



# **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

**PARISH OF  
ST. PATRICK**

**DONABATE, PORTRANE  
AND BALHEARY**

2009

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

We in the PARISH of St. Patrick's Donabate, Portrane and Balheary value and encourage the participation of children and young people in parish liturgies and in activities that enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional and social development. We recognize the dignity and rights of all children and are committed to their protection and support.

In keeping with this we will work to do all in our power to create safe environments for children and young people, in order to secure their protection and enable their full participation in the life of the Church.

## 2. THE PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING OUR DOCUMENT

This policy document is founded upon the principles and procedures set out in *Our Children, Our Church; Child Protection Policies and Procedures for the Catholic Church in Ireland*. We subscribe to the primacy of that document in guiding our practice, and should there appear to be a divergence in any part of our child protection policy from those principles and procedures, this is unintentional.

Those guiding Principles are derived from:

- Gospel Values, International Law and Domestic Legislation

and include the following:

*The principles derived from Gospel values are:*

- Each child shall be cherished and affirmed as a gift from God with an inherent right to dignity of life and bodily integrity which shall be respected, nurtured and protected by all.
- Everyone in the Church has an obligation to ensure that the fundamental rights of children are respected.
- A child's right to safety and care is inalienable.
- Children have a right to an environment free from abuse or neglect.
- Children have a fundamental right to justice and freedom; they have a right to be listened to and to be heard.
- Children have a right to good role models whom they can fully trust, who will respect them and nurture their spiritual, physical and emotional development.
- Those who have suffered child abuse by Church personnel should receive a compassionate and just response and should be offered appropriate pastoral care as they seek to rebuild their lives.

*The principles derived from civil sources are:*

- All adults have a duty to report allegations or suspicions of child abuse, where reasonable grounds for concern exist, irrespective of the status of the person suspected or their relationship to them or to the child.
- Due regard must be given to the criminal dimension of any action.
- It is the statutory duty of the civil authorities, not individuals or organisations, to investigate reports of child abuse.
- A proper balance must be maintained between protecting children and respecting the needs and rights of carers and adults however, where there is a conflict, the welfare of the child must be paramount.
- Actions taken to protect a child should not in themselves be abusive or cause the child unnecessary distress. Every action and procedure should consider the overall needs of the child.
- Organisations have a corporate responsibility to operate effective systems to assure the protection of children. They should ensure best practice in relation to recruitment and selection processes, provide appropriate training and ensure that all personnel are aware of their responsibility both to prevent child abuse and to report concerns about child abuse.
- All agencies and disciplines concerned with the protection and welfare of children must work cooperatively in the best interests of children.

### **3. DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE**

The rationale behind drawing up a Policy for the Parish is based on best practice as outlined in Church and Statutory Guidelines. Likewise, the definition of child abuse to which we subscribe, is the definition in those same guidelines:

#### ***Definition of Child Abuse***

Child abuse occurs when the behaviour of someone in a position of greater power than a child or young person abuses that power and causes harm to that child or young person. Child abuse is generally categorised into four broad groups: (i) neglect, (ii) emotional abuse, (iii) physical abuse and (iv) sexual abuse.

#### ***Note***

*A detailed examination of each of these categories is given in Section 11.*

*An outline of the various possible symptoms of each type of abuse is also given in Appendix 1.*

### **4. PARISH CHILD PROTECTION STRUCTURES**

*Note: Donabate Parish Pastoral Council is known locally as Donabate Parish Pastoral Forum*

#### **4.1 CHILD PROTECTION REPRESENTATIVE**

As part of our policy the Parish will nominate a Child Protection Representative in accordance with OUR CHILDREN OUR CHURCH. (Chapter 2)

#### ***The responsibilities of the Child Protection Representative will be:***

- To promote awareness of the Church's child protection policies.
- To ensure that the public has ready access to contact details for the Director of Child Protection.
- To facilitate anyone in the parish in bringing an allegation or suspicion of child abuse to the attention of the diocesan Director of Child Protection, should they wish to have such support.
- To ensure a complete written record is kept in relation to any complaint or concern, including subsequent action taken, and all communications pertaining it.
- The Parish Child Protection Representative will be appointed by the parish after appropriate consultation and agreement with the diocese. The person appointed should have the personal qualities, interest and life experience fitting to the tasks involved. He or she will be given a role specification, be required to undergo training and will be able to draw on expert help and support from the Director of Child Protection.
- The Child Protection Representative will be given every assistance by the Parish Pastoral Council in carrying out his/her task. Child Protection will be an item on the agenda of every Parish Pastoral Council meeting.

- The Child Protection Representative does not deal with the reported child abuse him/herself, but refers it to the designated person within the diocese, i.e. the Director of the Child Protection Service.

#### **4.2 PARISH CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE**

The Parish Pastoral Council will ensure that Child Protection is always a high priority. Child Protection will be an item on the agenda for every Pastoral Council meeting. The Pastoral Council will also establish a Child Protection Committee which will comprise the Parish Child Protection Representative, member/s of the Pastoral Council and other suitable persons.

