



**Glenstal Abbey**  
**Adult**  
**Safeguarding**  
**Policy**

## **Definitions:**

**Adult Safeguarding:** The terminology used in relation to adult safeguarding is different in each legal jurisdiction and is continuing to evolve. The policy uses the term adult safeguarding as a common term across both jurisdictions. The policy is aimed at protecting everyone, while making special provision for people who may fall within the legal definitions of adult safeguarding or adult protection in the respective jurisdiction.

**ASC:** Stands for Adult Safeguarding Champion.

**Church authority:** Refers to the leader of the Church body or the senior administrative authority of a lay organisation or ecclesial movement.

**Church body:** A Church body is the order, diocese, congregation, lay association or movement who have agreed to be bound by the policy.

**Church personnel:** Defines those who work (voluntarily or paid) for the Church body. This includes, clergy, male and female religious, staff and volunteers.

**DP:** Stands for Designated Person for adult safeguarding.

**HSE:** Health Service Executive (ROI)

**HSCT:** Health and Social Care Trust.

**HIQA:** Health Information and Quality Authority.

**LSR:** Stands for Local Safeguarding Representative.

**Ministry with Adults:** Is any work or service undertaken by Church personnel with adults (within or outside of Church property), which is under the authority of their Church body.

**RQIA:** Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority.

*This policy for Adult Safeguarding is based on the sample policy produced by NBSCCCI in 2023.*

## Vision

*"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Mt 5:14).* Our Lord Jesus Christ calls every believer to be a shining example of virtue, integrity and holiness. All of us, in fact, are called to give concrete witness of faith in Christ in our lives and, in particular, in our relationship with others.

Pope Francis recognises that for abuse of adults to be prevented '...a continuous and profound conversion of hearts is needed, attested by concrete and effective actions that involve everyone in the Church, so that personal sanctity and moral commitment can contribute to promoting the full credibility of the Gospel message and the effectiveness of the Church's mission. This becomes possible only with the grace of the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts, as we must always keep in mind the words of Jesus: *"Apart from me you can do nothing"* (Jn 15:5). Even if so much has already been accomplished, we must continue to learn from the bitter lessons of the past, looking with hope towards the future.'<sup>1</sup>

Inspired by the words of Pope Francis, our vision for the Church is one of safety and sanctuary, which cares for all its members, and treats them with dignity and respect. Those adults who have been harmed and come forward with allegations or concerns of abuse or neglect must be empowered, listened to, cared for and all allegations or concerns responded to in line with civil and canon law. Those clerics, male and female religious, and members of Church personnel who have been accused, must be cared for and managed in line with civil law and where appropriate, canon law requirements, to reduce risk of harm to people in our Church.

---

<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis (2019) *Vos estis lux mundi*, pg 1.

## **Our Safeguarding Mission**

As part of the Catholic Church in Ireland the monks of Glenstal Abbey aim to ensure that all ministry carried out with adults is safe. We want everyone involved in our ministry to feel welcome and to be treated in a way that values them as people of faith and respects their rights.

We will ensure that all Church personnel involved in ministry with adults understand how to minister safely and to respond appropriately to adult safeguarding concerns. As the Abbot, I will lead Glenstal Abbey in adult safeguarding with integrity and strive to embed a culture of safeguarding throughout all our ministries.

## **Scope**

This policy is designed for the ministries with adults for which the Church body has authority and responsibility. The policy does not cover those ministries which are run or governed by other external organisations such as the HSE, Department of Health (NI), RQIA or HIQA.

If a member of Church personnel is notified of concerns and is working or ministering in external settings, they should follow the adult safeguarding procedures of the setting in which they are working or ministering.

Some adults may come forward with allegations of abuse that occurred when they were a child. These retrospective allegations are not dealt with by this policy and instead are part of the child safeguarding policy.

## Who are Vulnerable Adults or Adults at Risk and in Need of Protection?

The terms used to describe adult safeguarding are not consistent and variations exist in civil law and policy in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and canon law. The current definitions at the time of writing are set out below.

