CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

GUIDANCE FOR

STANDARD 1: PROTECTING

CHURCH OF IRELAND 2026

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STANDARD 1: PROTECTING

1.1A GUIDANCE ON SAFE RECRUITMENT FOR LAY CHURCH PERSONNEL WHO ARE WORKING OR MINISTERING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

SAFE RECRUITMENT

When working with children and young people, it is essential to maintain the highest standards of recruitment and screening to ensure their safety and well-being. While personal familiarity with someone may provide a certain level of trust, it is still essential to conduct thorough background check and reference checks to ensure that individuals have the necessary character, suitability and qualifications if relevant, for working with children. In addition to police checks, taking up references is an important step in the recruitment process. Contacting and speaking with individuals who can provide insight into an applicant's previous work experience, character and conduct can help assess their suitability for working with children. References can provide valuable information about an individual's interpersonal skills, professionalism, and ability to work effectively in a child-centred environment.

Good recruitment, selection and management procedures will:

- Help screen out and discourage those who are not suitable to work with or have access to children and, if necessary, ensure as far as reasonably practicable that they do not have access to children.
- Ensure church personnel have clear rules and boundaries and feel supported in their roles.
- Assure parents/carers that all possible measures are being taken to ensure only suitable people will be recruited to work with children.

RECRUITMENT FOR NON-NOMINATED CHURCH PERSONNEL

Recruitment and selection procedures must be applied equally to all non-appointed staff and volunteers, and this includes:

- Those who have been part of the parish/diocese 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 they have been participants in.
- Those who are 16 or 17 and wish to continue as helpers or take up a role as a helper in a group (in line with Access NI and Vetting legislation in ROI).

The following steps should be undertaken by the Parish Panel (who oversee recruitment and selection) and are necessary to ensure good practice:

1. Defining the Role:

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

2. Application Form ***(1.1A Template 1)***

All applicants must be asked to complete an application form. The application form may be more extensive for a staff position than a volunteer position. All church personnel will confirm, in writing, their acceptance of all Safeguarding policies, and this confirmation will be stored locally.

3. Declaration (as part of the application process) ***(1.1A Template 2)***

All applicants are required to sign a declaration outlining their agreement to share information and maintain confidentiality, alongside a requirement to notify the organisation if they are being currently investigated.

4. Interview ***(1.1A Template 3)***

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 volunteer may be informal; however, an interview for a member of staff should be more formal and comply with the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland Order) 1998 and the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015 (ROI). All applicants deemed suitable at interview may be required to complete a consent form for carrying out an Access NI check at this point (NI) or to complete a Garda Vetting invitation form (ROI) if the role is eligible for Garda Vetting or AccessNI.

5. References ***(1.1A Template 4)***

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.

6. AccessNI and Garda Vetting.

If the role requires an AccessNI or Garda Vetting Check the procedures outlined on the Safeguarding website should be followed. For information on Garda Vetting follow this link *https://safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org/garda-vetting/* for information on AccessNI follow this link *https://safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org/access-ni/*
For more detailed information see ***Guidance 1.1B.***

Please note that if the roles requires an AccessNI or Garda Vetting Check a member of staff or volunteer cannot begin their work with children until they have obtained a satisfactory AccessNI Enhanced Disclosure check (NI) or a vetting disclosure has been received from the National Vetting Bureau (ROI) and it has been assessed by the Parish Panel. This also applies to clergy, and a satisfactory AccessNI check (NI) or vetting disclosure (ROI) must have been received and assessed prior to ordination, institution to an incumbency or other charge or granted a licence to officiate.

7. Record Keeping:

Details of the selection and recruitment procedure should be recorded and securely stored as per data protection regulations ***(Appendix E)***. These records will be subject to audit by the Diocesan Support Team in the triennial evidence-based audits.

8. Ratifying the Appointment:

At the conclusion of the selection and recruitment process, the Parish 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. The volunteer agreement may take the form of a letter of appointment. A contract of employment with a member of staff should be drawn up by legal/human resources professionals. When ratifying the appointment, it may also be helpful to indicate a particular duration for the role, for example, three to five years.

9. Induction:

An appropriate induction is provided including relevant aspects of the Child Safeguarding Policy and the applicant is asked to sign a Declaration of Acceptance of the Child Safeguarding Policy ***(Guidance 1.5A).***

RECRUITMENT PROCEDURE FOR NOMINATED CHURCH PERSONNEL

Some members of church personnel such as members of the Parish Panel may be nominated by the Rector to the Select Vestry for ratification of appointment or in the case of the Diocesan Support Team, or Diocesan Safeguarding Panel, these can be recommended by the Bishop and approved by the Diocesan Council. Although a formal recruitment procedure may not be required, the following steps should still be undertaken before the person commences their role:

1. A Garda Vetting or AccessNI check must be undertaken (if required), and the relevant disclosure certificate shared with the Parish Panel.
2. The applicant must sign a declaration form ***(1.1A Template 2).***
3. An appropriate induction is provided including child relevant aspects of the Child Safeguarding Policy and the applicant is asked to sign a Declaration of Acceptance of the Child Safeguarding Policy ***(Guidance 1.5A).***

STAFF OR VOLUNTEERS FROM OUTSIDE THE UK AND IRELAND

Full background checks may not be 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 caution, as it may not be possible 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** Something which constitutes an offence in UK/Ireland (and would be seen as child abuse) may not in the country of the home church. References, therefore, need to be viewed with this in mind. In addition, applicants from abroad are required to complete a Worker from Abroad form ***(1.1A Template 5).***

PROBATIONARY PERIOD (STAFF) / TRIAL PERIOD (VOLUNTEERS)

All appointments should be conditional on a satisfactory period of work. The Parish Panel should review every new appointment within an agreed period – usually six months.

SUPERVISION AND SUPPORT

It is good practice to set up a supervision system for paid staff, which means arranging to see staff at regular intervals, whether on their own or in small groups. Volunteers should also be provided with a system of support. This provides an opportunity to talk through any questions or difficulties they may have. It also gives the supervisor the opportunity to assess progress and determine whether any additional training should be provided. Each Parish Panel will determine who the appropriate person/people will be to supervise staff and volunteers. Supervision and support also provide the opportunity to review practice and general performance and identifying learnings going forward. Additionally, staff should be appraised on an annual basis.

1.1A TEMPLATE 1: SAMPLE APPLICATION FORM

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE APPLICANT

CONTACT DETAILS

Full Name:

Date of Birth: Male: Female:

Address:

Postcode:

Tel: Email:

Previous Name *(if different from above):*

EXPERIENCE

Please highlight any experience of working with children and/or young people in a paid or voluntary capacity. Give outline dates if possible.

LEADERSHIP ROLE

Please outline the group(s) and leadership role(s) you would like to undertake as a leader.

Why do you want to undertake this role(s)?

OTHER INFORMATION

Please outline any other information relevant to this role which you would like to share *(e.g. Medical conditions or allergies).*

REFERENCES

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

1. First Referee	**2. Second Referee**
Name:	Name:
Address:	Address:
Tel:	Tel:
Email:	Email:

DECLARATIONS

The Church has a policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders which is available from a member of the Parish Panel on request.

If required, additional questions relevant to this role will be asked as part of the AccessNI/ Garda Vetting application process, a copy of relevant forms will be stored by the Parish/ Diocese and relevant sections will be shared with the COI Safeguarding Board to process the AccessNI/Garda Vetting check.

If required, I consent to an AccessNI Enhanced check/ Garda Vetting check being undertaken for the role for which I have applied	Yes:		No:	
I acknowledge that I have read the relevant sections of the Child Safeguarding policy and declare I will uphold this policy in the role(s) I have applied for	Yes:		No:	
I shall uphold the requirements of the role and exercise a duty to care for any children in my charge	Yes:		No:	

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR):

We are committed to protecting your personal information. By completing and signing this form you are confirming that you are consenting to the Parish holding and processing your personal data, including training for the purpose of contacting you by post, phone or electronically with regard to church activities. If you have any questions about how we process your personal data contact a member of the Select Vestry.

Name *(print):*

TRAINING DECLARATION

If you have not undertaken any COI safeguarding training please leave this section blank.

I have attended training which has introduced me to the Church of Ireland Child Safeguarding Policy, and the recommended procedures to be followed when working with children have been explained to me.

Date of signature:	Venue:
Signature:	

NEXT STEPS

Please return this form to a member of the Parish Panel; they will contact you to arrange an informal interview.

With this application form you may have received information to complete an **AccessNI/ Garda Vetting Check**. Please complete the instructions in regard to this and bring the form (and supporting document originals) to the interview.

Please note that a leadership role can only be undertaken once the Parish Panel have formally approved it.

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PARISH PANEL

NOTES

- *If required, furnish the applicant with an AccessNI/Garda Vetting application pack.*
- *If a break of 6 months or more occurs in any volunteer's service, then a new interview and vetting process should be undertaken.*

REFERENCES

REFERENCE (1) RECEIVED: Yes: No:

REFERENCE (2) RECEIVED: Yes: No:

APPLICATION FORM

Date application form received: Form complete? Yes: No:

PANEL INTERVIEW *Or refresher interview if the volunteer has been in the role*

Panel Member (1): Panel Member (2):

Panel Member (3): Date of interview:

Recommendation: Approved: Not Approved: Deferred:

NOTES

1.1A TEMPLATE 2: DECLARATION FORM

I confirm and declare that all confidential and personal information that is disclosed to me or to which I have access during the course of acting as

will be kept strictly confidential, and shall:

a. Not be disclosed or otherwise made available by me to any person, except in accordance with the procedures set out in the Child Safeguarding Policy.

b. Be used by me only for the purpose of the procedures set out in the Child Safeguarding Policy.

If I am required to disclose confidential or personal information in accordance with law or by virtue of a court or similar order, other than in accordance with the Child Safeguarding Policy, nothing in this declaration prevents me from doing so. However, in those circumstances, I will inform the relevant Church Leader without delay.

