

Resources to Support the Development of a Culture of Safety

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A

Template for parish policy document

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Our Parish Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures

Parish

Date

Contents of our parish policy

1. Valuing our Young Parishioners
2. Our Parish Safeguarding Representatives
3. Good Practice for Working with Children
4. Recruiting and Supporting our Parish Volunteers
5. Developing Safe Practices for Involvement in Parish Activities
6. Responding to Safeguarding Children Concerns
7. Responding to Complaints
8. Parish Record Keeping
9. Audits

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1. Valuing our Young Parishioners

Children have a very important place in our parish. We celebrate their faith at Baptism, First Holy Communion and Confirmation; they are the life and focus of our parish schools; their energies and initiatives play a vital role in many of our parish activities. We are always eager to encourage their active participation in parish life. Towards this end, we are committed to doing everything we can to create a safe and welcoming environment for our young parishioners, where their welfare is paramount. It is our parish policy to ensure that our children will be protected and supported in all activities.

Our parish wants to assist the dedicated parents and volunteers who give generously of themselves by taking part in child-related parish ministry. Among these activities in our parish are the following (e.g. altar serving, youth choirs, folk choirs, adult choirs with children, gospel choirs, 'Do this in Memory' Programme, 'out of school' sacramental preparation, Baptism Team, childrens liturgy, Youth ministry activities, young readers, Youth Legion of Mary, Rainbows). (Delete as appropriate)

We realise that valuing young people means valuing volunteers as well; insisting on safe practices, eliminating the necessity for people to take risks and providing them with support will make for a healthier and safer gathering. This parish policy, addressed to parish clergy, lay employees and volunteers, covers all Church-related activities and circumstances involving people under the age of eighteen.

Activities involving our parish schools are governed by each school's child protection policy, ratified by the Board of Management.

It is important that, from the outset, we make and emphasise the following confidentiality statement in accordance with the guidelines of the civil authorities:

Where safeguarding children concerns arise, information must be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the best interest of the child. Sharing information in this regard is not a breach of confidentiality. It is best practice that parents and children are told if personal information is being shared, unless doing so could put the child at further risk.

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2. Our Parish Safeguarding Representatives

Some adults in our parish have undertaken the Keeping Safe child protection training, which was delivered at deanery level, in consultation with the Health Services Executive. Our parish is also committed to making provision for continuing support and future training for our volunteers in order to keep up to date on best practice in youth care and ministry.

The Parish Safeguarding Representatives can be contacted through the Parish Office. The Parish Safeguarding Representatives have been selected because they have good listening skills and sufficient knowledge about safeguarding children issues. They are familiar with parish activities and are available to our volunteers and parishioners to help us create an ever more child friendly spirit in our pastoral ministry.

The role of the Parish Safeguarding Representatives is as follows:

- To raise awareness of safeguarding children measures in the parish
- To circulate information on the national guidelines 'Safeguarding Children'¹ and other relevant updates
- To ensure that activities run within the parish provide for the safety and well being of the children and young people taking part
- To provide support, assistance and arrange training for parish volunteers working with children
- To ensure that the contact details for the Designated Person are widely circulated
- To report to the Designated Person any concerns, suspicions or allegations for onward referral to the relevant authorities (see Sections 5 and 6 below)
- To oversee the implementation of this policy, carrying out an annual review and reporting to the parish clergy.

The names of the Parish Safeguarding Representatives can be found on the Safeguarding Children notice in the church porch.

¹ *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland.* National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church. 2008.

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3. Good Practice for Working with Children

Our parish is fully committed to the guidelines outlined in 'Children First'² and 'Our Duty to Care'³ and all relevant Church policies on child protection. The Code of Behaviour at **Resource G** must be adhered to by all Church personnel.

4. Recruiting and Supporting our Parish Volunteers

When recruiting and selecting our parish volunteers, we will follow the checklist set out at **Resource B**. We will request completion of the Volunteer Application Form at **Resource C** and, where appropriate, will use the Volunteer Reference Form at **Resource D**.

We will ensure that the Declaration Form at **Resource E** is completed by the following people:

- parish representatives;
- sacristans;
- directors of children's choirs;
- all volunteers who work with children in Church related activities.

Training will be provided, not only for new recruits but for all volunteers, in order to maintain standards and good practice. Our Parish Representatives will play a role in facilitating this support.

After a recruit has been ratified, s/he will be informed of the dates of his/her probationary period.

If a grievance or disciplinary issue arises, we will follow the procedures at **Resource H**.

² *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, Department of Health and Children. 1999.

³ *Our Duty to Care: The Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People*, Department of Health and Children. 2002.

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5. Developing Safe Practices for Involvement in Parish Activities

A guidance document is available for Church personnel on what to do to keep children safe before, during and after their involvement in Church related activities. The document is included at **Resource J** and covers the following areas:

- parental and child consent;
- risk assessment;
- vetting for events/activities;
- supervision;
- knowing the children and the personnel;
- ensuring other individuals do not get the opportunity to harm children;
- health and safety;
- use of IT equipment;
- records of attendance;
- incident reports.

The form used to obtain consent from parents or guardians prior to children participating in an activity or event is included as **Resource K**. This form includes the code of behaviour for children taking part in Church activities.

6. Responding to Safeguarding Children Concerns

When concerns are raised about the welfare of any child taking part in parish-related activities, whether suspected or disclosed, these will be brought to the attention of a Parish Safeguarding Representative or directly to the Designated Person who will report to the HSE. These concerns can be in four different categories: neglect, emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Guidance on how to recognise each is given in the document at **Resource L**. All parish clergy, staff and volunteers will be given copies of this guidance document.

If members of our parish disclose concerns to parish staff or volunteers, it is our aim that they will feel comfortable about voicing the matter in a safe, supportive, understanding and sensitive environment. The following point is very important: we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality under any circumstances to a person who wishes to speak to us about a situation of abuse or suspected abuse.

We will ensure that the procedure at **Resource M** is followed in responding to concerns, suspicions, allegations or disclosures of abuse, and will use the Safeguarding Children Recording Form at **Resource O**.

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All Church personnel are expected to deal with concerns, suspicions, allegations or disclosures of abuse by bringing the information either to a Parish Safeguarding Representative, who will refer the matter to the Designated Person, or directly to the Designated Person. (This does not apply to situations involving the Sacramental Seal, which is inviolable).

7. Responding to Complaints against Parish Personnel

Any concerns or grievances about how this parish provides for child safety, supervision and protection will be taken very seriously by our parish and dealt with appropriately. It is paramount that precedence is given to the care of children above all other factors. Advice will be sought to ensure fair procedures. All efforts will be made to deal with these matters with justice for all and within an appropriate timescale.