### Northern Ireland

*Adult Safeguarding Prevention and Protection in Partnership* published in 2015 provides the current definitions relevant in relation to adult safeguarding. These are:

‘An ‘Adult at risk of harm’ is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- a) personal characteristics AND/OR
- b) life circumstances

Personal characteristics may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain. Life circumstances may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors and environmental living conditions.

An ‘Adult in need of protection’ is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- a) personal characteristics AND/OR
- b) life circumstances AND
- c) who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests AND
- d) where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, him/her to be harmed.

In order to meet the definition of an ‘adult in need of protection’ either (a) or (b) must be present, in addition to both elements (c), and (d).<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> DHSSPS (2015) *Adult Safeguarding Prevention and Protection in Partnership*. Available at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/adult-safeguarding-policy.pdf> (Accessed 22nd November 2021), p. 10.

## Republic of Ireland

In the Republic of Ireland the focus of current legislation is on defining vulnerable adults based on physical or mental disability. The definition is provided across two pieces of legislation with very subtle differences between the two.

The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016 defines a vulnerable person as:

‘A person other than a child who:

- (a) is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia,
- (b) has an intellectual disability,
- (c) is suffering from a physical impairment, whether as a result of injury, illness or age, or
- (d) has a physical disability, which is of such a nature or degree—
  - (i) as to restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against harm by another person, or
  - (ii) that results in the person requiring assistance with the activities of daily living including dressing, eating, walking, washing and bathing.’<sup>3</sup>

A similar definition is put forward in the Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information of Offences Against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012. ‘A person (including, insofar as the offences specified at paragraph 8 of Schedule 2 are concerned, a child aged 17 years old)-

(a) Who-

- I. is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia, or
- II. has an intellectual disability. Which is of such a nature or degree as to severely restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against serious exploitation or abuse, whether physical or sexual, by another person, or

(b) who is suffering from an enduring physical impairment or injury which is of such a nature or degree as to severely restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against serious exploitation or abuse, whether physical or sexual, by another person or to report such exploitation or abuse to the Garda Síochána or both.’<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts, 2012-2016, Republic of Ireland, Article 2.

<sup>4</sup> Criminal Justice (withholding of Information of Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons), 2012, Republic of Ireland, Article 1.

### **Canon Law Definitions**

The substantive norms issued as part of SST do not use the term vulnerable person however under Article 6 it sets out that a person who 'habitually has the imperfect use of reason is to be considered equivalent to a minor'.<sup>5</sup>

*Vos Estis lux mundi* (VELM) expands on this definition for the delicts contained within it, and for the first time uses the phrase vulnerable person, which it defines as:

'Any person in a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, even occasionally, limits their ability to understand or to want<sup>6</sup> or otherwise resist the offence'.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (2010) *Substantive Norms of Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Article 6.

<sup>6</sup> The term 'want' here is from the English definition of VELM, but the translation should perhaps be understood as 'to exercise the will'.

<sup>7</sup> Pope Francis (2019) *Vos estis lux mundi*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Article 2 (b).



## **Foundations**

### **Gospel Values**

The protection of minors and adults is an integral part of the Gospel message that the Church and all its members are called to proclaim throughout the world. '...We all have the duty to welcome openheartedly minors and vulnerable persons and to create a safe environment for them, with their interests as a priority. This requires a continuous and profound conversion, in which personal holiness and moral commitment come together to promote the credibility of the Gospel proclamation and to renew the educational mission of the Church.'<sup>8</sup>

While we may think of the safeguarding of adults as a new concept, there are many rich Gospel messages highlighting the importance of this ministry, for example this is made clear in the Gospel of Matthew when it states, 'As you did it to one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it to me' (Mt 25:40). The Gospel of John sets out the requirement to help very clearly when it states: 'how does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's good and sees one in need and refuses to help' (1 John 3:17-18).

Inspired by these Gospel teachings we aim to uphold the divine example set by Jesus in our ministry with all adults.

---

<sup>8</sup> Pope Francis (2019) *Apostolic Letter issued Motu Proprio by the Supreme Pontiff Francis on the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons*. Available at [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio-20190326\\_latutela-deiminori.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio-20190326_latutela-deiminori.html) (Accessed 22nd November 2021).