The role of the Child Protection Committee will be to:

- Coordinate the communication of the parish Child Protection policy
- Liaise with all groups and individuals working with children, within the parish
- Ensure appropriate child protection training is provided for parish personnel
- Ensure that all groups working with children using parish property, including non-church groups, have adequate child protection policies or adhere to this parish policy
- Monitor the implementation of the child protection procedures set out in this document by all relevant parties
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the policy
- Report concerns with regard to the implementation and/or effectiveness of the policy to the Parish Pastoral Council
- Instigate regular reviews of the policy and offer amendments for consideration to the Parish Pastoral Council

### **5. MAKING INFORMATION AVAILABLE**

To assist the reporting of child protection concerns, the contact details of the *Diocesan Designated Person, the H.S.E. and the Gardai* will be made widely available at parish level. They will, for example, be displayed in clearly visible and accessible places, such as the entrance to the Church and in other relevant community buildings.

The contact details for the Parish Child Protection Representative will also be made available.

Each volunteer worker, together with the priests and the members of the Parish Pastoral Council, will be given a copy of the Policy document and asked to read it to ensure that everyone knows the Parish Policy on Child Protection.

All groups operating in a church setting, including visiting groups, will be provided with the parish Child Protection Policy and made aware of the key principles and procedures for child protection in operation in the parish.

This Parish Child Protection Policy document will be available for download on the parish website at [www.donabateparish.ie](http://www.donabateparish.ie) and printed copies will be available from the parish office.

## **6. PARISH SUBGROUPS/ TEAMS**

### **6.1 LIAISON PERSONS**

Each subgroup /team working within the parish will nominate a person to liaise with the Parish Pastoral Council's Child Protection committee. The Pastoral Council Child Protection Committee must ensure that each liaison person is properly informed of their child protection responsibilities and the procedures that must be followed. This communication will be ongoing, but each September there will be a formal meeting between members of the Pastoral Council Child Protection Committee and all liaison persons. It is however, the responsibility of the subgroup/team to inform the Pastoral Council Child Protection Committee if the liaison person is no longer in place.

Each subgroup/team will draw up clear, practical and effective procedures that address child protection issues in their context. These procedures must be examined and approved by the parish Pastoral Council's Child Protection Committee.

### **6.2 NON-CHURCH GROUPS**

All groups using church property will be required to confirm, as part of a signed annual agreement with the parish detailing terms and conditions of use, that they have an adequate child protection policy in place. In the absence of such a policy, the group will be required to subscribe to the parish child protection policies and procedures. The Parish Pastoral Council Child Protection Committee will be responsible for examining and approving such groups' child protection policy and/or ensuring that the group subscribes and implements the parish policy.

## **7. CODE OF BEST PRACTICE**

All persons working within the parish team of St. Patrick's subscribe wholeheartedly to a Code of Best Practice for working with children. This code of practice has been drawn up to ensure the safety of children and young people, to enhance the work practices of Church personnel, and to reassure parents and guardians, as well as children themselves, that we are committed to the highest standards of care for our children.

We recognise and affirm:

- that the dignity of each child is sacrosanct
- that each child is a unique individual
- that children's implicit vulnerability must be safeguarded
- that adults must model Christian values
- that adults must allow children opportunities to communicate
- that children must be affirmed and encouraged
- that children should be given opportunities to contribute to decision-making where appropriate

## **8. CODE OF BEHAVIOUR WHEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The following guidelines constitute the **Code of Behaviour** for all parish personnel working with children:

### **8.1 GENERAL CONDUCT**

- Physical punishment of children is not permissible under any circumstances.
- Verbal abuse of children is not permissible under any circumstances
- ‘Slagging’ a child even good-humouredly is to be avoided. Using humour that diminishes the dignity of others is not acceptable. In particular, jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of children is totally unacceptable. Comments which deny the equality of others on racial, sexual or other grounds, even in humour, are also totally unacceptable.
- Great care should be taken if it is necessary to have a conversation regarding sexual matters with a child or young person.
- Being alone with a child or young person may not always be wise or appropriate practice. If a situation arises where it is necessary to be alone with a child, another responsible adult should be informed immediately, by telephone if necessary. A diary note that the meeting with the young person took place, including the reasons for it, should be made.
- Children and young people should not be permitted to work or remain in churches, parish property or schools unless there are at least two adults present.
- All children and young people must be treated with equal respect; favouritism is not acceptable.
- Personnel should not engage in or tolerate any behaviour – verbal, psychological or physical – that could be construed as bullying or abusive.
- A disproportionate amount of time should not be spent with any particular child or group of children.
- Under no circumstances should Church personnel give alcohol, tobacco or drugs to children or young people.
- Best practice in relation to travel with children and young people should be observed. Personnel should not undertake any car or minibus journey alone with a child or young person. If, in certain circumstances, only one adult is available, there be a minimum of two children or young people present for the entire journey. In the event of an emergency, where it is necessary to make a journey alone with a child, a record of this should be made and the child’s parent or guardian should be informed as soon as possible.
- Alcohol, tobacco or drugs must not be used by personnel who are supervising or working with children or young people.
- Only age-appropriate language, material on media products (such as camera phones, internet, video) and activities should be used when working with children and young people. Sexually explicit or pornographic material is never acceptable.

