

National Office for Professional Standards

The Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand

GUIDELINES FOR THE PREVENTION OF AND RESPONSE TO SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

1. Principles

The Catholic Church believes that every person has a value and dignity which derives directly from their creation in the image and likeness of God. This implies a duty to value all people and therefore to protect them from harm. Children and people at risk were welcome and safe in the company of Jesus and should be welcome and safe in his Church. The safeguarding of children and adults is an integral part of the life and ministry of the Church and flows from the gospel.

2. The Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand commits to honour the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which states:

“In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.” (article 3.1)

“1. Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s), or any other person who has care of the child.

2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programme to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate for judicial involvement.” (article 19)

3. The Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand is committed to

- the care, nurture of, and respectful ministry with all children, young people and adults
- the safeguarding of all children, young people and adults when they are vulnerable
- the establishing of safe, caring communities which provide a loving environment where there is an informed vigilance as to the dangers of abuse

The Catholic Church will

- carefully select and train all those with any responsibility in the Church in line with safe recruitment policies including police vetting
- respond to every complaint of abuse against Church personnel in accordance with agreed procedures
- seek to offer an appropriate ministry of informed pastoral care to those who have suffered abuse.

4. These guidelines have been agreed by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference and the Congregational Leaders Conference Aotearoa New Zealand and apply to all dioceses, religious congregations and Catholic organisations in the country.

5. **Safe Recruitment**

The Catholic Church will adopt Safe Recruitment Policies, including police vetting, for all who are involved in ministry with children, young people and adults who are vulnerable. This will include volunteers.

Safe Recruitment includes

- verifying identity eg by using photo based documents
- police vetting
- conducting thorough reference checks
- asking direct questions about issues which may suggest unsuitability for working with children or adults who are vulnerable
- critically examining employment history and any relevant registration
- Particular care must be taken in accepting clergy or religious transferring from another country, diocese or order.
- Safe recruitment also includes an obligation to be honest with potential employers of people who have been found unsuitable by the Church. The Church needs to ensure that they do not move into employment or voluntary work where similar issues could arise.

6. **Formation and Training**

Formation

The NZCBC and the CLCANZ will ensure that there is good human developmental, psychological and spiritual formation in the training of future priests and religious. Specific modules in their training will include training on sexual abuse, its impact, ministry with people who have been abused and developing a safe environment.

Training

The Catholic Church will provide training to all who are involved in ministry with children, young people and adults who are vulnerable. There will be two levels of training.

Level 1 Training will be for clergy (bishops, priests, deacons), religious, lay leaders, chaplains, people employed in ministry, people in leadership roles, seminarians, students on pastoral placements. The training is based on a clear theological framework. It includes an understanding of appropriate boundaries in pastoral relationships, the impact of abuse on individuals and families, responding to those who disclose abuse, supporting people who have been abused, creating safe environments to prevent abuse.

Level 2 Training will be for volunteers who work with children and young people, for example, in children's liturgy, catechism classes, homework clubs, youth groups and for volunteers who work with adults who are vulnerable including , for example, parish visitors, SVP, Legion of Mary, Eucharistic Ministers.

7. Community Awareness Raising/Education

The programme of training for clergy, staff and volunteers will be the first step in safeguarding education throughout the Church and will provide a foundation for wider education in parishes. The introduction of an annual Day of Prayer for those who have suffered abuse will provide an important opportunity to raise awareness both about the impact of abuse and the steps the Church is taking in prevention and response.

8. Creating a Safe Environment

The Catholic Church in New Zealand has developed the following
Published in 2000 this sets out guidelines of professional standards for clergy and religious

NATIONAL CODE OF ETHICS FOR CHURCH VOLUNTEERS

Published in 2003 this is a short statement for all volunteers in ministry.

JOURNEYING TOGETHER HIKOI TAHI

Published in 2006 this sets standards for Catholic Youth and Young Adult Ministry. It includes comprehensive guidelines on recruitment and behaviour.

STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEERS AND EMPLOYEES IN MINISTRY

Published in 2011 this is a short document setting out a safe recruitment process for volunteers and employees.

9. Responding to complaints of abuse

The Catholic Church published Te Houhanga Rongo A Path to Healing in 1998, which has been revised several times. It sets out procedures for responding to complaints of abuse in the Church

10. Ministry to victims/survivors

The Church is committed to supporting those who have experienced abuse in the Church with the aim of achieving healing. The procedures set out in Te Houhanga Rongo – A Path to Healing are designed to assist those who have been abused to be listened to, to have their complaint properly investigated and responded to. The Church will assist people to access support from ACC and other organisations. It will, where appropriate, provide or fund the provision of counselling and other social support services. Each individual's circumstances are different and the response of the Church will reflect that. The Bishop or Congregation Leader will be willing to meet the victim/survivor at the end of the process.

The Church will, through the National Office, maintain contact with victim and survivor support groups. The Church recognises that people who suffer abuse in other settings, for example in their family, may look for help from clergy, religious or others working in ministry. In each diocese there will be a designated person from whom those working for the Church can receive advice in such circumstances to ensure an appropriate and effective response.

11. Ministry to offenders

The Catholic Church has a long tradition of ministry to offenders, especially through the work of prison chaplaincy. It is based on a recognition of the human dignity of those affected by acts of crime, both victim and offender. A restorative approach to justice based on our faith tradition is one that holds people accountable and challenges them to look at ways to turn their lives around.

Those who have committed sexual abuse whilst in a position of trust in the Church, or elsewhere, will not be able to resume that position or take on any ministry with children, young people, or vulnerable adults in the Church. They may, however, be part of the worshipping Church community if this can be achieved without risk to others.

12. Monitoring arrangements

The National Safeguarding and Professional Standards Committee will be responsible for monitoring and auditing the compliance with these guidelines by dioceses, religious congregations and Catholic organisations.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUIDELINES

Dioceses will have the lead role in implementing these guidelines.

Each Diocese will nominate a senior person as the Safeguarding Lead for the Diocese to be responsible for ensuring that the Diocese implements the Guidelines and maintain records to enable audits.

Each Diocese will be an Approved Agency allowing it to apply to the New Zealand Police for vetting of clergy, religious, employees, including those employed directly by parishes, and volunteers. The diocese will nominate a member of staff as the authorised person to apply for vetting. The Diocese will maintain records of vetting.

Each diocese will nominate a senior person to consider any vetting returns which report a criminal conviction or cause for concern.

Each Diocese will nominate a person to be the first point of contact for those who wish to make a complaint of abuse committed by someone in the Church. The diocesan website and entry in the Catholic Directory should provide a contact telephone number (which may be the NOPS number) to enable people to report abuse.

Each Diocese will nominate a person, in the Diocesan Catholic Social Services or equivalent, as the person able to provide advice to clergy, religious, staff and volunteers who have a concern about abuse, or who receive a disclosure of abuse, arising from their pastoral work.

Dioceses will be responsible for ensuring that training is made available to all those involved in ministry.

The National Office will assist in the development of templates for recruitment, vetting, volunteer agreements and other material to enable dioceses to implement these guidelines.