Complaints made or a concern raised about a member of Church personnel will be brought to the Designated Person who will report the matter to the HSE (or to An Garda Síochána, out of office hours and in case of emergency). Any individual may report directly to the Health Services Executive (or to An Garda Síochána, out of office hours and in the case of an emergency). The Designated Person will also report the matter to the appropriate diocesan authority.

Further information on the handling of complaints is available from our Parish Safeguarding Representative.

8. Parish Record Keeping

Application forms, declaration forms, and all other documentation associated with recruitment and selection will be stored securely. Access will be restricted to the Parish Priest, and/or the Parish Representatives, and/or the Designated Person.

Each parish will be responsible for storing in a confidential way an accurate record of each activity involving children. This will include: parental consent, programme/activity details, attendance, incident records, necessary medical details etc. Data protection rules as outlined in the Data Protection Act 1988 and as amended by the Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003 will be adhered to.

Written confidential records of all complaints will be safely and confidentially kept.

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9. Audits

We will carry out an annual self-audit of our safeguarding children policy and procedures. This is an important method of ensuring that a process of continuous improvement takes place, and of demonstrating accountability and transparency.

The self-audit will be carried out in accordance with the checklist at Resource S.

B

Recruitment and selection checklist

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Recruitment and selection checklist

Contact with children	<p>What contact with children will the position involve?</p> <p>Will the employee or volunteer have unsupervised contact with children or hold a position of trust?</p> <p>What other forms of contact will the person have with children e.g. email, telephone, letter?</p>	
Defining the role	<p>Have the tasks and skills necessary for the position been considered?</p> <p>Does the task description make reference to working with and having responsibility for children?</p>	
Key selection criteria	<p>Has a list of essential and desirable qualifications, skills and experience been developed?</p>	
Written application	<p>Have all applicants been asked to supply information in writing including personal details, past and current work/ volunteering experience?</p> <p>Have application forms been developed? ⁴</p>	

⁴ See sample Volunteer Application Form at Resource C, Safeguarding Children: Child Protection Policy and Procedures for the Diocese of Meath

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Interview	<p>Have at least two representatives been identified to meet with an applicant to explore information contained in their application?</p> <p>Have the applicant and the application forms been carefully considered, highlighting points to raise in interview including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the applicant's attitudes towards working with children • areas you want to explore in more detail • gaps in employment history • vague statements or unsubstantiated qualifications • frequent changes of employment? 	
Declaration	<p>Have applicants been asked to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with children?</p> <p>Have applicants been asked to declare any past criminal convictions and cases pending against them?</p>	
Identification	<p>Have applicants been asked, where necessary, for photographic documentation to confirm their identity e.g. passport?</p> <p>Is documentation relating to the applicant's identity and relevant qualifications checked at interview?</p>	
Qualifications	<p>Are applicants asked for documentation to confirm their qualifications?</p>	

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References	<p>Are applicants asked to supply the names of two referees who are not family members and ideally, who have first-hand knowledge of the applicant's experience of work/contact with children? (Alternatively, referees may be asked to complete a <i>Volunteer Reference Form</i>.⁵)</p> <p>Are referees asked specifically to comment on the applicant's suitability to work with children?</p> <p>Are all references provided in writing and followed up with a telephone call?</p> <p>Is the identity of referees verified?</p>	
Suggested questions to referees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The post involves substantial access to children. We are committed to the welfare and safeguarding of children. Have you any reason at all to be concerned about this applicant being in contact with children?• How long have you known this person?• In what capacity?• Would you have any hesitation in re-employing/reinstating them within the parish?	

⁵ See sample Volunteer Reference Form at Resource D, Safeguarding Children: Child Protection Policy and Procedures for the Diocese of Meath

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Vetting procedure	<p>Does the position require the applicant to be vetted by the Gardai in accordance with the Diocesan policy?</p> <p>Has the applicant been informed that you may need to conduct essential background checks before they take up any appointment?</p>	
Records	<p>Are details kept of the selection and induction process on the personnel file of the person appointed?</p> <p>Are references kept on file as part of the record of the recruitment process?</p> <p>Are personnel informed that information such as application and declaration forms are held on file?</p>	
Confidentiality	<p>Is information about the applicant only seen by those directly involved in the recruitment process?</p> <p>Are applicants reassured that information about them, including information about convictions, will be treated in confidence and not used against them unfairly?</p>	



Volunteer application form

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Confidential | Volunteer application form

Surname

Forename

Address

Tel. No.

Are you over the age of 18? Y N

Previous work experience:

Have you previously been involved in voluntary work? Y N

If yes, give details:

Do you have any spare time hobbies, interests or activities?

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Any other relevant information?

Please provide names and addresses of two people whom we could contact for a reference (not relatives).

Name	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
Tel. No.	<input type="text"/>

Name	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
Tel. No.	<input type="text"/>

Signed	<input type="text"/>
Date	<input type="text"/>

D

Volunteer reference form

Copy from below this line

Confidential | Volunteer reference form

(Insert Name)

has expressed an interest in becoming a volunteer with this parish and has given your name as a referee.

This post involves substantial access to children and, as an organisation committed to the welfare and protection of children, we would like to know if you have any reason at all to be concerned about this applicant being in contact with children or young people?

Y N

If you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence.
If you are happy to complete this reference, all information contained on the form will remain confidential, and will only be shared with the applicant's immediate supervisor, should they be offered a volunteer position. We would appreciate you being extremely candid in your evaluation of this person.

How long have you known this person?

In what capacity?

What attributes does this person have which you would consider makes them a suitable volunteer?

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How would you describe their personality?

Please rate this person on the following (please tick)

	Poor	Average	Good	V/Good	Excellent
Responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maturity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Motivation of Others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trustworthiness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reliability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signed

Date

Occupation

E

Declaration form

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Confidential | Declaration form for all persons working as employees or volunteers with children.

Legislation, in both jurisdictions in Ireland, has at its core, the principle that the welfare of children must be the paramount consideration. The Diocese of Meath, therefore, asks that everyone working, or volunteering, for the Church, who will come into contact with children or personal details of children, abide by good practice by completing and signing this declaration:

Do you have any prosecutions pending or have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence (please tick)

Y N

If yes, please state below the nature and date(s) of the offence(s)

Date of offence

Nature of offence

Have you ever been the subject of disciplinary procedures or been asked to leave employment or voluntary activity due to inappropriate behaviour towards a child? (Please tick)

Y N

If yes, please give details including date(s) below:

Full name (print):

Any surname previously known by:

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Address

Date of birth

Place of birth

Declaration

I understand that, if it is found that I have withheld information, or included any false or misleading information above, I may be removed from my post whether paid or voluntary, without notice. I understand that the information will be kept securely.

I hereby declare the information I have provided is accurate.

Signed

Date

Note: Where a conviction or prosecution is indicated on the Declaration Form, that information will be brought to the attention of the Authorised Signatory so as to enter the Garda Vetting Process.

