

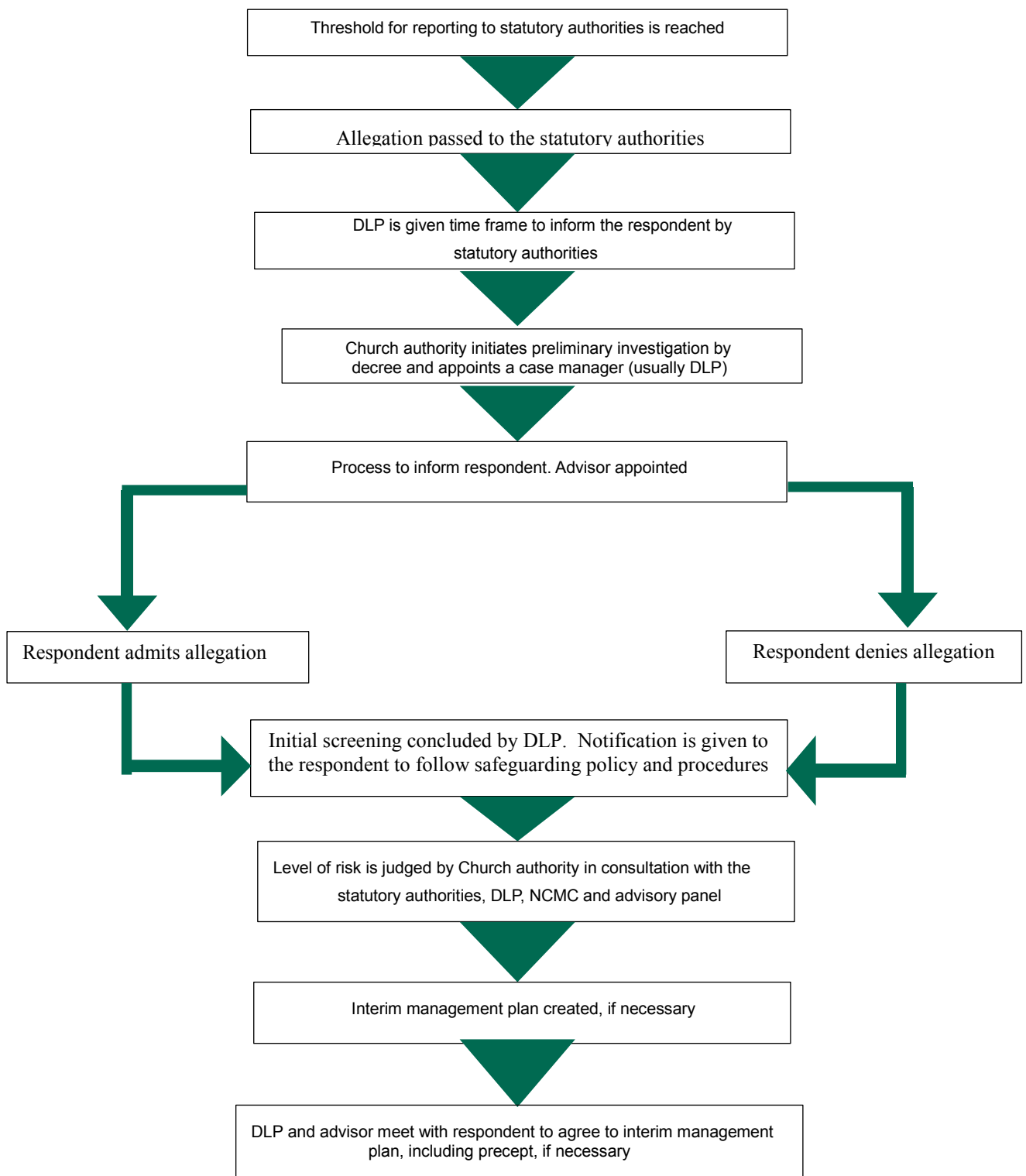
Loreto Sisters

Guidance on Informing the Respondent that an Allegation has been Received, and Consideration of an Interim Management Plan

A proper balance should be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights of respondents. Where there is conflict, **the child's welfare must come first**.

The rights of respondents are important and are given due weight, **once the safety and protection of children has been assured**.

The flow chart below shows the process for informing the respondent and should be read alongside the 'Procedures for Responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations'



1. On receiving a complaint, if the threshold for reporting has been reached, the DLP will inform the statutory authorities, whose role it is to investigate the allegation and assess the risk to children. If there is any uncertainty about whether the suspicion, concern or allegation meets the threshold for reporting, the DLP should consult with the statutory authorities, who will advise on the requirements for notification.
2. If the threshold for reporting has been reached, a preliminary investigation in accordance with canon law will be initiated by the province leader. This canonical inquiry will be paused to allow any statutory investigation to take place.
3. The statutory authorities inform the DLP about when they can tell the respondent that a child abuse matter has arisen.
4. Following the approval of the statutory authorities, the province leader arranges a meeting with the respondent. In arranging this meeting:
 - The province leader should inform the respondent that they will be accompanied by the DLP.
 - The respondent should be offered the services of an advisor and the role description outlined to them.
 - The respondent should be informed that they can be accompanied by another person at this meeting for their own support.
5. At the meeting:
 - The respondent must be informed of their rights to both canonical and civil legal advice.
 - The respondent must immediately be advised of their right to remain silent – they may admit, deny or decide not to respond at this stage.
 - The respondent needs to be given enough detail about the suspicion, concern or allegation and about the person making it in order to be able to offer a response, if they choose to do so. However, if a written statement has been given by the complainant, this cannot be given to the respondent, but a summary of its content can be shared.
6. After the meeting:
 - A dated, written record of the meeting is forwarded to the respondent for signing. This record should detail what they have been informed of, and their response (if any).
 - The respondent is given written information about the Church procedure, so that they are clear about the process that will be followed.
7. The province leader will judge the level of risk in consultation with the statutory authorities, DLP, NCMC, advisory panel and advisor. A decision will be made at this stage as to whether an interim management plan is required which may include restrictions to ministry.
8. A written reminder is given to the respondent from the province leader to advise them to continue following the child safeguarding policies and procedures.
9. If required, the DLP and advisor will meet the respondent and present them with the interim management plan, which the respondent will be asked to agree to and sign. During this meeting, the respondent must be advised that the preliminary investigation will be resumed following the conclusion of any statutory authority enquiries.