I acknowledge that some or all of the confidential and personal information may contain 'personal data' and 'sensitive personal data' within the meaning of data protection legislation, and I therefore agree to comply with my obligations under this legislation. In so far as I am the data processor in accordance with the Data Protection Acts, then I agree only to process personal data on, and subject to, the instructions of the relevant data controller, maintain appropriate security measures against all unlawful processing in respect of the personal data, and allow the relevant data controller to monitor and audit my compliance with my obligations in respect of personal data. My obligations under this declaration continue even after I may cease to act as a:

There is no information about me relating to concerns regarding my ministry and safeguarding, that I have not disclosed as part of my recruitment process, that is relevant to this role.

I undertake to inform the *[PARISH/DIOCESE]:* if, after signing this declaration, I become subject to investigation by any statutory body, professional regulator, or church authority in relation to allegations or concerns involving[1]:

- children or young people;
- vulnerable adults;
- behaviour that may bring my ministry into disrepute.

I understand that failure to disclose relevant information, or the provision of false or misleading information, may result in permission being refused or withdrawn.

Signed: **Date:**

[1] *For clarity this may refer to investigations by statutory bodies or professional regulators into criminal behaviour or civil matters relating to (but not limited to) violence, abuse, misuse of drugs, drink driving, or harassment.*

1.1A TEMPLATE 3: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Beware of 'closed' questions which make it possible to answer either 'yes' or 'no'.

Ask questions like 'What do you think about? / What are your views on?'

Put the candidate at ease – ask first about his/her interests or hobbies.

Discuss the candidate's career objectives and why he/she applied for this particular post.

Ensure the questions relate directly to the needs of the job.

If any offences were declared by the candidate, the interview should provide an opportunity for an open and measured discussion.

IDEAS FOR QUESTIONS TO ASK

You will probably need to choose only one question from each category.
The question you choose will depend on the requirements of the job.

1. Relating to experience, qualifications, training

What have been your roles and responsibilities in working with children?

Why are you volunteering for this role?

What skills/qualities would you bring to the role?

What is your understanding of the importance of child protection for staff and volunteers?

2. Relating to children's learning and development

How would you plan to provide an appropriate programme?

How do you think the group can meet the needs of the children?

What type of activities do you think the group should offer the children?

3. Relating to attitudes

How would you settle new children into the group?

What are your views on establishing and maintaining rules and codes of behaviour in the group?

What would you do if you found a child being bullied and treated unfairly by other children?

How would you deal with a disruptive child?

What are your views on disciplining children?

4. Relating to working with parents

How do you see the role of the parent in the group?

How do you think parents can help you with working with children?

How would you encourage parents to become involved in the group?

5. Relating to working in a team

What do you see as your role in the team?

What skills and qualities can you bring to the team?

How do you feel about working as part of a team?

What is your previous experience of working in a team?

How do you feel about working in a Christian environment?

6. Relating to ongoing personal development

How do you intend to keep up to date with any technical information needed for the job?

What are your feelings about undertaking training?

Is there any area in which you would like further training/development?

What difficulties have you had in attending training in the past?

What training would you need to undertake this role?

1.1A TEMPLATE 4: REFERENCE REQUEST FORM

[INSERT NAME]:

has expressed an interest in becoming a volunteer with

[INSERT NAME OF DIOCESE/PARISH]:

and has given your name as a referee.

This is a position with regulated access to children. As an organisation committed to the welfare and protection of children, we are anxious to know if you have any reason at all to be concerned about this applicant being in contact with children.

[PLEASE TICK]

Yes: No:

If you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence.

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

How long have you known this person?

In what capacity?

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

How would you describe their personality?

Please rate this person on the following *[PLEASE TICK]*

	Below Average	Average	Good	Very good	Excellent
Responsibility					
Maturity					
Self-motivation					
Motivation of others					
Energy					
Trustworthiness					
Reliability					

Signed:

Date:

Role:

1.1A TEMPLATE 5: WORKER FROM ABROAD FORM

1. Whether in your present country of residence or elsewhere, have you ever been investigated in respect of or charged with or convicted of any convictions, cautions, informed warnings or diversionary youth conferences that are not subject to filtering, or are you at present subject to any investigations by children or adult services, or the police due concerns about the treatment of children or vulnerable adults / adults at risk or in need of protection?

Yes: No: *(If yes to any of the above give details on separate sheet)*

2. Have you been placed on a sex offenders' register **in your present or any other jurisdiction?**

Yes: No: *(If yes to any of the above give details on separate sheet)*

I, the undersigned, who have applied to work / volunteer as

[INSERT NAME OF POSITION]

do hereby certify and warrant that in completing this form and in furnishing all the information contained herein or attached hereto, I am doing so in good faith and I further certify and warrant that all such information is true and accurate and constitutes a full disclosure of all material facts known to me.

Signed:

Full name *(block capitals)*:

Date:

When completed and signed, return this form to the Parish Panel.

1.1A TEMPLATE 6: ANNUAL REVIEW OF VOLUNTEER OR STAFF MEMBER

CONFIDENTIAL

Name:

(To be completed by each member of staff or volunteer annually and returned and discussed with the supervising leader then forwarded to the Parish Panel)

We thank you for all you do for this parish organisation and hope that this exercise may be helpful as you reflect on your work.

The parish wishes to support you in your work with children. Are there any areas of your work in which we might provide training to assist your skills development?

Have you any suggestions for resources, or other ideas which might develop your work?

Has there been any change in your personal circumstances you wish to share which may affect your capacity to continue in this role?

Yes: No: *(Please give details below if appropriate)*

Have you any questions you wish to ask or further comments you wish to make?

In line with Data Protection regulations, we are committed to protecting the personal information we hold on you. By providing the information requested, you are giving us permission (consent) to use this information for Safeguarding, legal or regulatory purposes and we will use it for no other purpose without further consent unless mandated or required to do so under the Data Protection Act 2018 or equivalent legislation. If you have any questions about how we process your personal data, please contact a member of the Panel.

1.1B GUIDANCE ON ACCESSNI AND GARDA VETTING

It is essential that those people who work in any capacity with children (under 18) are, as far as possible, assessed to ensure that they do not present a risk to children. ***Guidance 1.1A*** provides the required standard of practice in relation to recruitment and selection.

One part of the recruitment process is to screen applicants against police criminal conviction and caution records. This screening process – called Vetting – includes a check against relevant police-held conviction and non-conviction information, against UK lists of individuals who have been barred from working with children and/or vulnerable adults and, in the Republic of Ireland, against An Garda Síochána records.

Not all roles require an AccessNI Enhanced Check or a Garda Vetting check. The RCB Safeguarding Team have engaged with the Garda National Vetting Bureau and AccessNI to produce a list of roles that require vetting. Further information on these roles and the procedures for vetting or AccessNI is available here:

For information on Garda Vetting follow this link:
https://safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org/garda-vetting/

For information on AccessNI follow this link:
https://safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org/access-ni/

As this process is subject to change in line with new legislation and policy resources, further detail will be updated on the Church of Ireland website at the addresses above.

Garda Vetting or AccessNI checks must be repeated every thirty six months.

DEALING WITH OFFENCES DISCLOSED

On receipt of an AccessNI/Garda positive vetting disclosure, the Parish Panel may seek the direction of the RCB Safeguarding Team. This is a significant area of risk and needs to follow a robust process. Any assessment should take consideration of a person's criminal conviction in the context of his/her overall application for the role, motivation, ability to carry out the role, and the responsibility of the Church of Ireland for the care of children, staff, volunteers and, if appropriate, service users. Assessment of risk should be made using information on the nature of the offence and the sentence received against the activities of the role.

Complex cases, or where there is a conflict of interest, may be referred to the relevant RCB Safeguarding Manager. Once the risk assessment is complete and the person is deemed suitable for the role, consideration should be given around who is informed regarding the nature of the offences. It is also important that the person is informed that this information will be passed on. If they are not suitable, explain that it is because the criminal conviction was incompatible with the role in question, or that the reason for not being suitable for the role was other than a criminal conviction.

1.1C GUIDANCE ON UNDER 18S WORKING WITH CHILDREN - JUNIOR HELPERS

Junior Helpers (aged 16-18 years) can be used in groups to assist staff and volunteers to provide children's activities. However, it is not appropriate to require someone aged less than 18 years to take on the role of leader or to be in sole charge of children, as this would mean leaving a child in charge of children. They therefore cannot be counted as part of supervision ratios ***(Guidance 1.3F).***

Any 16/17-year-olds wishing to help with groups should complete an AccessNI Enhanced Disclosure/Garda Vetting prior to starting to work with children. Signed parental/carer consent is a prerequisite.

If under-16s are helping, in order to gain expertise, citizenship development, personal or professional development, they should not be 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 be permitted to submit an Access NI Enhanced Disclosure/Garda Vetting check until the age of 16. Signed parental/carer consent is a prerequisite. They therefore need to be supervised at all times by a leader who is AccessNI or Garda Vetted.

Under-18s must be provided with induction training appropriate to their level of responsibility ***(Guidance 1.5A)*** as well as Junior Helper Safeguarding training ***(Guidance 1.5B)***. The Parish Panel should ensure such induction training is provided and the leadership of the group should supervise these young leaders.

When junior helpers turn 18, they should complete the remaining parts of the recruitment process to undertake the leadership role; however if they have been in constant contact with the group, they do not need to repeat Access NI Enhanced Disclosure/Garda Vetting unless they are due for re-vetting.

1.1D GUIDANCE ON RECRUITMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY

The Bishop of the Diocese shall ensure that appropriate recruitment 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.

Providers of Ordination (Pre and Post) and Lay Reader Training must ensure that an AccessNI Check and/or a Vetting Disclosure from the Garda National Vetting Bureau which has been assessed as being appropriate to work in the role, should be received for those who have been nominated for training, subject to residence, before commencing training. A person shall not commence training unless a vetting disclosure has been obtained.

