



DIOCESE OF RAPHOE

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

for

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY & PROCEDURES

Diocesan Safeguarding Children Committee
Pastoral Centre
Letterkenny
Tel: 074 91 25669



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Diocese of Raphoe has provided clear guidance on Codes of Behaviour to personnel working with children in church activities (see attached).

These clearly outline, what is and is not, the standard of good practice expected from all adults when working with children in any liturgy, ministry, or activity. These are in place to help church organisations develop a culture of safety that minimises risk to children.

Church personnel clearly understand the procedures for raising concerns or suspicions of unacceptable behaviour towards children by other adults within the church organisation and will comply with Diocesan Child Safeguarding Reporting Procedures. This may be done confidentially if necessary.

All complaints will be taken seriously, fully investigated and dealt with fairly and confidentially.

The person who is the subject of the complaint will be made aware of the matter and that the complaints procedure will be followed. These include:

First step:

Efforts will be made to resolve complaints quickly and informally through discussion with the parents/guardians, children/young people, volunteer or staff and clergy, as appropriate. If the matter cannot be resolved at this stage, the following procedures should be followed:

Second step:

1. The Church Authority should be contacted by completing the Complaints Form attached. The Church Authority has eight weeks to consider the complaint.
2. A letter acknowledging receipt of the complaint should be sent within seven calendar days, enclosing a copy of the Complaints Procedure.
3. All complaints must be thoroughly investigated.
4. The Church Authority may organise a meeting to discuss and hopefully resolved the complaint. This communication may also take place by telephone if a meeting is not possible. This will be done within fourteen calendar days of sending the acknowledgement letter to the complainant.
5. Within seven days of the meeting or discussion, the Church Authority will write to the complainant to confirm what took place and to set out any solutions that were agreed upon.
6. If a meeting is not possible, the Church Authority will issue a detailed written reply to the complainant, setting out their suggestions for resolving the matter within twenty-one calendar days of sending the acknowledgement letter to them.
7. If the complainant is still not satisfied at this point, they should contact the Church Authority again.
8. At the conclusion of this step, the Church Authority may decide to take further action on the complaint. If, however, the Church Authority decides not to take further action, then the process is completed.

Please note: If a complaint involves suspected abuse or a criminal offence, the Designated Liaison Person will be informed immediately and the procedure for reporting such matters will be followed.



Complaints Form

All complaints arising during a Church-related activity (with the exception of complaints about child abuse) should attempt to be resolved by discussion between the parties involved. If this is not possible, this form should be completed and sent to the Church authority.

Name _____

Address

Email _____ Telephone number _____

Details of complaint (continue on separate sheet if necessary).

Signature _____

Date _____



Code of Behaviour for Adults

It is important for all personnel to:

- Treat all children with respect and dignity;
- Treat all children equally;
- Model positive, appropriate behaviour to all children they come into contact with;
- Be aware of the Church's child protection and child safeguarding policy;
- Challenge and report abusive and potentially abusive behaviour (Appendix C);
- Develop a culture of openness, honesty and safety;
- Develop a culture where children have permission to tell and to talk about any concerns or worries that they may have;
- Respect each child's boundaries and support them to develop their own understanding and sense of their rights;
- Be aware of their responsibility for the safety of all children in their care;
- Work in open environments;
- Help children to know what they can do if they have a problem.

Adults must never:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse children;
- Develop sexual relationships with children;
- Develop relationships with children that could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive;
- Act in any way that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse;
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice that is inappropriate, offensive or abusive;
- Do things for a child of a personal nature that they can do themselves;
- Watch or supervise a child undressing, or assist a child undressing e.g. in swimming pools or on international Pilgrimages, such as Lourdes baths. (see separate guidance 1.4F Guidance on participation of children with specific needs)
- Condone or participate in behaviour that is illegal, unsafe or abusive;
- Act in any way that is intended to intimidate, shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade;
- Engage in discriminatory behaviour or language in relation to race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation or political views;
- Consume alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs while having responsibility for or in the presence of children/ young people.

In general, it is inappropriate to:

- Take children away or to your own home, especially where they will be alone with you;
- Involve children in one-to-one contact; activities should usually be supervised by at least two adults (Guidance 1.4C). However, there may be two circumstances where this may occur:
 - l. In a **reactive** situation, for example when a young person requests a one-to-one meeting with you without warning, or where a young person has had to be removed from a group as part of a code of behaviour (Guidance 1.3A);
As part of a planned structured piece of work (for example one-to-one music tuition). See Guidance 1.4D for safe practices if either of these situations occur.