



DIOCESE OF
DOWN & CONNOR

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedures

**A Summary Guide to the new
Diocesan Policy and Procedures in
Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults**

This summary guide has been designed to provide you with some information about our new Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedures which came into operation in the Diocese of Down and Connor December 2012. Full details of the policy and procedures may be accessed on our website at:

www.downandconnor.org/safeguarding

Safeguarding vulnerable adults is the responsibility of us all. In order to do this, we need to work together, to listen to and take seriously what the most vulnerable people in our parishes and the wider community say.

Our Diocesan Commitment

The Diocese of Down and Connor is fully committed to safeguarding vulnerable adults and will undertake to do this by:

- Complying fully with new legislative requirements
- Recognising our responsibilities as a Church in taking all steps to safeguard the most vulnerable in our parishes
- Working together in partnership with key statutory organisations in managing any allegations, suspicions or concerns about abuse of vulnerable adults brought to our attention
- Ensuring that all of our clergy, staff and volunteers understand and work to clear standards of best practice with vulnerable adults.

What is a “vulnerable adult”?

A vulnerable adult is currently defined by the DHSS&PS as (1) :

“..any person aged 18 years or over who is, or may be, unable to take care of him

or herself or who is unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation. This may be because he or she has a mental health problem, a disability, a sensory impairment, is old and frail, or has some form of illness. Because of his or her vulnerability, the individual may be in receipt of a care service in his or her own home, in the community or be resident in a residential care home, nursing home or other institutional setting.”



*The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order, 2007, makes it a requirement for organisations to ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place to protect all vulnerable groups, and to ensure that those working or carrying out what is called *regulated activity* with vulnerable groups are vetted accordingly and work to clear standards of best practice.*

Best practice means a commitment to keeping vulnerable adults safe from harm and exploitation and to upholding their rights.

What is included in our policy?

In 2012 the Safeguarding Office was tasked by Bishop Treanor to develop the new policy. This project was guided and supported by a multi-disciplinary working sub-group (including representatives from the Health and Social Care Board, the PSNI and the voluntary and private sectors).

The new policy is applicable to all parishes and to those diocesan bodies/organisations who are not working to their own policy.

The policy clearly sets out the following aspects:

1. A definition of what is meant by a *Vulnerable Adult* (as defined by DHSS&PS, see 1)
2. The structures for safeguarding in this diocese
3. What is meant by vulnerable adult abuse
4. Recognising and responding to the potential abuse of vulnerable adults
5. How to report concerns, suspicions and allegations of abuse
6. How allegations will be managed in collaboration with statutory services
7. A Code of Conduct outlining best practice for clergy, religious staff and volunteers
8. Details of the Designated Officer within the diocese and how to contact him/her.

(see back of leaflet)



What does this mean for our Diocese?

Having policies and procedures for safeguarding vulnerable adults means that all parish groups and diocesan bodies must comply with the policy and procedures and work to standards of best practice.

Those clergy, religious staff and volunteers whose work brings them into contact with vulnerable adults **must**:

- Consent to an Access NI vetting check (this applies to those who undertake regulated activity, as defined in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007)
- Attend training
- Be committed to working to best practice in relation to vulnerable adults and others within the diocese
- Work to a Code of Conduct

What is a Code of Conduct?

A Code of Conduct allows everyone to know what is expected of them:

- It states the value we place on vulnerable adults
- It reflects the Church's teaching regarding vulnerable adults
- It helps aid understanding between clergy, staff/volunteers and vulnerable adults

Having a Code of Conduct for all diocesan clergy, staff and volunteers whose work involves close contact with vulnerable adults will minimise the opportunity for vulnerable adults to suffer harm. It will also serve to protect clergy, staff and volunteers by ensuring they are clear about what is expected of them in terms of their attitude, behaviour and the boundaries within which they should operate.

Codes of Conduct should be reviewed on a regular basis (at least every three years) as part of the policy and procedures review. It is an expectation that all clergy, staff and volunteers who work with vulnerable adults must sign and work to the agreed Code of Conduct.



If you have a concern or worry about a vulnerable adult's welfare please contact:

Andy Thomson

Diocesan Designated Officer

Tel: 028 **9049 2798**

Diocese of Down and Connor

Safeguarding Office, Good Shepherd Centre

511 Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 3GS

Message from Bishop Noel Treanor

Dear Reader,

This leaflet outlines the level of commitment our diocese, Down and Connor, is undertaking to ensure the safety and protection of the most vulnerable groups and individuals within our Church and our parishes. I trust that parishioners, clergy and religious will find this leaflet informative, helpful and re-assuring.

As Bishop of the diocese, I wish to thank all who were involved in its preparation both at diocesan and parish level. They invested much care and work in developing this document. I thank also those in the statutory sector whom they consulted and who provided input and advice. As ever, their assistance is greatly appreciated.

In addition, I wish to acknowledge and thank in advance all of our volunteers, who will provide the training and support over the coming months to ensure that our policies and procedures for vulnerable adults are fully implemented.

The development and implementation of our work to support vulnerable adults is yet another vital and integral part of the pastoral care provided by our parishes.

+Noel Treanor

Bishop of Down and Connor

April 2013