

STANDARD 3

CARE AND SUPPORT FOR THE COMPLAINANT

GUIDANCE

THESE PIECES OF GUIDANCE ARE TO ASSIST,
IF NECESSARY, WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
STANDARD 3





THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IRELAND

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Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2020

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Roles of Safeguarding Personnel in Relation to this Standard

Church authority

The role of the Church authority across all the seven standards is outlined in Appendix A. In relation to Standard 3, the Church authority is responsible for ensuring that:

- A support person is appointed, or that procedures are in place to share the services of a support person if required;
- Practice and policy on the care of the complainant is compliant with statutory and canonical law;
- Complainants are met and facilitated to disclose abuse in an environment that meets their individual needs;
- Complainants are heard in a spirit of acceptance and trust;
- Appropriate assistance is offered to complainants and, as required, to their families;
- Counselling, support and information is given to children and adults who wish to make a complaint of abuse;
- Pastoral care is given to those who have been abused by Church personnel, where this is deemed helpful by the complainant.

Designated liaison person (DLP)

The role of the DLP across all the seven standards is outlined in Appendix A. In relation to Standard 3, the DLP is responsible for:

- Attending the initial meeting with the complainant (unless this is against the wishes of the complainant);
- Ensuring that all appropriate internal and external inquiries are instigated;
- Ensuring that relevant information regarding contact with the complainant is recorded and stored appropriately in the case file;
- Keeping the Church authority updated regarding the health and well-being of the complainant;
- Liaising with the support person to ensure that support, advice and pastoral care is offered to the complainant. If relevant safeguarding concerns are raised with the support person by the complainant, the DLP must ensure that these are passed on to the civil authorities and to the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (the National Board).

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Support person

The role of the support person across Standards 2 and 3 is outlined in Appendix A. In relation to Standard 3, the support person is responsible for:

- Attending the initial meeting of the complainant with the DLP (if agreed in advance with the complainant) in order to support the complainant; keeping them informed of the progress of their case; and helping them to identify and access support;
- Ensuring that support is provided to complainants and their families, as requested and mutually agreed upon;
- Ensuring the complainant is offered pastoral care that meets their individual needs;
- Offering to arrange a pastoral meeting with the Church authority at an appropriate time during the process, if the complainant wishes;
- Recording any dates of meetings and/or contact they have with the complainant, and passing on relevant information to the DLP, as appropriate. They will not be responsible for managing the file but will pass on written records to the DLP, as appropriate, during regular meetings with them.

Advisory panel

The role of the advisory panel across Standards 2, 3 and 4 is outlined in Appendix A. In relation to Standard 3, the advisory panel is responsible for:

- Providing advice to the Church authority, if required, with regard to the credibility of the complaint and the appropriateness of providing support to a complainant or their family;
- Creating a written record of its recommendation, and noting the matters upon which it has been asked to advise and the documents it has considered. These records should be passed to the DLP who will store them in the third-party information section of the case file (Guidance 2.2B).

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland

The role of the National Board across all the seven standards is outlined in Appendix A. In relation to Standard 3, the National Board will:

- Be advised of safeguarding suspicions, concerns or allegations by the DLP, and retain records of this information;
- Offer advice and support to the people in the roles listed above and on the previous page, in relation to care and support for the complainant.

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National Case Management Committee (NCMC)

The role of the NCMC across Standards 2, 3 and 4 is outlined in Appendix A. In relation to Standard 3, the NCMC will:

- Offer advice and support to Church authorities who are members on any issue relating to the care of the complainant;
- The NCMC will put their advice in writing, and these records should be passed to the DLP who will store them in the minutes of meetings section of the relevant case file (Guidance 2.2B).

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Storage and Retention of Records Associated with this Standard

The table below lists the types of records that need to be stored appropriately and securely as part of this standard, in accordance with best practice in record-keeping (see Appendix B). The templates for the production of each record, which have been included in the guidance for this standard, are listed in the final column.