F

Garda Vetting

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Process to be followed when Garda Vetting is required

The following are required by the Diocese of Meath to complete the Garda vetting process:

- personnel commissioned in the Diocese of Meath for pastoral outreach at parish or diocesan level (e.g. school catechists, youth ministry, parish pastoral coordinators);
- prospective candidates for admission to seminary formation;
- diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes assistants.

Where a conviction or prosecution is indicated on the Declaration Form, that information will be brought to the attention of the Authorised Signatory (AS) so as to enter the Garda vetting process.

Steps to be followed

1. Initiating the Garda vetting process

- Applicants are informed at the earliest possible stage that they must take part in the Garda vetting process.
- The applicant is asked to complete a Garda Vetting Form. The form will be provided by the Authorised Signatory (AS), who may be contacted at the Diocesan Office.
- It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the information is properly completed on the form.
- The form is forwarded by the Diocesan office / parish to the AS who will examine it for any omissions, mistakes, or lack of clarity.
- Any incomplete form is dated and returned to the Diocesan office / parish with a cover letter, requesting the form's correction and resubmission. Changes cannot be made other than by the applicant on the authorised form.
- The AS then forwards the form to the Garda Central Vetting Unit.
- Forms are returned to the AS (this usually takes between 4 and 6 weeks). The Diocesan Office / parish is informed of the outcome.
- Where the returned form contains information which is relevant to the employment or engagement of the applicant, the Diocesan Office / parish must consider seriously whether or not a review meeting is appropriate (see below).
- Support and advice is always available from the AS.
- In accordance with best practice, the process remains valid for five years and it is recommended that the process be repeated every five years.
- Legal responsibility for employment and duty of care remains with the Diocese and / or parish entering into a contract of employment.

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2. When relevant Information is received

The Gardaí will provide details if the applicant has been subject to any prosecutions (successful or not, pending or completed) and convictions. If such information comes to light, the following procedures apply:

A. Process Review Meeting

- The Diocesan Office / parish will arrange a meeting with the applicant, attended by at least two people who are relevant to the pastoral activity.
- The applicant will be invited to bring a support person.
- The meeting has two purposes - to clarify the applicant's identity and to give the applicant an opportunity to discuss the application in the light of the information received from the Gardaí.
- A discussion then takes place with a view to ascertaining the nature and significance of the information received.
- A written record will be kept of the meeting.
- If the applicant asserts that the information is inaccurate, the onus is on him / her to provide satisfactory evidence to support this assertion.
- If the applicant provides satisfactory evidence to support this assertion, the Authorised Signatory will contact the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) with the new information, and any other information as deemed necessary. The GCVU will conduct further checks in respect of the applicant and write back to the A S who will communicate the response to the Diocesan Office / parish.

B. Risk Assessment

A conviction, prosecution or case pending will not necessarily bar an applicant from being considered for employment or engagement. The following criteria will be considered:

- the nature of any convictions;
- number of convictions;
- the frequency of any convictions;
- the post for which the person is seeking employment/engagement;
- the self disclosure of the conviction/case pending by the applicant;
- time lapsed since last conviction; the steps the applicant has taken to prevent reoffending.

It is the policy of the Diocese of Meath that any information which impinges on the safeguarding of children in our care will prevent the recruitment of the prospect employee or volunteer.

G

Code of Behaviour for Church Personnel

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Code of Behaviour for all Church personnel working with children

- Church personnel are expected to create an environment where children are valued, encouraged and affirmed, have their rights respected and are treated as individuals, eliminating any threatening, violent or degrading behaviour
- Each parish group must provide an adequate and appropriate number of personnel to supervise activities, depending on the ages and activities involved.⁶
- All must be treated with equal respect; favouritism is not acceptable and boundaries must be protected.
- Emphasis is placed on listening to children.
- Participants should not be left unattended.
- Dangerous behaviour or horseplay will not be allowed.
- Verbal abuse, bullying or physical punishment of children is not permissible under any circumstances.
- Facilities for parish activities must be suitable, safe and secure.
- Records of attendance and parental consent must be kept and all records must be kept in a safe and confidential manner.
- An Incident Report must be completed in the event of an accident or incident taking place.
- Attendance at activities must always be with the consent of a parent or guardian.
- Church personnel must not undertake any journey alone with a child: in exceptional circumstances, if only one adult is available, there should be a minimum of two children present.
- Meetings with young parishioners must take place in locations which allow for transparency and accountability (designated office or room with clear glass window); visits to private homes in the absence of parents are not acceptable.
- Only age-appropriate language, contact and materials are permissible.
- Under no circumstances should Church personnel use, provide, or permit alcohol, tobacco or drugs when working with children.
- Photographs of our young parishioners taking part in activities may only be taken/published with parental permission.
- Where pilgrimages and retreats are an occasional part of our pastoral programme, these events will adhere to recommended guidelines in terms of parental consent, supervision ratios, insurance, contact details, health requirements and First Aid, as well as the general code of behaviour and transport policies.

⁶ For further information on supervision ratios, see Resource J, Developing Safe Practices, Safeguarding Children: Child Protection Policy and Procedures for the Diocese of Meath

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Note: Our young parishioners with special needs or disabilities may depend on adults more than other children for their care and safety, so appropriately trained or experienced Church personnel may be required. This also applies to children who are vulnerable. The involvement of these children will mean that the adult - child ratios are adjusted. Sensitivity and clear communication is essential. It is also good practice to develop a good understanding with their parents or guardians.

Additional requirements for specific parish activities

Altar Servers

- The sacristan should remain in the sacristy when the servers are present, looking out for their safety with equipment and helping them to vest only by demonstration.
- On weekdays, Altar Servers should arrive and leave together.
- Practices should be arranged in cooperation with parents and schools, having the appropriate number of supervisors present.
- The stores and counting-office should be considered out of bounds.

Parish Facilities

- All non-parish groups using these facilities are required to have suitable insurance and their own safeguarding children policies.

Visiting Clergy

- Visiting clergy who are unknown in the parish will be expected to provide some indication that they are in good standing.

Parish Offices

- Parish offices must have a policy to determine the proper usage of computers and internet facilities, e.g. if there is one permanent parish computer which is the property of the parish, this must be guarded with a restricted password.

I have read this code of behaviour and agree to follow it correctly. I have also been made aware of the disciplinary and grievance procedure.

Signed	<input type="text"/>
Date	<input type="text"/>
Parish	<input type="text"/>

H

Disciplinary and grievance procedures

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Disciplinary and grievance procedures for all Church personnel working with children

Introduction

- Disciplinary situations include misconduct and/or poor performance.
- Grievances are concerns, problems or complaints that Church personnel raise.
- The code of behaviour, which reflects a child-centred ethos, will be issued to, and signed by, all Church personnel to indicate their acceptance of its provisions.
- Cases of minor misconduct or unsatisfactory performance are usually best dealt with informally. Sometimes additional training and advice is what is needed. Where an informal approach is not working, then the formal process may be invoked.

