

NATIONAL POLICY FOR INTEGRATING THOSE WHO POSE A RISK TO CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE/ADULTS AT RISK

1. A WELCOMING CHURCH

- 1.1 The Church aims to be an inclusive place open to all people. However, when someone who attends a Church is known to have abused a child it is important that an open and honest discussion takes place as to how that person can be safely integrated into the Church community. Trying to ignore the reality of a person's past either by pretending that it didn't happen, that it was a "one off" or that the person has repented and should be given a new start, is an unhelpful and potentially dangerous response, and could well lead to serious difficulties for the Church community as a whole.
- 1.2 Where a person is known to have abused a child, the best guidance will be that she or he should be welcomed into the Church but within the framework of a contract that has been fully discussed and agreed by a small group of people, i.e. Parish Priest, Offender, Diocesan Adviser, Offender's Supervisor and Parish Co-ordinator. We should remember that when such an individual is being integrated into a local community after a prison term she or he will usually be supervised or supported by a criminal justice social worker. Even when an individual has been convicted of a serious offence, but does not serve a prison sentence, it is likely that they will also be supervised by a criminal justice social worker.
- 1.3 Depending on how the Offender is perceived in terms of the level of risk, there could be restrictions placed on her or him as to where they live, places they can visit, local groups they can join, etc. These restrictions can be made as conditions of bail, prior to conviction or as part of a sentence after conviction or release from prison.
- 1.4 In some circumstances, the Police or Social Work Services would contact a Church to inform them of their concerns about an individual in the congregation.

- 1.5 In either case, the views of specialist workers should always be sought and it is strongly recommended that they are involved in any discussion relating to the safe integration of the person into the Church. These workers will be able to advise on the issue of 'who needs to know' about the individual's offence. Clearly, certain key individuals will need to be aware of the person's offence in order to ensure that children, young people and adults at risk in the Church remain safe. However, offenders also have a right to privacy, and advice should be sought from the Diocesan Adviser as to what must be divulged and to whom (see point 4, page 5 '*Managing the Information and the Risks*').
- 1.6 The National Co-ordinator will also be able to assist you.

2. DEVELOPING A WRITTEN CONTRACT

It is recommended that a number of key points are included in a written contract (see next page), to be jointly agreed by the group identified in **1.2** above and signed by the Offender, Parish Priest, Parish Co-ordinator and Offender's Supervisor. Copies of this contract, once signed and dated, must be provided to the Offender, the Offender's Supervisor and the Diocesan Adviser, while the original must be retained by the Parish Priest.

3. A (SAMPLE) WRITTEN CONTRACT FOR INTEGRATING THOSE WHO POSE A RISK

- I will never allow myself to be in a situation where I am alone with children, young people or adults at risk.
- I will attend meetings or house groups as directed by the Church leadership.
- I will sit where directed in the Church and will not place myself in the vicinity of children, young people or adults at risk.
- I will not enter certain parts of the building designated by the leadership, nor any area where the activities of children, young people or adults at risk are in progress.
- I will decline invitations of hospitality where there are children, young people or adults at risk in the home.
- I accept that X and Y will sit with me during Church activities, accompanying me when I need to use other facilities. They will be told that I am a Schedule One Offender or am registered with the Police under the terms of the Sex Offenders Act.
- I will accept that there are certain people who will need to be told of my circumstances in order for them to protect the children, young people or adults at risk for whom they care.
- I will accept that contact will need to be made with my supervisor who will meet with Church leaders as and when necessary.
- I accept that Z will provide me with pastoral care.
- I understand that if I do not keep to these conditions then I may be barred from attending the Church and in such circumstances the leadership may choose to inform the statutory agencies and any other relevant organisation.
- I understand that any other concerns will be taken seriously and reported.
- I understand that this contract will be reviewed every months and will remain for an indefinite period.

I hereby confirm that I understand and shall comply with the points stated in the above mentioned contract.

Signature:
(Offender)

Name in Full:

Dated:

Witnessed by:

Signature:
(Parish Priest)

Name in Full:

Dated:

Signature:
(Parish Co-ordinator)

Name in Full:

Dated:

Signature:
(Offender's Supervisor)

Name in Full:

Dated:

Review Date:

4. MANAGING THE INFORMATION AND THE RISKS

- Who is at risk?
- Risk of what?
- Is it relevant, appropriate and proportionate to disclose?
- What are the potential consequences of not disclosing?
- What is the risk to the Offender if you disclose?
- What information do you want to disclose?
- Whom do you want to disclose to?
- Who else needs to know?
- How do you manage the disclosed information?
- How do you manage the risks?

5. INFORMATION SHARING

- 5.1 It is the responsibility of a Parish Priest before he takes up a new appointment in another parish to share **all** confidential information and the risks with his successor.
- 5.2 Confidentiality is an important principle in any dealings with people in pastoral situations. However, where the safety of children/adults at risk may be compromised, confidentiality has to take second place in protecting vulnerable people.
- 5.3 Open communication with the new member of clergy regarding the Offender's management is vital, as is promoting good links with local statutory authorities.