Type of Record	Where to Store	Guidance Number/Page Number
Dates of meetings held by support person with complainant	Diocesan/congregational level	Guidance 2.2B
Any third-party information	Diocesan/congregational level	Guidance 2.2B
Notes of any requests for support or relevant safeguarding concerns made to support person by complainant	Diocesan/congregational level	Guidance 2.2B

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3.1A Guidance on a Pastoral Response to Complainants

The Church authority must identify who is best placed to offer pastoral care to complainants, and must recognise that providing pastoral care may not be the sole responsibility of any one person.

It is the responsibility of the DLP managing the case to ensure that the support person offers support and pastoral care to the complainant.

The Church authority should offer to meet with the complainant at appropriate points during the process to listen to concerns, if this is the wish of the complainant.

Awareness of the impact of abuse on a complainant

People who have been abused want to be heard and to have their very real pain acknowledged. They want a compassionate response from the Church and to see action take place to ensure children are now safe. A person who has suffered abuse will have significant strengths, as well as potential complex needs.

Disclosing abuse takes enormous courage and calls for a high level of trust. Child abuse by its very nature can damage trust; it is therefore imperative that when a complainant is ready to tell their story, the listener responds with great sensitivity and compassion.

There will be a complex mix of feelings and emotions where abuse has been at the hands of someone the complainant has trusted, and even more so if the respondent holds a position of spiritual or moral responsibility. This may then include the challenging process of re-establishing relations with a faith community and with God.

Process of ensuring a pastoral response

Initial contact

In line with the reporting procedure outlined in Standard 2 (Guidance 2.1A), once an allegation has been received by the DLP, they should:

- Make contact with the complainant to arrange a meeting (unless this is against the wishes of the complainant) and, with the knowledge and agreement of the complainant, allow the support person to attend the initial meeting or to meet with the complainant immediately thereafter. In advance of this meeting it may be helpful to provide an overview of what the meeting will entail to ensure the complaint is fully informed (some of the information contained in 3.1A Template 1 may be useful here);
- If a face-to-face meeting has been agreed, meet the complainant at a time and place that is convenient and acceptable, along with a family member or friend whom they may have asked to accompany them for emotional support. The support person may also attend this meeting, if agreed in advance with the complainant;
- Give the complainant an opportunity to give a detailed account of the allegation(s) – the

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account should be recorded, signed and dated by both parties;

- Accept third-party accounts from family or friends of the complainant, if the complainant wishes;
- Explain to the complainant that the Church has a duty to provide appropriate support, counselling and pastoral care to all complainants of abuse. Details of the Towards Healing and Towards Peace services should be provided, as well as the offer of assistance in making an appointment. This step should be carried out by the support person, if they are present (some of the information contained in 3.1A Template 1 may be useful here);
- In a situation where the complainant is still a child, particular sensitivity is required. A parent/guardian should always be present with their child, and the offer of care and support should be made to the child's parents/guardians;
- Every complainant is offered access to a support person. The role of the support person is to ensure that the complainant is appropriately supported throughout the process of disclosure and thereafter. It is the prerogative of the complainant whether or not they wish to accept the assistance of a support person;
- After the meeting, the DLP should review the allegation(s) in an effort to establish if the threshold for reporting has been reached. If it has, the DLP should, without delay, refer the allegation(s) to the statutory authorities and the National Board;
- The DLP shall assist the support person in drawing up an outline of a supportive response, appropriate to the individual and the circumstances;
- The DLP presents their findings recommends support needs to the Church authority for approval;
- The support person presents their proposed response to the complainant;
- The DLP and/or the support person contacts the complainant and communicates the decision of the Church authority on how to proceed, and they discuss the next stages of the process.

None of the above actions should interfere with any criminal investigation.

Meeting with the Church authority

Once a process of pastoral care and support is in place, the DLP should offer to set up a meeting with the Church authority, if it is the wish of the complainant.

It is important that the agenda, time and venue of any such meeting are negotiated by the support person, in consultation with the complainant, the DLP and the Church authority.

It is important that all parties are fully prepared for the meeting. It could be helpful in some instances to arrange to have a facilitator or mediator present, if this is deemed to be in the best interest of the complainant.

It must be understood by all that:

- The overall purpose of the meeting is to **listen** to the complainant;
- The meeting is not about determining the outcome of any investigation that might ensue.

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Towards the end of this meeting, ongoing support can be reviewed and any required changes can be agreed upon.

Ongoing support

Contact with the support person should always be led by the needs of the complainant.