Disciplinary procedure

- The Diocese will establish a panel of eight nominees from which members of disciplinary committees will be drawn.
- On receiving a complaint, the parish will appoint a disciplinary committee to resolve the issue. The committee will consist of three nominees from the diocesan panel.
- The complaint should be in writing to the Parish Priest or the Parish Safeguarding Representative and responded to within five working days.
- If the complaint involves suspected abuse or a criminal offence, the Designated Person will be informed and the reporting procedure described at Resource M followed.
- The person against whom the complaint is made will be informed of the problem, in writing, including any relevant witness statements.
- The disciplinary committee will establish the facts by reviewing any relevant paperwork and meeting with all parties concerned within ten working days.
- A meeting will be held at which the complaint is explained, evidence is considered and the person against whom the complaint is made is given the opportunity to answer the allegation.
- The member of Church personnel may be accompanied.
- Where it is established that an incident of misconduct has taken place, the committee will decide on an appropriate sanction and inform the person in writing.
- A further act of misconduct within a set period will result in a final written warning.
- Where the complaint is sufficiently serious, it may be appropriate to move directly to a final written warning e.g. where the actions complained of have had, or are liable to have, a serious or harmful impact.

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- The written warning will set out the nature of the problem and the change in behaviour required, with a timescale, and inform the person of the consequences of further misconduct or failure to improve conduct e.g. it may result in dismissal, demotion or loss of seniority.
- A decision to dismiss will only be taken by the Parish Priest.
- The person will be informed of the reason for dismissal, date of termination, given appropriate notice and right of appeal.
- Gross misconduct e.g. theft, fraud, violence, gross negligence, may be cause for immediate dismissal without notice.
- Church personnel will be given a chance to appeal against disciplinary action which they consider unjust. The appeal will be dealt with impartially and by a manager not previously involved and the person informed in writing of the outcome, as soon as possible.

Grievance procedure

- If it is not possible to solve a grievance informally, it will be raised formally, in writing, setting out the nature of the grievance.
- A formal meeting to consider it will be held without delay.
- The complainant will be allowed to explain their grievance and how they think it may be resolved.
- Decisions on what action to take will be communicated in writing and, where appropriate, will set out what action will be taken to resolve the grievance.
- The complainant may appeal if they are not satisfied, following the same format and conditions as for disciplinary process.

Confidentiality

Written confidential records of all complaints will be safely and confidentially kept in line with Diocesan and parish policy on confidentiality and record keeping.

(Adapted from the ACAS Code of Practice 1 - Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures 2009).

Code of behaviour for children taking part in Church activities

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Code of behaviour for children taking part in Church activities

- Our parish expects that children will act respectfully of themselves, their supervisors and fellow participants.
- Participants must accept the ground rules of activities which supervisors will clearly explain to them.
- Children will not have access to the use of email or the internet when participating in our parish programmes.
- Breaches of discipline and disruptive behaviour, including bullying, will be dealt with in a manner that is fair and transparent, by more than one member of Church personnel. Discipline issues will be handled in partnership with parents (or guardians) and recorded when appropriate.
- Children or their parents who are dissatisfied with any aspect of activities or services can follow a complaints procedure, namely to inform the leader of the programme or, when appropriate, to contact one of our Parish Safeguarding Representatives through the parish office.

Please note:

- The parish only accepts liability or responsibility for an incident or accident caused by the negligence or breach of statutory duty of the parish, its staff and volunteers.
- It is the responsibility of the parents to be on time when dropping off or collecting children.
- All participants must keep to the code of behaviour for this activity, otherwise they may be asked not to continue their participation.
- Leaders are not allowed to give participants a lift to or from activities.
- Any concerns regarding the welfare and safety of children participating in parish activities should be brought immediately to the attention of the Parish Safeguarding Representative, the Designated Person or the statutory authorities.

J

Developing Safe Practices

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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 procedures ⁷. 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 Form ⁸. 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 children ⁹.

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.

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

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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.

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?

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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*

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Accident/Incident Reporting Form

Name of Group

Injured Person

Full Name Telephone No

Address Date of Birth

Details of Accident / Incident

Date Time Place

Full description of accident/incident (*continue on a separate sheet if necessary*)

Details of injury to person/property

Was First Aid/treatment given, please detail (*who, what, when*) Please note that First Aid should only be administered by a trained person

Was GP/Hospital/Medical services contacted? (*give details*)

Were parents contacted? Y N

Name of person filling out form

Date

K

Consent Form

Copy from below this line

Consent Form

1. Name of Parish

Venue/Activity/Group/Event

Date/Time/Duration:

Name of Group Leader/Person Responsible

2. Name of Child

Address

Telephone No

Date of Birth

3. Please give details of any medical condition of which the organisers ought to be aware, and include details of any medication which has to be taken. (This information will be treated in confidence).

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4. Please give details of any specific dietary, medical or special needs of the child. (This information will be treated in confidence).

5. Please give contact telephone numbers during the duration of this activity

Name

Contact No.

Name

Contact No.

6. Please give contact telephone numbers in the event of an emergency

Name

Contact No.

Name

Contact No.

7. Please indicate whether you give your permission for the child to receive treatment, if needed. Please tick

Y N

- I have read all the information provided concerning the programme of the above activity, and have received a copy of the code of behaviour for children taking part in Church-related activities (attached).
- I hereby give permission for my son/daughter/ward to participate in the above activity.
- I also give permission for group leaders to make any necessary emergency decisions during this activity.

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Signed Parent / Guardian

Date

Address

(if different from above)

Additional Parental Consent for Altar Servers

Altar servers make a commitment to assist at Sunday Masses, funerals and other liturgies as required.

I/we agree to allow our child to serve at Masses and other liturgies, and to leave school, under conditions agreed with the school, for ceremonies when necessary.

Signed Parent / Guardian

Child

Date

Address

(if different from above)

Copy from below this line

Code of behaviour for children taking part in Church-related activities

- Our parish expects that children will act respectfully of themselves, their supervisors and fellow participants
- Participants must accept the ground rules of activities which supervisors will clearly explain to them.
- Children will not have access to the use of email or the internet when participating in our parish programmes.
- Breaches of discipline and disruptive behaviour, including bullying, will be dealt with in a manner that is fair and transparent by more than one member of Church personnel; discipline issues will be handled in partnership with parents (or guardians) and recorded when appropriate.
- Children or their parents who are dissatisfied with any aspect of activities or services can follow a complaints procedure, namely to inform the leader of the programme or, when appropriate, to contact one of our Parish Safeguarding Representatives through the parish office.

