



THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

CHILD SAFEGUARDING

POLICY



Approved by the Standing Committee of the Church of Ireland  
*for use in Northern Ireland*

2018







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## FOREWORD

IT IS ONE OF THOSE STRANGE FACTS THAT THE WORDS "SAFETY" AND "SALVATION" ARE DERIVED FROM THE SAME LATIN ROOT. IT MAY BE STRANGE, BUT IT IS WHOLLY APPROPRIATE.

The Church of God is charged by Our Lord with forwarding the salvation of souls, but it cannot even begin this task if it neglects the safety of people. These are connected aspects in the life of the Church, and it is therefore a primary duty to Christ that we do all in our power to ensure the physical, emotional and spiritual safety of Christian disciples, young and old, who have committed themselves (or who are entrusted by others) to our care.

I am grateful to all those who have worked diligently to ensure both that our safeguarding codes are rigorous and detailed, and also that they are compliant with civil law and our Christian responsibilities. I am of course aware that the safeguarding codes place huge obligations both on individuals and on organisations and that, for some smaller communities, these may be far from easy to fulfil. But there can be no short cuts.

Our work and ministry with children, and with adults who may (for whatever reason) be "at risk", is a privilege but also a trust. We cannot betray that trust in any way if we are to fulfil our responsibilities as followers of a Saviour who came into the world that all may know safety and find salvation.

**+Richard Armagh**





# PART 1:

## INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

### POLICY

“IT IS THE POLICY OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND TO SAFEGUARD ALL CHILDREN SHARING IN ITS MINISTRY AND TO PROTECT THEM FROM ALL FORMS OF HARM AND ABUSE.”

### PURPOSE

The Church of Ireland believes that children should never experience abuse of any kind. Everyone has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and to keep them safe. The Church of Ireland is committed to implementing procedures and practices which safeguard all children.

### PREMISE - LEGAL CONTEXT

*Safeguarding Trust* has been developed in line with the following legislation and guidance documents which seek to protect and safeguard children.

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948.
- European Convention on Human Rights 1953.
- The Children (Northern Ireland) order 1995.
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991.
- Safeguarding Board Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007.
- Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008.
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.
- Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967.
- Section 75 Northern Ireland Act 1998.
- Relevant government guidance on safeguarding children.

### PRINCIPLES

Thousands of children visit Church of Ireland premises for worship and other social, educational and recreational purposes each week. The Church’s ministry to them is a priority for the Church and it is



only possible because of the voluntary commitment of adults who are prepared to take responsibility for children in their care. *Safeguarding Trust: the Code of Good Practice for Ministry with Children* is designed to protect and to enhance that ministry.

*Safeguarding Trust: the Church of Ireland Code of Good Practice for Ministry with Children* is designed to enable all parties within the Church of Ireland to fulfil their proper responsibilities within this ministry:

- To create a safe environment which will promote healthy and fulfilling participation of children in spiritual, educational and recreational activities and minimise the possibility of harm, either deliberate or accidental.
- To encourage safe practices for those who work with children.
- To set out the appropriate responses and procedures in the event of accident or abuse taking place.
- To safeguard those who work with children from the consequences of unfounded accusations.

The Church of Ireland recognises that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount;
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all forms of harm or abuse;
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues;
- working in partnership with children, their parents/guardians and other agencies is essential for promoting the welfare of children.

Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers exercising the Church of Ireland's ministry with children are committed to implementing procedures and practices which promote the welfare of children and protects them from harm. The policy, procedures and practice contained in *Safeguarding Trust* will be reviewed at regular intervals, at least every two years.

The Church of Ireland will seek to safeguarding children by:

- valuing them, listening to them and respecting them;
- adopting child protection practices through procedures and a code of behaviour for all staff and volunteers;
- implementing robust recruitment and selection procedures including required vetting and reference checks;
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training;
- reporting concerns to statutory agencies and involving children and parents/guardians appropriately;
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents/guardians, staff and volunteers;
- ensuring adherence to safety procedures.



## PROMOTION OF SAFEGUARDING TRUST

*Safeguarding Trust* provides a framework for those ministering within the Church of Ireland for how to recognise, respond and report any concerns of any safeguarding nature regarding children. Safeguarding Trust sits alongside the Adult Safeguarding Policy and Dignity in Church Life policies to support and protect all those who work in the Church of Ireland as staff or volunteers.

The panel notice (section reference required) and the Child Safeguarding Statement should be prominently displayed in each of the Church's premises and everyone involved in the Church and its activities should receive or have access to a copy of the *Safeguarding Trust* policy document.

Safeguarding Handbooks on *Safeguarding Trust* shall also be made available to staff/volunteers, parents/guardians, children and select vestry members.

## DEFINITIONS

**Child** means a person under 18 years excluding a person who is or has been married.

**Staff** means anyone with a formal contract of employment who is employed and paid by a parish, the RCB, or any other Church of Ireland organisation to undertake relevant work or activities relating to children (see [www.sg.ireland.anglican.org](http://www.sg.ireland.anglican.org)).

**Clergy** or **Member of the Clergy** shall, unless otherwise specifically provided, mean a deacon or priest of the Church of Ireland or of a church in full communion with that Church serving in or retired from ministry of the Church of Ireland: beneficed, licensed or with Permission to Officiate.

**Incumbent:** In addition to the ordinary meaning of 'incumbent' within the law of the Church of Ireland (being a beneficed member of the clergy), the term shall, for the purposes of the implementation of this policy also include licensed clergy, or other officiating clergy (such as Clergy with Permission to Officiate), lay ministers (such as a Church Army Officer), who are in charge of a parish, including those temporarily in charge during a vacancy in an incumbency. The term shall not include a deacon serving in an internship.

**Volunteer** means anyone in a position of responsibility or assisting with a group or organisation providing activities to children, or care or supervision of children, and who is not paid for this involvement.

**Parish Panel** means the representatives appointed to oversee the implementation of *Safeguarding Trust: the Church of Ireland Code of Good Practice for Ministry with Children* in each parish or those appointed to discharge the same function at diocesan or central level.

**Parish** shall, in addition to the ordinary meaning of the term, include groups or unions of parishes, cathedrals (whether a parish or not), trustee churches, and also other non-parochial ecclesiastical units (e.g. church plants) in which a licensed member of the clergy of the Church of Ireland officiates as determined by the bishop and diocesan council.



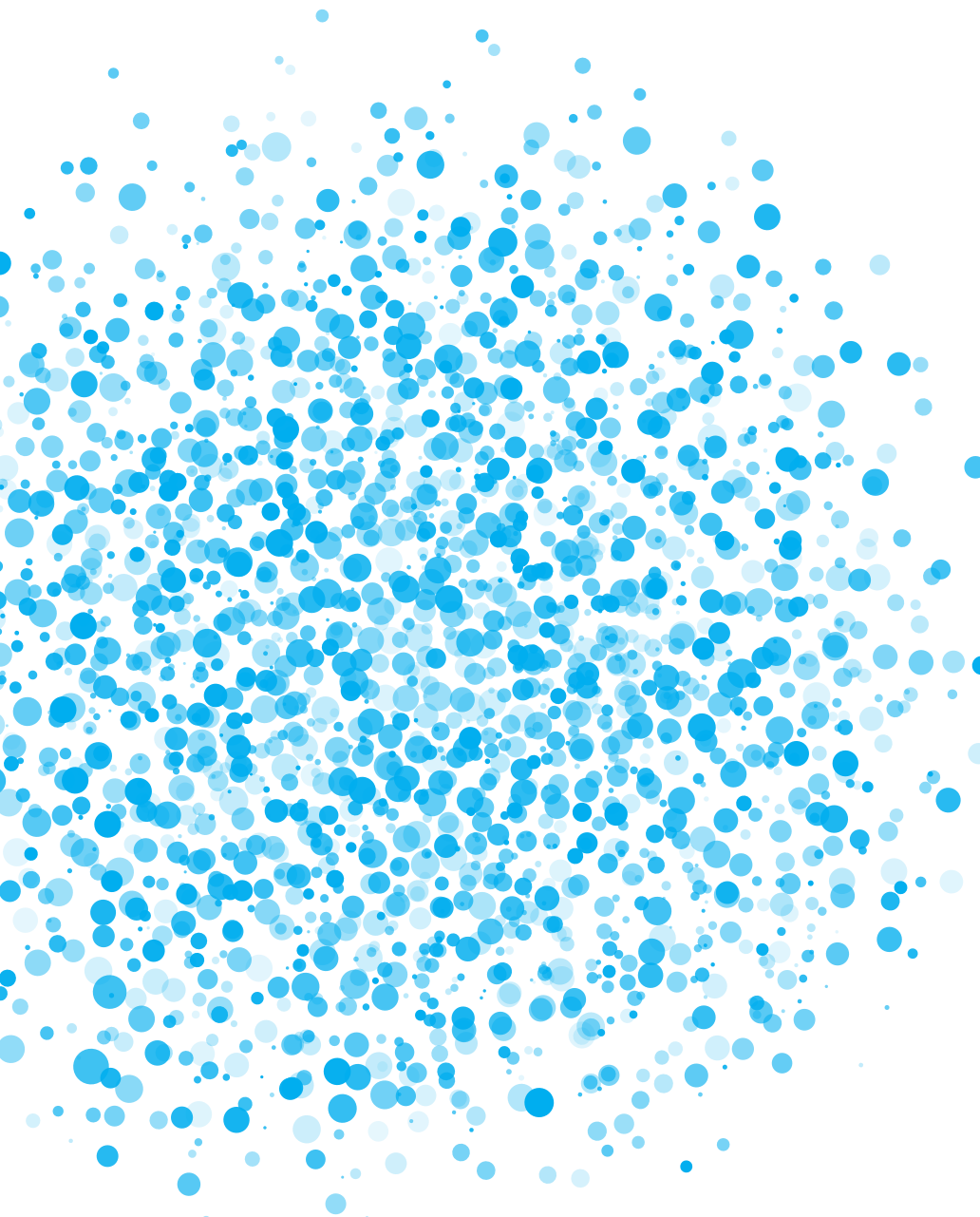
**Statutory Authorities** refers to Gateway which is the statutory body responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children and to the Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) who are empowered under legislation to investigate these matters.

**Select Vestry** refers to the select vestry of parishes and cathedrals howsoever described, and the Trustee body of every Trustee church howsoever described.

**Safeguarding Trust** refers to *Safeguarding Trust*: The Church of Ireland Child Safeguarding Policy.

**Review Board** means those appointed by the bishop of the diocese to undertake the risk assessment following the outcome of an allegation against a staff member or volunteer.

**RCB** or Representative Body refer to the Representative Church Body, located in Church of Ireland House, Church Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin 6, D06 CF67.







## PART 2: AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

### THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

#### CHAPTER XVI (2018) SAFEGUARDING PART 1: MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN

1. *Safeguarding Trust: The Church of Ireland Code of Good Practice for Ministry with Children*, approved by the Standing Committee of the General Synod and reported to the General Synod, hereinafter referred to as *Safeguarding Trust* shall be implemented and adhered to throughout the Church of Ireland in the church's ministry with children.
2. Each bishop and diocesan council shall ensure that *Safeguarding Trust* be implemented and adhered to by all parishes, clergy and diocesan bodies within the diocese and in any diocesan activity.

### CENTRAL CHURCH BODIES

The Standing Committee, on behalf of the General Synod, has overall responsibility for the Church's Child Protection Policy (known as *Safeguarding Trust*) and has delegated to the Church of Ireland Safeguarding Board responsibility for implementation. The Representative Body has responsibility, in conjunction with the dioceses, for providing funding to the Safeguarding Board to provide the necessary resources and training supports.

### CHURCH OF IRELAND SAFEGUARDING BOARD

The Church of Ireland Safeguarding Board is authorised by Standing Committee to ensure that those within the Church of Ireland have a special duty of care towards Children and Adults at Risk and therefore a culture of collective responsibility to work in partnership with other statutory, community and voluntary organisations is encouraged.

The Safeguarding Board will follow basic rights which are embedded in both our gospel values and within international and domestic laws to protect those at risk of harm.