Meeting the pastoral and support needs of complainants can be best achieved when the Church authority is open to:

- Travelling to meet those who wish to disclose abuse when the complainant is unable or unwilling to come to meet the identified Church personnel. This can be delegated by the Church authority to the DLP and/or support person, if appropriate;
- Facilitating those living abroad to travel to Ireland to meet with child safeguarding personnel and make a statement to An Garda Síochána;
- Seeking the assistance of the local Church body in situations where those living overseas wish to disclose abuse to a person or persons in their country of residence;
- Allowing sufficient time for the complainant to give a complete account of the allegation(s). This can take a number of meetings.

Some complainants may also wish to remain engaged with their Church despite the effect that the abuse may have had on their relationship with it, and, perhaps, with God. By meeting with and listening to complainants, the response from the Church that might best meet their spiritual needs can be identified with them. Towards Peace may be of assistance in this regard (Guidance 3.3A).

The support person liaises with the DLP for information sharing and accountability purposes, and should provide them with a summary of dates on which they have met with the complainant, along with any relevant child safeguarding concerns that may arise during these meetings. The DLP will store these in the third-party information section of the file (Guidance 2.2B).

Mediation

The services of a mediator/facilitator may be used by common agreement between the complainant and the Church authority. There are organisations that provide professional facilitators who arrange and mediate meetings between complainants, their families and members of the Church bodies that are part of the Catholic Church in Ireland. The function of the facilitator is to arrange and moderate a process of communication between the complainant and the Church authority. For instance, this may involve a meeting, managed by the facilitator, in which a formal apology can be made to the complainant, and their unresolved problems addressed.

The facilitator should be aware of the ongoing needs of the complainant, and should seek to know the response of the Church authority to those needs. The facilitator should also seek to know the support needs of the complainant's family and of the community in which the abuse occurred, if the abuse is publicly known.

The facilitator should seek to identify any outstanding issues where the complainant is not

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satisfied with the response from the Church authority, and should explore with both parties the best means of dealing with such issues.

(See also Guidance 2.1H: On Responding to a Complainant who is Dissatisfied with how their Allegation has been Handled by the Church Authority)

The complainant or Church authority may choose to have support at the meeting.

The Church authority should bear all ordinary and reasonable expenses attributed to the process of facilitation.

Financial compensation

Some complainants may wish to claim financial compensation for the harm they have suffered. All complainants should be advised of their right to seek legal advice if they wish to pursue a civil case against their alleged abuser and/or the Church authority. Complainants need to be informed of the adversarial nature of litigation and the inevitable process of disclosure involved.

Some Church bodies have decided to use mediated settlements in situations where complainants do not wish to take a civil case.

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3.1A Template 1: Example Information for Complainants

Purpose

This guidance can be adapted and given to complainants; it sets out the processes following receipt of a complaint and explains the roles of the civil authority agencies and Catholic Church processes. It has been written with some input from complainants.

Introductory comments to complainants

The Catholic Church in Ireland wants to hear from and wants to support people who have been abused by any of its priests or religious.

A lot has changed within the Church over the past 20 years; and it has put in place supports to help people who have been abused by priests or religious.

We accept that we have not dealt with this matter well in the past, and we accept that too often further pain was caused by our failure to acknowledge the reality of the abuse of children within the Church, and to act appropriately on behalf of survivors.

We are ashamed and saddened wherever abuse of children or other vulnerable individuals has taken place. We sincerely apologise for what has happened; we want to be sure we do everything possible to prevent similar future occurrences; and we want to help heal the wounds of those injured by our past actions and inactions. We do acknowledge that these scars are never completely healed; but we hope that the supports that we now offer will help.

Our goal is to take our experiences - both positive and negative - and to use them to build community-wide awareness of the risks to children that have to be guarded against - within the Church and the community at large. A second goal is to help all those abused to find their voices and the strength to break through the veil of silence with which they have been cloaked for years.

By recognising the real hurt and damage that clerical and religious members of the Church have caused, we have confronted their immoral behaviour and have put structures in place that ensure Church activities are safe, by putting the needs of children and other vulnerable adults first.