Please note:

- The parish only accepts liability or responsibility for an incident or accident caused by the negligence or breach of statutory duty of the parish, its staff and volunteers.
- It is the responsibility of the parents to be on time when dropping off or collecting children.
- All participants must keep to the code of behaviour for this activity, otherwise they may be asked not to continue their participation.
- Leaders are not allowed to give participants a lift to or from activities.
- Any concerns regarding the welfare and safety of children participating in parish activities should be brought immediately to the attention of the Parish Safeguarding Representative, the Designated Person or the statutory authorities.



Recognising Child Abuse

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Guidance on Recognising Child Abuse

Introduction

All Church personnel should be aware that, essentially, child abuse occurs when the behaviour of someone in a position of greater power than a child causes the child harm. Because children can be abused in a number of ways, sometimes at the same time, it is not always easy to categorise it, but four broad definitions can be considered: neglect; emotional abuse; physical abuse and sexual abuse.

Recognising child abuse

Child abuse might come to light because a child tells someone, or because someone sees it happening. However, this does not always happen, and it is often a question of someone feeling uneasy and concerned about a child, and needing to find out more. Child abuse can be difficult to recognise and can take many different forms. Church personnel should always be alert to the possibility of abuse.

It is not your responsibility to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. You do have a responsibility and duty to act in order that the appropriate agencies can investigate and take any necessary action to protect a child. The following information should help you to be alert to the signs of possible abuse. However, it is important to remember that no one sign should be seen as certain evidence of abuse, and there may be other explanations for it. Workers who have suspicions about child abuse should consult with the Parish Safeguarding Representative who will report the matter to the Designated Person. Church personnel may choose to consult with a duty social worker and report directly to the HSE.

Definitions of child abuse

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is any form of non accidental injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child.

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child. Physical abuse, as well as being a result of an act of commission can also be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect.

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Most children will collect cuts and bruises in their daily life. These are likely to be in places where there are bony parts of their body, like elbows, knees and shins. Some children, however, will have bruising which can almost only have been caused non-accidentally. An important indicator of physical abuse is where bruises or injuries are unexplained or the explanation does not fit the injury or when it appears on parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely, e.g., on the cheeks or thighs. A delay in seeking medical treatment when it is obviously necessary is also a cause for concern. Bruising may be more or less noticeable on children with different skin tones or from different racial groups and specialist advice may need to be taken.

The physical signs of abuse may include:

- Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body
- Bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips (from slapping or pinching)
- Cigarette burns
- Bite marks
- Broken bones
- Scalds.

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate physical abuse:

- Fear of parents being approached for an explanation
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- Flinching when approached or touched
- Reluctance to get changed, for example in hot weather
- Depression
- Withdrawn behaviour
- Running away from home.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is normally found in the relationship between a care giver and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's need for affection, security, approval and consistency is not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's

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developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Emotional abuse can be difficult to measure, and often children who appear well cared for may be emotionally abused by being taunted, put down or belittled. They may receive little or no love, affection or attention from their parents or carers. Emotional abuse can also take the form of children not being allowed to mix / play with other children.

The physical signs of emotional abuse may include:

- A failure to thrive or grow, particularly if the child puts on weight in other circumstances e.g. in hospital or away from their parents care
- Sudden speech disorders
- Developmental delay, either in terms of physical or emotional progress.

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate emotional abuse include:

- Neurotic behaviour e.g. sulking, hair twisting, rocking
- Being unable to play
- Fear of making mistakes
- Sudden speech disorders
- Self harm
- Fear of parent being approached regarding their behaviour.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his/her sexual gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others.

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts (e.g. oral sex). They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, by adults and by other young people. This includes people from all different walks of life.

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Adults who use children to meet their own sexual needs abuse both girls and boys of all ages, including infants and toddlers. Usually, in cases of sexual abuse it is the child's behaviour which may cause you to become concerned, although physical signs can also be present. In all cases, children who tell about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. It is important, therefore, that they are listened to and taken seriously.

The physical signs of sexual abuse may include:

- Pain or itching in the genital area
- Bruising or bleeding near genital area
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Vaginal discharge or infection
- Stomach pains
- Discomfort when walking or sitting down
- Pregnancy.

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse include:

- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn
- Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people
- Having nightmares
- Running away from home
- Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age, or developmental level
- Sexual drawings or language
- Bedwetting
- Eating problems such as overeating or anorexia
- Self harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts
- Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about
- Substance or drug abuse
- Suddenly having unexplained sources of money
- Not allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence)
- Acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults.

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Neglect

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, and failure to access appropriate medical care or treatment. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. It is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, such as the neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may also occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

Neglect can be a difficult form of abuse to recognise, yet have some of the most lasting and damaging effects on children.

The physical signs of neglect may include:

- Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children
- Constantly dirty or 'smelly'
- Loss of weight, or being constantly underweight
- Inappropriate dress for weather conditions.

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect may include:

- Complaining of being tired all the time
- Not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments
- Having few friends
- Mentioning their being left alone or unsupervised.

These definitions and indicators are not meant to be definitive but only to serve as a guide to assist you. It is important to remember that many children and young people will exhibit some of these indicators at some time, and that the presence of one or more should not be taken as proof that abuse is occurring. There may well be other reasons for changes in behaviour such as a death, the birth of a new baby in their family, relationship problems between their parents/ carers etc.

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Other forms of abusive behaviour

Apart from the above very serious forms of abuse, Church personnel should also be on the alert for other forms of behaviour that may be harmful to children. These behaviours may take place in any setting. Incidents like these should be dealt with immediately and not tolerated under any circumstances. The following behaviours are unacceptable for either workers or children:

Verbal abuse

This can include name-calling, sarcasm, and criticism, making reference to some physical characteristic, destructive criticism, derogatory remarks and gestures.

Bullying

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression, be it verbal, psychological or physical, which is conducted by an individual or group against others. Examples of bullying include teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting and extortion.

Unwelcome behaviour

This can include favouritism, exclusion, sexual harassment and sexual innuendo, humiliating and embarrassing others, deprivation of basic rights and harsh punishments.

Children who are especially vulnerable to abuse

Children in certain situations are especially vulnerable to abuse. These include children who, for short or long periods, are separated from parents or other family members and depend on other adults for their care and protection. Children with disabilities may also be particularly at risk as the nature of their disability sometimes makes communication between themselves and others difficult and they may depend more than most children on a variety of adults to help them, for example, for care and transport.

The same categories of abuse - neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse - may be applicable, but may take a slightly different form. For example, abuse may take the form of taking away basic rights, harsh punishments or overuse of medications or physical restraints.

Factsheet 8 in *Our Duty to Care (DOHC 2002)* gives additional information in respect of safeguarding children with disabilities.

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Who abuses children?

It is important to remember that children can be abused by a variety of people, including those in trusted positions. Nobody really knows what causes people to abuse children. Sometimes it is because abusers have had bad experiences themselves, because they have limited understanding of how to care for children properly or are unable to do it consistently. Sexual abuse is different and is almost always involves careful planning and manipulation of children and situations.

