



Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency

Responding to safeguarding concerns and allegations of abuse



National Safeguarding Prayer

*Lord Jesus we praise you for calling us to
the service of others.*

*We pray for a generosity of spirit
to ensure the vulnerable are protected.*

*We pray for a compassionate heart so
that we will reach out to those who are
wounded by abuse.*

*We pray for courage and determination
as we seek the safety of everyone in our
parish communities.*

*We dedicate ourselves to this work of
service and pray that you will help us to
do your will at all times and in all places.*

Amen.

Standard 3

STANDARD 3:

Responding to safeguarding concerns and allegations of abuse.

When alerted to information, concerns and allegations regarding the safety or welfare of child or a vulnerable adult, we respond with care and compassion.

We inform the statutory authorities of all allegations of abuse that we receive.

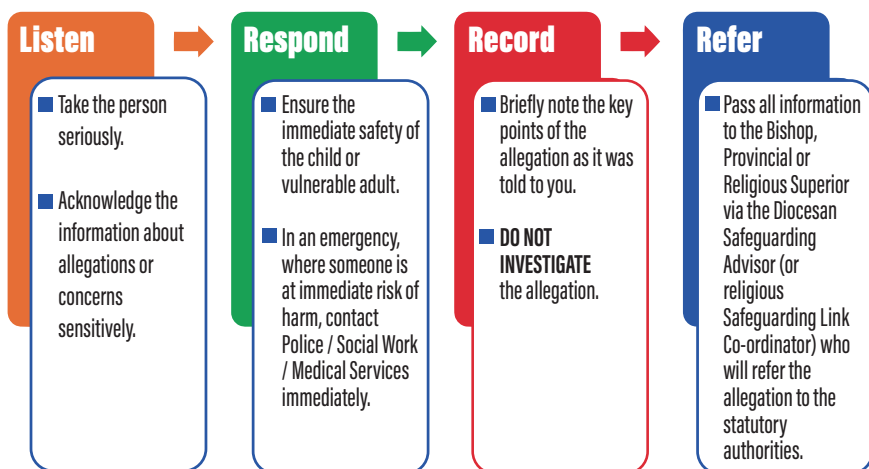
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| 3.1 | We exhort anyone who has information about the possible abuse of a child or vulnerable adult to disclose this information without delay. |
| 3.2 | When receiving an expression of concern or the disclosure of an allegation of abuse against Church personnel, we respond immediately to ensure the safety and welfare of children and adults who may be at risk of harm. |
| 3.3 | When an allegation of abuse against Church personnel is reported, the person to whom it is disclosed must LISTEN, RESPOND, RECORD and REFER. |
| 3.4 | We deal sensitively and fairly with those who have reported an allegation of abuse and with those who have been accused. |
| 3.5 | We deal sensitively and fairly with any allegation of abuse involving a bishop. |
| 3.6 | We are fully committed to co-operating with the statutory authorities and we refer all allegations of abuse to the Police. |
| 3.7 | We show appropriate sensitivity in handling communications about allegations. |

Responding to safeguarding concerns and allegations of abuse

This booklet aims to make you feel better equipped to respond to allegations by providing some practical tips to follow for each of the stages of the Catholic Church in Scotland's Response Protocol.

In God's Image standard 3.3.1:

While it is acknowledged that a disclosure of an allegation may first arise in the most unexpected of circumstances when the person hearing the allegation may be ill-prepared, it is critical that the following steps are taken:



Listen

Having the correct approach at this stage is critical. Someone who feels supported and listened to when they begin to make a disclosure are more likely to continue with their disclosure, and therefore receive appropriate support.

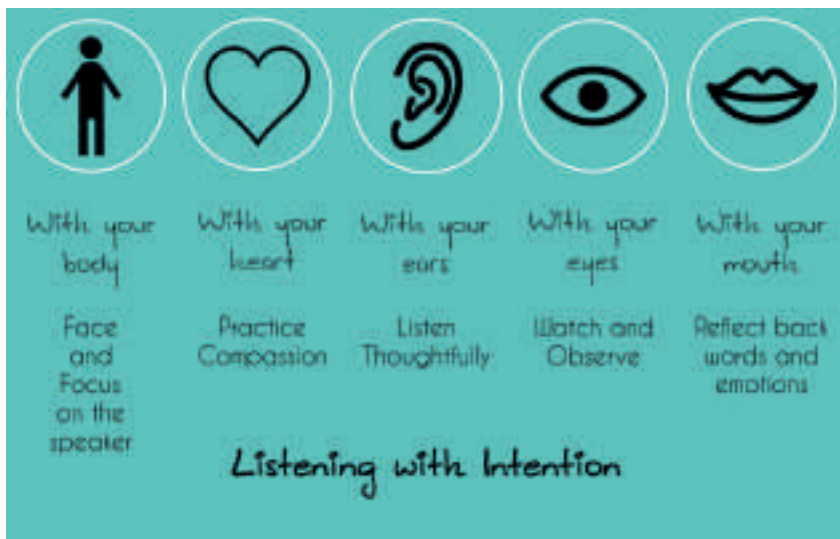


image by Suzanne Vardy, reproduced with consent.

