Recognise, Respond, Record, Refer

This Quick Reference Guide links to the Reporting Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations Code of Practice which can be found on the e-manual.

What is a safeguarding concern or allegation?

A **safeguarding concern** is when someone is worried that a child or vulnerable adult may not be safe, or may be at risk of harm, even if the reason is not yet clear.

A **safeguarding allegation** is when someone says that a person may have behaved in a way that has harmed, or could harm, another person.

Recognise

Everyone must be alert to the signs and symptoms of abuse, by undertaking the required level of training and being familiar with the relevant guidance. It is essential that when presented with a safeguarding concern or allegation that we accept and take seriously what is being said, without displaying shock or disbelief and without investigating or asking leading questions.

Respond

Do's	Don'ts
• Remain calm • Take what is said seriously • Only use open questions • Take into account the person's age and level of understanding • Ask if you can take notes during the conversation • Offer reassurance that disclosing is the right thing to do • Establish only as much information as is needed to be able to tell your leader/ Parish Safeguarding Officer/ Diocesan Safeguarding Team and statutory authorities • Check out what the person hopes for • Tell the child or adult what you are going to do next	• Panic • Make promises that cannot be kept • Make assumptions or offer alternative explanations • Never promise the child or adult that you can keep a secret. Explain that information will be shared if children or any adult is at potential risk • Contact the person about whom allegations have been made. • Carry out a medical examination

What is an open question?

An open question is a question which does not lead the person to a pre-determined answer and allows a person to expand on what they have said. Open questions usually start with 'who', 'what', 'when', 'why' and 'how', and cannot be answered with a 'yes' or a 'no'.

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It is usually not appropriate to ask 'why' questions when discussing a safeguarding concern, as the victim/survivor or person making the complaint cannot know the reasons behind an abuser's actions. We should never ask a person to explain 'why' something occurred.

Record

- Always ask if someone is happy for you to take notes when they are disclosing a concern or allegation to you.
- If they are, make brief notes at the time, so that you are paying as much attention as possible to the person speaking with you.
- After the meeting, write the notes up in detail as soon as possible.
- Do not destroy your original notes in case they may be required later on.
- Record the date, time, place, words used and how the person appeared to you.
- Record the actual words used, including any swear words or slang.
- Record facts and observable things, not your interpretations or assumptions.
- Don't speculate or jump to conclusions.

Report

- If there is immediate danger to a child/adult contact the relevant statutory service immediately.
- If there is no immediate danger, report to your local leader/safeguarding officer within one working day.
- The Parish will report to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team on the same working day, or the **next working day** if it is reported out of hours.
- The Diocesan Safeguarding Team will advise on reporting to statutory agencies.
- If there is any doubt seek advice from social services or the police.

Key terminology

Core safeguarding terms

Safeguarding Concern: This is when someone is worried that a child or vulnerable adult may not be safe, or may be at risk of harm, even if the reason is not yet clear.

Safeguarding Allegation: This is when someone says that a person may have behaved in a way that has harmed, or could harm, another person.

Complainant: This is the person making the disclosure or raising the concern. This may be the victim/survivor, or it may be someone else (for example, a parent or a member of the congregation).

Respondent: This is the person who is the subject of a concern or allegation.

Persons in a position of trust (PIPOT): An individual who, through their professional or voluntary role, has access to adults with care and support needs and is expected to uphold the highest standards of conduct and safeguarding.

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People and roles

Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO): The local safeguarding lead in the parish.

Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO): The person who maintains oversight of, leads and advises on safeguarding matters in a diocese. The functions of the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) are set out in the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer Regulations 2024.

Note: DSOs have the authority to delegate tasks that would otherwise be their responsibility to Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Officers (ADSOs), with the exception of Clergy Risk Assessments, as and when they see appropriate. ADSOs are not specifically referenced in this Code, but where a requirement is included that requires the DSO to undertake a certain action, the DSO can delegate that action to an ADSO within their team.

Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG): The diocesan or national group that makes decisions around how to manage and assess risk, as well as deciding what support should be put in place for the respondent and complainant. The DSO will convene the group within 10 working days of receiving the concern or allegation, and they are repeated as needed. At minimum, the complainant and respondent will be updated every 6 weeks on decisions made by the SCMG.

Support Person: The person who is offered to every complainant to listen with compassion and liaise with the Church on their behalf. Not every complainant will take up this offer, and that is okay.

Link Person: The person offered to every respondent to listen to provide emotional support to them. Not every respondent will take up this offer, and that is okay.

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): The person in the local council who deals with allegations against people who work or volunteer with children. If a safeguarding concern involves a church officer and a child, the DSO will contact the LADO and follow their advice.

Process terminology

Triage: The initial check of information by the diocesan safeguarding team to decide what level of response is needed.

Risk assessment: A formal process to assess risk to children/vulnerable adults and put safeguards in place.

Church Safety Plan: A set of boundaries for someone who poses a safeguarding risk but attends Church.

What are the possible outcomes?

When you share a safeguarding concern or allegation with your Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST), they will review the information and decide on the most appropriate next steps. Not every report will lead to the same outcome, but every piece of information helps build a safer picture. You will never be expected to manage to process yourself – the DST will always be there to support you.

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Possible outcomes include:

- **Referral to police and/or other statutory services**: if the concern suggests that a child or adult is at risk of harm, the DST will refer the matter to the relevant authority.
- **Referral to a Safeguarding Case Management Group (SCMG):** Where the allegation meets the threshold for formal case management, the DST will bring it to the SCMG, which makes decisions about risk and safeguarding action.
- **Sharing for information only**: Sometimes the concern does not require immediate action but is important to note in case further information emerges in the future. The DST will keep a record.
- **Advice given**: The DST may provide guidance to the PSO, parish, or others about how to best respond or manage the situation locally.
- **Further information needed:** the DST may need to gather more details before deciding next steps. They may come back to you (or others) with specific questions.
- **Additional monitoring**: In some situations, no immediate action is required but the parish will be asked to remain alert and pass on any further concerns so that patterns can be identified early.

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