### **8.2 RESPECT FOR PHYSICAL INTEGRITY**

- The physical integrity of children and young people must be respected at all times.
- Personnel must not engage in inappropriate physical contact of any kind – including rough physical play, physical reprimand and horseplay (tickling, wrestling). This should not

prevent appropriate contact in situations where it is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of a child (for example, where a child is distressed).

### **8.3 RESPECT FOR PRIVACY**

- The right to privacy of children and young people must be respected at all times.
- Particular care regarding privacy must be taken when young people are in locations such as changing areas, swimming pools, showers and toilets.
- Photographs of children or young people must never be taken while they are in changing areas (for example, in a locker room or bathing facility).
- Tasks of a personal nature (for example, helping with toileting, washing or changing clothing) should not be carried out for children or young people if they can undertake these tasks themselves.

### **8.4 MEETINGS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

- If the pastoral care of a child or young person necessitates meeting alone with them, such meetings should not be held in an isolated environment. The times and designated locations for meetings should allow for transparency and accountability (for example, be held in rooms with a clear glass panel or window, in buildings where other people are present, and with the door of the room left open).
- Both the length and number of meetings should be limited.
- Parents or guardians should be informed that the meeting(s) took place, except in circumstances where to do so might place the child in danger.
- Visits to the home or private living quarters of Church personnel should not be encouraged, nor should meetings be conducted in such locations.
- When the need for a visit to the home of a child or young person arises, professional boundaries must be observed at all times.

### **8.5 CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS OR DISABILITIES**

- Child with special needs or disability may depend on adults more than other children for their care and safety, and so sensitivity and clear communication are particularly important.
- Where it is necessary to carry out tasks of a personal nature for a child with special needs, this should be done with the full understanding and consent of parents or guardians.
- In carrying out such personal care tasks, sensitivity must be shown to the child and the tasks should be undertaken with the utmost discretion.
- Any care task of a personal nature which a child or young person can do for themselves should not be undertaken by a worker.
- In an emergency situation where this type of help is required, parents should be fully informed as soon as is reasonably possible.

### **8.6 VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND ADULTS**

- Since especially vulnerable children may depend on adults more than other children for their care and safety, sensitivity and clear communication are of utmost importance.
- Workers should be aware that vulnerable children may be more likely than other children to be bullied or subjected to other forms of abuse, and may also be less clear about physical and emotional boundaries.

- It is particularly important that vulnerable children should be carefully listened to, in recognition of the fact that they may have difficulty in expressing their concerns and in order that the importance of what they say is not underestimated.

## **8.7 TRIPS AWAY FROM HOME**

- All trips, including day trips, overnight stays and holidays, need careful advance planning, including adequate provision for safety in regard to transport, facilities, activities and emergencies. Adequate insurance should be in place.
- Written consent by a parent or guardian specifically for each trip and related activities must be obtained well in advance.
- A copy of the itinerary and contact telephone numbers should be made available to parents and guardians.
- There must be adequate, gender-appropriate, supervision for boys and girls.
- Arrangements and procedures must be put in place to ensure that rules and appropriate boundaries are maintained in the relaxed environment of trips away.
- Particular attention should be given to ensuring that the privacy of young people is respected when they are away on trips.
- The provision of appropriate and adequate sleeping arrangements should be ensured in advance of the trip.
- Sleeping areas for boys and girls should be separate and supervised by two adults of the same sex as the group being supervised.
- At least two adults should be present in dormitories in which children or young people are sleeping. Under no circumstances should an adult share a bedroom with a young person.
- If, in an emergency situation, an adult considers it necessary to be in a children's dormitory or bedroom without another adult being present they should (a) immediately inform another adult in a position of responsibility and (b) make a diary note of the circumstances.

## **8.8 BREACHES OF CODE OF BEHAVIOUR**

Persons in breach of these important principles will be subject to disciplinary procedures which may include termination of their services to the parish. Very serious breaches may warrant reporting to the civil authorities.

## **8.9 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

A Complaints procedure has been put in place to ensure that instances of inappropriate or inadequate behaviour on the part of parish personnel can be investigated and addressed. This procedure gives due regard to the rights of all persons involved.

## **9. BEST PRACTICE PROCEDURES**

In order to implement the Parish Policy the parish will put the following procedures in place:

### **9.1 PARENTAL CONSENT**

A signed consent form from parents or guardians will be obtained prior to the participation of children and young people in events, activities and groups. Consent will be sought also to retain relevant information (outlined below) in digital or hard copy format. The highest standards of data protection will apply to the use and storage of this information.

### **9.2 RECORD KEEPING**

- An accurate record will be kept for each child and young person participating in activities to ensure the safety and well-being of the children while engaged in these activities. This will include but not be limited to:
  - Attendance details
  - programme details
  - medical information
  - and any other relevant information, necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of the children while engaged in these activities
  - a copy of the consent form or letter signed by the parent or guardian
  - details of emergency contact numbers
  
- A written record of organisers, supervisors, employees and volunteers in attendance at events, such as meetings, choir rehearsals and sports activities, will be kept.
- An Incident/Accident Report Form will be completed in the event of any accident or incident relating to a child.
- The retention of these records will be the responsibility of the parish Child Protection Representative.

