

Guidance - Re-integration into Ministry

Any abuse of position and the misuse of power and authority by a person acting in the name of a Church community is likely to impact on the members of that community. Plans for re-integration into ministry must take account of both the needs and concerns of the person returning and the potential concerns and anxieties of the community to which they are being returned.

A person may only return to public ministry/role after a decision to re-integrate has been taken by the Bishop or Religious Congregation Leader. Risks must be re-evaluated and the Safeguarding Plan reviewed. It may not be possible for some individuals to return to a ministry/role in the Church community.

Where the allegation is shown to have been false or malicious there should be no requirement to use the Risk Identification Framework or implement a Safeguarding Plan. In these cases, reintegration into ministry should follow an individually tailored plan and procedure that enables the individual to achieve a resolution of any feelings of anger or injustice resulting from the process of investigation.

In most cases, where an allegation can be shown to have been made maliciously, an accused person may expect a public statement to be made detailing this fact. The level of publicity which may be expected will be comparable with the level of publicity given to the original allegation and the temporary removal from ministry, ecclesiastical office or other post. Consideration must be given to the circumstances and context of the person who made the allegation before deciding on the nature and content of a public statement.

In certain cases, it may be appropriate to consider informing individuals, such as colleagues and certain parishioners who have been especially affected by an accused person's temporary removal from post, of the outcome of the case. This may be in writing, and should be carried out in consultation with the accused person. Consideration must be given to the circumstances and context of the person who made the allegation before deciding on what information is shared.

A form of words for the communication will be recommended by the Safeguarding Commission, taking into consideration the views of the accused person.

Where an allegation or concern is substantiated yet there follows a decision by the Bishop or Religious Congregation Leader that the accused person may return to public ministry, this should be explained to the original complainant. It may be that the accused person does not wish for any announcement to be made more publicly and this view should be respected. If the allegation or concern is substantiated, where there are ongoing risks, the accused person concerned should be subject to a Safeguarding Plan and the arrangements for monitoring and support should be stated.

Pastoral support should be provided for the accused person throughout the period of re-integration into public ministry. The requirements of each individual will be different, including the length of time that a person will require such care.