The Safeguarding Board is committed to learning from experience and by a process of continuous improvement to monitor and challenge the effectiveness of The Church of Ireland's safeguarding arrangements.



The Safeguarding Board is in place to oversee the implementation and review of *Safeguarding Trust*. This is a living document and will be reviewed every two years or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which *Safeguarding Trust* refers, and amended as required by the Safeguarding Board. The Safeguarding Board shall advise the Standing Committee and the Representative Body of the outcome of the review and any amendments that need to be made. The updated policy from this review shall then be presented to Standing Committee for approval.

The Safeguarding Board will ensure that there are training materials developed and that support and training is provided to Diocesan Support Teams so that training can be provided for bishops, clergy, staff, volunteers and panel members.

## BISHOPS AND DIOCESAN COUNCILS

Each bishop and diocesan council(s) is required by the Constitution of the Church of Ireland to ensure that *Safeguarding Trust* is implemented and adhered to throughout the Church of Ireland.

Diocesan Councils through their secretaries will be responsible for issuing to each select vestry secretary on an annual basis, a standard form which will be completed and returned by the select vestry, confirming that *Safeguarding Trust* is being implemented by the select vestry in each parish. This is the declaration of compliance.

Diocesan Council will be required to report to the Safeguarding Board on an annual basis (usually by the end of June) that every parish and relevant diocesan bodies have completed the declaration of compliance.

The bishop of the diocese and diocesan council must set up a *Safeguarding Trust* diocesan support team. This team will undertake the evidence based triennial audit of the implementation of the Code in parishes and diocesan bodies and put in place a plan for each parish and diocesan body to action arising from the audit, provide support to parishes and diocesan bodies with the implementation of *Safeguarding Trust* and provide training in line with the Diocesan Training Strategy. The bishop of the diocese and diocesan council shall determine the composition of the diocesan support team and ensure that suitable people with the appropriate skills are appointed. The work of the diocesan support teams is supported by the Safeguarding Board in conjunction with the Child Protection Officer.

The bishop of the diocese, diocesan council and diocesan support team shall put in place a Diocesan *Safeguarding Trust* training strategy to outline what training must be completed and the frequency of such training.

The bishop of the diocese shall ensure that a current Access NI vetting disclosure is in place for a candidate for holy orders prior to ordination, or prior to institution to an incumbency or other charge or granted a licence to officiate or permission to officiate.

The bishop of the diocese shall attend role specific *Safeguarding Trust* (Child Protection awareness training) in line with the Central Training Strategy.



## THE INCUMBENT AND SELECT VESTRY

Incumbents and select vestries shall, following the approval of the bishop of the diocese, ensure that within each parish\*, there is a panel of at least three people ('the panel') trained to implement *Safeguarding Trust*.

The panel shall include the incumbent or in exceptional circumstances a person nominated by the incumbent together with two other members. The panel as far as is practical should comprise both male and female persons. Panel members may be working with children in the parish but at least one member of the panel should not be working with children in the parish.

**NB** A panel member cannot be the spouse of the incumbent or another panel member nor be an immediate relative of another panel member.

\*If in exceptional circumstances, due to lack of available parishioners, it is not practical to appoint a panel of three persons and subject to the prior approval of the bishop of the diocese, alternative arrangements may be made for the appointment of a panel, subject to such conditions as the bishop of the diocese shall decide.

Select vestries must:

- affirm, in writing on the declaration of compliance to the diocesan council annually, that *Safeguarding Trust* is being implemented by the select vestry in the parish.
- take all reasonable care that the premises, in which all who work with children takes place, and equipment used for such work, are safe for such purposes and that appropriate insurance is in place.
- ensure that *Safeguarding Trust* is a standing item on the Select Vestry agenda and receive regular reports from the panel.
- exercise reasonable care when letting a church hall or other premises for activities which will involve work with children. All external bodies or tenants must sign an annual agreement accepting the terms of the *Common Protocol for Churches relating to Independent Organisations working with children*.
- confirm that the appropriate insurance advised by the Representative Church Body is put in place by the parish insurer.

## PARISH AND DIOCESAN PANELS

### PARISH PANEL

The Parish Panel functions as a sub-committee of the select vestry with the membership nominated by the incumbent and appointed by the vestry. Members other than the incumbent or priest-in-charge are not required to be members of the select vestry. Lay panel members should be vetted prior to appointment by the select vestry.



## PARISH PANEL ROLES

- Maintain oversight of all matters regarding safeguarding in the parish on behalf of the select vestry and report on matters to each select vestry meeting. The Parish Panel should meet on a regular basis (at least twice) throughout the year. The checklists in section will provide guidance as to matters to be covered at these meetings.
- Implement and maintain good practice in the recruitment, assessment, training, management and support of staff and volunteers. The Parish Panel may include others in the interview process where a post requires specialist skills to be assessed.
- Keep records of all appointments, reports and other relevant documents regarding *Safeguarding Trust* and audit records such as the accidents and incidents book in case disturbing patterns emerge. Store all records securely in line with General Data Protection Regulations. (see *GDPR & Safeguarding Trust guidelines*)
- Follow the guidelines set out in *Safeguarding Trust*, and in the appropriate statutory guidelines, on how to respond to any safeguarding concern. The Parish Panel fulfils the role of Designated Officer and acts collectively.
- The Parish Panel will also be involved in managing situations where a member of staff or volunteer has been suspended pending a statutory investigation. Information may come to the Parish Panel from outside the parish, as from statutory authorities.
- Ensure that Parish Panel notices and children's information posters are displayed on parish premises giving relevant information regarding the statutory authorities to whom a concern can be reported. The notices and posters identify the panel members.
- Advise the select vestry in respect of its responsibilities. Safety and employment issues are normally advised directly to the vestry but information concerning child protection issues must only be shared on a 'need to know' basis.
- Meet members of the diocesan support team to undertake the evidence based triennial parish audit and implement actions required as a result of the audit.
- Ensure all clergy, staff and volunteers undertake regular training. They will be supported in this by their Diocese.

## DIOCESAN PANEL

The Diocesan Panel will be appointed by the bishop of the diocese subject to approval by diocesan council. This should be composed of a senior member of the clergy plus two others, with at least one lay member. The Diocesan Panel as far as is practical should comprise both male and female persons. The responsibilities and duties are the same as those of the Parish Panel in terms of receiving and reporting concerns. This Diocesan Panel is required to be constituted and to meet under the following three circumstances:



### 1. **Diocesan staff**

If a diocese employs staff who are undertaking relevant work or activities relating to children then a Diocesan Panel must be constituted for at least the duration of their employment. The Diocesan Panel will be responsible for ensuring that the member of staff has relevant training prior to employment and that regular training is accessed during their employment.

### 2. **Events / camps**

Where a youth camp or children's event is being held and serving any area greater than an individual parish.

### 3. **Report of historical abuse**

When a retrospective allegation is made concerning a member of the clergy or diocesan staff, the Diocesan Panel should meet to support the bishop of the diocese in dealing with the allegation. The Child Protection Officer can provide support to the bishop of the diocese and Diocesan Panel in their management of this allegation.

## PANEL MEMBERS - SUITABILITY FOR MEMBERSHIP

The people best suited to the foregoing tasks are those whose occupations, or lengthy voluntary experience, have brought them into contact with children.

Those who have already participated in foundation training in child protection, e.g. nurses, teachers, social workers, probation officers and doctors may be particularly suitable. Consideration should also be given to those who could bring particular gifts and skills to the panel, e.g. those with administrative experience.

Parishes need to indicate the duration of appointment for panel members, perhaps a period of five years which might be renewable, so that the role and responsibility is shared among parishioners.

## PROVIDERS OF ORDINATION (PRE AND POST) AND LAY READER TRAINING

An Access NI check or a vetting disclosure from The National Vetting Bureau which has been assessed as being favourable, should be received for those who have been nominated for training, subject to residence, **before** commencing training.

The Principal of The Church of Ireland Theological Institute is responsible for ensuring that all its students attend training in *Safeguarding Trust* prior to their placement in parishes or in any work involving children.

The bishop of the diocese shall ensure that training in *Safeguarding Trust* is provided for lay readers in the diocese.

The bishop of the diocese shall ensure that those in ministry in their dioceses shall receive continuing training in relation to child protection.



## THE CHURCH OF IRELAND YOUTH DEPARTMENT, DIOCESAN YOUTH COUNCILS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

The Church of Ireland Youth Department and every Diocesan Youth Council shall implement *Safeguarding Trust*.

All Church of Ireland groups using Church of Ireland premises shall implement *Safeguarding Trust* and ensure that their staff/volunteers undertake *Safeguarding Trust* training, where appropriate, and sign the declaration of compliance annually.

## BISHOPS, CLERGY, STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Anyone working with children in the Church of Ireland, whether as bishop, clergy, staff or volunteers should:

- (a) undertake in writing to exercise a duty to care for children;
- (b) adhere to the code of behaviour for bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers;
- (c) understand how to work safely with children in weekly activities as well as on day, weekend or longer trips (residential or otherwise);
- (d) have a basic knowledge of the definitions and features of child abuse;
- (e) know how to respond should a child make a disclosure;
- (f) report to the panel any concern regarding a child and cooperate in reporting the details to the appropriate statutory agencies. (In the event of the incumbent being implicated the report should also be made to the bishop of the diocese.)

## CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER (CPO)

The Child Protection Officer (CPO) advises on and supports the implementation of the child protection policy of the Church of Ireland *Safeguarding Trust* and provides professional advice and assistance to panels, bishops and other church authorities in relation to the reporting and management of any child abuse issue.

The CPO also assists in the development and review of *Safeguarding Trust*, designs and delivers training in line with the Central *Safeguarding Trust* Training Strategy and monitors implementation of *Safeguarding Trust*. The CPO contributes to the annual report and compiles statistical data, where relevant, in addition to other related tasks.

## COMPLAINTS

The Church of Ireland has an ethos of inclusion, transparency and openness.

Anyone who has a concern or child related concern relating to the Church of Ireland can raise an enquiry or complaint directly with the Representative Church Body ([www.ireland.anglican.org](http://www.ireland.anglican.org)).





Any serious complaints regarding the conduct of bishops or clergy will be referred to the Complaints Administrator. This will then trigger the complaints procedure as laid out in the Constitution of the Church of Ireland. Should the complaint require further investigation the Complaints Committee will sit to consider the matter.

The Church of Ireland Dignity in Church Life Charter also outlines the support available to anyone who wishes to complain about the conduct of clergy, staff or volunteers in relation to working with children in the Church of Ireland.

All parishes should have their own complaints procedure to deal with complaints at a local level. All leaders-in-charge, volunteers, staff, parents and participants should be made aware of the complaints procedure either through the Parish Magazine / Website or a notice clearly displayed in the Church and Church Halls.

## **BREACHING THE POLICY**

Staff and volunteers should understand that:

- If they are unsure of their actions and feel they may have breached the Policy, they should consult with their Leader-in-Charge, Rector, Panel or the Safeguarding Officer.
- Breaching the Policy may be a serious issue that will be investigated.
- Breaching the Policy may result in disciplinary action and ultimately dismissal and if it constitutes harm/risk of harm.





## **PART 3:**

# **RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT OF PARISH STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES**

Good recruitment, selection and management procedures will:

- help screen out and discourage those who are not suitable from joining your organisation.
- ensure paid staff and volunteers have clear rules and boundaries and feel supported in their roles.
- assure parents that all possible measures are being taken to ensure only suitable people will be recruited to work with children.

### **SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS OF RECRUITING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS WORKING WITH CHILDREN**

Recruitment and selection procedures must be applied equally to all staff and volunteers and this includes:

- those who have been part of the parish for many years and are taking up a new role with children.
- those who turn 18 and have become staff members or volunteers in a group where they have been participants.
- those who are 16 or 17 and wish to continue as helpers or take up a role as a helper in a group.

The process is the same for both volunteers and paid staff but the process will be more formal for the latter. The following steps are necessary to ensure good practice:

#### **DEFINING THE ROLE**

A role description should be drawn up for and given to all volunteers. This can be done generically for volunteer roles within the parish. For a paid role a specific job description should be created.

