy and provide training in line with the Diocesan Training Strategy (see Diocesan Support section for further information). The Bishop of the Diocese and Diocesan Council(s) shall determine the composition of the Diocesan Support Team and ensure that suitable people with the appropriate skills are appointed. The work of the Diocesan Support Team is supported by RCB safeguarding staff. The Diocesan Support Team shall report on a regular basis to the Diocesan Council(s) and shall also submit a report on their year's undertakings to the Diocesan Secretary for inclusion in the Diocesan Synod Book of Reports.

**INCUMBENT** - In addition to the ordinary meaning of ‘incumbent’ within the law of the Church of Ireland (being a beneficed member of the clergy), the term shall, for the purposes of the implementation of this policy, also include licensed clergy (for example vicar), or other officiating clergy (such as clergy with Permission to Officiate), lay ministers (such as a Church Army Officer, Ordained Local Ministers, Pioneer Ministers, etc.), who are in charge of a parish, including those temporarily in charge during a vacancy in an incumbency.

**MANDATED PERSONS (ROI ONLY)** - People defined in Schedule 2 of the Children First Act 2015 who have contact with children and/or families who, by virtue of their qualifications, training and experience, are in a position to protect children from harm. Members of the Clergy are mandated persons at all times and there may be members of the Church of Ireland who are mandated persons in their non-church roles, but this does not transfer to their role within the Church. Each diocese will maintain a list of all of those deemed to be mandated persons.

**PARISH** - In addition to the ordinary meaning of the term, shall include groups or unions of parishes, cathedrals (whether a parish or not), trustee churches, and also other non-parochial ecclesiastical units (e.g. church plants, pioneer ministry) in which a licensed member of the clergy of the Church of Ireland officiates as determined by the Bishop and Diocesan Council.

**PARISH PANEL OR EQUIVALENT** - The representatives appointed to oversee the implementation of the safeguarding policy and its compliance within a parish or equivalent. For pioneer ministry, church plants or equivalent diocesan ministries, panels can be established to fulfil the same function as a Parish Panel. The establishment of these panels is at the direction of the Bishop. For cathedrals with a Cathedral Board, a Safeguarding Panel should be constituted as a sub-committee of the Cathedral Board.

**RCB** - The Representative Church Body, located in Church of Ireland House, Church Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin 6, D06 CF67.

**RCB SAFEGUARDING CASEWORK OFFICER** - Is a mandated person (ROI) and acts as a first point of contact for all safeguarding allegations and advises the diocese on the management of allegations. Ensures the reporting of child safeguarding suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations which meet the threshold for reporting, to Gateway Services Team at the Health and Social Care Trusts (NI), or Tusla (ROI) and/or Police Service of Northern Ireland / An Garda Síochána. The Casework Officer may also be required to report certain information to the Disclosure and Barring Scheme (DBS).

**RELEVANT CHURCH ORGANISATION** - A group or organisation (other than a diocese or parish) which has been approved by the Safeguarding Board to be included within the remit of the Child Safeguarding Policy.

**RELEVANT PERSON (REPUBLIC OF IRELAND ONLY)** - Defined within the Children First Act 2015 as a person who is appointed by a provider of a relevant service to be the first point of contact in respect of the provider’s child safeguarding statement.

**RESPONDENT** - The person against whom an allegation of abuse has been received.

**SAFEGUARDING MANAGERS OR RCB SAFEGUARDING STAFF** - The Safeguarding Managers and RCB Safeguarding staff, will advise and support parishes, dioceses and central church bodies on the implementation and development of safeguarding.

**SELECT VESTRY** - This refers to the select vestry (or select vestries) of parishes and cathedrals howsoever described, and the Trustee(s) of every Trustee church howsoever described.

**STAFF** - Anyone with a formal contract of employment who is employed and paid by a parish, a diocese, the Representative Church Body, or relevant church organisation.

**STATUTORY AUTHORITIES** - Refers, as the context requires, in Northern Ireland, to Gateway Service Teams in the Health and Social Care Trusts, which is the statutory body responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children, and to the Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) who are empowered under legislation to investigate these matters. In the Republic of Ireland, to Tusla (Child and Family Agency) which is the statutory body responsible for child protection matters and for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children and to An Garda Síochána who are empowered under legislation to investigate possible criminal offences in ROI.