*Currently, these procedures apply to the workings of the Family Mass Choir. Parents accompany their children to practices for readers for Family masses and practices for sacramental preparation programmes/events.*

### **9.3 USE OF COMPUTERS**

- The Parish of St. Patrick's (and each subgroup) has a clear policy in place regarding the use of email and the Internet:
  - Where a computer is used by more than one person, each person should be obliged to have a unique username and password, or where this is not possible, to maintain a signed record of the date, time and duration of their use of the computer.
  - Where a computer in a Church organisation or institution can be accessed by children or young people, it should be accessible only through the use of a username and password unique to each child. Where this is not possible, the children or young people should be obliged to provide a signed record of the date, time and duration of their use of the computer.
  - Computers which can be accessed by children or young people will always have appropriate filtering software.

- All computers in Church organisation and institutions will be monitored regularly to ensure that they are being used in accordance with the stated policy. Where there is any suspicion or doubt, a person with specialist knowledge of computer hardware and software should be asked to assess the purposes for which the computer has been used.
- Data stored on computers by parish personnel in the course of parish activities are subject to the highest principles of data protection.

## 10. RECRUITMENT & TRAINING OF PERSONNEL

### 10.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

‘Safe practice starts with safe recruitment procedures’. We recognise that most people who apply to work with children and young people in the Church are well-motivated and potentially suitable for the various tasks involved. It is most important, however, that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that this is, in fact, the case. As well as enhancing the prospects of identifying the best person for the post, rigorous recruitment procedures can act as a deterrent to unsuitable applicants.

Some of the principles which enhance the safety of recruitment include:

- Always applying thorough selection procedures regardless of who the applicant is and whether the position is full-time, part-time, permanent, paid or voluntary.
- Judging the suitability of applicants across a broad range of criteria, through interview.
- Ensuring that interviews are conducted by more than one person and that at least one of those interviewing has established competence in interviewing and selection for posts involving work with children.
- Taking all reasonable steps to exclude unsuitable candidates by insisting on and verifying references, qualification and previous records of employment.

### 10.2 KEY ISSUES IN RECRUITMENT PROCESSES

The following key issues will guide the process of recruitment of persons to serve the parish in a voluntary or paid capacity:

#### *10.2.1 Clear definition of role*

A clear definition of role includes being specific about the roles and responsibilities that the person will be required to undertake, and identifying the personal qualities and skills needed to carry out the work. In the case of a paid position in the parish, a detailed job description and information about the organization or group responsible for the post will be sent to all applicants.

#### *10.2.2 Written application*

Applicants for all positions will be asked to supply information in writing. If an application form is used, it will be designed to collect all relevant information about the applicant, including past and current experience of working with children. The information supplied by the applicant will be seen only by those directly involved in the recruitment process.

#### *10.2.3 Interviews*

Where interviews are conducted, these will always be conducted by more than one representative of the group or organisation. The interview is a critical opportunity to explore with candidates the information provided in their written application and to assess their attitudes and skills, in particular their commitment to the welfare and protection of children. The recommendation for appointment agreed by the interview panel should be submitted for ratification to the management committee of the organisation or group making the appointment.

#### *10.2.4 Declarations*

All applicants for service to the parish will be required to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be considered unsuitable to work with children or young people and declaring any past criminal convictions or cases pending.

#### *10.2.5 References*

Each applicant for service to the parish will be expected to supply the names of two referees, who are not family members, who will testify to their general character, their suitability for working with children and young people, and any other detail relevant to their ability to perform the tasks associated with the post. At least one referee should have first-hand knowledge of the applicant's previous work with children or young people. An acceptable reference will indicate that the person is known to the referee and is considered by them to be suitable to work with children and young people. All references should be provided in writing and later verified by telephone, or in person.

#### *10.2.6 Vetting procedures*

Once a person has been selected, and before they take up their appointment, applicants will be required to submit to vetting procedures [Appendix]. This applies whether the person is clerical, religious, fulltime or part-time, a lay employee or a volunteer. This is a confidential process and only personnel responsible for overseeing the processing of these applications will have access to the information provided.

#### *10.2.7 Records*

Details of the selection and induction processes should be recorded and placed in the personnel file of the person appointed along with notes made during any part of the selection process, the application form, references and any other associated documentation. In the case of candidates for a paid position, a written record will be kept of the assessments made for each applicant for at least one year after they have been sent a letter stating that their application was unsuccessful. This is necessary because an unsuccessful applicant may bring a claim alleging discrimination in the selection process. Such a claim can be brought 'for up to six months after the date of the alleged act of discrimination, and an extension of six months is allowed where a good cause for not referring the claim within six months is established.'

### **10.3 GOOD PRACTICE FOLLOWING RECRUITMENT**

Following the recruitment of a new employee or volunteer, the following key elements of good practice will be implemented to ensure the protection of children and young people.

