



What happens if I make a complaint to the National Catholic Safeguarding Commission (NCSC) or the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS) about safeguarding services?

## Information Sheet

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## Definition of a concern or complaint

A complaint or concern is an expression of dissatisfaction about an act, omission or decision of the safeguarding services, either verbal or written, and whether justified or not, which requires a response.

## What is not considered to be a concern or complaint?

- Concerns about the welfare of an unborn baby, child or adult at risk<sup>1</sup>
- Employment grievances
- Whistleblowing

Summary information about these matters is set out below:

### Concerns about the welfare of an unborn baby, child or adult at risk

If you believe that an unborn baby, child or an adult at risk is at immediate risk of harm, you should refer the matter to the Police or the relevant Social Care Safeguarding Department, or Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) of the Local Authority where the child or adult lives. Any such allegations referred to the National Catholic Safeguarding Commission (NCSC), including those made directly to any member of the Survivor Advisory Panel, or the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS) will, at the earliest opportunity, be referred to the relevant Diocesan or Religious Safeguarding Coordinator or Lead who will, at the earliest opportunity, refer the matter to the relevant statutory agencies. If necessary for the immediate protection of children or adults at risk, NCSC or CSAS staff members might report allegations or concerns directly to the Police or relevant Local Authority Social Care Department and then inform the Safeguarding Coordinator or Lead at the earliest opportunity.

Reporting allegations or concerns about an unborn baby, child(ren)/young person(s) and adults at risk directly to the Police, or Local Authority may mean that the right assistance is provided sooner. You are advised, therefore, to refer any concerns about the immediate safety of an individual directly to the Police or Local Authority.

### Grievances

A grievance is when an employee or somebody within a role within the Church has a dispute about their own employment position. The individual should refer to the policies of the

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<sup>1</sup> An adult at risk of abuse or neglect is defined as someone who has needs for care and support, who is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect and as a result of their care needs - is unable to protect themselves.

Diocese or Religious Congregation as neither the NCSC nor CSAS are empowered take any action in respect of grievances.

### Whistleblowing

‘Whistleblowing’ is a term used to refer to the internal or external disclosure of malpractice as well as illegal acts, or omissions, at work.

The Whistleblowing Policy for safeguarding work applies to employees, office holders, volunteers or anyone holding an office within the Church and is intended to provide a forum for concerns to be raised in relation to other individuals or groups of individuals. Details of how to raise a concern are set out in the policy document which can be found on the [CSAS website](#).

### **Introduction**

This information sheet outlines what the NCSC or CSAS will do when they receive concerns or complaints relating to Dioceses and Religious Congregations within England and Wales.

The NCSC and CSAS do not and cannot investigate complaints about the actions of Dioceses and Religious Congregations. Neither do the NCSC or CSAS act as complaint adjudicators deciding if complaints are upheld. Instead, the complaint is referred to the most appropriate authority or person for resolution.

Although the NCSC and CSAS do not investigate or act as adjudicators, they will always seek to listen and show genuine empathy and concern for what a complainant has to say. The NCSC and CSAS strive to be approachable and to convey a safe and trusting environment for open discussion.

If concerns and complaints are received by the NCSC, they will be notified to the Director of CSAS who will liaise with the Chair of the NCSC to agree who will lead on responding to the matter referred to them. Complaints received by the Survivor Advisory Panel will be referred directly to CSAS. All concerns and complaints made directly to CSAS will be handled by the Director of CSAS.

All concerns and complaints, including anonymous concerns and complaints, will be taken seriously and passed on to the relevant person. If, however, an anonymous complaint does not provide enough information to enable it to be forwarded to the relevant Diocese or Religious Congregation, CSAS and/or the NCSC will retain the information in accordance with the national safeguarding record retention schedule.

CSAS and/or the NCSC may cease further correspondence where this procedure has been exhausted, and/or where there is abusive or persistent correspondence about a concern or complaint.

## **Complaints relating to the DBS application process**

Complaints relating to DBS application processes are dealt with separately and the procedure can be found on the CSAS website at [www.csas.uk.net](http://www.csas.uk.net). If you require a paper copy of this process, please contact the Director of CSAS at 39 Eccles ton Square, London, SW1V 1BX or on 0207 901 1920.

## **What can I do if I have a concern or complaint about a Diocese or Religious Congregation?**

In the first instance, you should discuss your concerns or complaint with the relevant Diocese or Religious Congregation. Most concerns can be resolved at this stage.

If you feel that your concern is not resolved through discussion, you can make a formal complaint. You should refer to the relevant Diocese or Religious Congregation to establish the procedure. The Diocese or Religious Congregation should tell you what steps they are going to take to look into your concern or complaint and how they are going to keep you informed.

## **Reporting to the Charity Commission**

Some complaints relating to the activities of a Diocese or Religious Congregation as a registered charity can be referred direct to the Charity Commission. Please note that the Charity Commission does not act as a complaints service looking at all complaints on behalf of complainants. It assesses and identifies if there is a regulatory issue or concern that requires its involvement. The Commission may refuse to take up an issue if it judges it not to be in the public interest to use its resources investigating or resolving it. For more information visit [Complaints about charities](#)

## **Can I provide information confidentially or anonymously?**

If you are in a professional role and are making a complaint or providing information, it is expected that you will provide us with your role and contact details. For anybody else, the NCSC and CSAS will always try to respect your wish for anonymity and confidentially but cannot guarantee this. For example, if it is necessary to take action to protect a child or adult at risk this may override your request for confidentiality. If your concern or complaint is referred on to the relevant Diocese or Religious congregation, they are likely to need to know your identity so that they can make enquiries about the specific matter.



If your letter or email does not say whether you want to keep your identity confidential, it will be assumed that it can be passed on if the NCSC or CSAS refer the concern or complaint to another party.

If you do request confidentiality and/or anonymity and for this reason the complaint cannot be referred for further investigation, you will be informed of this.

### **Keeping you informed about your contact with the NCSC and CSAS**

If you provide us with an email or postal address, the Chair of the NCSC or the Director of CSAS, will write to you to confirm that your correspondence has been received and to advise you of any steps taken by the NCSC or CSAS within 20 working days.

You will be given as much information as possible about any steps taken by the NCSC or CSAS. However, on occasion, how much you can be told may have to be limited to ensure that confidentiality of information relating to others is maintained.

### **Data protection**

Any information you provide to the NCSC and/or CSAS will be dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 and Data Protection Act 2018.

You will be issued with a privacy notice setting out how the information you have provided will be processed.

You can contact the Chair of the NCSC and the Director of CSAS to discuss any matters in relation to your personal data held by them.