#### **APPLICATION FORM**

All applicants must be asked to complete an application form relevant to the extent of the role being undertaken. A consent form for carrying out an Access NI check is also completed at this point.

#### **DECLARATION**

All applicants are asked to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with children. All applicants will be required to declare any past



criminal convictions and cases pending against them. All applicants deemed suitable at interview will be required to complete an Access NI enhanced disclosure check.

## INTERVIEW

All potential staff and volunteers will be interviewed by the Parish Panel sometimes in conjunction with other relevant individuals such as the leader-in-charge. The level of formality of the interview should reflect the role being undertaken. An interview for a Sunday School teacher should be fairly informal, however an interview for a paid member of staff should be more formal and comply with fair employment regulations.

## REFERENCES

References should be taken up from at least two people who are not family members and, ideally, one of whom should have first-hand knowledge of the applicant's previous work or contact with children. References should be taken up **in writing** and should be followed up **orally**.

## NORTHERN IRELAND - ACCESSNI CHECK

As this process can change periodically, follow the latest procedure outlined on the *Safeguarding Trust* section of the Church of Ireland website [www.ireland.anglican.org](http://www.ireland.anglican.org)

## RECORD KEEPING

Details of the selection and recruitment procedure should be recorded and securely stored as per data protection regulations.

## RATIFYING THE APPOINTMENT

At the conclusion of the selection and recruitment process the panel recommends the individuals to the select vestry which is the appropriate body to ratify the appointment of the individual. A contract of employment (in the case of a member of staff) or a volunteer agreement (in the case of a volunteer) is signed by the individual and incumbent on behalf of the select vestry. A contract of employment with a paid member of staff should be drawn up by legal / human resources professionals.

**Please note that a member of staff or volunteer cannot begin their work until they have obtained a satisfactory Access NI Enhanced Disclosure check. This also applies to clergy and they must have a satisfactory Access NI check prior to ordination and/ or licensing.**

## STAFF OR VOLUNTEERS FROM OUTSIDE THE UK AND IRELAND

Background checks are not possible for many overseas applicants. Staff and volunteers from abroad may produce certificates of good conduct from their home church or statutory agencies in their country of origin. Such certificates must be treated with extreme caution as there is no way to confirm their validity. As with any other criminal conviction disclosure, it can only provide 'known' information.



Panels must make every effort to verify the suitability of candidates by careful use of references and interview. **NB** What constitutes an offence in the UK (and would be seen as child abuse) may not in the home country of the applicant. References therefore need to be viewed with this in mind.

It is advisable also to require candidates to sign a sworn declaration that there is nothing in their background which would prevent their working with children.

## MANAGING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Good management of volunteers and paid staff will contribute to safe activities for children. Good management will also create an atmosphere where staff and volunteers feel valued, are listened to and where issues can be dealt with quickly by systems already in place.

Effective management for all staff and volunteers should include:

### INDUCTION

New staff and volunteers must have training that includes basic awareness and understanding of child protection issues. The training should explain the procedures and guidelines and also include an introduction to the activities and ethos of the group they have joined. Staff and volunteers should be made aware of what is expected and required of them and the boundaries or limits within which they must operate.

### PROBATIONARY PERIOD (PAID STAFF) / TRIAL PERIOD (VOLUNTEERS)

All appointments should be conditional on a satisfactory period of work. Every new post should be reviewed within an agreed period of time - usually six months

### SUPERVISION

It is good practice to set up a supervision system for paid staff and volunteers, which means arranging to see staff and volunteers at regular intervals whether on their own or in small groups. This provides support for staff and volunteers and provides an opportunity to talk through any questions or difficulties they may have. It also gives the supervisor the opportunity to assess progress and whether any additional training should be provided. The supervisor should be the leader-in-charge of the organisation.

### FIXED TERM

It may also be helpful to indicate a particular duration for the role, say three to five years, thus allowing a volunteer to step back with dignity rather than feeling that resignation may be misinterpreted.



## **ANNUAL APPRAISAL (STAFF) / REVIEW (VOLUNTEER)**

The purpose of this is to review general performance and also to give the opportunity to discuss any relevant changes in the personal circumstances of staff and volunteers. The appraisal/review also provides the opportunity to highlight any required future support or skills training. Parishes should aim to provide access to at least one training or development opportunity per year for each member of staff or volunteer.

## **COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES**

Everyone has the right to complain or report a grievance. Children, parents, staff and volunteers should be facilitated in raising a concern or complaint. Written complaint and grievance procedures should be in place and communicated to all associated with each organisation e.g. a complaints form, an anonymous comments box or a meeting with the leader-in-charge.

Everyone also has the right to appeal a decision made regarding a complaint or grievance. Parishes should consider how to facilitate this e.g. through a subcommittee of the select vestry. In certain circumstances select vestries may need to seek legal advice.

It is important that a child related complaint or grievance, which does not relate to abuse, can be dealt with in a separate procedure.

## **STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

This procedure is appropriate for all non-child protection concerns regarding staff and volunteers' conduct or practice. A grievance procedure should be included within the contract of employment of all paid staff.

## **UNDER 18S WORKING WITH CHILDREN**

It is never appropriate to require someone aged less than 18 years to take on the role of leader or be in sole charge of children as this would mean leaving a child in charge of children. At least two adults should be in charge of any group of children. However U18s who wish to help should complete a volunteer application form, provide references and have an informal chat with the leader-in-charge. Permission from the Parish Panel must be sought by the senior leader-in-charge before any U18 is involved in such a role.

If under 18s are assisting in order to gain expertise, citizenship development, personal or professional development and are not expected to take on the full range of duties of a member of staff or volunteer or be left in sole charge of children, they will not meet the criteria for regulated posts and will not require an AccessNI Enhanced Disclosure check until the age of 16. At the age of 16 they should have an Access NI Enhanced Disclosure check carried out. If at 18 they wish to take



up a leadership role then assuming they have been in constant contact with the group there is no requirement to repeat this aspect of the the recruitment process.

Under 18s must be provided with an appropriate form of training to cope with basic areas, such as bullying, shouting, physical contact, emergency procedures and first-aid policy. Such training must also include the need to safeguard themselves in situations where their actions may be misconstrued, without undergoing the full training required of core leadership. The panel should ensure such training is provided and the leadership of the group should ensure compliance with these standards.

It is essential that U18s work at all times under those adults who have been trained to implement *Safeguarding Trust*.



## PART 4: CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

Codes of behaviour provide protection for everyone, including children, bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers. It is important that everyone involved has guidelines on what is expected, and what is not acceptable, with respect to their behaviour. The code of behaviour for bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers will help to create a supportive environment to provide a child-centred approach for the children involved in the Church. The code of behaviour for members will help to provide a contract for the children to agree to and abide by.

### CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR BISHOPS, CLERGY, STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

The code of behaviour for bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers has been categorised under five headings:

- Child-centred approach;
- Best practice;
- Inappropriate behaviour;
- Physical contact;
- Health & Safety.

#### CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH

- Treat all children equally;
- Listen to and respect children;
- Involve children in decision-making, as appropriate;
- Provide encouragement, support and praise (regardless of ability);
- Use appropriate language (physical and verbal);
- Have fun and encourage a positive atmosphere;
- Offer constructive criticism when needed;
- Treat all children as individuals;
- Respect a child's personal space;
- Discuss boundaries for behaviour and related sanctions, as appropriate, with children and their parents/guardians;
- Agree a group code of behaviour at the beginning of each year/session;
- Encourage feedback from groups or group members;
- Use age-appropriate teaching aids and materials;
- Lead by example;



- Be aware of a child's other commitments when scheduling activities, e.g., school or exams;
- Be cognisant of a child's limitations, due to a medical condition for example;
- Create an atmosphere of trust;
- Respect differences of ability, culture, race and sexual orientation.

## BEST PRACTICE

- Ensure that a membership registration form is completed for each child on an annual basis (name, address, phone, special requirements, attendance, emergency contact);
- Make parents/guardians, children, and visitors aware of *Safeguarding Trust*;
- Have emergency procedures in place and make all aware of these procedures;
- Be inclusive of children with special needs;
- Plan and be sufficiently prepared, both mentally and physically;
- Report any concerns to the Panel and follow reporting procedures;
- Report to the Parish Panel any concerns that they may have about a fellow staff member's or volunteer's practice which may cause harm to a child or the reputation of the Church of Ireland and complete an incident form;
- Report to the relevant person any concerns that they may have about bishops and clergy practice which may cause harm to a child or the reputation of the Church of Ireland and complete an incident form;
- Encourage children to report any bullying, concerns or worries and to be aware of the Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Observe appropriate dress and behaviour;
- Evaluate work practices on a regular basis;
- Provide appropriate training for clergy, staff and volunteers;
- Report and record any incidents and accidents;
- Update and review policies and procedures regularly;
- Keep parents/guardians informed of any issues that concern their children;
- Ensure proper supervision based on adequate ratios according to age, abilities and activities involved;
- Observe appropriate gender balance for residential;
- Don't be passive in relation to concerns, i.e., don't 'do nothing';
- Don't let a problem get out of control;
- Avoid, if at all possible, giving a lift to a child and if you do then make sure that parents/guardians are informed;
- Maintain awareness around language and comments made, verbally and in any written communication. If you think that something you said may have caused offence or upset, then try to address it in an apologetic, conciliatory and sensitive manner.





## **INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR**

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children;
- Don't use or allow language that is offensive, abusive or sexually suggestive, physical and/or verbal
- Don't single out a particular child for unfair favouritism, criticism, ridicule, unwelcome focus or attention;
- Don't allow/engage in inappropriate touching of any form;
- Don't hit or physically chastise children;
- Don't socialise inappropriately with children, e.g., outside of structured organisational activities.

## **PHYSICAL CONTACT**

- Seek consent of child in relation to physical contact (except in an emergency or a dangerous situation);
- Avoid horseplay or inappropriate touch;
- Check with children about their level of comfort when doing activities that might involve physical contact.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- Don't leave children unattended or unsupervised;
- Manage any dangerous materials;
- Provide a safe environment by abiding by the practices outlined in working safely with children section;
- Be aware of accident and incident procedures and follow accordingly.

## **BREACHING THE CODE OF BEHAVIOUR**

Bishops, Clergy, Staff and volunteers should understand that:

- If they are unsure of their actions and feel they may have breached the Code of Behaviour or feel that their actions may have been misconstrued, a report should be written and submitted immediately to the leader-in-charge and / or the panel.
- Breaching the Code of Behaviour may be a serious issue that will be investigated.
- Breaching the Code of Behaviour may result in disciplinary action and ultimately dismissal if it constitutes harm/risk of harm.

It is important that if a staff member or volunteer has a concern about the behaviour of another staff member or volunteer they should report these concerns to the panel. Where the concern relates to a panel member, reports should be made to another panel member or incumbent. Where the concern relates to the incumbent, reports should be made to the bishop. Where the concern relates to a bishop, reports should be made to the relevant Primate or Chief Officer in Church House.



If the concern relates to a breach of the code of behaviour for workers it shall be dealt with through complaints and disciplinary procedures, however if the concern relates to suspected or witnessed abuse, the matter will be dealt with through the procedures for dealing with an allegation against a staff member or volunteer.

## CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR MEMBERS

It is good practice to have a code of behaviour for the children who are attending the group's activities. This should be developed in consultation with the children themselves and can be done, for example, in a workshop situation. In this way the children within your group will know what is expected of them and will have a degree of ownership of the agreed code. There are a number of elements which should form part of a Code of Behaviour for members.

It is important that when developing the code of behaviour with the children; clergy, staff, volunteers should also discuss and agree the sanctions for breaching the code of behaviour. When agreed the code of behaviour and sanctions should be made available to all the children and their parents/guardians.

## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

*Safeguarding Trust* recommends the adoption of the Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 which defines bullying as:

*"Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression - whether it is verbal, psychological or physical - that is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools. It includes behaviours such as physical aggression, cyberbullying, damage to property, intimidation, isolation/exclusion, name calling, malicious gossip and extortion. Bullying can also take the form of identity abuse based on gender, sexual preference, race, ethnicity and religious factors. With developments in modern technology, children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the internet and other devices."*

It is therefore important that bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers do all in their power to tackle bullying occurring in any children's ministry activities. The panel should develop an anti-bullying policy, which includes the definition of bullying and guidelines on how clergy, staff and volunteers should respond to any incidents of bullying. This should be adopted by the Select Vestry and circulated to all clergy, staff and volunteers.



## **PART 5:**

# **WORKING SAFELY WITH CHILDREN**

### **ADMINISTRATION OF ACTIVITIES**

Clergy, staff and volunteers must ensure that all children who attend the group should have a membership registration form filled in by a parent or guardian giving: name, address, date of birth, special medical details, dietary needs, emergency telephone numbers, next of kin, and parental consent to attend the group. The name of the leaders in charge and relevant contact details should be clearly identified on the membership registration form.

An attendance register should be kept for each individual meeting and include all children and bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers present.

Accidents and incidents should be recorded on the accident and incident report forms/books.

Parental consent forms for all outings, etc., should be completed. Parental consent forms for photographs, text messaging, social media contact, etc., should be completed.

It is essential that written information sought from parents/guardians is provided by those with parental responsibility.

Parents/guardians should always be informed of the limits of confidentiality around their contact details and any information they provide to the organisation.

### **SUPERVISION LEVELS**

Children are less likely to experience accidents or incidents if they are supervised properly. Activities should be organised to maximise participation, fun and learning in a way that minimises risk. Clergy, staff and volunteers should ensure that:

- Children are not left unattended.
- Adequate numbers of clergy, staff and volunteers are available to supervise the activities.
- When dealing with group members of mixed gender, it is recommended that there are sufficient clergy, staff and volunteers of both sexes to properly supervise activities and any premises in use.
- They know at all times where children are and what they are doing.
- Any activity involving dangerous equipment has constant adult supervision.
- Dangerous behaviour is never allowed.

The minimum adult to child ratio in any group is outlined below. More clergy/staff/volunteers or adults to children compared to the minimum ratio may be required due to local circumstances, the relationship with the group, the experience of clergy, staff and volunteers, safety, ability/disability of children and the nature and/or location of the activities being undertaken.



**Minimum adult/child ratio:**

- Children aged 0-4 years: minimum of two adults and ratio of 1:3
- Children aged 5 and above: minimum of two clergy/staff/volunteers and a ratio of 1:8

Therefore every group should have a minimum of two adults/clergy/staff/volunteers and allowing an additional adult/clergy/staff/volunteer every time the group goes over the adult to child ratio.

**Example of minimum adult/child ratio:**

No. of adults/staff/volunteers	0 - 4 years	5 - 12 years	12 years plus
2	1 - 3 children	1 - 8 children	1 - 10 children
3	4 - 6 children	9 - 16 children	11 - 20 children
4	7 - 9 children	17 - 24 children	21 - 30 children
5	10 - 12 children	25 - 32 children	31 - 40 children

Where a group is allowing under 18s to assist working with children, the under 18s can supplement the number of adults/clergy/staff/volunteers supervising the activity but should not be counted as part of the adult/clergy/staff/volunteer ratio.

Where an activity involves swimming and the children are under eight years of age then clergy, staff and volunteers should abide by the pool’s Child Admission Policy.

**PRIVATE MEETINGS / CHATS**

Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers should be aware of the dangers which may arise from private meetings / chats with individual members. Another member of clergy, staff or volunteer must be informed of a private meeting. It is recognised that there will be occasions when confidential meetings must take place, but such meetings should be conducted in a room with visual access, or with the door open, or in a room or area which is likely to be frequented by other people. Where possible another member or another adult should be present or nearby during the meeting.

Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers should not arrange to have private meetings with members off premises as such meetings may be perceived as an abuse of authority or simply be misunderstood. If it is required to meet a child off church premises then the parent /guardian must be present.

**PHYSICAL CONTACT**

As a general principle bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with children. Physical contact which may be misconstrued by the child, parent/ guardian or other casual observer should be avoided.



Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers should use their discretion when a distressed child needs comfort and reassurance.

Some bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers are likely to come into physical contact with the children from time to time in the course of their activities, for example when showing a child how to use a piece of apparatus or equipment or while demonstrating a move or exercise during activities or sports. Bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers should be aware of the limits within which such contact should properly take place and of the possibility of such contact being misinterpreted.

Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers should not engage in physical competitive games / sports with children.

Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers who have to administer first-aid should ensure wherever possible that other children or another adult are present.

Following any incident where a bishop, cleric, member of staff or volunteer feels that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued a written report of the incident should be submitted immediately to the person to whom he/she is accountable /reports to and be included in the incident record book.

## **RELATIONSHIPS**

Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers must not allow a romantic and / or intimate relationship to develop with an individual child.

Bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers should ensure that their relationships with members are appropriate, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to talk or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and particularly when staff or volunteers are dealing with adolescents.

When children seek advice on an individual basis the primary role of a bishop, cleric, staff member or volunteer is to listen to the child and refer him/her to qualified and competent sources of advice/counselling.

## **GENERAL SAFETY**

Select Vestries, as people who have control of the parish premises, have a duty under The Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 to ensure that the premises, means of access and any fabric and furnishings in the premises, are safe and without risk of harm. Select Vestries should ensure that a Health & Safety statement is in place and that an annual Health and Safety audit of the premises and a Health & Safety risk assessment of the activities is undertaken.

Safety is of prime importance during any activity. This is not only the responsibility of the leader-in-charge but of every bishop, member of clergy, staff or volunteer. Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers should be aware of the following guidelines:



- Always have a quick initial look around the premises you are about to use to identify any possible dangers, e.g. a stack of chairs which could topple, an electric cable which could trip, etc.
- Be aware of the location of fire exits and ensure that they are not obstructed. Regular fire drills should be conducted to ensure that all children know what evacuation procedure to follow in the event of a real fire. Know where the nearest fire extinguishers are located. In the event of a fire, evacuating the building and saving life is much more important than fighting a fire. The assembly point should be clearly identified.
- It is imperative that where children's ministry activities are the only activity taking place in the parish premise that the front door is kept locked, with a relevant internal easy opening device, so that access is limited to those attending and those leading that group. If parents/guardians or others wish to gain access to the premises during these activities they should have to ring a door bell or use an intercom and clergy, staff member or volunteer should open the door to allow them access to the premises.
- Where a children's ministry activity is taking place at the same time as other activities not involving children, clergy/staff/volunteers should be aware of the other groups using the premises and the potential threats that this may raise. This may involve having extra clergy/staff/volunteers in place for these activities to monitor the door to the premises and supervise bathroom facilities.
- It is essential at the end of children's ministry activities that children are handed over to the parents/guardians or the adult authorised to collect the children by a member of the clergy/staff/volunteer.
- Know where the nearest accessible telephone is.
- If at all possible each group should have someone with a first-aid qualification. Where possible clergy, staff or volunteers should be aware of what medication children are currently taking and this should not be given without written consent from parents/guardians or doctors. Clergy, staff and volunteers should also seek to obtain information concerning allergies and reaction to foods, e.g. peanuts. Medication should be clearly marked, out of reach of children, and securely locked away.
- While in the kitchen area children must be supervised at all times or if children are not allowed in the kitchen area, it should be clearly marked as out of bounds to children.
- There should be adequate supervision of certain equipment, e.g. table tennis tables, snooker tables, etc.
- During games or 'icebreakers' be aware of the risks of physical injury and guard against these.
- Check that equipment is safe and do not use items that you believe are not fit for the purpose.
- When using special equipment for your programme, e.g. for 'one off' activities such as trampolining, bouncy castle, etc., ensure there is adequate supervision by trained staff or volunteers. You may also require special insurance to cover these higher risk activities. Be aware of the physical environment and remove/avoid items which may cause injury during the said activity. If the organisation is undertaking what is deemed to be high risk activities written permission from parents/guardians must be obtained in advance.



- Areas where maintenance work is taking place should never be used.
- Know where the first-aid provision is located.
- Know where the accident /incident report book is kept for recording details of accidents/ injuries/witnesses/date. Records of accidents/incidents should be kept in the Parish Panel records system.
- A plan for dealing with emergency situations should be drawn up for each group. This would include actions to be taken, records kept and local contact numbers for those who need to be informed.

## HEALTH & SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT

The Select Vestry are required to ensure that an annual health & safety audit of the premises and a health & safety risk assessment of the activities are undertaken. The Select Vestry shall determine the appropriate person/people to undertake the annual health & safety audit and shall ask the leaders of each group to undertake the health & safety risk assessment of the activities. Reports from both should be brought to a select vestry meeting.

Activities that would require a health & safety risk assessment include the following (This is no way an exhaustive list but gives an indication of the types of activities involved):

- Church services.
- Sunday clubs.
- Youth clubs.

Further health & safety risk assessments are required for one off events or outings e.g. a weekend camp, cinema trip.

Health & safety risk assessments for all activities must be completed in writing and retained with other relevant documents such as Safeguarding records and can be made available when required.

## ACCIDENTS/INCIDENTS

Panels should ensure that there are accident forms and incident forms available to all groups using premises. Clergy, staff and volunteers should be advised as to where these forms are available and the correct procedure for submitting to the Parish Panel if they have to complete a form.

In the event of an accident/incident, a clergy/staff member/volunteer should administer any necessary first aid in the presence of another person. It is good practice to check the membership registration form or activity consent form for any allergies the child might have.

Clergy/staff/volunteers should use their discretion as to whether to inform parents/guardians of the accident/incident, immediately after it has happened or when they return to collect their child from the group activity. No child should go home after an accident without their parents/guardians being informed of the accident.





All facts relating to any accident or incident, contact details of all concerned and medical/other intervention (if such was necessary) should be accurately recorded on the accident/incident report form. All incidents and accidents (no matter how minor) must be recorded in writing on the relevant report form.

If an accident/incident occurs off church premises (i.e. on a trip or outing) the accident/incident should also be reported to the management of that premises.

## **CONTENT OF ACTIVITIES**

Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers should ensure that activities being undertaken are suitable for the ages, abilities and experience levels of the participants. Individual children should not be excluded from any suitable activities.

Bishops, clergy, staff, volunteers and organisations should, as a matter of policy, consult parents/guardians and management committees when using materials in connection with sex education programmes. When using training materials of a sensitive nature a bishop, member of clergy, staff or volunteer should be aware of the danger that their application, either by members or by the bishop, member of clergy, staff or volunteer, might have after the event.

## **PHOTOGRAPHS AND RECORDED IMAGES**

It is necessary for parishes and dioceses working with children to seek the consent of parents/guardians of children giving permission for their children to be present in photographs or on recorded images while attending a parochial or diocesan event and for publishing of these images. In addition, where photographs are published by the parish or diocese, (for example, in the parish/diocesan magazine or on the parish/diocesan website) the full name of children will not be given.

It is not practicable, however, on public occasions for the parish or diocese, the incumbent or bishop, or any staff or volunteer to regulate and oversee the use by every or any individual present of his or her camera, video recorder, camera on a mobile phone or smart phone, or any other such device. Hence, the following appropriate, realistic and albeit, limited safeguards should be in place to protect children as far as is possible from inappropriate use of their images.

## **GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR TAKING OF PHOTOGRAPHS OR RECORDED IMAGES**

- Parental/guardian consent has been obtained in writing for the taking of and use of photographs and recorded images.
- No unsupervised access to children is permitted or appropriate. This includes for photographic and recording purposes.
- Suitable clothing must be worn. Photographing and recording of children should be permitted only when suitable clothing is worn.



Concerns about intrusive or inappropriate taking of photographs or recorded images, or the use of photographs or recorded images, should be reported directly to the Panel or to the leader in charge who should then inform the panel.