**THRESHOLD, NORTHERN IRELAND** - Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2024 and the Children Order (Northern Ireland) 1995 2(2) set out the concept of harm as ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development. The Order states that 'ill-treatment' includes sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical; 'health' means physical and / or mental health; and 'development' means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development.

**THRESHOLD, REPUBLIC OF IRELAND** - Children First Act 2015 Part 3 (14), (1) defines the threshold for reporting as 'where a mandated person knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect, on the basis of information that he or she has received, acquired or becomes aware of in the course of his or her employment or profession, as such a mandated person, that a child (a) has been harmed, (b) is being harmed, or (c) is at risk of being harmed, he or she shall, as soon as practicable, report that knowledge, belief or suspicion, as the case may be, to the Agency' (Child and Family Agency).

**SUPPORT PERSON** - Every complainant should be offered access to a support person. The role of the support person is to ensure that the complainant is appropriately supported where there is an allegation of abuse against church personnel.

**VOLUNTEER** - Anyone engaged by a parish, a diocese, the RCB, or relevant church organisation in a position of responsibility towards children or assisting with a group or organisation providing activities involving, or care or supervision of children, and who is not paid for this involvement.

# APPENDIX B: LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE THAT UNDERPINS THIS POLICY

## INTERNATIONAL

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- The United Nations Convention on Human Rights (UNCHR)

## NORTHERN IRELAND

- Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland, updated October 2024 (V.3)
- Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022
- Safeguarding Board Act (Northern Ireland) 2011
- The Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008
- The Sexual Offences Act (NI) 2003
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007
- Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (amended in October 2017)
- The Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) (Disclosure) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008
- The Sex Offenders Act 1997
- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967

## REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

- Sex Offenders (Amendment) Act 2023
- Protected Disclosures Act 2014 amended by the Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022
- Criminal Law (Sexual Offences Act) 2017
- Children First Act 2015
- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012
- Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences Against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012
- Criminal Justice Act 2006
- Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998
- Child Care Act 1991
- The Constitution of Ireland

# APPENDIX C: DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

## NORTHERN IRELAND

**PHYSICAL ABUSE** is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

**SEXUAL ABUSE** occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via electronic technology). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

**EMOTIONAL ABUSE** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse, and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

**NEGLECT** is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter, that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

**EXPLOITATION** is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

## **ILL-TREATMENT OF ANOTHER OR ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR DIRECTED**

**AT ANOTHER** means that a child could be harmed by virtue of witnessing the ill-treatment or domestic abuse of another person. However, it is not necessary for the child to have witnessed such treatment or behaviour or, indeed, to have been present when it happened. Abusive Behaviour is behaviour that falls within section 2 of the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021.

## **REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

**PHYSICAL ABUSE** is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. A reasonable concern exists where the child's health and / or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

Physical abuse can include the following:

- Physical punishment
- Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking
- Pushing, shaking or throwing
- Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling
- Use of excessive force in handling
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation
- Fabricated/induced illness
- Female genital mutilation

The Children First Act 2015 includes a provision that abolishes the common law defence of reasonable chastisement in court proceedings. This defence could previously be invoked by a parent or other person in authority who physically disciplined a child. The change in the legislation now means that in prosecutions relating to assault or physical cruelty, a person who administers such punishment to a child cannot rely on the defence of reasonable chastisement in the legal proceedings. The result of this is that the protections in law relating to assault now apply to a child in the same way as they do to an adult.

**SEXUAL ABUSE** occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography.

Child sexual abuse may cover a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and, in some instances, occurs over a number of years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family, including older siblings and extended family members.

Cases of sexual abuse mainly come to light through disclosure by the child or his or her siblings/friends, from the suspicions of an adult, and/or by physical symptoms.

Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child
- An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- Masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation
- Sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal or anal
- Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes:
  - Inviting, inducing or coercing a child to engage in prostitution or the production of child pornography [for example, exhibition, modelling or posing] for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, videotape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means
  - Inviting, coercing or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act
  - Showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse
- Exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology
- Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person

An Garda Síochána will deal with any criminal aspects of a sexual abuse case under the relevant criminal justice legislation. The prosecution of a sexual offence against a child will be considered within the wider objective of child welfare and protection. The safety of the child is paramount and at no stage should a child's safety be compromised because of concern for the integrity of a criminal investigation. In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that in criminal law the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. Any sexual relationship where one or both parties are under the age of 17 is illegal. However, it may not necessarily be regarded as child sexual abuse. Details on exemptions for mandated reporting of certain cases of underage consensual sexual activity can be found in Chapter 3 of the Children First Guidance.