1.1E GUIDANCE ON VISITING MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY SEEKING TO MINISTER IN THE CHURCH OF IRELAND FOR MORE THAN A ONE-OFF EVENT

All steps must be taken to ensure a safe environment within the Church for children and adults. Within the Constitution of the Church of Ireland, bishops have a responsibility to take measures to ensure the safety and welfare of children and adults. To do this effectively, it is important that certain checks are carried out to ensure that all clergy are in good standing prior to permission to officiate being given. This procedure should be read alongside the Protocol for Granting Permission to Officiate[2] and the guidance on safe recruitment. For ease of reading this procedure is broken into the following categories:

- Church of Ireland Members of the Clergy Seeking to Minister in Another Church of Ireland Diocese for Longer Term Ministry.
- Members of the Clergy Coming from Outside the Church of Ireland Seeking to Minister for Longer Term Ministry in the Church of Ireland.

DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

It is important that bishops using this process are aware of their obligations under data protection legislation to process only accurate personal data that is necessary to meet the legitimate safeguarding objectives and should ensure compliance with the data protection principles of data minimisation, lawful specific purpose, accurate data and keeping the data secure.

The members of visiting clergy should be made aware that their personal data may be processed for the purpose of background checks and vetting, as a requirement under GDPR Article 6(1) (c) (legal obligation) and under the lawful basis of legitimate interests. In Northern Ireland under the Data Protection Act 2018, Schedule 1 condition 1 and condition 18 would apply in the processing of the data associated with this procedure. The data provided in Form 1 and any disclosures should be securely stored and retained in line with data protection procedures.

CHURCH OF IRELAND MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY SEEKING TO MINISTER IN ANOTHER CHURCH OF IRELAND DIOCESE FOR LONGER-TERM MINISTRY (MORE THAN A ONE-OFF EVENT)

When clergy within a diocese in the Church of Ireland seek to minister in another diocese, prior to granting permission to offciate the receiving Bishop must ensure that the member of the clergy is in good standing by following this procedure:

- The member of the clergy should contact the Bishop or equivalent of the Diocese in which they are seeking to minister and request permission to offciate.
- The host Bishop sends ***1.1E Template 1*** to the Bishop or equivalent of the Diocese in which the member of the clergy currently serves and asks for it to be completed and returned.

[2] *Available here https://www.churchofireland.org/cmsfiles/pdf/Information/Resources/hob/2016-001-Permission-to-Officiate.pdf*

- The host Bishop ensures that a Garda Vetting or AccessNI check is carried out.
- On receipt of ***1.1E Template 1*** and the relevant Garda Vetting or AccessNI check, the host Bishop decides whether to grant the permission to officiate or not in accordance with Protocol 2016-001 and notifies the member of the clergy.

MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY COMING FROM OUTSIDE THE CHURCH OF IRELAND SEEKING TO MINISTER FOR LONGER TERM MINISTRY (MORE THAN ONE-OFF EVENT) IN THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

When clergy from outside Ireland visit with the intention of being involved in longer term ministry, evidence should be provided that confirms they that they are safe to minister.

Clergy who come from parts of the world where police vetting arrangements are not in existence may seek to minister in Ireland. Therefore, the statutory route is not always available as a means of confirming that there is no adverse information known about them that would prevent them from carrying out ministry within the Church of Ireland.

- The member of the clergy should contact the Bishop or equivalent of the Diocese in which they are seeking to minister and request permission to officiate.
- The host Bishop sends ***1.1E Template 1*** to the Bishop or equivalent of the Diocese in which the member of the clergy currently serves and asks for it to be completed and returned.
- A Garda Vetting or AccessNI check is carried out.
- As the member of the clergy is coming from outside of Ireland copies of police clearance checks from the countries in which they have served must be sent to the host bishop.
- On receipt of ***1.1E Template 1***, the relevant Garda Vetting or AccessNI check and police clearance checks, the host Bishop decides whether to grant the permission to officiate or not in accordance with Protocol 2016-001 and notifies the member of the clergy.

1.1E TEMPLATE 1: CHURCH OF IRELAND CLERGY CURRENT STATUS LETTER

This form is designed to be completed by the Bishop or equivalent. Before completing and signing this form, relevant personnel, HR and other files should be checked to ensure the information is current and relevant on the date completed in the Signature and Declaration Section. This form is designed to cover safeguarding issues and is not a character reference, and bishops completing this form should ensure that the sharing of this information complies with data protection legislation.

DETAILS OF THE APPLICANT

Name:	Date of Birth:
Year of Ordination *(Deacon)*:	Year of Ordination *(Priest)*:
Date of Most Recent Safeguarding Training Course Completed (must be within the last 3 years):	
Date of Last AccessNI, Garda Vetting or Equivalent Check (must be within the last 3 years):	

CONFIRMATION

I have consulted all relevant files held for this person and at the date signed below and I confirm that:

1. This person is currently authorised as

[INSERT NAME OF OFFICE OR MINISTRY]:

in

[INSERT NAME OF DIOCESE OR EQUIVALENT]:

in

[INSERT NAME OF CHURCH]:

by

Institution	*[INSERT DATE]:*
Licence	*[INSERT DATE]:*
Permission to Officiate	*[INSERT DATE]:*

2. No complaint has been received in respect of this person under the Disciplinary Canon or Regulation of:

[INSERT NAME OF CHURCH]:

which has been determined or is pending and has yet to be determined, and I do not have any information which suggests that such a complaint may be made in the near future.

3. No request has been made for an enquiry involving this person under any Canon or Regulation of:

[INSERT NAME OF CHURCH]:

that relates to serious breakdown in pastoral relationship between this person and parishioners, which is pending and has yet to be determined. I do not have any information which suggests that such an enquiry may be made in the near future, and I have not given instructions for the institution of an enquiry under any Canon or Regulation of:

[INSERT NAME OF CHURCH]:

4. This person has no restrictions or other inhibitions on their ministry, and I am not aware of any reference to this person on any caution / disciplinary list or record of:

[INSERT NAME OF CHURCH]:

5. I am not aware of any convictions, cautions, informed warnings or diversionary youth conferences that are not subject to filtering.

6. No disclosures have been made or information provided, that this person is, or has ever been, subject to any investigation by Children or Adult Services, or the police, due to concerns about the treatment of children or vulnerable adults/adults at risk or in need of protection.

7. I am not aware of any allegation(s) (whether substantiated or not) or concern(s) about this person which relate to safeguarding or relate to his/her compliance with the requirements of safeguarding policy.

8. I am not aware of any information that bars or prevents this person from being a charity trustee on financial or other grounds.

If you cannot confirm any of the above statements, please enter further information below:

DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE

This form is not a competence or character reference and cannot be treated as an indication as to whether this person is suitable for ministry in general or for any particular appointment. This form is focused on safeguarding and makes no comment about the person's health, personal relationships, or other issues concerning manner of life.

Signed:	Date:
Print Name:	

1.1F GUIDANCE ON VISITING MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY OR OTHER LAY PEOPLE MINISTERING FOR A ONE-OFF EVENT

This procedure[3] outlines the process to be followed when clergy or other lay people are ministering for a one-off event. This will include:

- Church of Ireland Members of the Clergy Moving Between Dioceses Within the Church of Ireland Seeking to Minister for a One-Off Event.
- Members of the Clergy Coming from Outside the Church of Ireland Seeking to Minister for a One-Off Event.
- Other Lay People Invited to Speak at Services as a Visiting Preacher who are not Clergy – e.g. representatives of Mission organisations or other church groups.

In these instances, the procedure outlined below should be followed:

Members of the clergy and others are regularly asked to preach or officiate at funerals, baptisms, etc. in another diocese as a one-off event. As this activity is a single occasion it will generally not meet the requirements for Garda Vetting or AccessNI checks. The following procedure should be followed:

1. The person who wishes to minister should contact the Bishop of the Diocese in which the event is taking place and request permission to officiate. The person who wishes to minister should outline within the request which diocese or equivalent he or she is currently serving.

2. The host Bishop should establish if the event requires a Garda Vetting or AccessNI check to be carried out and ask for this to be completed if necessary.

3. The person should complete ***1.1F Template 1*** and return it to the host Bishop.

4. The host Bishop sends ***1.1F Template 2*** to the Bishop of the Diocese (or equivalent authority) in which the person currently serves.

On receipt of this correspondence the host Bishop decides whether to grant the permission to officiate or not in accordance with Protocol 2016-001 (for clergy) and notifies the person.

[3] *Available here: https://www.churchofireland.org/cmsfiles/pdf/Information/Resources/hob/2016 001-Permission-to-Officiate.pdf*

1.1F TEMPLATE 1: SELF-DECLARATION FORM FOR MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY OR OTHERS

This declaration is required for those seeking permission to minister at a one-off event. The information provided will be processed, retained, and destroyed in accordance with applicable data protection and safeguarding requirements.

I, *[FULL NAME]:* declare that:

1. I consent to the Bishop or equivalent authority named below being contacted to provide a reference in relation to my participation in:

[NAME OF EVENT]:

2. I am not currently prohibited, suspended, or otherwise barred from ministry.
3. There is no current restriction, condition, or inhibition on my ministry of which I am aware.
4. I have / have not any (delete as appropriate) unspent criminal convictions. *(For events located in Northern Ireland see The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1978 and for Republic of Ireland see Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016.[4])*

If yes, details must be provided below:

5. I am not aware of any information relating to concerns about my conduct, ministry, or safeguarding practice that would be relevant to my participation in this event.
6. I undertake to inform the host Diocese or Parish within 24 hours if, after signing this declaration, I become subject to investigation by any statutory body, professional regulator, or church authority in relation to allegations or concerns involving[5]:

   - children or young people;
   - vulnerable adults;
   - behaviour that may bring my ministry into disrepute.

I understand that failure to disclose relevant information, or the provision of false or misleading information, may result in permission being refused or withdrawn.