#### *10.3.1 Induction*

An induction programme, to help the new employee or volunteer successfully integrate into an organisation or group will be provided as appropriate. This programme may include: introductions to colleagues; immediate training in the organisation's child protection policy; explanation of day-to-day processes; clarification of expectations; outlining of conditions and procedures for dealing with discipline and grievances; familiarisation with the ethos of the organisation or group. Familiarisation with lines of management and supervision are particularly important.

### *10.3.2 Trial or probationary period*

Confirmation of appointment should be made subject to the successful completion of a trial or probationary period, the length of which should be decided at the outset (usually six months with a review at three months). This gives an opportunity to assess the suitability of the new member of staff and his or her commitment to the organisation's policies and practices in relation to the safety of children.

### *10.3.3 Child Protection priority*

Upon joining or participating in the activities of the group *The Code of Behaviour for Personnel Working with Children* will be read, understood and signed by all personnel, including volunteers.

They will also be given the name of the parish Child Protection Representative and advised of his/her role in relation to child protection procedures.

### *10.3.4 Child Protection Training*

All Church personnel will be offered training in child protection policies and procedures, including information about how to respond to suspicions and allegations of child abuse. To maintain high standards and good practice generally, training will be provided on an ongoing basis but as a minimum a child protection training module will be provided annually. The nature of the training will depend on the range of services provided by the group or organization and the needs of staff and volunteers.

### *10.3.5 Supervision and support*

Supervision of personnel is an essential part of ensuring the welfare of children and young people. Supervision will include the opportunity to provide feedback and support. This will involve arranging to observe those working with children and young people at regular intervals, on their own or in small groups, and giving members of staff the opportunity to raise any questions they may have, to highlight any problems they are experiencing or to present any suggestions for change that they may wish to make. Supervision also allows managers to assess the need for change in policies or practice, or for additional training. It is important that supervision procedures include the opportunity to identify and address sources of anxiety or stress for personnel, and for personnel to raise any concerns they may have regarding a child or young person.

### *10.3.6 Grievance, disciplinary and complaints procedures*

The parish is committed to providing effective grievance, disciplinary and complaints procedures, which seek to resolve difficulties promptly and with fairness.

### *10.3.7 Written statement of terms*

All new paid employees will receive a written statement of terms of employment, or contract, within two months of commencing employment. This statement will normally include the names and addresses of the employer and employee, a clear job description, hours of work, holidays and sick pay, and reference the organisation's policies on grievance, complaints and disciplinary matters.

### *10.3.8 Policy on the use of computers*

The parish of St. Patrick's has a clear policy regarding the use of email and the Internet and

requires every parish and Church-based organisation to adhere to this policy. Intentionally using a computer that is the property of a Church organisation or institution to send offensive emails or to receive, view or send pornography of any kind, or other forms of offensive or inappropriate material, will be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

Where it is suspected that a computer in a Church organisation has been used to receive, view or send pornographic images of children or young people, this will be regarded as a child protection issue, requiring immediate action in accordance with the procedures for responding to suspicions or allegations of child abuse described in Chapter Eight of *Our Children, Our Church*.

## 11. CHILDREN'S CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

The parish recognises that child protection principles also apply to the interaction between children themselves and that good behaviour can create conditions which mitigate some child protection concerns.

Each child participating in parish activities is required to subscribe to, and uphold the following principles. This will involve the child and parent/guardian signing the Code to indicate acceptance. These principles will be discussed with the children in an age-appropriate and open way at regular intervals.

I will:

1. Treat all other children and group leaders with respect
2. Be cooperative and do my best in my activities
3. Be fair and will not tell lies about other children, or about adults
4. Not use violence or engage in physical contact with others
5. Not hurt other children by what I say or do
6. Behave in a respectful way in God's house, the church
7. Not spread rumours
8. Respect the rule that the use of mobile phones is prohibited within the Church.
9. Not use or bring anything inappropriate or dangerous into the Church.
10. Talk to the person/s in charge if I have a problem

Children who do not comply with these principles will be addressed calmly and fairly by the leaders of the group. Parents will be informed of serious breaches. The parish reserves the right to end the participation of a child in the activity due to serious misbehaviour.

## 12. CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse occurs when the behaviour of someone in a position of greater power than a child or young person abuses that power, and causes harm to that child or young person.

The common denominator of all child abuse is that it makes children and young people feel diminished or threatened, and that it causes them harm. All forms of child abuse constitute a betrayal of trust and an abuse of power by an adult over a child or young person. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at a given time.

### 12.1 CATEGORIES OF CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse falls into four main categories:

Neglect, Emotional abuse, Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse

The following definitions of child abuse are taken from *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*.

#### 12.1.1 Neglect

Neglect is normally defined in terms of an *omission*, where a child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or medical care. *Harm* can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is *significant* is determined by his/her health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of a similar age.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways *over a period of time* rather than at one specific point. The *threshold of significant harm* is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

#### 12.1.2 Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the *relationship* between a caregiver and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's needs for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. The *threshold of significant harm* is reached when abusive interactions become *typical* of the relationship between the child and parent/carer.