“

The best results and the most effective resolution that we can offer to the victims, to the People of Holy Mother Church and to the entire world, are the commitment to personal and collective conversion, the humility of learning, listening, assisting and protecting the most vulnerable.

”

Pope Francis, Eucharistic Concelebration, Sala Regia, Vatican, Sunday 24 February 2019

Listen



✓ **Listen quietly.**

Do not interrupt the person or ask them questions. Periods of silence are fine. They will allow the person making the disclosure time to think. It can be difficult for them to share their experience.

✓ **Give your full attention.**

Switching off your phone or suggesting you move to a quieter space gives a powerful message that you are listening.

✓ **Be aware of your own body language.**

Maintain eye contact and turn your body to face them.

✓ **Give reassurance.**

It is important to make sure the person knows they are doing the right thing telling you, and that they are safe while explaining to them that you have clear procedures to follow.

Useful phrases include 'It is okay to tell me this.' 'You are safe just now.' 'You are doing the right thing telling me.'

✓ **Be calm and patient.**

It can be difficult to receive a disclosure.

If you do become upset, reassure the person that you are affected by their story and that you are not judging what they are telling you.

✓ **Make sure they are safe.**

If you have reason to believe they will be at immediate risk, call your Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Provincial, or Religious Superior, and seek advice.

Listen

DON'T:



✗ Ask questions.

Traumatic events affect our brain's memory storage, so it is important to allow the person to tell their own story in their own way, even if this sounds disjointed or it is not told in a chronological sequence.

Asking questions can be distracting and confusing for the person sharing their experience.

✗ Investigate or confront the alleged perpetrator.

This is the role of the professional investigators and is NOT the role of anybody within the Catholic Church in Scotland.

✗ Make promises you can't keep.

For example, do not promise you will keep a secret or maintain confidentiality and bear in mind that the Church has a mandatory reporting policy (page 9).

✗ Be afraid of "saying the wrong thing".

The person has chosen YOU and trusts you to listen to a difficult disclosure. You help them by simply listening to them.

✗ Use jargon or acronyms.

Try and be clear about what you are saying. Do not use acronyms such as DSA. Say 'Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor'.

✗ Pass any judgement on what they are saying.

It is important not to apportion or imply, blame or criticism. Do not dismiss their experiences. You may not understand everything they have told you, but your role is just to listen.

Respond

Once you have listened to what the person wants to share with you, you can respond by:

- **Reinforcing that they have done the right thing by telling you.**

This is likely to be worrying them so, once more, acknowledge their courage and provide reassurance that they have made a good decision.

- **Reviewing what you understand about their experiences.**

Tell them that you want to check that you have correctly understood what they wanted to tell you.

Repeat the main points they told you.

It is helpful to use the same language they used. This gives them an opportunity to make sure you have all the information they wanted to share.

- **Explaining what will happen next.**

You are required to pass on what they have told you to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Provincial or Religious Superior.

That person will make contact with them to discuss, for example, onward referrals as appropriate.

- **Asking if they have any questions.**

If you do not know the answer, it is good practice to consult with your Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Provincial or Religious Superior.

- **Making sure they are safe.**

Record

- Write down the key points of the allegation
 - ✓ Briefly
 - ✓ As soon as possible
 - ✓ Using the words spoken by the person who made the disclosure as far as possible.
- Remember that your Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Provincial or Religious Superior, will offer to meet with the person who made the disclosure, so do not be anxious if you find that you cannot quite remember everything.
- Add the date and approximate time you received the disclosure to your record.
- Please pass on all information that you have, even if you are not sure whether it is a disclosure or not. It is important that all concerns are shared, however small they seem, as the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor then gets an overview which aids decision-making about risk.
- You should not audio or video record disclosures. The storage of this information on personal devices is problematic in legal terms and contravenes GDPR.
Records should be written only.