**EMOTIONAL ABUSE** is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security is not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Emotional abuse can also occur when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet their children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily seen.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer.

Emotional abuse may be seen in some of the following ways:

- Rejection
- Lack of comfort and love
- Lack of attachment
- Lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play)
- Lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves, particularly unplanned)
- Continuous lack of praise and encouragement
- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child
- Bullying
- Conditional parenting in which care or affection of a child depends on his or her behaviours or actions
- Extreme overprotectiveness
- Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking child in bedroom)
- Ongoing family conflicts and family violence
- Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development

There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse. A child may show signs of emotional abuse through their actions or emotions in several ways. These include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, risk taking and aggressive behaviour.

It should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive evidence of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors.

**CHILD NEGLECT** is the most frequently reported category of abuse, both in Ireland and internationally. Ongoing chronic neglect is recognised as being extremely harmful to the development and well-being of the child and may have serious long-term negative consequences.

Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety. Emotional neglect may also lead to the child having attachment difficulties. The extent of the damage to the child's health, development or welfare is influenced by a range of factors. These factors include the extent, if any, of positive influence in the child's life as well as the age of the child and the frequency and consistency of neglect.

Neglect is associated with poverty but not necessarily caused by it. It is strongly linked to parental substance misuse, domestic violence, and parental mental illness and disability.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when neglect becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer. This may become apparent where you see the child over a period of time, or the effects of neglect may be obvious based on having seen the child once.

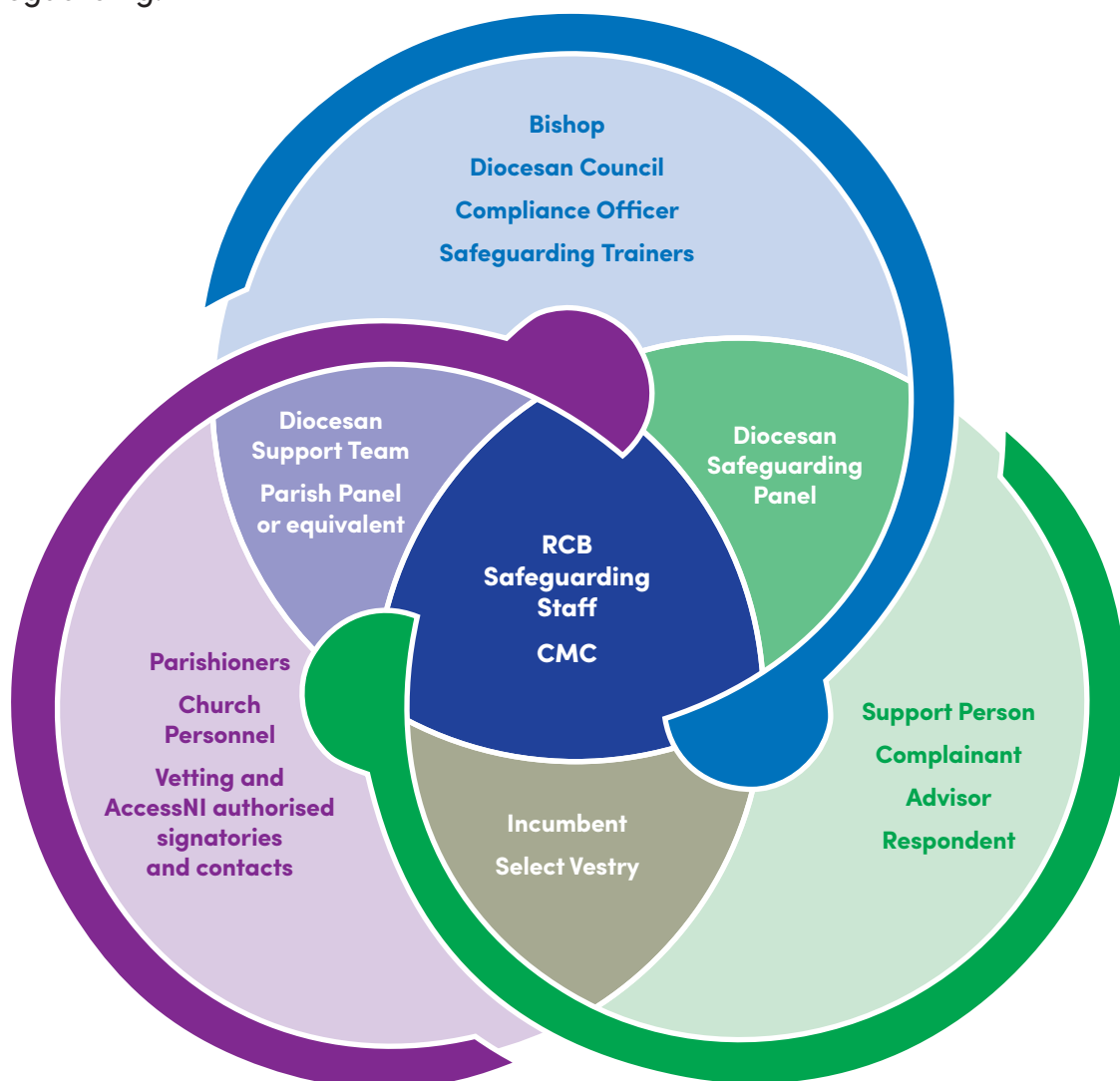
The following are features of child neglect:

- Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision
- Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food or erratic feeding
- Non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation
- Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation
- Inadequate living conditions - unhygienic conditions, environmental issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture
- Lack of adequate clothing
- Inattention to basic hygiene
- Lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger, or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age
- Persistent failure to attend school
- Abandonment or desertion.

# APPENDIX D: ROLES IN THE SAFEGUARDING STRUCTURE

Every member of church personnel has a role in safeguarding children. The diagram below contains each role in the structure of safeguarding children within each diocese or relevant church organisation. The purple circle includes those who are responsible for Protecting (Standard 1) those in the green circle are responsible for Responding (Standard 2) with the blue circle representing those involved in compliance (Standard 3) at diocesan level.

The roles are listed beneath the diagram outlining specific responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.



## **BISHOPS**

- With the Diocesan Council ensuring that this policy is implemented and adhered to in their diocese as outlined in Chapter XVI Constitution of the Church of Ireland
- Ensuring that a safeguarding plan is in place and being followed
- Ensuring that the Diocesan Support Team and Diocesan Safeguarding Panel are in place
- In the Republic of Ireland ensuring that an updated Child Safeguarding Statement and Local Safeguarding Risk Assessments for children's activities are completed where applicable

## **DIOCESAN COUNCIL**

- With the Bishop ensuring that this policy is implemented in their diocese
- Ensuring the annual safeguarding return is sent to each select vestry
- Reporting annually to the Safeguarding Board on the status of their annual returns

## **DIOCESAN SUPPORT TEAM**

- Undertaking the evidence-based triennial audit of the implementation of the Safeguarding Children Policy in parishes and diocesan bodies
- Putting in place a safeguarding plan for every parish and diocesan body for action arising from the audit. This includes a communication and safeguarding training plan
- Providing support to parishes and diocesan bodies for the implementation of the Safeguarding Children Policy
- Coordinating trainers to ensure the Provision of training to those involved in regulated activity (NI) and relevant work (ROI) and maintaining records of training attendance
- Reporting regularly to the Diocesan Council and submitting an annual report to the Diocesan Secretary for inclusion in the Diocesan Synod Book of Reports
- Ensuring recruitment procedures are followed for diocesan staff including AccessNI/Garda Vetting when required
- Ensuring that Local Safeguarding Risk Assessments are in place for diocesan events involving children
- (In ROI only) ensuring that a Child Safeguarding Statement and Local Safeguarding Risk Assessments for children's activities are completed and made available

## **COMPLIANCE OFFICER OR EQUIVALENT**

- Working alongside the Diocesan Support Team to fulfil the roles assigned to the support team
- Coordinating audits and assisting parishes and diocese with compliance
- Offering advice and support to parishes in the implementation of the safeguarding policy

## SAFEGUARDING TRAINERS

- Are trained and registered with the RCB to deliver approved child safeguarding training, but are coordinated by the Diocesan Support Team
- Delivering at least 3 training events annually
- Submitting training returns to the Diocesan Support Team