Telling someone that you were abused by a priest or member of a religious order during your childhood can be the first step on your road to healing and recovery. As you consider how to share this with someone else, you may experience anxiety, anger, confusion, deep hurt and a sense of betrayal and mistrust. You have every right to these feelings; while they are very painful, they are also natural reactions to the trauma you have suffered.

You may have asked yourself what you can do with this distress and whether opening it up now might make matters worse. It can also feel like a contradiction to approach the Church for support and assistance when your trust in the same Church has been so badly damaged.

As a child, you were not in charge of what happened to you; but as an adult, you are in control of when you tell, who you tell and what services you choose to use, or not. You can decide who to share information about your childhood abuse with.

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*Words and definitions

Adults who were sexually abused in childhood are sometimes referred to as victims or as survivors.

The word that we use most frequently in this guide is complainant, simply because it is addressed to adults who were abused in childhood and who want to now come forward to make a complaint about what was done to them.

Childhood abuse is any action by another person – adult or child – that causes significant harm to a child.

Children First (2011) tells us that Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.

Child abuse can often be perpetrated over a period of time, so it may not be a once-off occurrence.

Most adults who complain about being abused in their childhood by a priest or a member of a religious order describe being sexually abused or physically abused, or both.

What to do

If you have been abused in any way by any member of the Church we urge you to report what has happened:

- Reporting and talking about past abuse is the start of a journey of healing, release and liberty for you;
- Reporting abuse may be the only way to stop your abuser from abusing others and will ultimately give you back some of what they stole from you;
- Reporting abuse ensures that the Church takes responsibility for the depraved actions of our members.

Even if the abuse occurred years ago and you are not fully sure of the details, it may help to speak to someone about it. We do not want you to suffer alone.

Who you can report to

You can disclose directly to the police - An Garda Síochána in the Republic of Ireland, or the PSNI in Northern Ireland. They are responsible for investigating whether a crime has been committed; and if they decide that this is likely the case, they send this information to the relevant state prosecutor's office, (the Director of Public Prosecutions in the Republic of Ireland, and the Public Prosecution Service in Northern Ireland). The police will normally ask you to sign a written statement of complaint. You do not have to do this. However, without a signed statement of complaint from you, the police investigation will be much more difficult to conduct in Northern Ireland; while in the Republic of Ireland An Garda Síochána will be unable to carry out an investigation at all.

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- You can approach the Child and Family services to tell them what happened to you; this is TUSLA in the Republic of Ireland, or your local Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland. Their responsibility is to assess whether there is a current risk to children from the person who abused you.
- You can contact the Church - each diocese and religious order now has people in place to receive allegations of abuse. These people are called the Designated Liaison Person (DLP). Most DLPs are lay people, both female and male, but some are clerics or religious. You first need to decide if you wish to speak to a woman or a man, a lay person, a priest or religious; and then to request to talk to whomever you feel most comfortable with. There may be a slight delay in arranging for the right person, if the diocese or religious order needs to bring in a DLP from outside who meets your requirements. You can make a phone call, write a letter, send an email or call in person, whatever seems most appropriate for you. The phone number for the DLP is displayed on the Diocese's or Religious Order's website.

What the Church is committed to do in response to you, through the Bishop or Religious Superior

- To listen;
- To investigate;
- When established, to acknowledge the abuse and to apologise for it;
- The opportunity to meet with the Bishop, or the Provincial of the Religious Community, or their senior representative, to receive an acknowledgement of the abuse and its impact on the victim;
- An assurance of the steps now in place to protect against further abuse of children; Access to counselling support to assist you on your journey.
- In many cases, your other needs will be considered and support may be provided.

What follows overleaf is a detailed description of the process that has been set out above.

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Making a statement of complaint

As you prepare to tell someone about your childhood abuse it may be helpful to write down a list of the things that you want to say and then read them to familiarise yourself with them. This can help you to remember important points to make, especially when you may be a bit nervous about telling a stranger. You could think of whether there is a friend or family member who you could ask to support you, and who could accompany you if you are going to meet a Designated Liaison Person (DLP). If you meet a DLP, they will make a note of the meeting and share this with you, either by arranging for you to read it or by reading it out to you. This is so that they record the information in detail, but also to give you the chance to correct any mistakes they might make, or to make something clearer. Once you have both agreed with the record of your complaint, you will be asked to sign it as your statement of complaint.