Be aware that:

- Abusers appear just like anyone else - you can't tell by looking.
- People who abuse children come from all types of background.
- Sometimes strangers abuse children, but it is more often someone that the child knows, and who is in a position of authority or trust over him or her.
- Children can be abused by other children (*Our Duty to Care, DOHC 2002*).

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Procedure for Responding to Concerns, Suspicions, Allegations or Disclosures of Abuse

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1. Introduction

- The Church has a responsibility to pass on safeguarding concerns about a child to the civil authorities even when they do not concern Church personnel directly. The guiding principle is that the safety of the child is always the most important consideration.
- It is our aim, if children disclose concerns, that they will feel comfortable about voicing the matter in a safe, supportive, understanding and sensitive environment. The following point is very important: **absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed to a person who wishes to speak about a situation of abuse or suspected abuse.** This does not apply to situations involving the Sacramental Seal, which is inviolable.
- When a concern is raised about the welfare of any child - whether suspected or disclosed - it should be brought to the attention of the Parish Safeguarding Representative, to the Designated Person, or directly to the HSE or An Garda Síochána.
- This procedure must be followed if any concern, allegation, suspicion or disclosure is made, whether current or historical, that indicates a member of Church personnel (current or former) has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child.
- This procedure must also be followed for any other instances where personnel suspect or receive disclosures that a child is, may have been or is likely to be experiencing abuse, even when this abuse is not occurring in a Church setting.

The procedure applies to all Church personnel.

2. Procedure to be followed when responding to concerns, suspicions, allegations or disclosures of abuse

2.1. Listen, reassure and explain

- Stay calm and listen - give the person the time to say what s/he wants.
- Don't ask leading questions or make suggestions.
- Don't stop the person recalling significant events but don't make him or her repeat the story unnecessarily.
- Reassure the person that they have done the right thing but don't promise to keep a secret.
- Explain what needs to be done next in age-appropriate terms.
- Indicate who will be made aware of the information given.

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If the disclosure involves an allegation against Church personnel give contact details of the Designated Person in case the referrer needs to ask questions later.

- Where the disclosure involves an allegation against Church personnel advise the person that a Support Person is available to assist them where appropriate.
- Support Persons, appointed by the Bishop, will be available to those who make an allegation or disclose abuse and a choice between a male or female Support Person will be offered.

For further guidance on dialogue with people communicating a concern, allegation, suspicion or disclosure of abuse, see Resource N, *Safeguarding Children: Policy and Procedures for the Diocese of Meath*.

2.2. Record the discussion

- Make a written record as soon as possible afterwards and in any case before the end of the day.
- Record the discussion as carefully as possible, using the **Safeguarding Children Recording Form**¹².
- Do not be selective. Include details which to you may seem irrelevant. It may prove invaluable at a later stage in an investigation.

2.3. Act immediately

- Report the concern, suspicion, allegation or disclosure. There are two options:
 1. Consult with the Parish Safeguarding Representative or Contact the Designated Person¹³.
 2. Report directly to the HSE or, out of office hours and in case of emergency, to An Garda Síochána.
- Pass all original records, including rough notes, immediately to the Designated Person. (The initial Safeguarding Children Recording Form will form the first entry in a file of information about the case and will be retained by the Designated Person.)
- The Designated Person will report all instances of suspected or disclosed abuse, where there are 'reasonable grounds for concern' as indicated in Children First - 4.3.2 (DOHC, 1999), to the HSE, and/or An Garda Síochána using the standard reporting form.
- Matters relating to parish personnel will also be referred to the relevant Church authorities.
- In a case of emergency, where a child/person appears to be at immediate and serious risk, make a report immediately to the HSE and/or An Garda Síochána, as well as to the Designated Person.

¹² Resource O - *Safeguarding Children: Policy and Procedures for the Diocese of Meath*

¹³ Contact details in **Contacts** section of *Safeguarding Children; Policy and Procedures for the Diocese of Meath*

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Consideration should, in all cases, also be given to whether an immediate referral is necessary in order to preserve, and safeguard against the possibility of any loss, deterioration or destruction of potential evidence or forensic evidence.

Remember: It is not the role of the person who received the concern, allegation, suspicion or disclosure to investigate.

Information about the existence of a potential allegation must always be communicated to the Designated Person.

2.4. Keep information secure

- Keep any copies of records secure.
- Do not discuss incident/concern with anyone other than those detailed in these procedures.

3. Procedure to be followed when responding to a person who admits abusing a child

- Tell the person who admits an offence against a child that such information cannot be kept confidential.
- Even where the admission relates to something which happened a long time ago, refer the matter to the Designated Person as soon as possible.

The Designated Person will follow the procedures at 5 below for referral to the HSE or An Garda Síochána.

4. Procedure to be followed when responding to an anonymous allegation or concern

- Treat anonymous allegations carefully. Anxiety and fear may persuade some people not to reveal their identity immediately. Inform the person raising the concern that anonymity might restrict the ability of professionals to access information or to intervene to protect a child.
- Encourage as much openness as possible.

5. Procedure to be followed by the Designated Person after communication of concern, allegation, suspicion or disclosure

- The Designated Person will report all instances of suspected or disclosed abuse, where there are 'reasonable grounds for concern' as indicated in *Children First* - 4.3.2 (DOHC, 1999), to the HSE, and/or An Garda Síochána using the standard reporting form.
- Out of office hours and in the case of an emergency, where a child is at serious and immediate risk, reports will be made to An Garda Síochána without delay.

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- A social worker may be contacted by the Designated Person for informal consultation and advice to determine where there is a need to make a report regarding the child based on the information at hand.

6. Procedure to be followed if the Designated Person decides not to make a formal referral

In the event that the Designated Person decides not to make a formal referral to the HSE or Gardaí, the matter will be recorded. The person who raised the initial concern will be informed, in writing, given reasons for this decision and assured that the matter will be reviewed over a defined period.

Church personnel will be advised that, if they remain concerned, they are free to consult with, or report to, the HSE or An Garda Síochána. The provisions of the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act (1998) apply once they report “reasonably and in good faith”.

7. Additional procedures when allegations relate to Church personnel

- Where allegations of abuse are made against Church personnel, the Diocese of Meath provides a range of additional supports for both those who have experienced abuse and those who have perpetrated it, in line with the best practice model outlined by the NBSC.
- Church personnel will also be subject to the disciplinary procedure outlined in Resource H.
- The full procedure to be followed where allegations or disclosures refer to members of the clergy is outlined in *Safeguarding Children*, NBSC, 2008.

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Dialogue with People Communicating a Concern, Allegation, Suspicion or Disclosure of Abuse

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Dialogue with people communicating a concern, allegation, suspicion or disclosure of abuse

It is often very difficult for people to talk about abuse so it is important to make sure that you are patient, listen carefully and actively, and create a safe environment in which they feel able to tell you as much as they can remember. This will help those people whose responsibility it is to investigate the incident(s) do so as thoroughly as possible.