### **PHOTOGRAPHERS EMPLOYED AT EVENTS:**

Check that the photographers have been vetted and issue identification to be worn at all times. Keep a record of accreditations of the photographer. Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour. Clearly outline to the photographer that all images taken will remain the property of the parish/diocese and cannot be used or sold for any other purpose except with the explicit consent of the parish/diocese.

### **PUBLISHING OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND RECORDED IMAGES**

- Establish the type of image that appropriately represents the activity and the parish/diocese. Think carefully about any images you may wish to use in hardcopy, online or on social media.
- Never use the full name(s) of children along with the image(s). First names could be used if it is appropriate to name individuals. In group photos the first name should not be matched with their image in the photo in order e.g. L-R 'Jane, Tom, Jackie, Sally - prize-winners in the painting competition'.
- Only use images of children in suitable clothing. Parishes/dioceses can be involved in a range of activities; clearly some will pose a higher risk for potential misuse than others. Photos of these activities should focus on the activity rather than the individual child.

Only photographs or recorded images where consent has been given through the parish/diocese will be used for publicity purposes. Where consent is given for the use of photographs and recorded images of children, they may appear in a range of hardcopy, online publications and social media.

### **USE OF SOCIAL/DIGITAL MEDIA**

When considering using social/digital media as a means of communication with children, bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers must consider the age profile of the members of the group and should not use or encourage children to use social/digital media under the age of 13. Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers should always ensure that the means of communication being used with any group will not isolate or exclude any child who does not have access to that form of communication.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA**

In all their contacts and communications with the children of their group, bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers must be seen to be open and transparent. This is the case whether communications are by traditional means or by electronic means.

Bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers should not communicate with children using their personal social media accounts, personal email or chat rooms (unless a familial relationships exists).



For a group/parish using / publishing a social networking site, such as What's App, Facebook, the following principles should be applied:

- The page/profile must be password-protected, and the password must be held by at least three people from the clergy, staff or volunteers of that group/parish.
- The site should be monitored by a designated supervisor. This person should have access to the login details of the site. This supervisor will be appointed by the Panel.
- Any inappropriate posts should be removed immediately by the designated supervisor. Reasons should then be explained to the person who posted the content. Where possible sites should be monitored before content is put up.
- The site should be kept 'private' or 'closed' i.e. only permitted members or 'friends' can see what is posted on the site.
- The use of personal addresses and telephone numbers, etc. should be avoided as, while sites are 'private' or 'closed', there is the potential for items to be copied and shared.
- Content of any postings should be consistent with the aims of the parish/group. In cases of doubt clergy, staff or volunteers should seek advice from the Parish Panel.

For bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers using a social networking site:

- Bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers should not 'Friend' or 'Follow' children on social media. (unless a familial relationships exists) (Children may 'Follow' bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers on social media so bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers should make sure any content they post is appropriate.)
- Messages left to or from children on social network sites should be written on an open page e.g. A Facebook "wall", and not in a private message, or by using "chat" [one-on-one].
- Bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers should not network with members of their group via closed [one-on-one] chat rooms e.g. Facebook messenger, WhatsApp, etc. This should be done through 'Group Chats'
- Any events or activities run by the group/parish that are organised or publicised on the site should be a closed event so as non-members cannot access the event without suitable permission by the site administrators.
- Any emails sent to children via the site must be sent to at least one other member of clergy, staff or volunteer. (This can be done by 'bcc' if necessary.)
- Bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers should avoid communicating with children in their organisation/group via social/digital media late at night or during school hours.
- In signing off a post or an email bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers should not do so in a way that could be misconstrued or misinterpreted by the recipient e.g.: "luv X"; "xoxoxo". Simply sign your name.



- Parents/guardians should be asked to give their consent for bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers to communicate with their child via social/digital media. Leaders-in-charge of groups must seek this consent in writing when they are communicating with parents/guardians at the commencement of each year. Once known, bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers must adhere to the wishes of the parents/guardians. Parents/guardians should also be encouraged to become members of any social networking site groups. For those parents/guardians who wish to become members of any social networking site group they should be asked beforehand to ensure that their own privacy settings are suitable and reminded that they should not accept any friend request from a child from the social networking site group other than their own.
- Parental consent is required before pictures or videos of children are posted online. When posting any pictures or videos, bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers should be careful to ensure that no unnecessary private details of that child are disclosed - e.g. surnames or photos/videos where the child is wearing a uniform and which would identify the school they attend.
- Any disclosures of abuse reported through a social networking site must be dealt with according to the reporting procedures.

## **MOBILE PHONES**

Those who work with children need to be aware of the opportunities for abuse through the misuse of mobile phone and text messaging. While good use of such media can be beneficial we must be vigilant and alert to the possibilities of misuse and consequent harm that can result to children. Bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers must also take care to protect themselves.

- Bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers involved in youth and children's work should only have children's mobile numbers if the nature of their involvement requires them to phone or text children. (Such bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers might include those running a group for older teenagers, or a member of staff, clergy or a volunteer involved in co-ordinating youth work.)
- Written parental consent should be sought if the member of staff or volunteer in this role will be contacting children via mobile phone.
- A method of accountability should be arranged e.g. copies of texts could also be sent to other staff or volunteers or to parents/guardians.
- If a member of clergy, staff or volunteer has a child's phone number it should only be used for the purposes it has been given i.e. the cleric, staff member or volunteer should not share this information.
- It is recommended that bishops, clergy and staff have a separate phone for work purposes rather than using their personal phone for contacting children.

## **TEXTING - COMMUNICATION NOT CONVERSATION!**

- Texts should be used for the purposes of reminding children about events which are forthcoming.
- Texts can also be used as a means to encourage children if it is appropriate e.g. 'hope exam goes ok'. This should not develop into a one to one conversation but remain as a group chat.



- If it turns into a conversation, communications should be ended. A member of staff, clergy or volunteer can suggest discussing the subject further at the next event or, if they are concerned about the child, arrange to meet up to talk further (within the approved safety guidelines).

## CAMERA PHONES

Camera phones should be used safely and responsibly.

Pictures can be very powerful and stir up strong emotions. Camera phone users should respect the private lives of others and not take or distribute pictures of other people if it could invade their privacy.

Bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers and children should not send pictures that are obscene, indecent or menacing and should be sensitive about other people's gender, colour, religion, sexual orientation or personal background. Bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers and children should be made aware that it is a criminal offence to take, make, download, permit to be taken, distribute, show or possess an indecent or sexually explicit image of a child under 18.

Camera phones can be used to make children safer. Older children, for example using a taxi, can send a picture of the car's registration to a parent/guardian/friend before they begin the trip, or can simply use the phone to show parents/guardians where they are.

## USE OF MOBILE PHONES ON ACTIVITIES

When developing a Code of Behaviour for Members, clergy/staff/volunteers should encourage the children to include what is acceptable and what is expected of them in relation to mobile phones whilst at activities.

The Code of Behaviour for members should include sections to cover:

- Confirmation that when on activities a named member of clergy, staff or volunteer is the primary point of communication and is to be contacted if there is an emergency or change to previously agreed arrangements.
- That the usage of mobile phones including text messaging or playing games cannot be allowed to be a distraction from a safe awareness of the environment.
- That the usage of mobile phones including text messaging or playing games cannot be allowed to interfere with full participation in the activity.

When drawing up a Code of Behaviour for members for outings, camps and overnight activities, it should include sections to cover:

- Preferred time period when parents/guardians may make contact if they wish. Parents/guardians should be advised that contact outside of this time may not be possible due to the nature of the activities unless in an emergency situation.
- The use of phones while away can worsen rather than alleviate homesickness. In this context it can be good to encourage children sometimes to consider 'no news is good news'



## **USE OF COMPUTERS / TABLETS / WEB ENABLED GAMES CONSOLES / SMART TVS**

Where bishop/clergy/staff/volunteers plan to use such electronic devices as part of their activities to engage in a relevant up-to-date medium, it is essential that a number of additional safety measures are undertaken.

Bishops/clergy/staff/volunteers should set out to the children clear boundaries as to what the electronic devices can be used for, the access limitation and the consequences of not abiding by these boundaries. The electronic devices being used should have, where possible, appropriate parental control software installed to ensure that the children do not gain access to inappropriate sites.

Bishops/clergy/staff/volunteers should supervise access to the electronic devices closely to ensure that they are not inappropriately used.

Bishops/clergy/staff/volunteers should ensure that whatever activity is planned using electronic devices will not, even inadvertently, expose children to inappropriate content.

## **TAKING CHILDREN ON OUTINGS / RESIDENTIALS**

If planning an activity off parish premises or staying away from home overnight, bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers should consider the following:

- Safe methods of transport.
- Adequate insurance to cover all aspects of the trip.
- Written parental consent (for each individual trip).
- Any information about the children which may be relevant as they may be in your care for longer or overnight, e.g. allergies, medical problems, special needs, etc.
- Number of clergy/staff/volunteers required to supervise children adequately at all times.
- Appropriate and well supervised sleeping arrangements.
- Respect for privacy of children in dormitories, changing rooms, showers and toilets.

The following guidance is for bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers who are involved in organising day trips away or residentials for children.

## **PLANNING AND DOCUMENTATION**

- Ensure activity consent forms are signed and received from parents/guardians prior to departure.
- Ensure that activity consent forms have details of medical conditions, allergies and/or procedures that may need to be looked after during the trip.
- Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover for the trip and activities involved.



- Ensure that the selection process for choosing children for the trip is fair and transparent.
- Ensure that emergency contact numbers for parents/guardians are documented and available at all times.
- All bishops/clergy/staff/volunteers should be given clear roles and responsibilities for the trip.
- There should be one person appointed as the overall leader of the group who will have final decision making authority during the trip.
- Ensure that a health & safety assessment has been conducted.

### **ACCOMMODATION (FOR RESIDENTIAL TRIPS)**

- In the planning stage check the proposed sleeping accommodation for children, bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers.
- Check health and safety issues relating to the accommodation such as emergency evacuation, accessibility of rooms and corridors for the mobility of the children, bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers.
- Ensure that single gender dormitories are used for children.
- Ensure that only children of similar age share sleeping accommodation.
- Ensure that all bishops/clergy/staff/volunteers have a list of all the children's accommodation allocation.
- Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers should never enter children's rooms without knocking first.

### **PREPARING PARTICIPANTS AND PROGRAMME**

- Prepare an information pack for children and parents/guardians including the programme of activities, emergency information, and a 'help me' card particular for foreign trips
- It is essential that the children are involved in every aspect of the process. This is an ideal opportunity for them to share the responsibility for the trip /activities that take place.
- A code of behaviour for the children, specific to the trip, should be drawn up / agreed and signed by the parents/guardians.
- Ensure that one person is appointed as the overall leader of the group, they will have various responsibilities including making a report following the trip.
- There should be a plan for communication with parent/guardians and children to inform them of travel and accommodation details, activities, special requirements, medical requirements, special dietary needs and any other necessary details. This can take the form of meetings or written correspondence.





## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- Have clear emergency procedures should you need to curtail the trip, have an emergency fund and know where the children, bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers are at all times.
- Children should be under reasonable supervision at all times and should never leave the venue or go unsupervised without prior permission.
- Have a back-up plan if the programme changes for any reason.
- Bring a medical/first aid kit with you.
- Bishops/clergy/staff/volunteers should ensure they have the contact details of the Panel with them while on the trip.
- For foreign trips, in particular, it is advisable to have an agreed contact person in the parish/diocese that will be able to respond to emergencies if they occur at any time of the day or night. This may involve liaising with parents/guardians in difficult situations that can be hard to do over the phone. This person should have the full contact details of the group and the full itinerary for the trip.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

To put an effective monitoring and evaluation of how well the trip fulfills its aims and objectives, each of the following should be addressed:

- Systems for monitoring and evaluation should be developed prior to the trip and agreed among the organisers.
- Monitoring and evaluation should be carried out with the children, bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers.
- There should be daily evaluations with the children, bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers for longer trips.
- Carry out a full and final evaluation which should be a real exercise to learn from. Review your safety assessment from the planning process to see if there are any areas that need to be addressed.
- Make sure there is a system for keeping records and reports during the trip.

