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Developing Safe Practices

Developing Safe practices - Guidelines for Church Personnel

1. Initial considerations

For each activity or event consider:

- Whether or not the event/ activity/ contact is a 'one off'?
- Will it involve parents and carers?
- What is the age range and level of ability of the children involved?

The next stage in the process is to do a risk assessment to decide how best to run the activity or event.

2. Apply practices such as the following to help keep both children and personnel safe

Vetting for events/ activities

Ensure that Church personnel who are in a position of trust with children are recruited in line with Diocesan policy and procedures⁷. Sometimes, Church organisations may run 'one off' events where people such as parents/ volunteers will help out or individuals will supply a service. In such situations, the adults involved should be asked to complete the Declaration Form⁸. You should also have some form of agreement with individuals / organisations who are going to supply a service, or be involved in activities or events with children, stating that they will abide by the expected standards of behaviour and comply with the diocesan safeguarding children policy. They may be given a copy of the code of behaviour for all Church personnel working with children⁹.

Supervision

The recommended ratios of adults to children for events/activities are as follows:

Under 8 years

- 0 to 2 years = one member of staff to 3 children;
- 2 to 3 years = one member of staff to 4 children;
- 3 to 7 years = one member of staff to 8 children (6 children for outdoor activity).

8 years and over

- Two members of staff to 20 children (15 children for outdoor activity);
- There should be one additional staff member for every 10 children.

Please remember these ratios are recommendations. They are not statutory requirements.

For individuals who have not been vetted, adequate supervision arrangements must be in place to ensure they are not in a position to harm children.

⁷ See Resources B, C, D, E and F in Safeguarding Children: Child Protection Policy and Procedures for the Diocese of Meath

⁸ Resource E | ⁹ Resource G

Know the children

- Have defined criteria for membership of the organisation/group
- Have a registration system for each child
- Keep a record on each child, including medical details, any special needs, emergency contact numbers, attendance, consent forms

Know the personnel

- Display a work schedule so that everyone knows who is on duty.
- Respond to any allegation or complaints made about workers.
- Provide supervision for workers including opportunities for discussing concerns and training needs, an annual review to assess general performance and any changes that you need to make.

Other ways to make sure individuals do not get the opportunity to harm children

- Try to use open plan venues / spaces, where individuals cannot take children away on their own and adults are in sight of other adults.
- Maintain a culture of awareness amongst the adults and children present by ensuring everyone is clear about their roles and responsibilities, and people are encouraged to challenge and report any inappropriate conduct with children.
- Inform children how to report concerns.
- Make sure there is good supervision of staff and volunteers.
- Make sure you take feedback and debrief after the event.

Health and safety

You will need to comply with good health and safety practices. Make sure you ask yourself the following questions when planning an activity or event:

- Is there appropriate supervision in place? (Activities should not take place if this is not possible.)
- Does the venue meet health and safety standards?
- Are fire precautions in place and checked regularly?
- Do you have First Aid supplies to deal with minor accidents? (It is also advisable that first aid training is provided.)
- Do you have adequate and appropriate changing and toilet facilities with separate provision for boys and girls?
- Is there adequate insurance to cover activities?
- Are all trips away carefully planned, including adequate provision of safe transport?
- Do you have appropriate and adequate sleeping arrangements for all overnight trips?

Additional information in respect of children with disabilities is available in *Our Duty to Care*, Factsheet 8 (DOHC, 2002)

Parental consent

- Have signed consent ¹⁰ from parents or guardians prior to children participating in an activity or event and keep this record of their permission.
- Provide a copy of the code of behaviour for children taking part in Church activities ¹¹.

Use of IT equipment

- Ensure that children will not have access to internet facilities while engaged in Church related activities.
- Ensure that photos will only be taken and/or published with parental consent and this consent will be recorded.

Further help and guidance about online safety is available from the following:

For adults - Child exploitation and online protection centre (CEOP)
www.ispai.ie; www.copine.ie; www.ceop.gov.uk

For children - Child exploitation and online protection centre (CEOP)
www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Record of attendance

Ensure that group leaders maintain a record of attendance of children and supervisors, using a hard backed notebook for this purpose. The following information should be recorded:

- **Name of group**
- **Date of meeting**
- **Leaders present**
- **Participating children**

Accident / Incident reports

Any accident / incident which occurs during activities should be recorded, using an Incident Report Form which is kept on file and a copy given to the Parish Safeguarding Representative. Alternatively, a hard backed notebook may be used for this purpose.

Information should be recorded in the following format:

¹⁰ See Resource K in *Safeguarding Children: Child Protection Policy and Procedures for the Diocese of Meath*

¹¹ Resource I in *Safeguarding Children: Child Protection Policy and Procedures for the Diocese of Meath*