People may tell you about:

- abuse that's happening to them now - current;
- abuse that happened to them some time ago - historical;
- something they've been told by someone else and that they strongly believe is true;
- seeing signs of abuse, such as physical injuries on a child;
- something that they have witnessed, such as the behaviour of an adult to a child that made them feel uncomfortable.

Where information is given in person, consider the following:

- Listen carefully to that person, but do not ask intrusive or leading questions.
- Stay calm, take what the person raising the concern says seriously, and reassure them.
- Allow the person to continue at his/her own pace.
- Check with the person to make sure that you have understood what they actually said. Do not suggest words, but use theirs.
- Make no promises that cannot be kept, particularly in relation to secrecy, but listen carefully to what is being sought.
- Explain these procedures and the referral procedures to the person.
- Where a complaint concerns Church personnel, offer to accompany the person to the Support Person
- Do not make any comments about the respondent, make assumptions or speculate.
- Be aware that a person's ability to recount his or her concern or allegation will depend on age, culture, nationality and upon any disability which may affect use of language and range of vocabulary.
- Adopt a listening style which is compassionate, calm and reassuring. If the information given to you shocks, disgusts or distresses you, do not allow these feelings to show. If you do, you may inadvertently dissuade the person from giving any further information.

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- Avoid statements about your belief, or otherwise, of the information given.
- Do not question, beyond checking what has been said. It is the job of the HSE and/or An Garda Síochána to investigate.

There must be no probing for detail beyond that which has been freely given. Listening does not mean telling a person to stop when they are freely recalling events; because some facts are only ever told once, the information given must be fully and accurately recorded. However, it is better that such detail is given directly to a professional from the HSE or An Garda Síochána, to allow proper procedures to be observed and to avoid the distress of having to repeat the account more than once.



Safeguarding Children Recording Form

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Safeguarding Children Recording Form to be used in reporting to the Designated Person

(The Designated Person will use the HSE standard reporting form when reporting to the HSE)

1. Date, time method of disclosure/concern

Date of disclosure/concern

Time of disclosure/concern

How was information received? (attach any written information to this form)

Telephone /Letter/ Email /In person

2. Details of person making disclosure/raising concern

Name

Address

Tel/Mobile

Relationship to child or alleged victim

3. Details of child or alleged victim

Name

DOB

Address

Tel/Mobile

Language

(Is interpreter/signer needed)

Disability

Special needs

Parish

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4. Parent / Carer details (where appropriate)

Name Tel/Mobile

Address

(if different from above)

Are they aware of the allegation, suspicion or complaint? Y N

5. Details of alleged perpetrator

Name Tel/Mobile

Address

Relationship to child/victim

Position in Church

Address at time of incident(s)

Current contact with children if known (e.g. member of Board of Management of school, runs youth activities etc.)

Any additional information

6. Details of concern, allegation or complaint (Include dates / times and location the incident(s) occurred, witnesses, if known. Does the child /victim know this referral is being made?)

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7. Action taken

Has the matter been referred to civil authorities? Y N

If yes Date Time

If no explain why

Who was it referred to:

Name Tel
Designation/position Email
Address

Has the matter been referred to a member of the Church? Y N

If yes Date Time

If no explain why

Who was it referred to:

Name Tel
Designation/position Email
Address

8. Next Steps

What actions were agreed and by whom when the matter was referred onto civil / Church authority?

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Are there any immediate child protection concerns? If so please record what they are and state what actions have been taken by whom to address them:

9. Designated Person details:

Date form sent

10. Details of person completing the form

Name

Tel

Email

Position in Church

Parish

Form completed

Date

Time

Signed

(A copy must be retained by the recipient and filed in a secure location, and a copy must be sent to the Designated Person)

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Frequently asked questions when a safeguarding complaint is made against Church personnel

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I wish to make a complaint; who should I talk to?

If you wish to talk to someone about a concern or suspicion of abuse, it is important to do so as soon as possible. You will be listened to and what you say will be taken seriously.

If you have suffered abuse in the past, please tell someone about the abuse. You will be listened to and what you have to say will be taken seriously. Understandably, many people find it difficult to tell anyone about the abuse they have suffered. It may be many years after the event before a disclosure is made, perhaps when the victim is an adult. Even then, the Church will act. If you want to raise a concern or suspicions, or make an allegation or disclosure, you can choose who to talk to. You may choose to contact the HSE or local An Garda Síochána. Contact details are available at the end of this document. There are some people in the Church who have special safeguarding jobs; they are called Parish Safeguarding Representatives (there is at least one in every parish) and the Designated Person. Alternatively, you may prefer to tell someone in the Church that you already know. They will refer you to sources of support and also let the Designated Person know that they need to address a child protection matter.

What happens next?

If the complaint concerns a member of the clergy, then the Designated Person will meet with you to find out more information, and the details of what you have to say. S/he will also explain to you what will happen next.

If there are reasonable grounds for concern then details of the matter you are raising will be reported to the HSE or An Garda Síochána. Where a complaint refers to a member of church personnel it will also be reported to relevant Church authorities. All allegations or disclosures will be addressed sensitively, openly and in a timely manner. You will also be offered a Support Person to help and advise you of the process as any inquiry progresses, where a complaint refers to a member of the clergy.

If you are a child or you are raising a concern about a child, the Designated Person will not interview a child, as s/he will not be trained to do so.

The Designated Person will talk with the HSE or An Garda Síochána about what to do next.

In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at an immediate and serious risk of harm, s/he will make an immediate referral to the HSE or An Garda Síochána.

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When your concern is about the behaviour or actions of a member of Church personnel, then that person will be informed, to allow him or her to respond to it, unless to do so would put the child and others at further risk. The person may also be asked to stand aside from his or her role while the matter is being investigated. If the concern relates to abuse that has occurred to you in the past, the Designated Person will ask you to provide a description of what happened, including the background and circumstances. You will be given plenty of time to do this. If appropriate, and if he has not already done so, the Designated Person will then inform the HSE or An Garda Síochána of your concerns/allegation. He must do this if he has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child may have been abused, is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, which may be the case even where your concern/allegation relates to abuse that took place a long time ago. The Designated Person is not involved with the statutory investigation, but will keep in contact with the HSE and An Garda Síochána. He will normally be informed when the statutory investigation has concluded. The Church inquiry process will then take place. What happens next may vary depending on whether the concern raised is about a priest, religious, a lay employee or volunteer. This is because each is subject to their own internal procedures. As the process unfolds, you will be regularly informed about what is happening.

The Diocesan Advisory Case Management Committee is appointed by the Bishop to work on his behalf to advise on all aspects of case management. This committee works to ensure an effective response is made to complaints and the appropriate pastoral care is put in place.