## TRANSPORT

Children should not, where at all possible, be transported by a bishop, member of the clergy, staff or volunteer on their own. Try to ensure another member of clergy, staff or volunteer or other children are present in the vehicle. If a situation occurs when a child has to be transported alone, ensure other clergy, staff and volunteers and if possible the parents/guardians know this is happening and that the child is in the rear seat. **Current seat belt and child seat legislation must be adhered to.**



Those bishops, clergy and staff members transporting children must have a relevant driving licence and business insurance as part of their insurance policy.

When using public transport to bring children to activities, bishops/clergy/staff/volunteers should complete a head count when embarking and disembarking the mode of transport. Always have a back-up plan in case the particular mode of public transport is not available.

When hiring a coach or minibus to transport children to activities, ask for confirmation of insurance and public service vehicle licence for the firm and that an Access NI vetted driver will be supplied to drive the bus on the day. Ensure that bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers are seated by all emergency exits and interspersed throughout the coach. Ensure that everyone wears the seat belts supplied.

## DIVERSITY

Everyone within the parish needs to take into consideration diversity in the needs and practices of those who attend activities in the parish. The Church of Ireland does not discriminate against children who have different cultural backgrounds and beliefs. Groups should ensure bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers are open to and aware of diversity in the beliefs and practices of children. They need to ask about cultural needs and be aware of the difficulties posed by any language barriers or other communication difficulties. Anti-discriminatory practice is at the core of the Church of Ireland and a zero tolerance towards discriminatory practice is expected. Groups have a responsibility to ensure that any children with additional needs are treated with equality and a policy of inclusion needs to be underlined with robust procedures which all bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers agree to and are aware of.

## SUPPORTING FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Parenting a child with additional needs can be overwhelming at times. Parents/guardians can sometimes feel anger, fear, grief and fatigue while struggling to help their child. The Church should strive to be a place of sanctuary for parents / guardians and members should seek to understand difficulties faced by families.

***Talk with the parents/guardians who will know what the child's needs are.*** Not only will this demonstrate to the child's family that the church is welcoming to children with additional needs, but you may also be able to offer the family support if required. Having consulted with the parents/guardians and child consider how your group can meet the child's needs. Some children with additional needs may require one-to-one help in church or a children's group, ensure that your group have the appropriate number of clergy, staff or volunteers to provide this support.

## ACTION POINTS

**Dos and Don'ts** - general advice for all working with children with additional needs.

### Do:

- Include (not just by enrolling a child into your programme or activity, but by including them in every aspect of what you say or do).



- Treat the child as you would any other child.
- Always speak directly to the child.
- Always ask the child if you can help him or her in any way.
- Integrate the child into the group.
- Be aware that inclusion in your group may be a child's first experience of being in a mixed group - make it a positive experience.
- Try to be aware of a child's hidden disability or condition, such as epilepsy, which may require assistance.
- When planning an event, ask advice from the children and their parents/guardians, and advertise accessibility.
- Be aware of the use of language that may be hurtful, insensitive or derogatory.
- Assume nothing - always ask! Talk to the parents/guardians and communicate with the child too!

**Don't:**

- Exclude (this is demonstrated by your commitment to the child).
- Use negative terms such as 'crippled' or 'victim'.
- Use language that promotes pity or charity.
- Use emotionally loaded language such as 'suffers from', 'afflicted with', 'bound' or 'confined'.
- Consider a parent/guardian to be a conversational go-between.
- Segregate.
- Pretend that you know what children are saying when you cannot understand them - ask them to repeat themselves or try another method of communication.
- Be embarrassed about using common expressions, for example saying 'see you later' when speaking to a child who is blind.



## PART 6: SHARING INFORMATION AND RECORD KEEPING

### COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Spreading the word, sharing resources and raising awareness about safeguarding children throughout the Church of Ireland is an essential element of *Safeguarding Trust*. It is important that all stakeholders feel informed and have an opportunity to have their say.

The Safeguarding Board shall devise a communications strategy to ensure the ongoing dissemination of information about safeguarding children and the provision of support to dioceses and parishes to ensure the proper implementation of *Safeguarding Trust*.

Dioceses and parishes shall devise a communications policy which sets out how communication will happen in children's ministry activities, between the parish/diocese and parents/guardians and children and the wider community. The policy will set out the dioceses/parishes intention to involve parents/guardians and children and share information in an open and transparent way.

### WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS/GUARDIANS POLICY

Working in partnership with parents/ guardians helps to safeguard children. The Church of Ireland sees the welfare of children as paramount and therefore seeks to form positive relationships between bishops/clergy/staff/volunteers and parents/guardians to encourage mutual trust and support and so dioceses/parishes should adopt a policy for working in partnership with parents/guardians.

### CONFIDENTIALITY AND SHARING PERSONAL INFORMATION

All information about a child and family should be handled by bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers in a confidential and sensitive manner. It is important to note that whilst bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers will do their utmost to ensure the confidentiality of information there are occasions where personal information will be shared.

Where a child protection or welfare concern arises, information will be shared on a need to know basis in the best interest of a child with the relevant statutory authorities and with parents/guardians. Data protection regulations recognise that in certain circumstances information can be shared in the interests of child protection, but that such sharing must be necessary and proportionate.

Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers working with children should make it clear to children and their parents/guardians that they cannot give undertakings regarding secrecy.

Parents/guardians and children will be informed if personal information is being shared with statutory authorities, unless doing so could put the child at further risk or the bishop/clergy/staff/volunteer/Panel member making the report at risk.



## RECORD KEEPING

### CHILD PROTECTION RECORDS

The Panel is responsible for keeping the following records relating to *Safeguarding Trust* in a locked filing cabinet.

- Any disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse.
- Records relating to disclosures, concerns or allegations of abuse including reports from bishops/clergy/staff/volunteers, reports to Gateway / Social Services, including informal advice from the Gateway / Social Services, informing parents/guardians, reports to the PSNI, advice given to bishops/clergy/staff/volunteers.
- Any complaints about the safety and welfare of children while at children's ministry activities.
- Any protective measures or action taken in relation to an allegation against a staff/volunteer.
- Any actions taken in response to a complaint against bishop/clergy/staff/volunteer.

The Panel members are the only people who have access to these child protection records.

The Parish Panel will review all Child Protection records twice a year and keep them updated. The Panel shall report to each meeting of the Select Vestry on *Safeguarding Trust* matters without revealing any details of individual cases unless the situation so warrants.

Child Protection records held by the bishops and the Child Protection Officer shall be kept in a locked filing cabinet. The bishops and the Child Protection Officer shall ensure that all Child Protection records held by them are kept up to date and shall ensure that such records are handed over in their entirety to their successors.

### PERSONNEL RECORDS

Personnel records for all staff and volunteers including application forms, declaration forms, notes from interviews, reference forms, vetting disclosures, forms of identification, declarations of acceptance, volunteer agreements shall be kept securely in a locked filing cabinet by the Parish Panel.

The Parish Panel members alone will have access to these personnel records. Individual staff or volunteers may request in writing to see the information held relating to them.

These records will be updated regularly with information from the support meetings held with staff and volunteers.

The bishop of the diocese will hold personnel records for the clergy in their charge and these must be stored as per current data protection legislation.

### GROUP RECORDS

Membership/Registration consent forms, parental consent forms and attendance records for each group are held by the clergy/staff/volunteers leading that group for the year those records pertain to. At the end of each year the clergy/staff/volunteers shall ensure that these records are handed over to the Parish Panel to be stored in the locked filing cabinet.



All completed accidents and incidents books/forms will be held by the Parish Panel in the locked filing cabinet.

## **DATA PROTECTION AND STORAGE OF INFORMATION**

The General Data Protection Regulations and *Safeguarding Trust* guidelines set out the appropriate safeguards which must be in place to ensure the safe storage of information and sets out the retention period for the various records held by the Panel.

**NB** The careful handling of information should not inhibit the availability of necessary information about children.

## **CONVERSION OF CHILD SAFEGUARDING RECORDS FROM HARD COPY TO DIGITAL COPY**

Where a parish/dioceses/diocesan body or organisation wishes to convert records from hard copy to digital copy the following steps should be taken:

1. The Select Vestry shall agree to the conversion of the records to digital format, what records shall be converted, who shall undertake this conversion and what time period of records shall be converted. These details shall be recorded in the Select Vestry minutes.
2. The relevant records shall then be scanned and the digital copy stored on a password protected external hard drive. No converted records should be stored on a cloud or on a network linked computer to avoid breaches of data protection.
3. The external hard drive shall be stored in the panel filing cabinet.
4. In order to ensure that the data on the external hard drive is not lost if it should become corrupted or is damaged, a backup of the external hard drive should be made on a second password protected external hard drive and it should be stored in a separate location (e.g. in the Rectory or by another panel member).
5. A check should be undertaken that all the information contained on the hard copy is legible on the digital copy and no document has been missed in conversion process before the hard copy records are shredded and destroyed.
6. Due to the length of time that certain records have to be kept it is essential that the digital records are migrated or converted as technology develops as the records need to remain accessible.
7. Additional records can be converted over time, but each time records are to be converted, this should be agreed by the Select Vestry as above.

Before commencing conversion of records from hard copy to digital copy, consideration must be given to the time it will take to convert the records, the cost factor (if any) and the ongoing responsibility of ensuring that the digitised records will remain accessible in light of technological advances.



## PART 7: RESPONDING TO ISSUES

### RECOGNISING, RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING ALLEGATIONS, DISCLOSURES AND CONCERNS OF ABUSE

Abuse and serious neglect occur in all sectors of society. There is no such thing as an 'abuse-free' community. In our churches and communities there are children who are being abused, adults who have been deeply scarred by childhood abuse and people who are currently abusing, or have abused, children. The Church must do all it can to ensure the protection of children from all forms of harm and abuse.

*Safeguarding Trust* is in place to enable parishes, dioceses, bishops, clergy and other Church staff and volunteers to safeguard the welfare of children with whom they work.

Disturbingly, people with a sexual interest in children are to be found in all communities. The Church must take all reasonable steps to:

- exclude known abusers from opportunities to groom children for purposes of abuse.
- report to the statutory authorities any suspicious person or known offender attempting to make contact with children.
- report to the appropriate Gateway Team and/PSNI when there is an allegation, disclosure or concern of abuse arising from activities within the Church.

Those working with children should be aware of the range of abuse - neglect, emotional, physical, emotional, sexual, neglect and exploitation - to which some children may be subject. Most abuse is committed by close relatives, friends or those in positions of authority or trust. It often takes place in the home of the child concerned.

Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers should know what steps to take in response to a situation where they have reason to suspect that abuse may be occurring or where a child alleges that abuse is occurring.

***The one option that is not available is to do nothing.***

### PEER (CHILD TO CHILD) ABUSE

In some cases of child abuse, the alleged perpetrator will be a child. In these situations, the child protection procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and alleged abuser, i.e. it should be considered a child protection issue for both children.

### AGE OF CONSENT

In Northern Ireland the legal age of consent to have sex is 16 years.





## **ISSUES AROUND 'AGE OF CONSENT'**

Sexual activity involving a child who is capable of giving informed consent on the matter, while illegal, may not necessarily constitute sexual abuse as defined for the purposes of this guide. One example, which would fall into this category, is a sexual relationship between a 16 year old girl and her 18 year old boyfriend. The decision to initiate child protection action in such cases is a matter for professional judgement by Social Services and each case should be considered individually. The criminal aspects of the case will, of course, be dealt with by the PSNI.

## **SUPPORTING ADULTS WHO WERE ABUSED IN CHILDHOOD (HISTORIC ABUSE)**

When an adult makes an allegation of historical abuse it is important to attend and listen to them. Adults must be made aware, if possible in advance of disclosure, that if they give information which indicates a potential risk to children, a referral to PSNI must be made. If the adult making the disclosure refuses to report to the PSNI, the person to whom the disclosure has been made is legally required to make the report to the PSNI.

Even when the alleged or suspected victims are now adults there may be an ongoing risk to other children.