## **Human Rights Approach**

The importance of seeing the person as a rights holder is a clear duty set out by Pope John XXIII in *Pacem in Terris*, it should be understood that while the language used in this quote mentions men it should be interpreted as referencing humankind - which includes both men and women '...each individual man is truly a person he has rights and duties which together flow as a direct consequence of his nature. These rights and duties are universal and inviolable and therefore altogether inalienable.'<sup>9</sup>

The principles of human rights in Ireland are contained within a number of key pieces of legislation on both sides of the border. These include:

### **Republic of Ireland**

- The Irish Constitution, 1937.
- The European Convention on Human Rights Act, 2003.
- The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, 2000.
- The Equal Status Act 2000-2015
- The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014.
- Assisted Decision Making and Capacity Act (2015)

### **Northern Ireland**

- The Disability Discrimination Act, 1995
- The Northern Ireland Act, 1998
- The Human Rights Act, 1998

Internationally, Ireland and Northern Ireland (as part of the United Kingdom) are signatories to two important human rights conventions relevant to adult safeguarding. These are the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

While all of the articles are interlinked and interdependent, a number of key articles are important to consider in relation to adult safeguarding. These are outlined internationally under the FREDA Principles:

### **Fairness**

The implication of this principle in relation to safeguarding touches on the area of recognising and responding to abuse but also in terms of gaining consent for Church related activities. The important principle here is that adults can give or withhold their consent freely and without pressure.

---

<sup>9</sup> Pope John XXIII (1963) *Pacem In Terris*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

There are principles in legislation in both jurisdictions in Ireland, which make it mandatory to report certain offences in relation to adult safeguarding. However, understanding whether an allegation meets a threshold is not always straightforward, for example an older person living alone might be considered vulnerable but still retains capacity to make decisions for themselves. However, someone with a disability who is being abused, may not have capacity to make decisions regarding intervention. The important thing is the need to find a balance between protecting people from harm and respecting their personal autonomy through informed consent.

In situations where there is any adult safeguarding concern, it is important to seek advice from the DP/ASC and/or the HSE/HSCT.

### **Respect**

Closely linked to the first principle of fairness, respect requires that people should be communicated with, listened to and respected, regardless of their impairment or lack of capacity.

This means when involving adults in ministry, they should be consulted, to ensure they are happy to be present, and give consent for the ministry. This may be implicit consent or in some cases, consideration may be given to having formal written consent.

### **Equality**

In treating people with respect, this must also include a need to ensure equality in all safeguarding actions ensuring that people are not discriminated against. This is underpinned by *Vos estis lux mundi*, to ensure that when allegations are made they are taken seriously and not dismissed due to perceptions about the person. These perceptions can include family violence or coercive control being experienced by men, financial abuse being perpetrated against a family member and understanding that not everyone with a disability is vulnerable.

### **Dignity**

The concept of dignity has been highlighted in recent communications from Pope Francis as an area that needs continual work. Upholding human dignity restricts damaging practices such as perpetuating unhelpful attitudes and stereotypes, breaching privacy and personal data unnecessarily and making complainants feel let down by safeguarding systems and practices designed to protect.

### **Autonomy**

Linked closely to the principle of fairness, is understanding that in terms of adult safeguarding the person is presumed to have capacity from the outset, even if that decision may seem unwise. If a person is deemed to lack capacity (after consultation with the appropriate statutory agency) any action taken must be done in such a way as to limit a negative impact on their human rights.

## **Adult Safeguarding Pledges**

Gospel values and a human rights-based approach are the foundations upon which adult safeguarding is built. These foundations are summarised under five pledges:

### **1. Ensuring a safe and welcoming environment**

The Church will be welcoming and will put in place appropriate and relevant processes that will ensure that risk is assessed and managed.

Practically this will be done through ensuring that those who minister (lay, vowed and ordained) will be selected (including vetting where appropriate), trained and supported to ensure the safety and well-being of adults.

The Church will invite the active involvement of adults, so that they can be empowered to have an active role in ensuring that ministries are safe.

The Church Authority will work to raise awareness of adult safeguarding issues amongst Church personnel and in line with best practice.