For more details regarding the process, please refer to *"Safeguarding Children - Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland"* (NBSC, 2008) which is available at www.safeguarding.ie.

What if I am unhappy with the way my concerns were dealt with?

If you are unhappy with the way that the Church dealt with your concerns, you can ask for the process (i.e. how it was dealt with) to be reviewed within three months after the investigative process has finished. This timeframe can be extended in certain circumstances. You should write to the National Board for Safeguarding Children, setting out the reasons why you are unhappy with the process. If you have any difficulty in doing this, please contact the National Office to discuss other ways they may be able to help you to ask for a review. The review will be conducted by an independent review panel of three persons with specialist expertise. The Review Panel cannot review the outcome of the process, but will look at the manner in which the process was conducted and ensure that all the required steps were followed. At the end of the review, the Review Panel will then make a recommendation.

The person who your concern/allegation was about is also entitled to seek such a review if he or she is unhappy with the way the process was conducted.

Q

Training Plan

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Training Plan

The following priority areas have been identified for training:

Priority 1: Keeping Safe training (see overview of programme attached)

Target: All Parish Safeguarding Representatives and clergy will have undertaken *Keeping Safe* training.

Action: Roll out Keeping Safe training programme to any Parish Safeguarding Representatives or parish clergy who have not yet availed of the programme.

Priority 2: Update on revised policy and procedures

Target: Familiarise all Parish Safeguarding Representatives and clergy with revisions to the policy and procedures.

Action: Provide update sessions to clusters of parishes.

Priority 3: Information sessions (see overview of sessions attached)

Target: Church personnel will be offered information sessions, as needed, on awareness of safeguarding children issues; relevant documentation; policy and procedures.

Action: Prepare and deliver the required modules to clusters of Church personnel on a cross parish basis or, in the case of policy launches, on a parish basis.

Priority 4: Other training needs

Target: Identify and respond to additional training needs (particular skills training) in consultation with the Diocesan Safeguarding Children Committee.

A record of attendance at each course or information session will be maintained. Each course will be evaluated by participants and an annual evaluation of trainers will be carried out by the HSE Keeping Safe Coordinator.

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Overview of Keeping Safe programme

The Keeping Safe child protection awareness training was designed by the Volunteer Development Agency in Northern Ireland through the Our Duty to Care project. It provides training, support and information on good child protection practice to community groups and voluntary organisations. The programme is part of a cascade training programme and is delivered by the HSE and also by trainers who have undertaken the Training for Trainers strand of the programme run by HSE trainers.

Keeping Safe consists of five modules which may be used according to the needs of the group. The full, certificated, programme is targeted, in this diocese, at Parish Safeguarding Representatives and clergy.

The modules cover the following topics:

- Module 1: Awareness of child protection issues
- Module 2: Policy and procedures for reporting suspected or disclosed abuse
- Module 3: Recruitment and management of staff and volunteers
- Module 4: Code of behaviour for staff and volunteers
- Module 5: Awareness of residential issues.

Overview of information sessions

These presentations will be built around and tailored to the needs of the particular groups. An information module on safeguarding children awareness will be provided to relevant groups eg sacristans, those working on children`s liturgy. This will be a presentation of information without involving participants in group exercises etc. Presentation time will depend on the amount and detail of information to be presented. The presentation will cover: developing a culture of safety; recognizing and responding to child abuse; implementing the diocesan policy and procedures.

R

Communicating the Safeguarding Message

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Guidance for Communicating the Safeguarding Message

1. Advertise the name of the Parish Safeguarding Representative(s) and have a record of their contact details.
2. Make sure that communications between the Church and parents/carers children take account of language or communication differences.
3. Make sure that parents, children and relevant others know about your safeguarding children policies and reporting procedures.
4. Involve parents, as well as children, in developing codes of behaviour (e.g. about anti-bullying)
5. Devise ways of obtaining feedback from parents/carers/children/ the parishioners to find out what you are doing well, and what's not working.
6. Openly discuss your child safeguarding principles, policy, codes of behaviour with children involved in activities and make sure they know who to turn to if they have a worry or concern.
7. Ask children what makes them feel safe and not safe. Really listen and take account of what they say and make sure they know you are listening.
8. Display posters or have information leaflets, especially for new children who join, about child safeguarding and child help lines.
9. Have a suggestion box.
10. Consider how disabled children can communicate their complaints, especially if they have verbal communication difficulties.
11. Don't forget that communication systems and practices do not lie just within the Church. It is important that there are established links with other organisations in the locality in order to promote a safe and caring community and to share good practices. At the same time, confidentiality must be maintained, with information shared only on a 'need to know' basis.

S

Checklist for Parish Self-Audit

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Instructions for completing the checklist

This checklist should be completed by the Parish Safeguarding Representatives, following consultation with the group leaders of Church related activities. It should be completed during the last two weeks of November each year and given to the Parish Priest for return to the Diocesan Office.

In parishes where there are a large number of groups, it may be necessary to ask group leaders to complete relevant parts of the checklist and for the Parish Safeguarding Representatives to then collate the responses into a parish report.

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Parish self audit	
Name of Parish	<input type="text"/>
Year of Completion	<input type="text"/>
1. Developing a culture of safety	
Parish Safeguarding Representatives in place	If yes give number
Safeguarding information poster displayed in churches	
Safeguarding children policy adopted and advertised	
Code of behaviour in place and signed by staff and volunteers	
Does each group have appropriate number of volunteers to supervise activities?	If yes, give details
Were required recruitment procedures followed for volunteers and staff?	
Are all facilities in use up to health and safety standards?	
Have issues arisen relating to any of the following: inappropriate behaviour, photographs, internet, trips?	If yes, give details
Are all records: consent, recruitment, incident reports etc., up to date?	
Have participants and parents been made aware of parish policies relating to child protection, good behaviour, complaints procedure?	
Were altar servers given training during the year?	
Was guidance on supervision of altar servers followed?	
Do non-parish groups using parish facilities have suitable insurance and safeguarding policies?	
Have any visiting clergy provided an indication that they are in good standing?	

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2. Responding to concerns

Have all staff and volunteers had an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the safeguarding policy and procedures?	
Have all staff and volunteers been made aware of the procedure for reporting allegations or disclosures of abuse?	
Have all staff and volunteers signed their agreement to observe procedures?	
Have any staff/volunteers reported any allegations or disclosures of abuse?	If yes, give details
Has the disciplinary procedure been invoked?	If yes, give details

3 Implementing Diocesan Safeguarding policy

Has Keeping Safe training been completed by Parish Safeguarding Representatives?	
Has Keeping Safe training been completed by priests of parish?	
Have information sessions on safeguarding children policy and procedures been attended by relevant staff and volunteers?	If yes, give details
Is information available for children on sources of support?	

Signed (Parish Priest)

Date