When you meet the DLP, they will only ask you to tell your story as factually as you can. While they might ask you to explain something that they have not understood, they will not interrogate anything you say. Your statement of complaint allows the various agencies to begin their responses to you.

Next steps

The DLP will provide your statement to the Bishop, in the case of a diocese, or to the Provincial or Superior, in the case of a religious order.

The DLP has a duty to report your complaint to the Police and to the Child and Family service. The DLP will make a formal written notification to each, which will include your statement of complaint. The priest, or member of a religious order, who you have identified in your statement of complaint has a right in law to know what has been alleged against them. When they decide it is the right time to do so, the Police and the Child and Family service will tell them what you have complained of; but the person you allege abused you does not have the right to read your statement of complaint.

The Church must allow the Police to investigate first before it can fully complete its own internal inquiries. It also needs to cooperate with the Child and Family services and make sure that it does not delay or obstruct their assessment.

However, the Bishop or Provincial / Superior has responsibility to protect children by deciding, if the person you have complained about is still alive, whether that person presents a risk to children. If they decide that such a risk does exist, or if they believe that the priest or member of a religious order needs to step aside from their Church work until the Police and Child and Family services have completed their tasks, then restrictions can be placed on their Church ministry.

Legal steps

There are three codes of law that have a role in dealing with a complaint of childhood abuse if the person alleged to have abused is still alive: - the criminal law, the civil law and the canon law.

The criminal law requires that a Judge (or jury in a higher court) decides that the evidence presented to them meets the threshold for criminal conviction. This is defined as being beyond all reasonable doubt. In criminal law, it is the State that decides to bring the case against the alleged abuser.

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Civil law deals with disputes which arise between two people, where one person has suffered damage or loss due to the behaviour of the other person. Some complainants use the civil law to sue the person who sexually abused them in their childhood. The evidence threshold to be met in civil law for a finding that the abuse happened is being on the balance of probability.

This is a lower threshold than in criminal law. A complainant has the right to take a civil action independently of any criminal law or canon law case.

In Church (Canon) law, the evidence threshold to be met for a finding that the abuse happened is defined as moral certainty.

Possible outcomes of criminal investigation

Because everyone has constitutional and legal rights, a person who is accused of having abused another person in the past is not guilty of any crime unless they are found to be guilty by a court or unless they admit to having carried out the abuse. Until or unless this happens, they cannot be presumed to be guilty. They must be referred to as 'the alleged abuser' or 'the person accused'.

What you believe they did to you must be referred to as 'alleged abuse'. These terms are not used to suggest that you are not being truthful or that other people do not believe you.

There are three possible outcomes from a Police investigation of your complaint:

1. A decision for 'No Further Action', which means that the Police do not believe that there is sufficient evidence to show that a crime has been committed, or the State prosecution service believes that there is not enough evidence to secure a criminal conviction.
2. A criminal prosecution, which means that the State prosecution service believes that there is enough evidence to secure a conviction and directs that a criminal case is presented in court. However, having considered the case presented, the Judge can decide not to proceed to the making of a final judgement; or the Judge (or jury in a higher court) can conclude that the person charged is 'not guilty', and they are free to go.
3. A conviction in a criminal court where the person is judged to be 'guilty' of a criminal offence. Not all criminal convictions result in imprisonment.

Church Inquiry

Regardless of what happens in any criminal or civil legal process, the Church must conduct its own inquiries to establish whether the accused priest or member of a religious order is guilty or not guilty in canon law.

Once the outcome of the criminal investigations is known, then the Bishop or Provincial / Superior must conduct Church inquiries to determine if the complaint you have made meets the threshold for action under Church (canon) law.

The canon law process starts with a preliminary investigation (see Appendix 1). During this preliminary process and until the case is concluded, the Bishop or Provincial / Superior may decide on certain actions to safeguard children and to protect you from any possible contact with the accused person. These will always include a direction to the accused priest, or member of a religious order, to not attempt to make any contact with you, in person, by phone, by correspondence or through any third party. If you have a concern that this has been attempted, you should discuss this with your Support Person or with the DLP.