### **2. Responding to Adult Safeguarding Concerns**

Church personnel will work with the appropriate statutory agency to take appropriate action in line with legislation and guidance on consent and capacity if a person alleges that they have suffered:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Financial abuse
- Institutional abuse
- Neglect/self-neglect
- Organisational abuse
- Discriminatory abuse
- Online or digital abuse
- Human Trafficking or modern-day slavery.

In safeguarding adults, it is important to recognise that a decision about taking any action must begin with the principle that action should only be taken with the explicit and informed consent of the adult. This will depend on the person's capacity to give consent. Action can be taken where consent is withheld if there is a concern about the

safety of the person and where it is in line with legislation to do so (for example knowledge of a crime).

Anyone who brings any concern regarding adult safeguarding will be responded to sensitively, respectfully, actively and in a timely manner, in line with statutory legislation, guidance and Church requirements.

### **3. Caring for Complainants**

Complainants will be offered support to empower them to attempt to deal with the consequences of the abuse on their lives. Those who have suffered abuse by Church personnel will receive a compassionate and just response informed by Gospel values and respect for human rights.

### **4. Ensuring a just and fair response for those who are accused**

A Church authority, in their response to those that have been accused of adult abuse, must ensure that respondents are subject to a fair and just system of inquiry, in line with civil law and where appropriate canon law.

Throughout the civil and Church process, the legal presumption of innocence will be maintained, and appropriate pastoral support will be offered to the respondent.

The Church will take responsibility, in consultation with the appropriate statutory agency, to ensure that those who are considered a danger to adults will be managed through a risk management process including the operation of appropriate safety plans if necessary.

### **5. Providing Clear Leadership and Accountability**

Church authorities will work with all Church personnel to be accountable in the ministry of adult safeguarding. In practical terms this means:

- Working with the statutory authorities, complainants and respondents to build trust and confidence in the process of responding to adult safeguarding allegations.
- Ensuring that they, as leaders are skilled in adult safeguarding; and put in place relevant training and support for those who work with them in this area to promote competency and accountability.
- Developing transparent systems of accountability to ensure the policy of adult safeguarding is implemented locally and monitored in their Church body.

## **Safeguarding Requirements**

To ensure the implementation of these pledges three safeguarding requirements have been used to help understand how to take the principles and vision of adult safeguarding and implement them.



# Ensuring a Safe and Welcoming Church

## What it is and why we do it?

Pope Francis stated that “we all have the duty to welcome with generosity minors and vulnerable persons and to create for them a secure atmosphere that has their interests as a priority”.<sup>10</sup> This statement by Pope Francis is underpinned by key human rights documents including:

- Right to respect for private and family life - Article 8 ECHR, and Articles 19, 22 and 23 UNCRPD.
- Right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, expression and opinion - Articles 9 and 10 ECHR, and Articles 3 and 21 UNCRPD.
- Prohibition of discrimination - Article 14 ECHR, and Articles 3, 5, 17 and 25 UNCRPD.

As a Church we aim to embody these important principles and teachings from Pope Francis to ensure a safe and welcoming Church for all.

## To do this well what does it look like?

In practical terms, a safe and welcoming Church for all is one where:

- Those who are selected to deliver ministry are safe and competent to do so, through good recruitment and vetting procedures, ongoing training and appropriate codes of behaviour.
- Ministry that involves adults, is risk assessed as appropriate, to ensure that safeguards are put in place to protect the adults taking part, as well as those delivering the ministry.
- Procedures are in place to manage concerns which are not allegations of abuse, such as whistleblowing, complaints and breaches of codes of behaviour.
- Adult safeguarding messages of the Church are widely disseminated in appropriate and relevant formats.

## Who is involved?

The Church authority has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that procedures and practices are in place so that adults and those that work with them are safe. To do this the Church authority engages the support of:

- Parish priests/local superiors
- LSRs
- Safeguarding committee
- Church personnel who work with adults.

---

<sup>10</sup> Taken From <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/03/29/pope-francis-issues-decree-protection-minors-and-vulnerable-adults-vatican>.

