

# **Whistleblowing**

## **Policy and Procedures**

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## **1.0 Policy Statement**

The term 'whistle blowing' is used to describe the actions of personnel who draw attention to bad practice where they work or volunteer. Personnel may whistleblow within their organisation or, if they do not have confidence in their organisation or fear reprisal as a result, may disclose their concerns to others.

## **2.0 Purpose of Policy**

- To encourage diocesan personnel to feel confident in raising concerns about the safety and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults or any other concern.
- To provide avenues for the raising of concerns and to receive feedback on any action taken.
- To ensure that individuals receive a response to their concerns and that they are aware of how to pursue them further if necessary.
- To reassure individuals that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing in good faith.

## **3.0 Principles**

The **Dioceses of Killaloe** is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, honesty and accountability. In line with this commitment, individuals are encouraged to report concerns about any aspect of a child's safety or welfare or any other concern, to come forward and to voice those concerns. This policy makes it clear that individuals can raise a matter of concern without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. It is in the interest of all concerned that disclosure of potential neglect/abuse or irregularities are dealt with properly and quickly. Those who raise a concern under the whistleblowing policy in good faith do so with the support of **The Protections for Persons reporting Child Abuse Act 1998**.

The whistleblowing policy should only be followed if the person raising the concern feels unable to follow the standard reporting procedures as set out in the Diocesan Child Safeguarding Policy.

## **4.0 Scope**

This policy is addressed to all Church Personnel/volunteers in the Diocese of Killaloe who are likely to have access to children/vulnerable adults or hold Positions of Trust within the Diocese of Killaloe. It is intended to provide a forum for concerns to be raised in relation to other individuals or groups of individuals.

## **5.0 Safeguards**

The **Diocese of Killaloe** is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of everyone within the community. We recognise that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the alleged poor practice. If an individual believes what they are saying to be true, they should have nothing to fear because in reporting their concern they will be doing their duty to the child, young person or vulnerable adult concerned.

Staff/Volunteers must acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of their supervisor/superior/manager. These could be the Parish Priest, Priest in Charge or Bishop and/or relevant organisation managers.

The Diocese will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect individuals when they raise a concern in good faith. Any investigation of allegations under this policy will not influence or be influenced by any other complaints procedure.

## **6.0 Confidentiality**

The Diocese will do its best to protect the identity of the whistleblower when they raise a concern and do not want their name to be disclosed. It must be appreciated that the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by the whistleblower may be required as part of the evidence to bring the matter to conclusion. They will be given prior notice of this and an opportunity to discuss the consequences. Support is available from the Director of Safeguarding for the Killaloe Diocese for concerns relating to children and vulnerable adults and or the Diocesan Office.

## **7.0 Anonymous Allegations**

This policy encourages the whistleblower to put their name to their allegation. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered (at the discretion of the Safeguarding Personnel).

In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account include:

- The seriousness of the issues raised.
- The credibility of the concern.
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources or factual records.

## **8.0 Untrue Allegations**

If an individual makes an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against them. If however, it is established that they have made malicious or frivolous allegations, or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against them. In such cases, the Diocesan disciplinary procedure will apply. In civil law untrue allegations are a criminal offence.

## **9.0 Should I Raise a Concern?**

You may be the first to recognise that something is wrong but may not feel able to express your concerns out of a feeling that this would be disloyal to colleagues or you may fear harassment or victimisation. These feelings, however natural, must never result in a child or young person continuing to be unnecessarily at risk. Remember it is often the most vulnerable children or young person who are targeted. These children need someone like you to safeguard their welfare.

***Don't think what if I'm wrong - think what if I'm right***

### **9.1 Reasons for Whistleblowing**

- Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behavior.
- To prevent the problem worsening or widening.
- To protect or reduce risks to others.
- To prevent becoming implicated yourself.

### **9.2 What Stops People from Whistleblowing**

- Feeling of disloyalty to colleagues.
- Fear of starting a chain of events which spirals out of control.
- Disrupting the activity.
- Fear of getting it wrong.
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers.
- Fear of not being believed.

## **10.0 How to Raise a Concern**

- Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing.
- Ideally, you should put your concerns in writing, outlining the background and history, giving names, dates and places wherever you can.
- Try to pinpoint exactly what practice is concerning you and why.
- Approach your group or parish leader.
- If your concern is about your immediate superior/supervisor/manager then please contact either one of our Designated Liaison Persons, the Diocesan Office or externally, the National Office for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church. *Contact details are given below for all of these.*
- Make sure you get a satisfactory response - don't let matters rest.
- You are not expected to prove the truth of an allegation but you will need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for the concern.

***You should voice your concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as you feel you can. The earlier a concern is expressed the easier and sooner action can be taken.***

## **11.0 What Happens Next**

- You will be informed on the nature and progress of any enquiries.
- The matters raised may be referred to the statutory authorities.
- Advice and support will be available from the Diocese.
- Your group or parish leader has a responsibility to protect you from harassment or victimisation.
- No action will be taken against you if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith. This is in line with ***The Protections for Persons reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.***
- Malicious allegations may be considered as a disciplinary offence.

## **12.0 Contact Numbers**

**Killaloe Diocesan Office.** 065 6828638

**Cleo Yates. Director of Safeguarding (Designated Liaison Person).** 086-8096027

**Fr. Pat Malone. Assistant Designated Liaison Person.** 086-8096074

**National Office for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland**

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