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Pastoral care and support

As well as ensuring that full and proper criminal investigation and risk assessment are carried out, the diocese or religious order will offer you pastoral care and support. You will be given details of a free, professional counselling service; and you will be offered a trained Support Person who can represent your care needs to the Bishop or Provincial / Superior.

The following services are available to you:

- Towards Healing is an organisation that has expertise in providing a compassionate response to those who have experienced abuse. This service is funded by the Church, but its services are totally confidential. It offers direct services to complainants by way of professional face-to-face counselling, a counselling telephone helpline, self-care and self-development workshops, and restorative justice approaches. More information can be found at www.towardshealing.ie, and this service can be contacted at Freephone 1800 303416 (Rep of Ireland); Freephone 0800 0963315 (Northern Ireland and UK); or Hearing-impaired Text Line Number: 085-8022859. The telephone helpline is open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday from 11am to 8pm, and on Friday from 11am to 6pm.
- Towards Peace is a free service offering spiritual support to people who have experienced abuse— physical, emotional or sexual – which was perpetrated by priests or members of religious orders, either individually or in institutions. For further information, visit www.towardspeace.ie, and their telephone number is 00353-(0) 1 505 3028.

Compensation

If you wish to seek financial compensation for the loss and damage that has been caused to you by your childhood abuse, you can do this by:

- Applying directly to the Bishop or Provincial / Superior, who may consider your request and agree to make an offer of compensation, or not.
- Seeking the advice of a solicitor who may pursue your request directly with the Bishop or Provincial / Superior, or through civil action by way of an application to the High Court. In these circumstances, the Bishop or Provincial / Superior will also appoint a solicitor who will act for them in dealing with your request.
- You may ask the Bishop or Provincial / Superior to appoint a mediator. The mediator is an independent third party who helps both sides to reach a negotiated settlement agreement (with the assistance of the parties' own lawyers and other expert advisors, if appropriate). The outcome arrived at must be acceptable to both parties. Mediation involves less conflict than a contested civil court case, and avoids the high level of costs and the time court cases can take.

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APPENDIX 1

Process of preliminary investigation in canon law

The person appointed by the Bishop or Provincial / Superior needs to speak with a number of people, including you as the complainant. The purpose of these interviews is to get information from people who may know what happened. The preliminary investigation does not try to decide whether someone is guilty or not guilty. Its task is to decide whether someone accused has a case to answer. The terminology used here is that the evidence collected through the preliminary investigation has a semblance of truth, needs to be considered as credible and warrants further action.

Interview with you:

- You should be asked if you wish to meet the person undertaking inquiries on behalf of the Church. If they cannot interview you, it will be very hard for them to complete their investigation.
- You can bring someone with you to the interview.
- You can provide information in writing or in person; or you can refer to your statement of complaint that you originally made to the DLP; or you can refer to any statement you made to the Police.
- If you have participated in a one-to-one interview, you will be asked to read and sign the notes of this interview. These notes form part of the Church process, and they can be made available to the accused and their canon lawyer, as by this stage the criminal law investigation will have been completed.
- You will be asked questions to identify any witnesses who you think have information about the childhood abuse and the circumstances surrounding it.

Information from witnesses:

If you have referred to another person who may have witnessed your abuse or may have information relevant to the circumstances of your abuse, that person may be interviewed to provide information.

Other Church people who were part of the relevant parish or care setting or school or other institution at the time of the alleged abuse may be interviewed to provide any helpful information they have.

Information from the accused:

The person conducting the Church Inquiry will interview the accused priest or member of a religious order, and as part of this interview they will put to them what you have alleged and seek a response to this from them. They may have their canon lawyer present, and they will also be offered an advisor during this meeting.

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Next Steps

Once the person undertaking the preliminary investigation has gathered and analysed all the evidence they can through the interview process described above, they will produce a written report for the Bishop or Provincial / Superior.

The Bishop or Provincial / Superior has access to an independent Advisory Panel or to the National Case Management Committee (NCMC), and normally asks for advice and guidance from whichever one of these they use. The Advisory Panel / NCMC is a body of experts, including civil lawyers, canon lawyers, social workers and/or probation officers, psychologists, and others expert in caring for complainants and accused persons. The panel or committee offers advice to the Bishop or Provincial / Superior on next steps they need to take; and they give an opinion on the credibility of the evidence provided through the preliminary investigation.