## RCB SAFEGUARDING CASEWORK OFFICER

- Receiving child safeguarding suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations and ensuring that those that meet the threshold for reporting to the statutory authorities are passed on in line with national law and church procedures. The Casework Officer will usually do this directly except in cases where it is agreed that the Archbishop/Bishop or their nominee will make the referral
- Operating within the guidelines set by the statutory authorities and the Church of Ireland
- Liaising with the Diocesan Safeguarding Panel and Bishop of the Diocese in relation to any reports made about church personnel
- Offering advice and support to the diocesan safeguarding panel in how to manage risk and other related matters

## DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING PANEL

- Liaising with the Safeguarding Manager for Casework or Safeguarding Casework Officer in relation to any allegations/concerns as necessary
- Developing safeguarding agreements with offenders/persons of concern who engage in Church of Ireland services, alongside the Safeguarding Manager for Casework or Safeguarding Casework Officer
- Assessing positive AccessNI/Vetting disclosures
- Liaising with the Case Management Committee as necessary
- Implementing support for respondent or complainant in relation to allegations against members of the Church of Ireland
- Managing cases and all associated documents

## PARISH PANEL OR EQUIVALENT <sup>1</sup>

- Maintaining oversight of all matters regarding child safeguarding in the Parish or equivalent on behalf of the Vestry/Board and reporting on matters at relevant meetings. The panel should meet on a regular basis to ensure a proactive safeguarding approach. That should be no less than twice a year
- Implementing and maintaining good practice in the recruitment, assessment, training, management and support of church personnel. The panel may include others in the interview process where a post requires specialist skills to be assessed
- Ensuring that all children's activities are appropriately risk assessed and that mitigation measures are in place

<sup>1</sup> Equivalent here may include panels set up at diocesan level to manage certain youth-led events organised at diocesan level.

- Ensuring that correct safeguarding procedures are in place for external groups who are using church property
- With the Vestry/Board ensuring that appropriate insurance for safeguarding is in place
- Keeping records of all appointments, reports and other relevant safeguarding documents
- Ensuring that panel notices and children's information posters are displayed on church premises giving relevant information regarding the statutory authorities to whom a concern can be reported
- Advising the select vestry (or equivalent) in respect of its responsibilities. Safety and employment issues are normally advised directly to the select vestry but information concerning child protection issues must only be shared on a 'need to know' basis
- Meeting members of the Diocesan Support Team to undertake the evidence-based triennial parish audit and implement actions required as a result of the audit
- Ensuring church personnel undertake regular, relevant training as required by the diocesan training strategy
- In ROI ensuring that the Child Safeguarding Statement and Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment for ministries involving children is available and up to date

### **SUPPORT PERSON**

- Keeping the complainant informed of the process of the case (where there is a criminal investigation this responsibility will be fulfilled by the PSNI/ An Garda Síochána)
- Helping the complainant identify and access counselling and support
- Keeping a record of any meetings or contact they have with the complainant, and pass on relevant information to the Diocesan Safeguarding Panel, as appropriate

### **ADVISOR**

- Keeping the respondent informed of the process of the case; (in the case of a criminal investigation this responsibility will be fulfilled by the PSNI/ An Garda Síochána)
- Helping direct the respondent to counselling and support, should they want to avail of it
- Keeping a record of any meetings or contact they have with the complainant and pass on relevant information to the Diocesan Safeguarding Panel, as appropriate

### **SELECT VESTRY/BOARD (OR EQUIVALENT)**

- Completing the annual safeguarding return including a declaration on compliance
- Ensuring that they are compliant with Health and Safety requirements and that appropriate insurance is in place
- Ensuring that safeguarding is a standing item on the Select Vestry agenda and receiving regular reports from the Parish Panel or Diocesan Safeguarding Panel
- Ensuring that relevant Service Level Agreement (SLA) for AccessNI or Garda vetting is in place

## **VETTING AND ACCESSNI AUTHORISED SIGNATORIES AND CONTACTS**

- Processing AccessNI and Garda vetting disclosures in line with the SLA for the diocese, parish or relevant church organisation
- Attending mandatory Garda vetting training (ROI only)
- Ensuring that any change to personnel is communicated to the RCB Vetting Admin Team

## **CASE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (CMC)**

The CMC is a committee established to offer advice to the bishops on complex cases in line with its Terms of Reference.

## **RCB SAFEGUARDING STAFF**

The RCB safeguarding staff offer advice, write policy and provide training to church personnel to implement the child safeguarding policy.

