

**Don't think,
'what if I'm
wrong?'**

**Think,
'what if I'm
right!'**

Reporting Concerns

All clergy, religious, staff and volunteers within the context and agency of the Diocese must acknowledge their individual responsibility to report matters of concern. In such instances, contact any of the following:

**Diocesan Designated
Liaison Person:**
Mrs Mary Gormley
087-2882500

Rev Ciaran Kitching
090-9676151

**HSE Safeguarding
Vulnerable Persons
and Protection:**
La Nua, Ballybane,
Castlepark Road, Galway
Tel: 091 748432 Email:
Safeguarding.cho2@hse.ie

**Garda National Protective
Services Bureau:**
Harcourt Square, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 666 3430 / 3423
Garda Confidential Service:
Tel: 1800 666 111

For further information on Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons within the Diocese of Clonfert, contact **Ms Isabelle Mulkern, Safeguarding Co-ordinator Diocese of Clonfert, Coorheen, Loughrea, Co. Galway 091-841560 or 083-8791745**

For further information on the Diocese of Clonfert Procedures for Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons, visit www.clonfertdiocese.ie.



Updated October 2021

Diocese of Clonfert



Code of Conduct for those who minister to, provide support to or have contact with Vulnerable Persons

When ministering, providing support to or having contact with Vulnerable Persons it is critical that boundaries are respected and that appropriate practices are established which always place the needs and well-being of the vulnerable person as the primary concern.

It is essential to balance the right to safety and protection for the vulnerable person and to facilitate appropriate interaction between a vulnerable person and his/her priest, lay minister or volunteer.

It is important for clergy, religious, staff and volunteers to:

- Adhere to the protocols and guidelines of any organisation within whose premises they are ministering.
- Treat everyone with equal respect.
- Engage and interact appropriately with vulnerable persons.
- Be aware of the difficulties posed by language barriers and other communication difficulties.
- Respect the dignity of each individual and their right to personal privacy.
- In general, Church activities should not involve one-to-one contact between an adult and a vulnerable person. However, there may be circumstances where this may occur, for example when a vulnerable person requests a one-to-one meeting with you or when bringing the Blessed Sacrament to a vulnerable person at home.

The points below provide some guidance in relation to these situations.

- If you need to visit a vulnerable person alone, try to do so in an open environment, in view of others.
- If this is not possible, try to arrange with family members/carers to be present during the visit. It is good practice to advise another adult (family member/carer as appropriate) that such a meeting is taking place and the reason for it. A record should be kept of these meetings – including names, dates, times, location, reason for the visit.
- Recognise that particular care is required in moments when you may be discussing sensitive issues with vulnerable persons.
- Avoid situations that might compromise your ministry with vulnerable persons, and which are unacceptable within a relationship of trust. This rule should apply to all such behaviours including those which would constitute an illegal act.
- Respect the religious, cultural, racial and sexual identity/orientation of the vulnerable person and be open to and aware of diversity in their beliefs and practices and those of their families.
- Provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow.
- Operate within Diocesan Guidelines.

The Code outlines unacceptable behaviours as follows:

Clergy, religious, staff and volunteers must never:

- Abuse or exploit a vulnerable person.
- Become involved in either using the vulnerable person's money on his/her behalf or in giving the vulnerable person advice in use of his/her money.
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
- Do things of a personal nature for a vulnerable person that he/she is capable of doing for himself/herself or are the responsibility of others e.g. a carer.
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade.
- Discriminate against the person on the basis of religion, race, culture, sexual identity or sexual orientation.
- Form inappropriate relationships with vulnerable persons.
- Gossip about personal details of vulnerable persons and their families.
- Photograph or video a vulnerable person.
- Inappropriately use social media in a manner that could cause harm or distress to a vulnerable person.

Clergy, religious, staff and volunteers are made aware of this Code of Conduct in the expectation that they will act in accordance with it when exercising ministry with the vulnerable.

A Duty to Tell

All clergy, religious, staff and volunteers within the context and agency of the Diocese must acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of their supervisor/superior/manager. This could be the parish priest, religious superior or bishop. Although this can be difficult to do, it is particularly important where vulnerable persons may be at risk. You may be the first to recognise that something is wrong, but you 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 vulnerable person continuing to be unnecessarily at risk. Remember, it is often the most vulnerable who are targeted, and they need an advocate to safeguard their welfare.