If the preliminary investigation finds that your allegation has a semblance of truth, then the case is referred to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in the Vatican in Rome which deals with cases of child abuse. The Bishop or Provincial/Superior will send all the necessary information to the CDF in Rome, along with their own opinion; and they ask for guidance on the procedures they should follow and the actions they should take, in the short and in the longer term.

Canonical action

If your allegation is against a priest (either diocesan or religious order) it will be dealt with by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF).

If your allegation is against a member of a religious order who is not ordained as a priest, the Superior General of the Order has the authority in canon law to take all necessary action.

CDF - allegations against priests:

The CDF has two options:

1. Penal Processes

The CDF may authorise the local bishop to arrange for a trial. Under canon law this would be a judicial penal trial before a local Church tribunal. Like a trial in criminal law, a judgment is reached at the end of the process of hearing all the evidence; and like a trial in criminal law, the judgment can be appealed. An appeal in canon law cases would eventually be considered by a tribunal of the CDF itself.

The CDF may authorise the local bishop to conduct an administrative penal process before a delegate of the local bishop, assisted by two assessors. The accused priest is called to respond to the accusations and to review the evidence against him. The accused cleric has a right to lodge an appeal to the CDF against any decree imposing on him a canonical penalty. The decision of the members of the CDF is final.

Should the priest be judged guilty, both judicial and administrative penal processes can condemn him to a number of canonical penalties, the most serious of which is dismissal from the clerical state (priesthood). The question of damages to be paid to the complainant can also be treated directly during these procedures.

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In cases where the priest has admitted to his crimes and has accepted to live a life of prayer and penance, the CDF can authorize the local bishop to issue a decree prohibiting or restricting the public ministry of the priest. The priest has the right of appeal against any such decree back to the CDF. The decision of the CDF is final.

2. Case referred directly to the Pope

The CDF can present a case directly to the Pope, especially where a criminal law trial has found the priest guilty of sexual abuse of a minor, or where the evidence is overwhelming. The Pope can issue a decree dismissing the priest from the clerical state (priesthood). This is called an “ex-officio dismissal.” There is no appeal to such a decree by the Holy Father; it is final and binding.

An accused priest who is aware of the gravity of his abuse can make a request to the CDF to be dispensed from the obligation of the priesthood and to be allowed to return to the lay state. The CDF also brings such requests to the Pope for his personal decision.

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APPENDIX 2

Insert relevant contact details here



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3.2A Guidance on Appropriate Personnel

Those who have alleged child abuse should receive a compassionate response from Church personnel and be offered access to appropriate care, advice and support.

The Church authority must have in place a safeguarding structure that provides consistent and effective responses to the safeguarding needs of child and adult complainants across the Church as a whole. Complainants need to be listened to and heard to ensure that any allegation or disclosure of abuse is handled compassionately, effectively and professionally.

Those recruited to fulfil the roles listed on Pages 3–5 should be selected following clear criteria, in accordance with safe recruitment practices (Guidance 1.1A).

Given the highly sensitive nature of this work, everyone involved must abide by the highest possible standards of professional conduct in all aspects of their work, including the maintenance of appropriate confidentiality. Consideration should be given to requesting that any potential applicants for these roles sign a confidentiality agreement as part of their contract (Guidance 1.1A, Template 5).

Each Church authority should have access to a support person who is available to those who make an allegation/disclosure of abuse, if the complainant so wishes. For smaller Church bodies with limited resources, liaising with other Church bodies for access to a support person is acceptable.

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3.2B Guidance on the Role of the Support Person

The role

As shown in Appendix A, the role of the support person is to:

1. Keep the complainant informed of the process of the case;
2. Help the complainant identify and access counselling and support;
3. Record any meetings or contact they have with the complainant, and pass on relevant information to the DLP, as appropriate;
4. Uphold the seven standards in practice and behaviour.

Being attentive to the expressed needs and objectives of the complainant, the support person should:

- Encourage and support the complainant in getting suitable help;
- Be extra mindful of the vulnerability of the complainant during the process.