#### 12.1.3 Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury that causes significant harm to a child, including allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

#### 12.1.4 Sexual Abuse

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

*Note: A detailed outline of the possible symptoms of each type of abuse is given in Appendix 1.*

#### 12.1.5 Recognising Child Abuse

The ability to recognise child abuse depends as much on a person's willingness to accept the

possibility of its existence as it does on knowledge and information. It is important to note that child abuse is not always readily visible, and may not be as clearly observable as the ‘text book’ scenarios outlined in these guidelines suggest.

## **12.2 A MORAL DUTY TO RESPOND**

The civil guidelines emphasise that where any person encounters a situation which gives rise to concern that a child has been, or is being, abused, or is at risk of abuse, the matter should be reported to the civil authorities.

*Children First* states:

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- specific indication from the child that (s)he was abused;
  - an account by a person who saw the child being abused;
  - evidence, such as an injury or behaviour, which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in any other way;
  - 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 case of abuse.
- An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour; very consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

**If a member of the parish team believes there are reasonable grounds for concern that child abuse may have occurred, or be occurring, (s)he must make these concerns known without delay to the parish Child Protection Representative. The onus is not on the person receiving the allegation/with concerns to prove or investigate these concerns. This is a matter for competent and relevant authorities.**

It should be noted that *The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998* provides (i) immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse “reasonably and in good faith” to designated officers of health boards or any member of the Garda Síochána and (ii) significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to, and including, dismissal. This act also created a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities “knowing that statement to be false”. This is a new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

## **13. PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE**

Those who experience child abuse and who disclose it to a person working for the Church have a right to expect a sensitive, prompt and appropriate response. The existence of clear procedures, which are known and understood by Church personnel, can help to ensure that such a response is provided.

### **13.1 FIRST RESPONSE ON RECEIVING AN ALLEGATION**

Where a child or young person discloses child abuse to a person working in any capacity in the Church, it is important that the situation is handled sensitively and compassionately. It should be borne in mind that the child or young person may feel they have taken a huge risk in disclosing the abuse.

The following general guidance should be observed:

- The person receiving the allegation should remain calm and not show an extreme reaction. They should listen to the child or young person with sensitivity and understanding; they should facilitate them to tell about the problem, *but avoid interviewing them.*
- The person receiving the allegation should be conscious that the child may feel very frightened and need reassurance and support that they have done the right thing in disclosing the abuse.
- It should be made clear that the person receiving the allegation *is not in a position to promise to keep the information secret.* However, reassurance can be given that it will be treated as confidential and will be *shared only with those who have a right to hear it.*
- The person receiving the disclosure should avoid appearing judgmental about the person against whom the allegation is being made.
- The child or young person should not be questioned unless the nature of what is being said is unclear. It may be necessary to clarify that what was said has been correctly understood, but *leading questions should be avoided.*
- The steps that are likely to follow should be explained to the child or young person.
- Parents or guardians should be informed, unless to do so would place the child at further risk.
- In the case of an adult disclosing child abuse, it is equally important that the initial response is characterised by compassion and sensitivity. The general guidance outlined above should be followed.
- The person who receives an allegation of child abuse should actively encourage the person who is making it to report the matter to the civil authorities. Appropriate arrangements should be made to support them in doing so, if this is what they wish.

Should the person making the allegation be under eighteen years of age, their parent or guardian can make a statement on their behalf.

- Whether or not the person making the allegation wishes to report it to the civil authorities, *it should be explained to them that the Church's child protection procedures require that the allegation be referred to the Church's Director of Child Protection.* The procedures that are likely to follow should also be explained.
- The person receiving the allegation should record in writing all relevant information received, including, for example, dates, times, names, locations and context. They should then inform the parish Child Protection Representative who will, without delay, inform the diocesan Director of Child Protection of the allegation.

### **13.2 REPORTING TO CHURCH'S DIRECTOR OF CHILD PROTECTION**

**All allegations of child abuse against Church personnel shall be reported without delay to the Church's Director of Child Protection, who is the Designated Person to receive allegations and suspicions, and who acts on behalf of the bishop or religious superior.**

### **13.3 ALLEGATIONS AGAINST PARISH PERSONNEL**

**The procedures that are followed in the case of an allegation of abuse against a lay employee or volunteer, or against a priest or religious are outlined in Chapters 9 and 10, respectively, of *Our Children Our Church*. In all instances, the person about whom an allegation has been made will stand aside from their position while investigations are taking place.**

## **14. POLICY MONITORING AND REVISION**

The purpose of this Child Protection Policy is to ensure that procedures and practices that safeguard children are in place in our parish. The effectiveness of this policy needs to be monitored constantly. The Parish Pastoral Council subcommittee for Child Protection will have responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the policy in the various groups and activities of the parish. By having child protection as an item on the agenda of every pastoral council meeting the Pastoral Council are committed to ensuring that the parish child protection policy is being implemented properly. The policy itself will be subject to review each year.

