

What information will be provided to me?

The alleged victim and their parent/carer are given particular consideration during an investigation, including:

- ▶ being informed of the investigation's progress. The investigator will set up an agreed schedule of contact with the child's parent/carer
- ▶ being advised of the investigation findings relating to the child – if there is more than one alleged victim in the investigation, the parent/carer will only be given information relating to their own child
- ▶ being advised, in general terms, of the outcomes of the investigation.

The term 'findings' describes whether there is sufficient evidence to establish a particular allegation occurred – a 'sustained' finding. If there is insufficient evidence, the finding is 'not sustained'.

The term 'outcomes' describes key decisions the diocesan leadership makes when one or more allegation in an investigation is sustained. Outcomes can relate to the diocesan worker investigated, and operational or systemic issues.

Information for witnesses

Once an investigator has interviewed a witness and their evidence has been finalised, the child witness's role in the investigation is complete. The child and parent/carer will be advised when the investigation has been completed, but they will not be given information in relation to findings or outcomes.



A child is protected during and after the investigation

The Diocese is committed to promoting the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children. The local leadership of diocesan entities has an obligation to ensure children involved in an investigation are given particular care. Counselling and additional support may be arranged for a child if the process makes them anxious or distressed.

Any allegation that a diocesan worker is targeting or discriminating against a child because they reported allegations of misconduct, or because of their participation in an investigation, is taken very seriously and the OoSG will investigate. If it is established a diocesan worker has been a party to such discrimination, they are at risk of serious disciplinary action.

The OoSG will protect the identity of child witnesses and will only reveal them if legally compelled to do so. The diocesan worker under investigation has the right to know who he or she is alleged to have abused, but not the identity of child witnesses.

For more detailed information on what happens in an investigation, you can refer to the Office of Safeguarding website and consult the Office of Safeguarding brochure *What happens in an investigation for children of the Diocese.*



Information for parents and carers of children involved in a diocesan investigation



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The Diocese takes any allegation of misconduct or abusive conduct towards a child as unacceptable.

Children can become involved in a diocesan investigation as either the victim of, or as a witness to alleged abuse or misconduct by a diocesan worker. Being involved in any investigation can be very stressful, and it's easy to feel overwhelmed and confused.

Investigations conducted by the Diocese aim to understand what has happened when there is a concern that a child may be the subject of abuse or misconduct.

The purpose is to reduce any risk that there might be, to help keep them safe and offer the child and family supports that might be needed to achieve this.

Who will manage the complaint?

The Diocese will conduct inquiries at a level commensurate with the seriousness of the allegation.

Local leaders, i.e. a school principal or a manager, may conduct some investigations with the Office of Safeguarding overseeing and supporting. These 'local investigations' are informal and resolved more quickly because the nature of the allegation is less serious or only constitutes a minor breach of professional standards.

The Office of Safeguarding must investigate all reportable allegations, as well as undertake any other investigation it deems appropriate to do so. This may include matters where there is a perceived or actual conflict of interest.

Will the Police be contacted?

The Diocese will report to the NSW Police and other relevant authorities, criminal conduct that:

- ▶ involves a child or class of children
- ▶ constitutes a serious indictable offence.

A serious indictable offence is an offence that is punishable by imprisonment of five years or more.

Depending on the nature of the allegation, we may also make a report to the Department of Communities and Justice (formerly FACS).

How long will the investigation take?

Investigations may be relatively straightforward and resolved within a few weeks. Other investigations extend over months, sometimes years.

Some of the more serious investigations involve statutory authorities conducting their own inquiries. Statutory authorities' inquiries take precedence – police inquiries are paramount, and then other statutory authorities such as the Department of Communities and Justice. Mostly the Diocese is obliged to wait for statutory authorities to complete their inquiries first, before the Diocese is allowed to begin its inquiry.

Will my child be interviewed?

The investigator will ask for the parent/carer and the child's consent to participate in the investigation. If both parent/carer and child agree to participate in the investigation, the investigator will make arrangements to interview the child.

The child needs to feel as safe and supported as possible. The child's interview must be witnessed. One or more of the child's parents/carers, or another trusted adult, needs to attend the child's interview.

With the parent/carer and the child's consent, the interview will be audio recorded. The audio recording will be transcribed into a written record of interview, a copy of which will be posted to the child (care of their parent/carer).

If the parent/carer or child chooses not to participate in the investigation, the parent/carer will be asked to put their decision in writing to the investigator. The choice not to participate will likely affect the investigation.