Clarity about the role

- The support person is not a counsellor for the complainant and should not act in that role.
- The support person should not act as spiritual guide for the complainant.
- The support person does not manage the case file and will not have access to it.
- If the complainant is a child, the support person should liaise with the parents/guardians of the child.

Issues to consider when meeting with complainants

Meeting complainants can be stressful, particularly if there is not an established relationship. Consideration should be given to the following issues:

Venue

- Consider a location where both the complainant and you will feel at ease. If you have anxieties about meeting the complainant in their home consider a neutral venue.
- Invite the complainant to be accompanied by a friend.
- Ensure you are accompanied either by another support person or another neutral person who may take notes.
- Advise the complainant that you will have another person with you and that person's role.

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- If meeting in a neutral venue ensure privacy and confidentiality but also consider personal safety issues
- If responsibility rests with you to identify a suitable venue ensure refreshments are available.

Frequency

- The frequency of contact/meetings should be dictated by the complainant, but the support person needs to initiate contact at least once a year on an ongoing basis, unless the complainant states that they do not want any further contact. This is to ensure that the Church authority continues to make every effort to offer a supportive and pastoral response to complaints.

Storage of records

Information regarding meetings between the support person and the complainant must be stored safely and securely (Appendix B). The following should be used as a guide to information that must be recorded:

- The date and time the meetings took place,
- Any relevant child safeguarding issues that have arisen,
- If the complainant has knowledge of a crime
- If the complainant is suffering from a mental health condition or is suicidal
- Any requests for support or representations that the complainant wishes to make to the Church authority.

A record that the meetings have taken place, along with any relevant child safeguarding issues, should be forwarded to the DLP for placing in the third-party information section of the file (Guidance 2.2B). It is advisable to share this record with the complainant prior to sending to the DLP.

Support

Regular meetings between the support person and the DLP should be held to enable the DLP to keep up to date with the needs and requests of the complainant, and to advise the Church authority of any requests for support. These meetings should incorporate any requests for supervision, in order to allow the support person to receive feedback on their role. If necessary and appropriate, external support for the support person should be used (Guidance 5.6A).

Training

All support persons should attend a local full-day training programme (Guidance 5.3A) facilitated by trainers registered with the National Board. The Church authority should ensure that support persons are given the opportunity to attend training provided by the National Board, in accordance with the National Board Training Strategy (Guidance 5.2A). Both of these training needs should be included in the annual training plan, which is produced by the safeguarding committee (Guidance 5.2B).

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3.3A Information and Guidance on Contacts for Relevant National Organisations and Agencies

Disclosing abuse can be a significant milestone on the road to possible recovery. There are a number of organisations that specialise in working with complainants. Many of these are listed below.

All-Ireland Church bodies

- **Towards Healing** is an organisation that has expertise in providing a compassionate response to those who have experienced abuse. This service is funded by the Church, and offers direct services to survivors through a range of counselling, helpline and restorative justice approaches. More information can be found at www.towardshealing.ie
- **Towards Peace** offers spiritual support and guidance to survivors of abuse by Church personnel. For further information, visit www.towardspeace.ie

Republic of Ireland

- The Child and Family Agency – Tusla: www.tusla.ie
- An Garda Síochána: www.garda.ie
- ISPCC: www.ispcc.ie
- Barnardos: www.barnardos.ie
- HSE National Counselling Service: www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/Mental_Health_Services/National_Counselling_Service/
- Rape Crisis Network of Ireland: www.rcni.ie
- Children at Risk in Ireland (CARI): www.cari.ie
- One in Four: www.oneinfour.ie
- Connect: www.connectcounselling.ie

Northern Ireland

- Social Services: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk
- The PSNI: www.psni.police.uk
- One in Four: www.oneinfour.org.uk
- The Nexus Institute: www.nexusinstitute.org
- The Samaritans: www.samaritans.org
- The Rowan Sexual Assault Referral Centre: www.therowan.net
- Lifeline: www.lifelinehelpline.info

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- NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk
- Barnardos: www.barnardos.org.uk

If you are concerned that a child is currently at risk, all reporting numbers are contained in Appendix D.

The following resources may also be useful:

- Childline (ROI): 1800 666666
- ChildLine (NI): 0800 1111
- CARI: 1890 924567