# APPENDIX 1

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ABUSE

### *Signs and Symptoms of Emotional Child Abuse*

- Rejection
- Lack of praise or encouragement
- Lack of comfort and love
- Lack of attachment
- Lack of proper stimulation
- Lack of continuity of continuity of care
- Serious over-protectiveness
- Inappropriate non-physical punishment
- Family conflicts and/or violence
- Inappropriate expectations of a child's behaviour – relative to his or her age and stage of development
- Every child who is abused sexually or physically is also emotionally abused

### *Signs and Symptoms of Physical Abuse*

- Bruises
- Fractures
- Swollen joints
- Burns or scalds
- Abrasions or lacerations
- Haemorrhages
- Damage to body organs
- Poisonings – repeated
- Failure to thrive
- Coma or unconsciousness
- Death

### *Signs & Symptoms of Child Sexual Abuse*

- Bleeding from vagina or anus
- Difficulty or pain in passing urine or faeces
- An infection may occur secondary to sexual abuse, which may or may not be a definitive sexually transmitted disease. Professionals should be informed if a child has a persistent vaginal discharge or has warts or a rash in the genital area.
- Noticeable and uncharacteristic change or behaviour
- Hints about sexual activity
- Age-inappropriate understanding of sexual behaviour
- Inappropriate seductive behaviour
- Sexually aggressive behaviour with others uncharacteristic sexual play with peers or with toys
- Unusual reluctance to join in normal activities which involve undressing, for example, games or swimming

***Particular behavioural signs and emotional problems suggestive of child abuse in young children (0-10)***

- Mood change, for example acting out or the child becomes fearful or withdrawn
- Lack of concentration (change in school performance)
- Bed wetting, soiling
- Psychosomatic complaints: pains, headaches
- Skin disorders
- Nightmares, change in sleep patterns
- School refusal
- Separation anxiety
- Loss of appetite
- Isolation

***Particular behavioural signs and emotional problems suggestive of child abuse in older children (over 10)***

- Mood change, for example, depression, failure to communicate
- Running away
- Drug, alcohol, or solvent abuse
- Self-mutilation
- Suicide attempts
- Delinquency
- Truancy
- Eating disorders
- Isolation

***Signs and Symptoms of Child Neglect***

- Abandonment or desertion
- Children persistently left alone without adequate care and supervision.
- Malnourishment, lacking food, inappropriate food or erratic feeding.
- Lack of warmth
- Lack of adequate clothing
- Lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger, or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age
- Persistent failure to attend school
- Non-organic failure to thrive, that is, a child not gaining weight, not alone due to malnutrition but also due to emotional deprivation
- Failure to provide adequate care for a child's medical problems
- Exploited, overworked

## APPENDIX 2

### Contact Personnel

#### Parish Level:

**Child Protection Representative:** Lóirín O’Leary 087 2033240  
**Child Protection Committee:** Fr. Paddy O’Byrne, Lóirín O’ Leary, Pat Henry, Joslin Ryan, Marguerite Darby, Joan McKevitt, Pádraig Haran

#### Diocesan Level:

**Dublin Diocese Child Protection Office** 01-8360314

#### **Dublin Diocese Director of Child Protection Service**

Mr. Philip Garland 01-8842590

#### **Dublin Diocese Training & Development Coordinator**

Fr. Paddy Boyle 086-1011415

#### **Garda Vetting**

Ms. Jo Parada, Human Resources Dept. Diocesan Offices, Clonliffe College 01-8379253

#### **Parish Office Number**

01-8434574

#### **Local Garda Siochana (Swords)**

01-6664700

#### **Area Social Worker**

(Deirdre Donnelly, HSE, Airside, Swords) 01-8708000

HSE, St. Ita’s Hospital: 01-8436337

Eileen Kelly, Director of Nursing, Intellectual Disabilities Services

Katherine McTiernan, Director of Nursing, Mental Health Services

#### **Samaritans Helpline**

1850 609 090

#### **Childline**

1850 666 666

#### **Emergency Services Numbers**

999 or 112

**APPENDIX 3**

**CONFIDENTIAL APPLICATION FORM**

**ADULT VOLUNTEER <sup>1</sup>**

Diocese: ..... Parish: .....

Surname: ..... First Name: .....

Address: .....  
.....

Date of birth: ..... Tel. .... Email .....

**Are you** (*please tick*)

- |           |                          |            |                          |         |                          |
|-----------|--------------------------|------------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| Employed  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Unemployed | <input type="checkbox"/> | Student | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Homemaker | <input type="checkbox"/> | Retired    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Previous work experience**

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**Have you previously been involved in voluntary work:** Yes  No

*If yes, please give details*

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**Why do you want to get involved with this diocesan activity/ministry?**

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**Have you previously received any training for working with children or young people?**

Yes  No

*If yes, please give details*

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

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**Any other relevant information?**

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**Is there any medical or other reason why you may be deemed unsuitable to carry out this work?**

Yes  No

*If yes, please give details*

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Tel. \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

***I declare that the above information is true and that I am fit to serve as a volunteer with this parish ministry/activity. I agree to abide by and accept the terms and conditions of participation.***

Signed: ..... Date: .....