## **SELF-DISCLOSURE**

An adult, young person or child within your organization may disclose information which indicates that they have perpetrated abuse. This information should also be referred to Gateway through the Parish Panel.

## **REPORTING CONCERNS**

Under *Safeguarding Trust* procedures, the Parish Panel is charged with the duty to report child protection concerns or disclosures notified by bishops, clergy, staff, volunteers or any parishioner, where there is a reasonable concern.

It is **not** the parish member of staff or volunteer's responsibility to identify and investigate possible instances of abuse of children. This is the role of Gateway and / or the PSNI

## **WHAT MIGHT CONSTITUTE A CONCERN ABOUT A CHILD?**

A concern relates to the possibility of a child suffering harm. Indicators of this might include:

- sudden, unexplained or worrying changes in behaviour.
- physical signs or symptoms that may be indicative of abuse (emotional, sexual, physical or neglect).
- worrying remarks made by a child.
- a situation where a child is exposed to potential risk of harm.



**All concerns should be recorded and reported to the Parish Panel, no matter how insignificant they may seem, whether they relate to situations internal or external to the parish. For instance, concerns connected to a family or school situation should be noted as well as concerns related to your organisation.**

### **WHAT IS A DISCLOSURE?**

A **disclosure** is when a child tells a worker that they have been or are being harmed or abused in some way. This may be physical, sexual, emotional abuse, neglect or bullying.

It is important to reassure the person who has made the disclosure and offer appropriate support. A disclosure may also be made when a person discloses that he/she has perpetrated abuse and that person will also require appropriate support. All disclosures must be reported to the panel.

### **WHAT IS A CONCERN OR ALLEGATION ABOUT THE BEHAVIOUR OF STAFF OR VOLUNTEERS?**

Inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour or communication, favouritism or negligence are examples of what may constitute a **concern** about the conduct of a volunteer or member of staff.

An **allegation** about a cleric, volunteer or member of staff occurs when a child, parent or other worker reports specific unacceptable behaviour where a child has been harmed or abused in some way. Allegations against clergy, staff or volunteers must be referred to the Parish Panel.

In the case of allegations against one of the Parish Panel members this should be reported to the bishop of the diocese. If a bishop is the subject this should be reported to an archbishop. If the archbishop is the subject then this should be reported to the Primate or the Chief Officer of the Representative Church Body.

### **RECORD KEEPING**

All concerns, disclosures and allegations should be recorded on pro formas provided by your organisation and passed to the Parish Panel - see **Appendix**.

### **BISHOPS, CLERGY, STAFF OR VOLUNTEERS NEED TO KNOW**

- what constitutes a 'concern', 'disclosure' and 'allegation'.
- to whom to report i.e. the Panel and its contact details.
- how to access and complete the pro formas used for reporting concerns, disclosures and allegations.
- contact details for Gateway and the PSNI and the CPO in the event that Parish Panel members are not available in an emergency.
- that the panel will support them through the reporting process and provide access to legal advice if the Panel or the insurer decides this is advisable.
- that the primary concern for the first person who suspects, or is told of, possible abuse is to report it to the panel and ensure the concern is taken seriously. The worker may also report directly to Gateway.



**Under no circumstances should any Bishop, clergy person, staff or volunteer attempt to deal with the problem of abuse alone.**

## **RESPONDING TO A CHILD WHO MAKES A DISCLOSURE**

### **DOS AND DON'TS**

#### **Dos**

- Stay calm
- Listen and hear
- Give time to the child to say what he or she wants
- Reassure the child that he or she has done the right thing in telling
- Record in writing using the child's own words, immediately after meeting the child, what was said
- Keep a note of your report, giving the date, time, name of the individual whom you have told and course of action agreed. This record may be required for any subsequent legal proceedings.

#### **Don'ts**

- Don't panic
- Don't display shock or disgust
- Don't make a child repeat the story unnecessarily
- Don't promise to keep secrets or make promise you cannot keep
- Don't enquire into details of abuse
- Don't communicate with the person against whom accusations have been made and don't attempt to deal with it alone
- Don't delay
- Don't give opinion, state the facts as reported to you

**Your primary responsibility is to report any suspected abuse and ensure that the concern is taken seriously.**

### **VITAL INFORMATION**

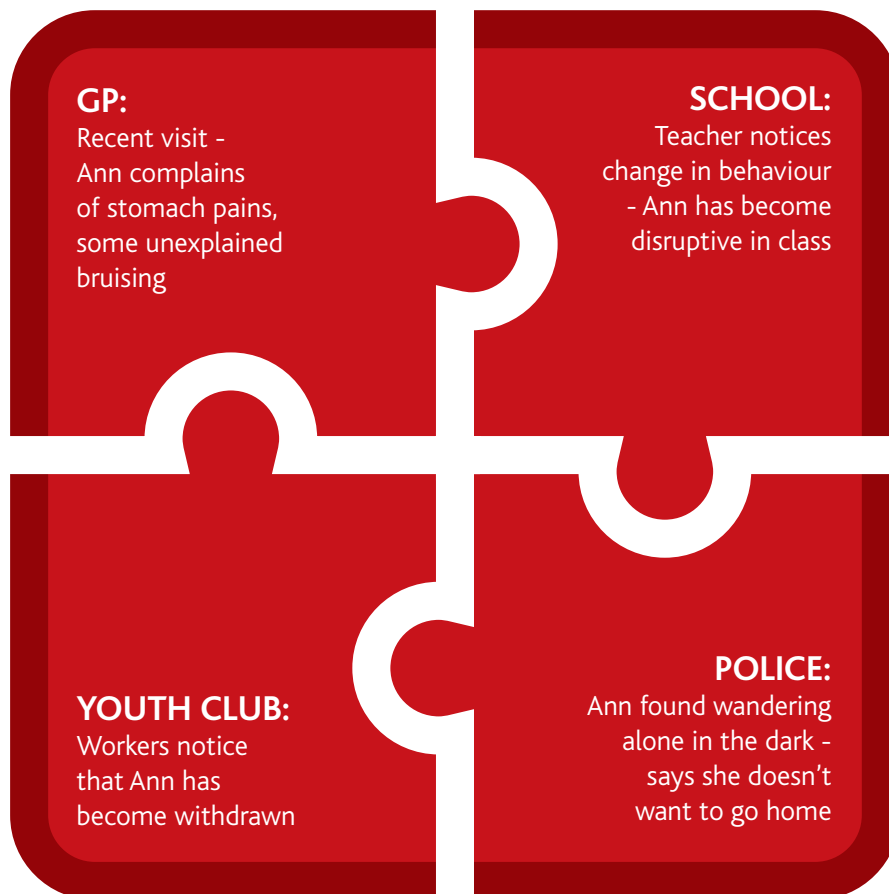
Try to have available:

- the name, address and age of any child you are concerned about
- the nature of any injury
- any need for medical attention
- your reason for suspicion of abuse



- details of what you have done already and who you have told
- any practical information you may have, such as the name of the child's GP, school etc
- information as to whether or not the person against whom a suspicion, complaint or allegation exists, has any children of his/her own.

Sharing information is one of the most important ways to prevent abuse of children. In many situations a number of individuals or agencies may each have a piece of information which in itself may seem unimportant but when put together with all of the other pieces could create quite a worrying picture. E.g.



Abuse of children often goes undetected because people who have pieces of information are reluctant to share them. Your church / parish should have well established links with other organisations and parents so that action can be taken when information which causes you concern comes to light.

It is also important to note that some children are more vulnerable to abuse because of the circumstances of their life. This group would include the following:

- children with disabilities
- children in the criminal justice system



- children living with domestic violence
- separated children seeking asylum
- children who are carers.

Bishops, clergy, staff or volunteers should be particularly vigilant for signs of abuse if they are working with children in any of these groups.

### **PARISH PANEL - KEY ROLE**

The role of the Parish Panel is to make contact with the duty social worker in the appropriate Gateway Team or, in emergency, to the PSNI and to report any allegations against staff or volunteers, disclosures or concerns (if appropriate).

If the panel has concerns about adults who are not involved in the parish organisations but may pose a risk to children in other organisations, advice should be gained from statutory agencies on how this information should be shared appropriately.

### **INFORMAL ENQUIRY**

The Parish Panel may pose a notional story or hypothetical example to the duty social worker responsible for child protection concerns to clarify if reporting is appropriate in a given situation. An informal enquiry involves a Parish Panel member or any person describing the scenario of concern to the duty social worker without disclosing names or location.

The Parish Panel considers:

#### **Reasonable grounds for concern (the objective indicators)**

- a) Specific indication from the child that he/she was abused.
- b) An account by the person who saw the child being abused.
- c) Evidence, such as injury or behaviour, which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way.
- d) An injury or behaviour which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a question of abuse (an example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour).
- e) Consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering some form of harm.

**One panel member on behalf of the Parish Panel** makes the report.

Others to be contacted:

The Child Protection Officer and the bishop of the diocese or archbishop (if they have not already been contacted) immediately thereafter, certainly within 24 hours or on the next working day. Advise them of the disclosure, allegation, concern and report (details and names should not be conveyed if the parish does not have a legal interest in the matter).



The Parish Panel should:

- create a confidential file recording all notes, all conversations, the standard report form and advice from the statutory authorities and the CPO.

## **ALLEGATIONS AGAINST VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF MEMBERS**

In a situation where a staff member is the subject of an allegation the following should be remembered:

- It is not possible in these guidelines to deal with every scenario as conditions of employment can vary greatly from employee to employee.
- **It is advisable that legal advice be sought by the incumbent/Select Vestry as quickly as possible to ensure that employment law procedures and natural justice principles are correctly followed.**
- **Parish insurers should be advised of any issue of alleged abuse.**

Any individual against whom an allegation has been made has a right to be notified of the cause of concern by an appropriate person. The notification of this individual will need careful consideration and should **only** be undertaken in consultation with the statutory authority.

The same person should not have responsibility for dealing with both the reporting and the employment issues.

The staff member should be informed:

- a) that an allegation has been made against him or her.
- b) the nature of the allegation - if this has been agreed with the statutory agencies The staff member should be afforded an opportunity to respond. The employer should note the response and pass on this information when making the formal report to the duty social worker.

If the person is a paid employee suspension without prejudice pending further investigation by the statutory authorities may be appropriate. Such suspension should normally be on full pay. It may be appropriate to re-assign the staff member to work that does not involve contact with children.

Any person who has been suspended should be advised to seek his/her own independent legal advice.

At this stage it is important to stress that the person against whom a suspicion, complaint or allegation has arisen, and his/her family, will require pastoral care, as will any alleged victims and their families.

It is preferable for a different member of clergy to provide support to the alleged perpetrator.

The bishop of the diocese or the archbishop, in consultation with the panel, should take all necessary steps to ensure that parish activities can be carried on with a minimum of disruption.



The Child Protection Officer is available for advice and support and must be briefed regularly as any child protection issue develops.

In a situation where the statutory investigation does not lead to prosecution or conviction, the Church of Ireland will conduct an internal review of the issue at the end of any statutory investigation.

This will require that the Diocesan Panel is convened to examine the issue and to meet with the individual against whom the allegation was made. The Diocesan Panel will prepare a report with recommendations in relation to the individual's suitability to return to their position. The report will be considered by a special panel who will make a decision whether to accept and implement the recommendations of the report.

Membership of the special panel:

The panel should have either the CPO or Secretary of the Board of Education, a senior person from the diocese and someone with knowledge and experience of child protection and safeguarding issues. The individual will have the right to be accompanied to the meeting though not by a legal representative, and will have the right to appeal the decision. A further appeal panel may need to be convened in such a case when an appeal arises.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality is key to this process. It must be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in concerns about child abuse. It is imperative that all information is treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should be discussed only with those who need to know (e.g. Diocesan Panel member, bishop or archdeacon, and the Gateway social worker. The Select Vestry may need to be advised to some extent. All written records should be filed securely.

A full guarantee cannot be given that information received in relation to an allegation, suspicion or concern of child abuse will be kept absolutely confidential. However, every effort will be made to preserve the anonymity of persons or organisations providing the information if that is desirable. However Gateway will expect a parish to be willing to stand over any report made on behalf of the Church.