Signed: **Date:**

Print Name:

[4] For queries related to criminal records contact Niacro https://www.niacro.co.uk/

[5] For clarity this may refer to investigations by statutory bodies or professional regulators into criminal behaviour or civil matters relating (but not limited to) violence, abuse, misuse of drugs, drink driving, or harassment.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR REFERENCE

Name:

Role or Title:

Contact information:

Tel:

Email:

1.1F TEMPLATE 2: REFERENCE TO BE COMPLETED BY BISHOP OR EQUIVALENT

This reference is provided in respect of: *[NAME]:*

who has consented to this information being shared for the purposes of ministering at:

[NAME OF EVENT]:

I confirm that, to the best of my knowledge (Please enter NA for any statement below that is not applicable):

1.The applicant is currently authorised to minister within

[INSERT NAME OF DIOCESE/CHURCH/DENOMINATION OR EQUIVALENT]:

2. The applicant is not currently prohibited, suspended, or otherwise barred from ministry.

3. There is no current restriction, condition, or inhibition on the applicant's ministry.

4. I am / am not *(delete as appropriate)* aware of any unspent criminal convictions relating to the applicant.

5. I am not aware of any safeguarding concerns that would make the applicant unsuitable to officiate at the above event.

I confirm that the above information is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed:	**Date:**
Print Name:	
Role/Title:	

1.1G GUIDANCE ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE DIOCESAN SUPPORT TEAM

The Bishop of the Diocese and Diocesan Councils shall determine the composition of the Diocesan Support Team and ensure that suitable people with the appropriate skills are appointed. Any potential conflict of interests must be shared with the Bishop and Diocesan Councils and dealt with prior to appointment.

The recruitment of the Diocesan Support Team should follow the procedure for nominated church personnel as outlined in ***Guidance 1.1A.***

The Diocesan Support Team shall report on a regular basis to the Diocesan Councils about their work and shall also submit a report annually to the diocesan secretary for inclusion in the Diocesan Synod Book of Reports.

1.1H GUIDANCE ON THE COMPOSITION OF PARISH PANEL OR EQUIVALENT

Incumbents and select vestries shall, following the approval of the Bishop of the Diocese (or equivalent), ensure that within each parish, there is a panel of at least three people (the Parish Panel).

The Panel shall include the Incumbent (or equivalent) or in exceptional circumstances a person nominated by the Incumbent together with at least two other members. The Panel should comprise of 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.

A Panel member cannot be the spouse or immediate relative of the Incumbent or 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. This may include, for example joining panels together, or suggesting alternative volunteers, but these would have to be agreed by the Bishop of the Diocese

The recruitment of the Parish Panel (or equivalent) should follow the procedure for nominated church personnel as outlined in ***Guidance 1.1A.***

If there is a vacancy in the Parish, the Bishop must ensure that a person overseeing the Parish during the vacancy is appointed to the Parish Panel, until the vacancy is filled.

The people best suited to these tasks are those whose occupations, or voluntary experience, has provided them with the relevant experience in this area.

Parishes should indicate the duration of appointment for Panel members. A period of three years is suggested, which may be renewable, so that the role and responsibility is shared among parishioners.

1.1I GUIDANCE ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING PANEL

The Diocesan Safeguarding Panel will be appointed by the Bishop of the Diocese subject to approval by Diocesan Councils as outlined in the procedure for nominated church personnel in ***Guidance 1.1A.*** This should include a senior member of the Clergy plus at least two others, with at least one lay member. The Panel should comprise of both male and female persons who have relevant skills in relation to case management or child safeguarding. Any potential conflict of interests must be shared with the Bishop and Diocesan Councils and dealt with prior to appointment.

1.2A GUIDANCE ON A CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR CHURCH PERSONNEL

The Code of Behaviour for church personnel has been categorised under the following headings:

- child-centred approach
- inappropriate behaviour
- physical contact
- relationships

All church personnel must comply at all times with the Code of Behaviour, as set out below.

CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH:

- Treat all children equally.
- Listen to and respect children.
- Treat all children as individuals and respect diversity.
- Lead by example.
- Respect a child's personal space.
- Involve children in decision-making, as appropriate.
- Provide encouragement, support and praise (regardless of ability).
- Use appropriate language (verbal and non-verbal).
- Have fun and encourage a positive atmosphere.
- Discuss boundaries on behaviour and related sanctions, as appropriate, with children and their parents/carers.
- Offer feedback and challenge as appropriate.
- Encourage feedback from children.
- Agree a group contract at the beginning of each year/session.
- Use age-appropriate teaching aids and materials.
- Be aware of a child's other commitments when scheduling activities, e.g. school or exams.
- Be cognisant of a child's limitations, for example, due to a medical condition.
- Encourage a trusting environment.
- Observe appropriate dress.

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR:

- Avoid spending unnecessary time alone with children.
- Do not use or allow language or behaviour that is offensive, abusive or sexually suggestive.
- Do not single out a particular child for unfair favouritism, criticism, ridicule, unwelcome focus or attention.
- Do not allow/engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Do not hit or physically chastise children.

- Do not socialise inappropriately with children, e.g. outside of structured organisational activities.
- Do not allow an inappropriate relationship to develop with any child.
- Ensure that any contact with children through social/digital media is in line with any relevant Policies.
- Do not be passive in relation to concerns, i.e. 'don't do nothing'.
- Maintain awareness around your communication, either verbal, written or digital (including social media). If you have said or done something that has caused offence or upset, then try to address it in an apologetic, sensitive and timely manner, with a view to reconciliation.

PHYSICAL CONTACT:

- Should be in response to the need of the child and not the need of the adult.
- Should be open and not secretive.
- Should be with the consent of the child.
- Should be appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the child.
- Check with children about their level of comfort when doing activities that might involve physical contact.
- Avoid rough play or inappropriate touch.

As a general principle, church personnel are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with children and should exercise a high level of caution in relation to any engagement in physical competitive games/contact sports with children.

Church personnel who have to administer first-aid should ensure wherever possible that other children or another adult is present and that the administration of any first aid of medication has consent in place.

Following any incident where an adult thinks that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued, every effort should be made to communicate with the offended party to resolve any misunderstandings. All incidents should be recorded, and where there is concern, the person in charge should be informed.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Church personnel should ensure that their relationships with children are appropriate. Church personnel must not allow a romantic/intimate relationship to develop with a child.

In Northern Ireland anyone who abuses their position of trust with children, even those over the age of consent, may be prosecutable by law. This pertains to people involved in the areas of religion and sport. As regards religion, those responsible for young people in this setting can command very high levels of trust, influence, power and authority. They have significant influence over a young person's spiritual and religious development, often against a background of emotional vulnerability or immaturity. They can often be well established and respected in the community.

An abuse of trust of this kind is a breach of the Child Safeguarding Policy and is also potentially prosecutable.

1.2B GUIDANCE ON A CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR CHILDREN

It is important to have a Code of Behaviour for children which can take the form of a group agreement for the children who are attending 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 will know what is expected of them as well as their right to be safe and protected from harm. They will also have ownership of the agreement.

It is important that when developing the group agreement with the children, church personnel should also discuss and agree the consequences for breaching the agreement. When agreed, the group agreement and accompanying consequences could be made available to all the children and their parents/carers.

1.2B TEMPLATE 1: SAMPLE CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR CHILDREN

A Code of Behaviour for members helps to explain children's rights and responsibilities when taking part in a group's activities. For a Code of Behaviour to work best, children need to be able to develop the Code for themselves, with the assistance of clergy/staff/volunteers.

Codes of Behaviour have been shown to help children to develop their sense of fair play and mutual respect and will help to create a safe, secure environment and an atmosphere where children will feel that they can confide in the leaders. When children 'own' the Code, they will generally protect and support it.

It is recommended that at the commencement of the group's year a Code of Behaviour be drawn up with the members' participation. While it is recognised that discipline may seem at times to be restrictive to children it is best enforced with their agreement and therefore the members should also be involved with deciding what sanctions should be associated with the code of behaviour.

An effective Code of Behaviour should contain the following elements:

- A description of the rights and responsibilities of all members of the group (i.e. respecting views and feelings of other members, right to express opinions, right to be heard/listened to).
- A description of the ways in which the group encourages and recognises good behaviour (i.e. reward system).
- A description of unacceptable/inappropriate behaviour (i.e. alcohol consumption, smoking, physical abuse, verbal abuse, destruction or damage of property or equipment, misuse of any substance).
- A description of what is acceptable in terms of use of mobile phones at activities.
- Mechanisms for achieving a supportive culture and positive environment (i.e. leaders willing to listen to children, involvement of children in decision making).
- Strategies to embrace diversity and difference within the group (i.e. respecting others' opinions, not excluding anyone).
- Strategies for the prevention of bullying and other serious misbehaviour and processes for managing conflict.

Sanctions should contain the following elements:

- Issuing an apology.
- Loss of privileges.
- Parents/carers being informed of the breach of code.
- Leaving the group for a period and/or for good.

Once the Code of Behaviour and sanctions have been agreed by the members of the group, a copy of it should be issued to each child and their parents/carers for them to sign.

1.2C GUIDANCE ON BREACHING THE CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

Breaching the Code of Behaviour may, in some circumstances, give rise to a complaint, or in more serious cases, give rise to a child protection concern. When an issue of concern arises, the matter should first be brought to the attention of the Parish Panel, who will triage the concern and determine whether it should be dealt with under the complaints procedures ***(Guidance 1.4A)*** or be referred to the RCB Casework Team ***(Guidance 2.1A).***

Breaching the Code of Behaviour may be a serious issue that needs to be reviewed and addressed and may result in disciplinary action and in severe cases, ultimately dismissal. A breach of the Code is serious, even if it does not reach the threshold for causing harm to a child. Breaches of the Code may indicate that a person's behaviour could pose a risk of harm to children if it is not addressed.

If a child/young person or an adult breach the Code of Behaviour, in consultation with the Parish Panel, efforts should be made to resolve the issue by:

- Discussion with and support for the adult or the child/young person.
- A child/young person or adult may be asked to apologise for their behaviour.
- In the case of a child/young person, involving their parents/carers.
- Deciding on further steps.