I am a survivor...It's okay to be afraid but you're not alone. Whenever you're ready, you can do this, and there are people waiting to help you.



anonymous

Refer

- Your written record should be passed on immediately to your Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Provincial or Religious Superior, who will store it in line with the diocese's data retention policy. You should not keep a copy with any identifying information for yourself because of GDPR rules.
- This is part of the Catholic Church in Scotland's ***mandatory reporting procedure*** (see page 9).
- If you are a volunteer in a parish, you might choose to pass it to your Parish Priest or Parish Safeguarding Coordinator in the first instance. They will pass it on to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor. **Please respect confidentiality and do not share what you have been told with anybody else.**
- Please use the space at the back of this booklet to record your own diocesan contact details.



It is the responsibility of all of us - ordained, professed, employed and volunteer lay people - to work together to uphold these safeguarding standards that have been designed to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse or harm.



Our Safeguarding Culture - In God's Image

Mandatory Reporting Procedure

Pope Francis introduced mandatory reporting across the whole Church in 2019 with the *Motu Proprio*, or edict, *Vos estis lux mundi* (You are the light of the world). This states that all allegations of recent and non-recent abuse made against bishops, clergy, religious, lay employees or volunteers must be reported to the ecclesiastical authorities, and to the competent civil authorities.

The Catholic Church in Scotland adheres strictly to our mandatory reporting procedure. This means that all allegations of recent or non-recent abuse made against bishops, clergy, religious, lay employees or volunteers must be reported to the police.

Our response protocol **listen-respond-record-refer**, as detailed in the preceding pages, inherently contains mandatory reporting as part of “refer”. Once you have referred any matter on to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Provincial or Religious Superior, they are responsible for mandatory reporting to the police and any other relevant statutory authorities.

It is important, when someone begins to make a disclosure, to ensure at the earliest stage that they are aware you will need to report onwards. This means, for example, that you cannot ever promise confidentiality or that you will keep a secret. It is understandable that you might feel awkward about doing this or that you might not know exactly what to say. Here are a couple of suggestions:

“I am glad you are sharing this with me. You are telling me about a crime and I will have to pass this on. You do not have to speak to anyone you do not want to, but I need to make sure our Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Provincial or Religious Superior knows what you have told me.”

“Thank you for trusting me. What you've told me is something I have to pass on. I'll pass it to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor who might need to pass it on to police or social work.”

Looking after Yourself

Grounding Techniques *(continued)*

Square Breathing

Square breathing is a type of breathwork that can shift your energy, connect you more deeply with your body, calm your nervous system, and reduce the stress in your body.



The Butterfly Hug

The Butterfly Hug presents an opportunity for SELF-SOOTHING in the presence of fear, stress and anxiety

- 1** Cross your arms over your chest and place each hand on your upper arm/shoulder area.
- 2** With eyes closed or open, begin gently tapping each arm, one side then the other, back and forth.
- 3** Begin to notice your breath and try to slow and lengthen your breathing as you continue to tap. In time feelings of anxiety will reduce, and feelings of safety will increase.

Try to observe any thoughts, feelings, images or sensations that arise without judgement like they are clouds passing by.

Looking after Yourself

It is normal after receiving a disclosure to find that it can prey on your mind. Once you have done all that is asked of you (Listen/Respond/Record/Refer), it is likely that you will not hear anything else about it. This is usually because, when an active police investigation begins, the information that can be shared is restricted.


If after receiving a disclosure you feel that you need some support, or would like to talk things through, please do not hesitate to contact your Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Provincial or Religious Superior.


Grounding Techniques


Here are some examples of “grounding techniques” to help calm your mind if you find yourself feeling anxious or stressed after receiving a disclosure.




Breathe deeply while you deliberately focus on

5 THINGS YOU CAN **SEE** 

4 THINGS YOU CAN **TOUCH** 

3 THINGS YOU CAN **HEAR** 

2 THINGS YOU CAN **SMELL** 

1 THINGS YOU CAN **TASTE** 

A Prayer for Healing

This prayer has been written specifically for the National Safeguarding Conference and is designed to offer words of healing and comfort to those who have suffered abuse and harm.



Heal my wounds my strength renew

Bestow healing, Lord God,
upon me, your beloved child,
wounded by the pain and fear
inflicted on me by others.

Cast light on the darkness of
my heart and draw near to me
to restore what is lost.

Shelter me safely in your love
and make me confident in the
knowledge that I have been
powerfully redeemed.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen

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of Scotland

*This icon of Divine Mercy was created
by Monika Walendziak for the Blessed Sacrament Chapel in
St. Mary's Cathedral, Aberdeen.*

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