# Reporting and Responding with Compassion

## What it is and why we do it?

Pope Francis stated that ‘The crimes of sexual abuse offend Our Lord, cause physical, psychological and spiritual damage to the victims and harm the community of the faithful. In order that these phenomena, in all their forms, never happen again, a continuous and profound conversion of hearts is needed, attested by concrete and effective actions that involve everyone in the Church, so that personal sanctity and moral commitment can contribute to promoting the full credibility of the Gospel message and the effectiveness of the Church’s mission.’<sup>11</sup> Effectively living out the words of Pope Francis requires ensuring the implementation of the following human rights principles:

- Right to life - Article 2 ECHR, and Article 10 UNCRPD
- Prohibition of and free from torture or inhuman or degrading treatment – Article 3 ECHR, and Articles 15 and 16 UNCRPD.
- Right to liberty and security - Article 5 ECHR, and Article 14 UNCRPD.
- Right to a fair trial and access to justice - Article 6 ECHR, and Article 13 UNCRPD.
- Protection of property - Article 1 protocol 1 ECHR, and Article 12 UNCRPD.

## To do this well what does it look like?

In practical terms, effective reporting and supporting requires the following:

- Anyone who brings any concern regarding adult safeguarding, will be responded to sensitively, respectfully, actively and in a timely manner, in line with statutory legislation, guidance and Church requirements.
- Complainants will be empowered and supported throughout the civil and canonical process.
- Where the allegation relates to Church personnel, there will be a fair and just system of inquiry in line with civil law and where appropriate canon law.
- Data and information will be retained and shared appropriately with relevant agencies, inline with data protection legislation.

## Who is involved?

The Church authority has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that procedures and practice reflect appropriate reporting of allegations, suspicions and concerns; for ensuring complainants are supported and respondents are provided with a fair and just system of enquiry. To do this the Church authority will engage the support of:

- Designated People/Adult Safeguarding Champions
- Statutory Services
- Canon and civil law advisors.

---

<sup>11</sup> Pope Francis (2019) *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*- preamble.



# Leadership and Accountability

## What it is and why we do it?

Addressing the bishops of Ireland in 2018, Pope Francis said ‘In these years, all of us have had our eyes opened – painfully – to the gravity and extent of sexual abuse and the abuse of power and conscience in various social settings. In Ireland, as elsewhere, the honesty and integrity with which the Church chooses to confront this painful chapter of her history can offer an example and a warning to society as a whole. Continue on this path. Humiliation is painful, but we have been saved by the humiliation of the Son of God and this gives us courage. The wounds of Christ give us courage. I ask you, please, to be close – this is the word, “closeness” – to the Lord and to God’s people. Closeness. Do not repeat the attitudes of aloofness and clericalism that at times in your history have given the real image of an authoritarian, harsh and autocratic Church.’<sup>12</sup>

As a leader in the Church, there are particular responsibilities, which include ensuring that the gospel values are embedded and that human rights standards in relation to adults are upheld and implemented in ministry.

## To do this well what does it look like?

In practical terms, good governance in regard to the safeguarding of adults, involves the following:

- Through words and actions, the Church authority will demonstrate their personal commitment to adult safeguarding. For example, actively participating in ministry that involves vulnerable adults or adults at risk or in need of protection; promoting safeguarding and attendance at relevant optional and mandatory training.
- Ensuring their Church body has competent, trained personnel to lead and embed good adult safeguarding practices in line with the ministry of the Church body.
- Ensuring the Church body has a robust process, which is open and transparent for responding, recording and reporting adult safeguarding allegations.
- Reviewing and assessing the implementation of the adult safeguarding policy in their Church body at least on an annual basis.

## Who is involved?

The Church authority has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that effective systems of governance are in place. To do this the Church authority will engage the support of:

- Safeguarding Committee
- LSRs
- Designated Person/Adult Safeguarding Champion

---

<sup>13</sup> Pope Francis (2018) Address to the Bishops of Ireland

### **Commitment by the Church Authority**

On behalf of Glenstal Abbey I commit to safeguarding adults by agreeing to follow this policy ensuring a safe and welcoming Church for all.

### **Signature**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brendan Coffey" followed by a stylized monogram or initials.

Abbot Brendan Coffey osb

### **Date**

20 June 2023