Further steps may include:

- Time out of group activity.
- For children/young people, a parent/carer may be asked to attend group activities with their child for a period of time.
- For adults, retraining in leadership skills, code of behaviour, etc. may be required.
- For children/young people, the code of behaviour should be revisited and agreed upon.
- Monitoring behaviour and support on an ongoing basis.
- In serious cases, exclusion from the group may be considered.
- Formal reporting to the statutory authorities via the reporting procedures ***(Guidance 2.1A).***

1.3A GUIDANCE ON CONDUCTING LOCAL SAFEGUARDING RISK ASSESSMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Risk assessment is an important part of working with children. It assists with managing both health and safety issues, and the welfare of children. Part 2, Article 11 of the Children First Act 2015 requires all services who work with children to have a Child Safeguarding Statement in ROI, and in Northern Ireland carrying out risk assessments on activities with children is considered good practice. The core component of this statement is risk assessment. This should focus on any risks of harm to a child that could occur while availing of or in attendance in your service.

Consideration of how to control or manage risks is critical. It is important to identify acceptable levels of risk, as it may not be possible to eliminate all risk, however every effort must be made to mitigate against its adverse effects. If you do not feel equipped to identify or address a risk locally, consult with the Safeguarding Manger for Policy and Training. Whilst this guidance is concerned primarily with risks associated with failure to follow effective safeguarding practice, it must be understood alongside the health and safety regulation and policy which is the responsibility of the Select Vestry.

Whilst the focus on risk assessment should be on groups of children with whom you are working, as opposed to the physical venue, if a problem with the venue is discovered during the course of assessing (e.g. broken glass, electrical cabling) this needs to be raised with the Vestry.

WHAT DOES THE TERM "RISK" MEAN?

A risk is a potential source of harm or adverse health effect on a person or persons. In the Republic of Ireland 'risk' in the context of this risk assessment is the risk of harm to children as defined in the Children First Act (2015) – (a) assault, ill-treatment, or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child's health, development or welfare, or (b) the sexual abuse of a child whether by a single act, omission, or circumstance or by a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances, or otherwise.

In Northern Ireland, Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI takes its definition from the Children (NI) Order 1995 which defines 'harm' as ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development. It states that 'ill-treatment' includes sexual abuse, forms of ill-treatment which are physical and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical; 'health' means physical and/or mental health; and 'development' means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development.

ASSESSING RISKS

For each activity that involves ministry with children, the leader should meet with the Parish Panel and any relevant safeguarding personnel and complete the following steps:

1. Identify and list the risks: look for hazards in the nature of the activity, and in the place where you are holding the activity. Areas to be considered include:

- Have all staff and volunteers been recruited properly? (including vetting reference checks, etc).

- Have all staff and volunteers been trained in safeguarding and in working with children?
- Does everyone understand their role?
- Does everyone know what to do if they are concerned about a child?
- Have appropriate supervision ratios been put in place?
- Have children and their carers been informed of rules for the activity and given their consent to participate?
- Have practical considerations been assessed for risk – e.g. where are toilets, washing and changing facilities?
- What security measures have been considered – e.g. access to the venue by non-participants?
- Will technology be used in the activity? Who has access and how is it monitored?
- Has consideration been given to the safe collection of children after the activity?
- Have relevant personnel been briefed on the content of the Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment and what polices to follow in the event that a concern is identified?
- Does everyone know the reporting procedures for allegations and concerns?

It may be helpful to consider these risks in stages of the activity; for example, what the risks are in advance of the activity, on arrival, during the activity and after.

2. Identify the controls that need to be put in place to limit the risk.
3. Identify who is responsible for managing the risk and the correct implementation of the associated procedures. This should include those directly responsible for the children's ministry and those with specific responsibilities for child safeguarding in the Parish/Diocese.
4. These steps should be used to complete the Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment ***(1.3A Template 1).***

Given the similarities that exist across certain activities, whatever the location, it is likely that the same risks and mitigation measures may be appropriate to many situations. However, it is important that those completing a risk assessment keep the focus on their own situation and consider whether the needed controls may differ based on the local context of the activity. The Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment must be available to all leaders of activities with children, who should be aware of its contents and their role.

REVIEWS

Risk should be periodically reviewed, especially in circumstances when a venue changes, a new activity takes place or the members of the group change. If no new risks are present, a review of the Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment should take place at least annually.

1.3A TEMPLATE 1: LOCAL SAFEGUARDING RISK ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

This assessment considers the potential for harm as defined by the Children First Act/Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland *(delete as appropriate)* to a child while participating in activities organised by:

[NAME OF ACTIVITY]:

and to ensure that adequate procedures are in place to manage identified risks.

It will be reviewed at least annually or as soon as practicable after there has been a new risk identified or any other relevant change.

Name of group/activity:

Date of risk assessment:

Date of review:

Person completing the hazard assessment:

Role:

Identified Risk	Procedures in place to manage risk	Persons Responsible

1.3B GUIDANCE ON TUSLA CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT (ROI ONLY)

This section refers to a requirement under legislation in the Republic of Ireland only and is not the same as a health and safety risk assessment.

Under the Children First Act 2015, organisations providing a relevant service with children, such as the Church of Ireland, must display a 'compliant' Child Safeguarding Statement (public document) and undertake a Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment (Guidance 1.3A) (private document). A Child Safeguarding Statement must not be published until the Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment is complete.

CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

The RCB has worked with the Tusla Child Safeguarding Statement Compliance Unit and have agreed that the centralised statement is compliant ***(1.3B Template 1)*** and should be displayed prominently in places where children's activities take place.

This template should be completed by adding in the relevant details and the name(s) of the relevant person/people who should be contacted in relation to the statement.

LOCAL SAFEGUARDING RISK ASSESSMENT

This assessment considers the potential for harm (as defined by the Children's First Act below) to come to children while they are in the organisation's care. It should be noted that the potential for harm is not a general health and safety risk which is a totally different requirement.

Definition of 'harm' in the Children First Act 2015.

'Harm' means, in relation to a child –

(a) assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child's health, development or welfare, or;

(b) sexual abuse of the child, whether caused by a single act, omission or circumstance or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances, or otherwise;

The process is intended to enable the organisation to:

- Identify potential areas where harm could happen.
- Develop policies and procedures to minimise these.
- Review whether adequate precautions have been taken to eliminate or reduce these areas of potential harm.

As outlined in ***Guidance 1.3A*** this process should be completed for each activity with children, reviewed annually and stored locally should Tusla wish to view it.

1.3B TEMPLATE 1: TUSLA CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT (ROI ONLY)

NAME AND DETAILS OF THE SERVICE PROVIDER

[INSERT NAME OF DIOCESE OR PARISH]:

[INSERT ADDRESS OF DIOCESE OR PARISH]:

[INSERT TELEPHONE NUMBER OF DIOCESEAN OR PARISH OFFICE]:

STATEMENT

This Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, the Children First: National Guidance, and Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice.

The *[INSERT NAME OF DIOCESE OR PARISH]:* acknowledges its duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice that reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice.

The *[INSERT NAME OF DIOCESE OR PARISH]:* is committed to safeguarding children by working under the guidance of the COI Child Safeguarding Policy and its associated guidance. We recognise that the welfare and interests of children are paramount in all circumstances. The bishops, clergy, volunteers and staff are committed to ensuring that all children have a positive and enjoyable experience in a safe and child-centred environment and are protected from abuse whilst participating in activities.

NATURE OF SERVICE

The *[INSERT NAME OF DIOCESE OR PARISH]:* provides the following activities and services to children under 18 years of age:

[INSERT LIST OF SERVICES TO CHILDREN]:

RISK ASSESSMENT

All parishes, dioceses and other bodies operating under the COI Child Safeguarding Policy have conducted a written Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment of any potential for harm to a child through their involvement in each church activity. The written risk assessment indicates the areas of potential harm, the likelihood of harm occurring, and lists the required policy, guidance, process and practice required to manage risks. If there are site specific risks that local parishes and diocese need to include in their Child Safeguarding Statement they have done so in conjunction with their relevant person.

Risks Identified	Polices/Procedures in Place
Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) of a child by a member of the clergy/staff/ volunteer/peer	The COI Child Safeguarding Policy includes a code of behaviour and vetting procedures which addresses these risks. These are available as part of the procedures under Standard 1 available here *https://safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org/*
Risk of harm (as defined in the CFA 2015) to a child on outings by a member of the clergy/staff/ volunteer/stranger/peer	The COI Child Safeguarding Policy addresses these risks as part of procedures under Standard 1 which is available at *https://safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org/*
Risk of harm (as defined in the CFA 2015) to a child of bullying by peers	The COI Child Safeguarding Policy addresses these risks as part of procedures under Standard 1 which is available at *https://safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org/*
Risk of harm (as defined in the CFA 2015) of a child from unauthorised photography	The COI Child Safeguarding Policy addresses these risks as part of procedures under Standard 1 which is available at *https://safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org/*
Risk of harm (as defined in the CFA 2015) of a child from online abuse through social media or internet access	The COI Child Safeguarding Policy addresses these risks as part of procedures under Standard 1 which is available at *https://safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org/*
Church of Ireland Bishops, members of the clergy, volunteers or staff fail to understand their responsibilities to protect children from risk of harm (as defined in the CFA 2015)	Procedures to provide safeguarding training and support are in place as part of procedures under Standard 1 which is available at *https://safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org/*

In addition to the risk assessments and the above policies and procedures named, the following procedures are in place as part of the COI Child Safeguarding Policy which is available here *https://safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org/*:

- Procedures for the safe recruitment of volunteers or employees to work with children in our services.
- Procedures for provision of and access to child safeguarding training, including the identification and reporting of harm.
- Procedures for reporting child protection and welfare concerns to Tusla and An Garda Síochána.
- Procedures for maintaining a list of persons in each diocese who are mandated persons.
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person for this Child Safeguarding Statement.
- Procedures for dealing with allegations made against clergy/staff/volunteer/peer.

