

Diocese of Killala Whistleblowing Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. In fulfilling its mission, The Diocese of Killala upholds high standards of professional and personal conduct. The Diocese recognises that these standards involve openness and accountability.
- 1.2. The Diocese of Killala acknowledges that sometimes its values and requirements on conduct, to include the implementation and enforcement of safeguarding policy, may not be upheld to the standard expected. If this is the case, The Diocese of Killala wants to be informed and will, where possible, take action to try to put things right and improve its quality and effectiveness. The Diocese of Killala recognises and values whistleblowing as a public good and therefore maintains this Whistleblowing Policy for use across the breadth of its work.
- 1.3. The Diocese of Killala welcomes concerns being raised by any individual, group of individuals, or organisation who want to make it aware of concerns about The Diocese of Killala's actions, those of its workforce (priests, post-holders, paid employees, volunteers) or third-party contractors working on its behalf or of activities of an organisation working with The Diocese of Killala. The Diocese of Killala also welcomes concerns being raised by individuals on behalf of another person if they have been asked to do so for reasons such as a fear of repercussions, safety concerns or language barriers.
- 1.4. The Diocese of Killala, its employees, agents, volunteers and clergy are committed to:
 - Conducting themselves ethically, with honesty and integrity.
 - The highest possible standards of openness, probity, and accountability.
 - Good practice and high standards regardless of their role; and
 - Being supportive of each other.
- 1.5. This policy aims to help individuals (“whistleblowers”) to raise with confidence any serious concerns regarding safeguarding issues which they may have about The Diocese of Killala, its employees, agents, volunteers or members of the clergy operates, without having to worry about being victimised, discriminated against or disadvantaged in any way as a result.
- 1.6. The Diocese of Killala recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make due to the fear of subsequent harassment or victimisation from the person responsible for the alleged failure. We encourage you to identify yourself but if you are not able or prepared to do this we will still receive and act on your concern. Providing us with your name helps us to understand your concern and not having this information may limit how well we can respond. However, we will receive and act on your concerns regardless.
- 1.7. The Diocese will take appropriate action to protect the whistleblower who raises a concern in good faith. Any investigation into such a concern will be treated on its merits.
- 1.8. All concerns will be treated in confidence. It may happen that eventually the whistleblower may be invited to come forward as a witness in order to bring the matter to a conclusion. This invitation will be based on the principle that the welfare

and safety of children or vulnerable persons are paramount and that it takes precedence over all other considerations.

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 person continuing to be unnecessarily at risk.

2. What is Whistleblowing?

2.1. Whistleblowing can be defined as

‘The disclosure or raising of concerns by a person to those in authority or to those who have been appointed in a whistleblowing role, of mismanagement, corruption, illegality, or some other wrongdoing or misconduct within an organisation or within an independent structure associated with it’.

2.2. Whistleblowing differs from raising concerns about allegations of abuse which has its own specific reporting policies and procedures.

Don't think 'what if I'm wrong'? Think 'what if I'm right!'

3. What type of concerns may be the subject of Whistleblowing?

3.1. The following is a non-exhaustive list of areas of concern that may be the subject of whistleblowing:

- a breach of the church body's safeguarding procedures
- a breach of the law
- failure to comply with legal obligations
- a health & safety risk
- misuse of public money
- corruption or unethical conduct
- concealing or destroying evidence of wrongdoing

4. Whistleblowing Procedure

4.1. Stage 1

- All persons are encouraged to raise their concerns under this procedure in the first instance.
- If a worker is not sure whether or not to raise a concern, they should discuss the issue with their immediate superior, which in the case of volunteers may be their supervisor.
- Raise the concern with your immediate superior/ supervisor. Record your concern in writing and ensure that your immediate supervisor has received an accurate description of the concern
- If a person feels that it may be inappropriate to raise a concern with their immediate superior because they may have an involvement in or connection to the wrongdoing of concern, or for any reason they do not wish to approach their

immediate superior, then the person should contact the Diocesan office who will, on the authority and instruction of the Bishop, arrange for another officer with whom to discuss or report the matter, or make other such necessary enquiries as in stage 2 below. The contact details are as follows:

The Chancellor
Killala Diocesan Offices
Ballina
Co. Mayo
Tel: +353 (0)96 21518

4.1.1 For the avoidance of doubt this procedure does not include concerns over the welfare of children or vulnerable persons which have their own specific reporting procedures.

4.2.2 Any approach to the Diocesan office will be treated with the strictest confidence. Your identity will be kept confidential as far as possible although if there is a criminal investigation you may be needed as a witness.

4.2. Stage 2

4.2.1 The person to whom the disclosure is made should acknowledge receipt in writing within 7 days of receiving it.

4.2.2 That person will arrange an investigation of the matter (either by investigating the matter themselves or passing the issue to someone in a more senior position).

4.2.3 Relevant information on the nature and progress of any enquiries resulting from the concern may be shared with the person who made the disclosure. It is acknowledged that confidential sensitive data cannot be shared so the response should include general information about internal inquiries and statutory referrals made.

4.2.4 The Church person to whom the disclosure is made should keep detailed notes of the disclosure action taken, who was consulted and the outcome of the inquiries.

4.2.5 Initial inquiries will be made to determine whether an investigation is appropriate and if so what form it should take.

4.2.6 The matters raised may be subject to:

4.2.6.1 Internal investigation.

4.2.6.2 Referral to statutory authorities.

4.2.6.3 Consideration under Canon Law.

4.2.7 The investigation may involve you and other individuals involved giving a written statement.

4.2.8 Your statement will be taken into account, and you may be asked to comment on any additional evidence obtained.

4.2.9 The immediate superior (or the person who carried out the investigation) will then report to the Bishop through the Diocesan office,

who will take any necessary action, including reporting the matter to any appropriate government department or regulatory agency.

4.2.10 On conclusion of any investigation, you will be told the outcome of the investigation and what the Board has done, or proposes to do, about it. If no action is to be taken, the reason for this will be explained. The information contained in this report to you may however be limited due to the confidential nature of the subject matter, the requirements for confidentiality of legal proceedings, the restrictions imposed by data protection, or such other restrictions that may be applied by courts, statutory bodies or the law.

4.3. If on conclusion of stages 1, and 2 you reasonably believe that the appropriate action has not been taken, you should report the matter to the proper authority. Such authorities may include:

- An Garda Siochana
- TUSLA
- The Health Service Executive
- The Revenue Commissioners
- National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland

5. Matters to consider when making a whistleblowing disclosure

5.1. Those in ministry within the Diocese have certain canon law confidentiality obligations to their bishop. However in a limited set of circumstances whistleblowing may override these obligations if a person has information which they believe will not be addressed properly within the Church.

5.2. It is important to:

- Voice any concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as possible. The earlier a concern is expressed the sooner and easier action can be taken
- Try to pinpoint exactly what practice is concerning you and why
- Confirm your concerns with factual information (dates, times, details, history, giving names, dates, locations and any other relevant information) in writing
- You are not expected to prove the truth of your disclosure but you need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for concern
- Seek a satisfactory response in writing; do not let matters rest. If you do not receive a response within a reasonable timeframe write again seeking a written response. A failure to respond should be included in any further disclosure to the statutory authorities or the National Board (if related to the application of child safeguarding practices).
- Follow up if the person to whom you reported has not responded within a reasonable period of time and if that follow up is not acted upon report the matter to the relevant statutory authorities.