



PASTORAL RESPONSE
TO SUBSTANCE MISUSE



The confirmation commitment

Pastoral Response to Substance Misuse has been asked over a number of years to create an option to The Pledge as in many communities it has been seen as out-dated and many feel it's not realistic. The result of this is **The Confirmation Commitment** which is being piloted in a number of parishes in 2014/2015.

What is **The Confirmation Commitment**?

The Confirmation Commitment is an opportunity for the confirmation candidate and parent/guardian to choose a sponsor who will be a positive role model in the young person's life. Research has shown the move to secondary school can be one of the most challenging times in a young person's life. This initiative gives the opportunity for the sponsor to be an important part of the young person's life and be a support to the parents/guardian in guiding them through these challenging years. Current research shows the age of young people being introduced to Alcohol & Cigarettes has falling to age 12/13 years of age in many communities.

The Confirmation Commitment encourages the candidate to make a commitment to themselves and others to lead a healthy lifestyle, respect themselves and others, and to use the knowledge about Alcohol & other drugs to stay safe. The Confirmation programme in the parish will stay the same with the only change being the sponsor will be required to attend The Service of Light ceremony and stand together with other sponsors and make a commitment to the young person to be a positive role model. The sponsor will then present the candidate with a Spirit Band with one of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit engraved on it. The young person will also stand with other candidates and make their commitment as outlined above. The candidate will present the sponsor with a specially designed bookmark to thank them for making their commitment.

The Parish and school will be supplied with resources and the Spirit Bands and Bookmark. The school will also be supplied with resources to complement the work being carried out in SPHE/Walk Tall programmes in preparing the young people for **The Confirmation Commitment**.

The option to take the pledge still remains for young people as that can be their commitment to abstain to a chosen age they and their parent decide.

The number of young people taking the pledge has decreased in recent years in many parishes and this is seen as an opportunity not to lose the opening for young people to be educated in substance misuse and to be given the responsibility to make a commitment to lead a healthy lifestyle. We will also through our website www.irishbishopsdrugsinitiative.com be providing resources for parent's / guardian should they wish to work with the candidate and in doing so could educate themselves on the ever changing landscape of legal & illegal substance misuse.





The Parents Role

As your children venture out and experience the world around them, several influencing factors help shape them into the person they will eventually become. Thankfully, parents still sit at the top of the list of the important and powerful role models in a child's life. As a parent, you have a few key advantages that other role models and environmental factors do not have. Young children mimic what they see. Mimicry is part of how children master certain skills. If your child sees you doing something or acting a certain way, he/she is bound to try to do the same. For instance, if they see you eating healthy foods, they will follow, the same can be said for smoking and drinking alcohol. For this reason, you should be conscious of which behaviors you exhibit in your daily life, especially when your child is present. Parents can talk to their children about the challenges they will face in secondary school. You should discuss what commitment they plan to make to lead a healthy lifestyle. Parents should take time to educate themselves about the dangers of drug and alcohol misuse. If children know they have a parent who is up to date and comfortable talking to them about these challenges it will always ensure the lines of communication are open and clear.

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SPONSOR'S GUIDE

As a Confirmation sponsor, you do have specific functions.

As part of The Confirmation Commitment you will be asked **to attend the service of light or services arranged specially for sponsors and make** a commitment to the young person. This commitment will consist of the following:

- The Commitment you will make to the young person will consist of you being a positive **role model in their lives**, after confirmation they will go through many challenging stages beginning with starting secondary school. This can be a difficult time for the candidate to adjust to and as a role model you could use any positive experiences of your own to help their coping skills improve.
- Standing with the candidate before the bishop and the community helping the candidate live as a follower of Jesus

As a Confirmation sponsor, you could enrich the experience for the candidate and yourself if you consider the following;

- The sponsor who presents a candidate for confirmation could take a role for assisting them in preparation for The Confirmation Commitment
- Developing a faith relationship with the candidate
- If you live close by, make plans to participate in the Eucharist (Mass) together especially preparation services

Some of the following suggestions will not be possible if you live away from the area but be creative and think of ways to be in contact with the candidate.

- Arrange opportunities to spend time with the candidate and to enjoy being together. Some of these times can relate directly to the Confirmation programme.
- Discuss with the candidate the efforts, progress and problems experienced in preparing for the reception of Confirmation.
- See if there are any questions or concerns they have about confirmation & the challenges of moving to Secondary School
- Offer suggestions and encouragement, as they are needed.
- Keep in contact with your candidate either in person or on the telephone.

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We pray that your role as a sponsor will be an enriching one.