IMPLEMENTATION

The *[INSERT NAME OF DIOCESE OR PARISH]:* recognises that implementation is an ongoing process and is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support its intention to keep children safe from harm and the risk of harm. The Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed no later than

[INSERT DATE]:[6]

or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.

Signed by the provider of the relevant service:

[INSERT NAME OF BISHOP OR INCUMBENT]:

[INSERT DATE OF SIGNATURE]:

RELEVANT PERSON

For any queries relating to this statement please contact the relevant person who is:

[INSERT NAME OF RELEVANT PERSON]:

[INSERT EMAIL ADDRESS]:

[6] *24 months after the existing Child Safeguarding Statement*

1.3C GUIDANCE ON BEST PRACTICE WHEN PLANNING ACTIVITIES WITH CHILDREN

To assist those with ensuring activities with children are appropriately planned and risk assessed, the following bullet points should be considered:

- Ensure that all administrative requirements are fulfilled.
- Make parents/carers, children, and visitors aware of the Child Safeguarding Policy ***(Guidance 1.6B).***
- Have emergency procedures in place and make all aware of these procedures.
- Plan and be sufficiently prepared.
- Report any safeguarding/child protection concerns in line with reporting procedures ***(Guidance 2.1A).***
- Ensure that church personnel report to the Parish Panel any concerns (which are not allegations of abuse) that they may have about a fellow staff member's or a volunteer's practice and complete an incident form ***(Guidance 1.4A and Guidance 1.4B).***
- Ensure that any complaint about a bishop's or clergy's practice which may cause harm to a child is reported via the reporting procedures ***(Guidance 2.1A).***
- Report and record any incidents and/or accidents in the incident report form/book.
- Encourage children to report any bullying, concerns or worries and refer to the Anti-Bullying Policy and related reporting procedures ***(Guidance 1.3E).***
- Evaluate work practices on a regular basis.
- Provide appropriate training for church personnel ***(Guidance 1.5B).***
- Keep parents/carers informed of any issues that concern their children ***(Guidance 1.6B).***
- Ensure proper supervision based on adequate ratios according to age, abilities and activities involved ***(Guidance 1.3F).***
- Observe appropriate gender balance for residentials ***(Guidance 1.3N).***
- Church personnel must ensure that all children who attend activities should have a membership registration form filled in by a parent or carer with parental responsibility, giving name, address, date of birth, relevant medical details, dietary needs, emergency telephone numbers, next of kin, consent to seek emergency medical assistance if required, and consent to attend the activity ***(Guidance 1.3C Template 1).***
- Explicit parental consent is required for all outings, photographs, text messaging, social media contact, etc. ***(Guidance 1.3C Template 1, 1.3L Template 1, Guidance 1.3M).***
- Any information should be managed in accordance with GDPR ***(See Appendix E).***
- The name of the leaders in charge and relevant contact details should be provided to parents/carers as necessary ***(Guidance 1.6B).***

- An attendance register should be kept for each session and include all church personnel present.
- Church personnel 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, and reasonable accommodations should be made to meet individual needs and enable participation.
- Church personnel should consult with parents/carers and management committees when using materials in connection to sensitive personal topics and should not use such materials other than with parental or carer consent in respect of any children attending such programmes.

1.3C TEMPLATE 1: SAMPLE CONSENT FORM

Please complete this form and return it to:

[INSERT RELEVANT DETAILS]:

A signed consent form is a condition of participation in this activity for those under the age of 18.

GROUP/ACTIVITY DETAILS

[INSERT DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF ACTIVITIES OR GROUP]:

PERSONAL DETAILS

Name of Child:

Age: Date of Birth:

Address:

Parent/Carer emergency contact number:

Name and Number of Parent/Carer 1:

Name and Number of Parent/Carer 2:

I am willing for: *[INSERT CHILD'S NAME]:*

to participate in: *[INSERT GROUP OR ACTIVITY NAME]:*

and confirm that he/she is willing to participate as fully as possible.

(Delete the two lines below if not relevant)

Furthermore, I permit: *[INSERT CHILD'S NAME]:*

to travel on transport that has been designated as official for the purpose of this event.

Signed: Date:

MEDICAL DETAILS

Please indicate if your child:

a) Has any allergies

b) Is taking any medication

c) Has any additional needs we need to be aware of

I give permission for basic first aid to be administered to my son/daughter. Yes: No:

In the event of a medical emergency, illness or accident church personnel will endeavour to contact the people named on this form with parental responsibility as soon as possible using the contact numbers given. Having parental responsibility for the child named on this form, I give permission for relevant and proportionate medical treatment to be administered by a suitably qualified medical practitioner. Where necessary, I will inform relevant church personnel of any relevant changes to my child's health, medication or needs and also of any changes to the contact numbers provided.

Signed: Date:

CHILD'S CONSENT

I give my consent to participate in this event/activity in line with my Parent's/Carer's consent above.

Signed: Date:

Consent must be provided by the person with parental responsibility.

In line with Data Protection regulations, we are committed to protecting the personal information given on this form. By providing the information requested, you are giving us permission (consent) to use this information for Safeguarding, legal or regulatory purposes and we will use it for no other purpose without further consent unless mandated or required to do so under the Data Protection Act 2018 or equivalent legislation. If you have any questions about how we process your personal data, please contact a member of the Parish Panel.

1.3C TEMPLATE 2: CHECKLIST FOR PARISH/DIOCESAN SUPPORT TEAM - SAFETY OF ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

This checklist should be used annually at a meeting of all staff and volunteers/leaders in charge of groups and panel members to complete and update the Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment ***(Guidance 1.3A).***

A		
Is a register kept of all those in attendance at children's organisations?	Yes:	No:
Has a registration form been completed for each child who attends?	Yes:	No:
Is a consent form used for outings and residential activities?	Yes:	No:
Is parental consent sought for the taking and use of photographs or videos?	Yes:	No:
B		
Is there a list of children in each group?	Yes:	No:
Is there a list of staff/volunteers in each group?	Yes:	No:
Are supervision levels appropriate for age of children, activities being undertaken, etc.?	Yes:	No:
C		
Has each group held a fire drill in the last twelve months?	Yes:	No:
D		
Have staff/volunteers talked to children about safeguarding?	Yes:	No:
Have staff/volunteers provided relevant information regarding safeguarding to children?	Yes:	No:
Are children aware of whom to contact regarding safeguarding issues?	Yes:	No:
E		
Does each group have a Code of Behaviour in place for the members and staff?	Yes:	No:

Have the children been involved in drawing up this Code of Behaviour?	Yes:	No:
Have the children been involved in agreeing the sanctions for breaches of the Code of Behaviour?	Yes:	No:
Have parents/carers been informed of each group's Code of Behaviour and sanctions?	Yes:	No:

F		
Have any issues arisen in any group in relation to content of activities?	Yes:	No:
Has each group adequate resources for their activities for the next twelve months?	Yes:	No:

G		
Does any group plan to hold an outing/trip away during the next twelve months?	Yes:	No:
Have planning, health and safety risk assessment (including periodic inspections) and a local safeguarding risk assessment been undertaken for this event?	Yes:	No:

H		
Have images or video been taken of children for church purposes?	Yes:	No:
Has parental/carer and child permission been sought to take and use such photos or videos?	Yes:	No:
Are photographs/videos that have been taken, stored and secured appropriately?	Yes:	No:

I		
Does any group use social/digital media to contact children?	Yes:	No:
Has parental/carer permission been sought?	Yes:	No:
If there is a social networking site, is it monitored appropriately?	Yes:	No:

J		
Are there any other issues which volunteers/staff have had to deal with which they need help and support with?	Yes:	No:

1.3C TEMPLATE 3: CHECKLIST FOR SELECT VESTRIES

This checklist should be completed by the Select Vestry once a year and used to update the Tusla Child Safeguarding Statement (ROI only).

Is first-aid available during all activities?	Yes:	No:
Is there an up-to-date first-aid kit available both on the premises and for activities away from the premises?	Yes:	No:
Do staff and volunteers know who the First Aider is for their group? Are all accidents and incidents recorded?	Yes:	No:
How?		
Do regular fire drills take place?	Yes:	No:
Are evacuation notices displayed informing people what to do in case of emergency?	Yes:	No:
Are fire appliances suitable and serviced regularly?	Yes:	No:
Has the local fire prevention officer visited the premises?	Yes:	No:
Is there a Health and Safety Statement in place that covers all parish premises?	Yes:	No:
Has a health and safety risk assessment (including periodic inspections) been undertaken?	Yes:	No:
Are there precautions in place regarding access to premises by strangers whilst children's activities are taking place?	Yes:	No:
Has an intercom or doorbell been fitted to parish premises?	Yes:	No:
Has the Select Vestry ensured that all activities with children have a Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment (Guidance 1.3A) completed?	Yes:	No:
Has the Select Vestry adopted the Tusla Child Safeguarding Statement (ROI only)?	Yes:	No:
Is the Tusla Child Safeguarding Statement (ROI only) displayed on all parish premises?	Yes:	No:

Have the Parish Panel completed their care of records checklist in the past twelve months?	Yes:	No:
Have the Parish Panel and staff and volunteers completed their checklist in the past twelve months?	Yes:	No:
Has every external organisation that involves children:		
(a) signed an external agreement this year?	Yes:	No:
(b) provided the Parish with a copy of their insurance?	Yes:	No:
Is this checklist completed annually by the Select Vestry?	Yes:	No:

1.3D GUIDANCE ON WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Children who are involved in church activities may have a range of additional or specific needs and may depend on adults more than other children for their care and safety. In line with a child-centred approach, it is important that all children have opportunities to participate in the life of the church. If a child has specific needs, it is important to engage with them and their parents/carers sensitively to explore ways in which they can participate in the church's activity. To do this well, consideration should be given to the following:

- Consultation with the child and their parents/carers in order to identify what the child's needs are and consider how your group can meet the child's needs by ensuring adequate supervision, ensuring church personnel have the appropriate skills to deal with the child's needs and ensuring appropriate parental consent is in place.
- Some children with additional needs may require one-to-one help in church or a children's group; therefore, ensure that your group has an adequate number of appropriately trained leaders to provide this support.
- Local Safeguarding Risk Assessments may be necessary to ensure everyone can participate safely. Additionally, a care plan may be required to support the participation of the child in the group. Depending on the needs of the child this may involve consideration of:
  - Administration of medicines. It is important that church personnel are adequately trained to administer medicines, are willing to do so, and have obtained parental consent. Additionally, any administration of medicines should be recorded in keeping with data protection. You should also check with your insurers in this regard.
  - Showering and intimate care.
  - Access to bathrooms.
  - Suitability of accommodation.
- Where it is necessary to carry out tasks of a personal nature for a child/young person with additional needs, this should be done with the full understanding and consent of the child and their parents or carers. In carrying out such personal care tasks, sensitivity must be shown to the child and tasks undertaken with discretion.
- The views of the child/young person should be actively sought, wherever possible, when drawing up arrangements.
- Children/young people who require additional assistance with personal care tasks may prefer to be accompanied by someone of the same gender. Parental preference and permission should be followed in this regard.
- Any care task of a personal nature which a child or young person can do for themselves should not be undertaken by a leader.
- In a situation where any variation from agreed procedure is necessary, the child, the leader in charge and parents/carers should be informed as soon as possible and it should be recorded appropriately.

- Children with additional needs may be more likely than other children to be bullied or subjected to other forms of abuse, and they may also be less clear about physical and emotional boundaries. It is important that consideration is given to how to appropriately train and support children in recognition of these needs to ensure they understand who to go to for advice and support.
- It is particularly important that children with additional needs are carefully listened to, in recognition of the fact that they may have difficulty verbalising their concerns, and so that the importance of what they communicate is not underestimated.
- Be sensitive to the fact that not every disability is visible.

Please note: Church personnel who encounter children or young people presenting with mental health issues/needs should inform their parents/carers and signpost them to the G.P. in the first instance.

1.3E GUIDANCE ON ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Bullying is defined as repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise. It may be conducted by one or more persons against another or others and is behaviour which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity. An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity but as a once-off incident is not considered to be bullying. 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. Additionally, bullying involves the repeated misuse of power.

It is therefore important that church personnel do all in their power to tackle bullying occurring in any children's activities. The Parish Panel should refer to the anti-bullying policy template ***(1.3E Template 1)***, which includes the definition of bullying and guidelines on how church personnel should respond to any incidents of bullying. This policy should be adopted by the Select Vestry and circulated to all church personnel.

1.3E TEMPLATE 1: ANTI-BULLYING POLICY TEMPLATE

[INSERT NAME OF PARISH/DIOCESE OR RELEVANT CHURCH ORGANISATION]

is committed to providing a caring, supportive and friendly environment where children learn to value and respect each other and are challenged to reach their full potential through active participation.

[INSERT NAME OF PARISH/DIOCESE OR RELEVANT CHURCH ORGANISATION]

will not tolerate bullying by anyone in any of its activities.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Northern Ireland (Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People)

Bullying causes physical and/or emotional harm and can result in significant problems of low self-esteem, social isolation, anxiety and depression for the children and young people subjected to it. Bullying occurs in a variety of settings and can take place off and online. All settings in which children are provided with services or participate in activities must have rigorously enforced anti-bullying policies and procedures in place.

ROI (Children First Act)

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, cyber-bullying, damage to property, intimidation, isolation/exclusion, name-calling, malicious gossip and extortion. Bullying can also take the form of abuse based on gender identity, 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 personal devices *(See section on Cyberbullying).*

It is recognised that bullying affects the lives of an increasing number of children and can be the cause of genuine concerns about a child's welfare.

While bullying can happen to any child, some may be more vulnerable. These include: children with disability or special educational needs; those from ethnic minority and migrant groups, or from the Traveller community; lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) children and those perceived to be LGBT; and children of minority religious faiths.

There can be an increased vulnerability to bullying among children with special educational needs. This is particularly so among those who do not understand social cues and/or have difficulty communicating. Some children with complex needs may lack understanding of social situations and therefore trust everyone implicitly. Such children may be more vulnerable because they do not have the same social skills or capacity as others to recognise and defend themselves against bullying behaviour.

PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES

Church personnel should promote a positive anti-bullying ethos in their activities, raise awareness amongst other church personnel and children that bullying will not be tolerated and that anyone who witnesses an incident of bullying has a responsibility to report it. By emphasising the Code of Behaviour, church personnel should create an environment in which children are valued as individuals and are encouraged and affirmed.

What can church personnel do if a child tells them they are being bullied?

- Listen calmly and accept what is said.
- Complete an incident form following the conversation and keep on file as this forms the basis of the bullying report. Notes should include nature of incident, date, time, location, names of those involved, witnesses, relevant history and child's response.
- Reassure them that help is available, action will be taken, the child was right to tell, it is not their fault, and it could happen to anyone.
- Negotiate confidentiality – be clear you'll tell only people who need to know but that you cannot guarantee confidentiality or secrecy.
- Ensure the child's safety. The member of church personnel should be aware that the safety of the child is paramount, and this can be maintained through appropriate supervision. Liaise with the parents/carers in relation to a solution and possible actions.
- Tell the child that you will keep them informed and how you intend to proceed.
- Respond to the incident – all actions should be guided by the needs of the child. Decide what action to take and by whom.
- Make a record of facts rather than opinions. Include details from the bullying report, details recounted by others involved, any agreements made, an account of action taken and suggestions for follow up and monitoring. This should be retained by the Parish Panel.

RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS OF BULLYING

There are a number of approaches which can be used, and the member of church personnel should determine which action to take depending on the incident of bullying.

1. The Code of Behaviour sets out the guidelines for children regarding boundaries and appropriate behaviour. Draw everyone's attention back to the Code of Behaviour and the consequences of not abiding by the Code.

2. The 'no blame' approach does not concentrate on who did what to whom, but instead it focuses on the feelings of the target and what the group involved in the bullying and the target can do to make this situation better. The 'no blame' approach allows the group involved in the bullying behaviour to think about the action that has taken place and the effect it has had on the target. It provides the perpetrator and the rest of the group involved in the bullying behaviour with an opportunity to redeem themselves.

3. Time Out – by providing some space and time between the perpetrator and target and allowing both parties involved to think about the incident that has taken place, time apart may aid the process of resolving the bullying, e.g. removal of the perpetrator away from the target to another group.
4. Denial of privileges – loss of certain privileges by the perpetrator in the group. It is hoped that by using this response the perpetrator may realise the impact of their actions on the target and the consequences for themselves.
5. Parental/Carer involvement – make parents/carers of all children involved aware of the incident of bullying and ask them to intervene in the situation.
6. Suspension or expulsion of the perpetrator may be used as a last resort in bullying where no other interventions have worked.
7. Disciplinary procedures must be applied in relation to any sanctioning of the perpetrator and advice should be sought in relation to the adoption of such procedures, where appropriate.

CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying is defined as 'any behaviour performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others'.

Cyberbullying, similar to more traditional forms of bullying, must meet three main criteria:

- Intention to cause harm to the victim(s).
- Repetition of abusive behaviour(s) over time; however in some instances, one behavioural act can create an ongoing sense of intimidation for the victim (e.g. posting a humiliating photo/video which can be viewed by a large audience can have long-term effects).
- Imbalance of power between victim(s) and bully/bullies (i.e. super technological skills, anonymity).

Cyberbullying differs from more traditional forms of bullying in a number of ways:

- The audience is larger.
- There are no time or location barriers.
- It can happen 24/7.
- The target's reaction is not often seen, leading to a reduction in feelings of empathy or guilt for the perpetrator.

What are the signs/symptoms that someone is being cyberbullied?

Some signs or symptoms that may present when a child is experiencing cyberbullying include:

- More frequent health problems – headaches, stomach aches, frequent absenteeism, sleep problems, depression or suicidal thoughts.

- Behavioural and emotional changes – distressed, anxious, frustrated, fearful, angry.
- School-related changes – inability to concentrate, drop in academic performance, reluctance to attend school.
- Negative emotional expressions after use of social media – poor self-image, sadness, hopelessness, loneliness, suspicion of others.
- Changes in online behaviour – more careful or cautious approaches to communicating online.
- Being emotionally upset during or after using the Internet or the phone.
- Being very secretive or protective of their digital life.
- Wanting to stop using the computer or mobile phone.
- Being nervous or jumpy when getting an instant message, text or email.
- Avoiding discussions about computer or mobile phone activities.
- Physical symptoms such as self-harm, eating disorders and/or risky behaviours.

Actions church personnel should consider when a child is the target of cyberbullying:

- Confirm that you are dealing with bullying behaviour.
- Listen calmly and uncritically to the report the child is making.
- Remind the child that it is not their fault; it is the person who is doing the bullying that has the problem.
- Tell the child not to respond to the bully as this can exacerbate the issue.
- Ask the child if they have talked to their parents about the cyberbullying. If they have not, the Bishop/clergy/staff member/volunteer should offer to help the child to talk to their parents about the problem.
- The following advice should be given by the Bishop/clergy/staff member/volunteer to the parents of the child experiencing the cyberbullying:
  - Keep a copy of all correspondence between the child and the bully.
  - Encourage the child to remove the cyberbully as a 'friend' online and block them from his/her phone.
  - Report the issue to the website and/or mobile phone company as appropriate.
  - Serious issues may require to be reported to PSNI/An Garda Síochána. Issues requiring investigation by PSNI/An Garda Siochana may include the making of inappropriate sexual suggestions, racist remarks or persistent bullying that is seriously damaging to the child's well-being. In such situations the member of church personnel should report their concerns to the Parish Panel who can assist them to inform parents that they should report the cyberbullying or sexting to the PSNI/Gardaí by bringing the child's phone to the local PSNI/Garda station and making a report.