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<sup>1</sup> adapted from : Depart of Health & Children *Our Duty to Care: the Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People*. Dublin Stationary Office 2001 pp 41-42



Have you ever been convicted of an offence in the Republic of Ireland or elsewhere?

No  Yes

Date	Court	Offence	Court Outcome

**DECLARATION OF APPLICANT**

I, the undersigned who have applied for a position as a \_\_\_\_\_ hereby authorise An Garda Síochána to furnish to **Archdiocese of Dublin** a statement that there are no convictions recorded against me in the Republic of Ireland or elsewhere or a statement of all convictions and / or prosecutions, successful or not, pending or completed, in the State or elsewhere as the case may be.

Signature of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 ( \_\_\_\_\_ )

**To be completed by Employer/School /Parish**

Name of Line Manager/ Contact Person\*: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (\*Must be the Chairperson of the Board of Management in the case of the school)

Name of Employer (ie school/ parish): \_\_\_\_\_

Full Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Tel Number \_\_\_\_\_

**To be completed by Archdiocese of Dublin Offices**

Authorised Signatory: \_\_\_\_\_ (Archdiocese of Dublin)

PLEASE PRINT ALSO ( \_\_\_\_\_ )

Registration Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*To be completed by the Garda Central Vetting Unit*

According to Garda records there are no previous convictions recorded against the above named applicant

OR the attached convictions appear on Garda Records

OR the attached prosecutions are pending

**NOTE:** Checks were carried out by this office based on the information supplied.

The convictions supplied may apply to the subject of your enquiry.

Please verify information disclosed with the applicant

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Member I/C

C.V.U

**APPENDIX 5**

**CONFIDENTIAL  
Declaration Form Adult Volunteers <sup>1</sup>**

Surname: .....

Forename: .....

Date of Birth: ..... Place of birth: .....

Any other name previously known as: .....

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a Caution or of a Bound Order

Yes  No

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

Nature of offence:

Date of offence:

.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
.....  
.....

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>1</sup> adapted from *Our Duty to Care (Northern Ireland)*

## APPENDIX 6

### *Parental Consent Form*

Name of Child:	Date of Birth
Address:	
Name of Parent/Guardian:	
Telephone: Home: Work:	Mobile: Emergency Contact No.:
Parish Activity/Group:	
<b>Medical Information</b> ( <i>Parent/Guardian must complete medical section</i> )	
Name of GP: _____	
Address: _____	
Tel. No.: _____	
Does your child suffer from any of the following:	
Asthma: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Diabetes: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Epilepsy: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Allergies: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Additional information: _____	
_____	
Special Needs: _____	
Other: (give details) _____	
Is your child on any medication at present? _____	
If so, please give details _____	
_____	
Any other information relevant to your child's welfare and safety: _____	
_____	
_____	
<p><i>I acknowledge that I have an ongoing duty to give the activity leaders any information relevant to the welfare and safety of my child. I agree that the information given here can be retained subject to strict protocols of confidentiality, in paper and digital format.</i></p> <p><i>I hereby give consent for my child to take part in the above activity:</i></p>	
Signed: _____	
Date: _____	
<p><i>Parish of St. Patrick, Donabate, Portrane &amp; Balheary</i></p>	

## *Children's Code of Behaviour*

### **I will:**

1. Treat all other children and group leaders with respect
2. Be cooperative and do my best in my activities
3. Be fair and will not tell lies about other children, or about adults
4. Not use violence or engage in physical contact with others
5. Not hurt other children by what I say or do
6. Behave in a respectful way in God's house, the church
7. Not spread rumours
8. Respect the rule that the use of mobile phones is prohibited within the Church.
9. Not use or bring anything inappropriate or dangerous into the Church.
10. Talk to the person/s in charge if I have a problem

Signed: (Child) \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Children who do not comply with these principles will be addressed calmly and fairly by the leaders of the group. Parents will be informed of serious breaches. The parish reserves the right to end the participation of a child in the activity due to serious misbehaviour.*

## APPENDIX 7

### *Incident Report Form*

Date and Time of Incident:	
Name of Child involved:	
Address: _____ _____	
Contact No. of Parent/Guardian:	
Name of Individual involved:	Contact No.:
Address: _____ _____	
Location of Incident:	
Describe incident and injury if any: <i>(Give brief objective description – factual information only)</i> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	
Was the child referred for medical treatment: <i>(If so, please give details and medical findings, if any)</i> _____ _____ _____	
Witnesses to Incident:	
Name: _____	Contact No. _____
Name: _____	Contact No. _____
Form completed by	
Name: _____	Title: _____
Signed: _____	Dated: _____

## APPENDIX 8

### *Travelling Permission Consent Form:*

*Event:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Venue:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Date:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Pick-up location:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Drop off time:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Drop off location:* \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Children:**

(Altar Servers/Children's Liturgy) X as appropriate

I have read and accept the conditions and rules as set out in the Code of Ethics and good behaviour when travelling to and from parish organised trips and I agree to abide by the rules.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Parent/Guardian:**

I have read and accept the conditions and rules as set out in the Code of Ethics and good behaviour when my child is travelling on a parish organised trip.

Name of Child(ren): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Carer's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_