## **SUMMARY OF THE REPORTING / REFERRAL PROCEDURE**

The Parish Panel member:

1. takes details of the allegation/disclosure/concern.
2. if practicable, consults with the other Parish Panel members and if an opinion can be reasonably formed that abuse may have taken place the designated Parish Panel member, on behalf of the Parish Panel, reports to:

Gateway





OR, in an emergency where a child is believed to be at immediate risk:

The PSNI

3. asks the name of the staff member or volunteer involved and who they report to and subsequently uses standard reporting form.
4. follows the advice given by the appropriate authority listed above, providing reports in writing as required.
5. as soon as possible notifies the bishop/archbishop and child protection officer.

**NB** If there is any doubt or uncertainty, it is strongly recommended that you test your concerns with appropriate Gateway Staff by the use of an informal enquiry.

**This method of referral / reporting adopted by the Church of Ireland does not preclude the individual worker making direct contact with the statutory authorities above if he/she so chooses.**

## **RAISING A CONCERN ABOUT SOMEONE IN A POSITION OF TRUST IN THE CHURCH - THIS INCLUDES ALL BISHOPS, CLERGY, STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

All organisations that provide services for, or work with, children must have appropriate whistle-blowing procedures, and a culture that enables safeguarding concerns and allegations to be addressed. There should be particular awareness that the welfare of children is paramount. Whistle blowing as part of the safeguarding procedures is intended to encourage and enable anyone with a serious concern, to raise that concern.

People who work within the Church of Ireland, including but not limited to office holders, employees or volunteers, may find it difficult to speak out and raise their concerns as they may feel they are being disloyal to their colleagues or to the church. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. Whistle-blowers are protected by law from victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage provided the matter in question is raised with genuine concern. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (NI) gives workers legal protection against being dismissed or penalized as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. The Act extends this protection to volunteers.

It is important that the individuals raising concerns put their name to the allegation and do not raise it anonymously. Where concerns are expressed anonymously they will be considered however they are much less powerful and far more difficult to investigate and prove. Concerns can be raised in confidence. At the appropriate time, however, the whistle-blower may be approached to come forward as a witness, in order to bring the matter to a conclusion.

**If an individual has any concerns that someone within the church is engaged in activities or behaviour that is contrary to any part of these safeguarding policies they should, in the first instance, contact the Child Protection Officer (NI).**

**If the individual feels unable to contact a member of the Church of Ireland they can go directly to the Gateway Service in the relevant Health and Social Care Trust.**



**If an individual has any concerns about a person in a position of trust in the Church and feel unable to use the above procedure for dealing with an allegation against staff or volunteers, they should in the first instance contact the Child Protection Officer. If the individual feels unable to contact the Child Protection Officer or the allegation involves this person, an incumbent, a member of the clergy or a member of the panel, they should contact the bishop of the diocese, or in their absence, to the bishop's commissary or those appointed in accordance with Chapter VI of the Constitution of Church of Ireland who will follow the above procedures.**

**If an allegation involves the bishop of a diocese the matter should be referred directly to the Child Protection Officer and Chief Officer in Church House, who shall deal with the reporting procedures in relation to the child, and to the archbishop of the province or in his or her absence the archbishop of the other province who will follow the internal personnel procedures in relation to the bishop. In the case of an allegation against an archbishop, the report should be made to the archbishop of the other province or, in his or her absence, the next most senior bishop who will follow the internal personnel procedures. In these situations, the identified persons will operate the above procedures.**

Concerns may be raised verbally in the first instance however this should be followed up in writing detailing the history of the concern and providing as much detail as possible including any supporting evidence. The earlier concerns are raised the easier it is to take action.

If the individual feels unable to contact the Child Protection Officer or the allegation involves this person, an incumbent or a member of the panel, they should contact the bishop of the diocese, or in their absence, to their archdeacon or those appointed in accordance with Chapter VI of the Church of Ireland Constitution who will follow the above procedures. If an allegation involves the bishop of a diocese the matter should be referred directly to the Child Protection Officer, Chief Officer in Church House and the relevant Primate who will follow the above procedures. In these situations the identified persons will operate the above procedures.

## **WHISTLEBLOWING**

*Safeguarding Trust* runs in conjunction with 'Dignity at 'Work' and all other Representative Church Body human resource policies:

- The Church of Ireland is committed to the highest possible standards of conduct, openness, honesty and accountability;
- The Church of Ireland takes poor or malpractice seriously, and will ensure that a whistleblowing concern is clearly distinguished from a grievance;
- Staff or volunteers have the option to raise concerns outside of line management structures;
- Staff or volunteers are enabled to access confidential advice from an independent source;
- The Church of Ireland will, where possible, respect the confidentiality of a member of staff raising a concern through the whistleblowing procedure;
- It is a disciplinary matter both to victimise a bona fide whistleblower and for someone to make a false allegation maliciously.



There may be situations in which concerns or allegations turn out to be unfounded. It is important that everyone in the organisation knows that if they raise a concern which, through the process of investigation, is not validated, they have not in any way been wrong in their initial action. Responsible action needs to be encouraged in the organisation and whistleblowers should be confident of support. The whistleblowing policy will be regularly reviewed as part of *Safeguarding Trust* to ensure the procedures work in practice. It is everyone's duty to be vigilant in preventing abusive practice.

## **HOW THE CHURCH WILL RESPOND**

The Church of Ireland gives an undertaking to minimise any risk to the individual from raising a concern in good faith and will support any individual doing so. It will not tolerate victimisation, intimidation or negative repercussions for anyone raising a concern in good faith and will take action.

## **MANAGEMENT OF SEX OFFENDERS IN CHURCH (NI)**

Research has indicated that a significant number of individuals who have convictions for sexual offences against children, return to church-going.

If someone who has a conviction for a sexual offence against a child wishes to attend worship in a church setting, they are required to inform their Designated Risk Manager (DRM).

The Church of Ireland has a Memorandum of Cooperation with PPANI (Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland) and the Child Protection Officer NI is the central point of contact. When an individual informs their DRM that they wish to worship in a Church of Ireland, the DRM will contact PPANI who will then contact the Child Protection Officer NI and advise.

In order to allow any such individual to worship while, at the same time, reducing and minimising the risk to children, an Offender Management Agreement should be entered into and adhered to. This agreement also aims to create a safe environment for the person posing the risk through protecting them from false allegations and the risk of re-offending, supporting them and enabling them to receive appropriate ministry within explicit bounds of confidentiality.

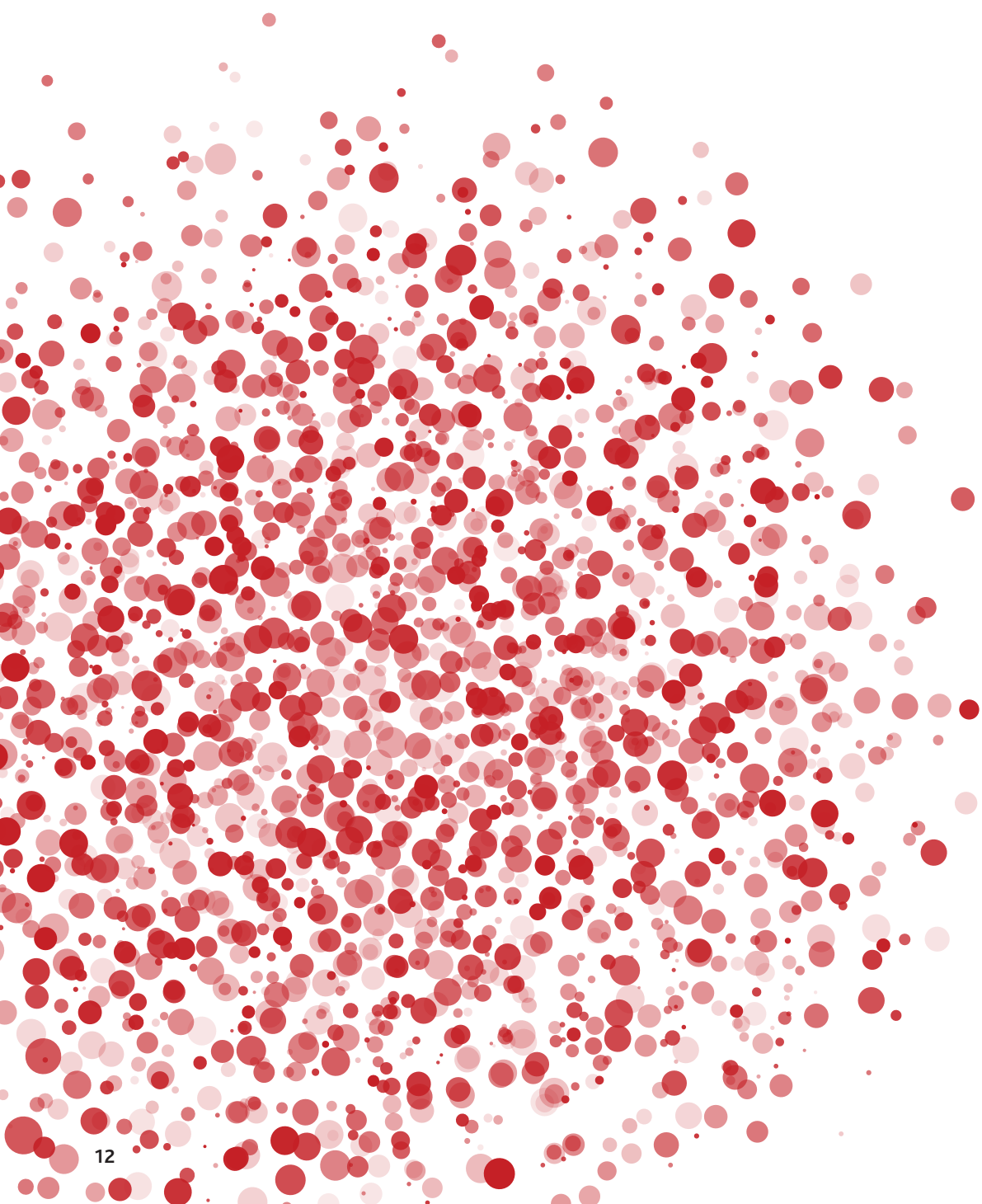
The agreement will specify how the offender can worship and receive ministry and support. The agreement will set clear boundaries in relation to the offender's involvement in the church community, in order to minimise risk. These boundaries may include:

- Which services the person may attend.
- Where the person may sit.
- What activities he/she may participate in.
- What activities he/she will be barred from; this will include any involvement with children/ young people's groups and any role or office in the church which gives him/her the status or authority giving the impression that he/she was deemed to be trustworthy.
- Any other restrictions on the person's behaviour within the church community which is considered appropriate.



The agreement will be signed by the individual, the DRM, the incumbent and at least one Parish Panel member. All members of the Panel should be informed that such an agreement has been put in place. The agreement must be enforced and monitored with no manipulation allowed. It will remain in place for as long as the person is part of the congregation.

In the event of the agreement being broken, or any concerns in relation to the person arising, statutory agencies and the CPONI must be informed in order to decide what further safeguards need to be put in place.





## **PART 8:** **APPENDICES**

### **CHECKLISTS AND EVALUATION FORMS**

Checklist for select vestries  
Checklist for panels - care of records  
Safeguarding Trust evaluation form

### **NOTICES AND FORMS**

Sample notice for parish premises  
Volunteer/worker application form  
Volunteer/worker reference form  
Declaration of acceptance of Safeguarding Trust and a "duty of care"  
Annual review form  
Declaration by worker from abroad  
Sample membership registration form  
Sample images consent form  
Activity consent form  
Accident report form  
Incident record form  
Standard form for reporting child protection and/or welfare concerns updated pro forma

### **RESOURCE DOCUMENTS**

Definition and indicators of abuse  
Guidelines for a code of behaviour for members  
Anti-bullying policy update  
Inter-Church Child Protection Group  
A Common Protocol for churches relating to independent organisations  
Sample interview questions  
Offender and Parish Agreement