Adopted by the Select Vestry on

1.3F GUIDANCE ON SUPERVISION LEVELS AND CHILD-TO-ADULT RATIOS

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

- Children are not left unattended.
- Adequate numbers of church personnel are available to supervise activities.
- When dealing with group members of mixed gender, it is recommended that there are sufficient numbers of church personnel of both sexes to properly supervise activities and any premises in use.
- Know at all times where children are and what they are doing.
- Any activity involving additional risk, e.g. the use of bouncy castle, requires enhanced adult supervision.
- Dangerous behaviour is never allowed.

The minimum adult-to-child ratio in any group is outlined below, the minimum number of adults is two.

More church personnel or adults to children compared to the minimum ratio may be required due to local circumstances, the relationship with the group, the experience of church personnel, safety, ability/disability of children and the nature and/or location of the activities being undertaken.

Where a group is allowing under-18s to assist working with children, they should not be counted as part of the adult ratio.

Where an activity involves swimming, or other external activities, staff and volunteers should abide by the external organisation's Child Admission Policy.

No. of Church Personnel	0 – 4 years	5 – 12 years	13 years plus
2	1 – 6 children	1 – 16 children	1 – 20
3	7 – 9 children	17 – 24 children	21 – 30
4	10 – 12 children	25 – 32 children	31 – 40
5	13 – 15 children	33 – 40 children	41 – 50

1.3G GUIDANCE ON ONE-TO-ONE MEETINGS WITH CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE

For the vast majority of youth work, engagement with young people should be planned. Young people should not be on their own with a youth worker. In the event of an emergency or an extremely reactive situation, the youth worker should take all necessary steps to ensure the safety of the young person and their own safety. All actions taken should be recorded and reported to their supervisor or equivalent.

Church personnel should be aware of the dangers which may arise from one-to-one meetings with individual children. In a reactive situation, e.g. where a child/young person requests a one-to-one meeting without warning or where a child/young person needs to be removed from a group, another member of church personnel must be informed of this. 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 adult should be present or nearby during the meeting. A record should be kept of these meetings including names, dates, times, location, reason for the meeting and outcome.

When children/young people seek advice on an individual basis, the primary role of church personnel is to listen to the child/young person and refer them to qualified and competent sources of advice/counselling.

If one-to-one working is part of a planned structured piece of work, it should be noted that this type of work carries significantly increased risk to both the child and the adult. Additional risk must be addressed. The programme/activity should have a clear rationale, evidence base, aims, methodology, evaluation mechanism and accompanying work plan, which includes:

- A comprehensive recruitment process, including competencies, interviews, references, Access NI/Garda Vetting etc. (where appropriate), must be implemented ***(Guidance 1.1B).***
- A comprehensive training programme must be delivered, at diocesan level, to church personnel involved ***(Guidance 1.5B).***
- A formal supervision structure must be in place, with clarity as to who is responsible for this work.
- Supervision should be delivered by adequately trained personnel, to support this work and address any issues which may arise.
- Parents/carers must be fully informed as to the nature and purpose of this work and must give written consent ***(1.3C Template 1).***
- Any work in this regard must be risk assessed (with documentary evidence provided) in relation to the risk of abuse ***(1.3A Template 1).***
- Additionally, any work in this regard must be formally approved by the Bishop of the relevant Diocese.
- Evidence of approval by the relevant insurers must also be provided.

1.3H GUIDANCE ON USE OF HOMES BY SMALL GROUPS INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE

There may be occasions where it is appropriate for youth groups to meet in the homes of group leaders. This should only take place with the permission of the Parish Panel and the reasoning for this decision recorded by the Panel. Cognisance should be taken of the Safeguarding implications in this regard.

The Church of Ireland understand the social engagement opportunities involved in hosting youth events in a leader's family home, but after consideration of the Safeguarding implications would discourage churches from organising youth events in a private house. The priority is the safeguarding of children, but there are also concerns about the potential risk to church personnel. It is preferable for a group to meet in the church hall. If a local parish decide that using a private home to deliver any of their youth activities is the best option it can do so, but to reduce risks must take the following actions.

Leaders should be aware of the potential risks posed as well as the advantages in relation to such venue. In addition, a member of the panel is required to conduct a Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment.

The Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment should take account of:

- How participants will travel to or from the meeting.
- Potential trip hazards during access and egress.
- Management of household pets.
- Details of relevant allergies and medical conditions and responses where required.
- Removal/management of any hazards which may cause harm, e.g. use of fireguards, catering, electrical devices, etc.
- Any additional needs of participants.
- Finishing time of meeting.
- Bathroom hygiene.
- Managing areas of the home where entry is forbidden.
- Provision of smoke or carbon monoxide detectors (where gas heating, an up-to-date inspection certificate).
- Management of other individuals calling to/residing at the house, who are not involved in the group. Parents should be informed in advance of other adults/children who may be in the family home but are not part of the church meeting. Other adults in the home should not be part of the youth activity taking place unless they are designated leaders/helpers.

- The home-based activity will operate under the same safeguarding policy requirements as youth activities based in church property, but in addition:
  - Record in writing the reasons why using a private home is the best option to the Parish Panel and their permission should be obtained.
  - Adequate insurance cover needs to be evidenced and a first aid kit available.
  - If the youth group is led by a couple, there should be a third adult leader/ helper present.
  - Parental consent and emergency contact details completed for all children in advance.
  - Attendance details must be kept.
  - No opportunity for lone working. Two adult leaders should always be present.
  - The programme or event leaders will follow all other safeguarding policy requirements.
  - Church of Ireland photography, filming and social media guidelines should be followed.

Informal gatherings, such as birthday parties, play dates, etc., which are not church-related activities and which are organised by parents/others, would not fall under the remit or the responsibility of the Church of Ireland. If church property is being used for these events, follow the guidance here ***(Guidance 1.7A).***

1.3I GUIDANCE ON GENERAL SAFETY

Select vestries, as people who have control of the parish premises, have a statutory duty to ensure that the premises are safe. Select vestries should ensure that the necessary legislative requirements in their jurisdiction are followed:

https://www.hseni.gov.uk/ & *https://www.hsa.ie/eng/*

Please follow your insurer's instructions in this regard.

Safety is of prime importance during any activity. This is not only the responsibility of the leader-in-charge but of all church personnel.

Church personnel should be aware of the following guidelines:

- Always have a 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 someone, etc. Be aware of the physical environment and remove/avoid items which may cause injury during the said activity.
- 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.
- Ensure that the areas where children's activities are happening are secure from unauthorised personnel gaining access.
- Where a children's activity is taking place at the same time as other activities are taking place, church personnel should be aware of the other groups using the premises and the potential risks that this may raise. This may involve having extra church personnel 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 activities that children are handed over to the parents/carers or the adult authorised to collect the children by church personnel. The agreement between the parent/carer and the leader-in-charge should reflect the age of the child and the location of the activity.
- Ensure that there is access to a telephone.
- If possible, each group should have someone with a first aid qualification. Know where the first aid kit 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.
- 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 church personnel. You may also require special insurance to cover these higher-risk activities. If the organisation is undertaking what is deemed to be high-risk activities, written permission from parents/carers must be obtained in advance.
- Areas where maintenance work is taking place should never be used.
- Manage any dangerous materials.
- Be aware of accident and incident procedures and follow accordingly.
- Do not leave children unattended or unsupervised.

Health and Safety Risk Assessment:

The Select Vestry shall ensure that health and safety risk assessments (including periodic inspections) are carried out of premises (including those where children's activities will take place). These assessments will form part of the Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment of each activity and should be listed in the 'procedures to mange risk' column of ***1.3C Template 1.*** The Select Vestry shall determine the appropriate person/ people to undertake the annual safety audit.

Additional health and safety risk assessments may be required for one-off events or outings, e.g. a weekend camp or cinema trip.

1.3J GUIDANCE ON ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS

In the event of an accident/incident, church personnel should administer any necessary first aid in line with the consent of parents/carers and children. It may be necessary to inform a parent/carer immediately after an accident, e.g. a head injury. No child should go home after an accident without their parents/carers being informed of the accident.

All facts relating to any accident or incident should be recorded on the accident/incident report form ***(I.3I Template 1)***. If during a church activity, an accident/incident occurs off church premises, the accident/incident should also be reported to the management of that premises.

1.3J TEMPLATE 1: ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Name of group:

Name of group leader:

DETAILS OF PERSON(S) INVOLVED IN INCIDENT:

Name: Age:

DETAILS OF INCIDENT: *Please state in your own words what happened.*

Date, time and location of incident:

Name(s) and address(es) of witness(es)

a:

b:

c:

Follow Up Action

Describe what action was taken (e.g. details of first aid, Garda or medical involvement).

Who undertook this follow-up action:

Signed by person reporting: Date:

Position:

Countersigned by leader in charge of group: Date:

1.3K GUIDANCE ON PHOTOGRAPHS AND RECORDED IMAGES

It is necessary for parishes and dioceses working with children to seek the consent of parents/carers and children (where appropriate) for photographs and or recorded images (including webcams) which are used for church purposes. The following safeguards should be in place to protect children as far as possible from inappropriate use of their images:

- Parental/carer consent and children's assent have been obtained in writing for the taking of and use of photographs and recorded images (see *www.Safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org*).
- No unsupervised access to children is permitted or appropriate.
- Suitable clothing must be 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 Parish Panel and/or to the leader-in-charge who should then inform the Panel. For serious concerns relating to a person of concern, contact the RCB Casework Team.

It is not practical, however, to oversee the use by everyone of their camera/recording device. If parents/carers wish to take photographs or record video of their children alongside other people's children, this should be a matter agreed between parents and is not the responsibility of the Parish or Diocese, as the images or videos are not being taken for church purposes. If the Parish or Diocese are not taking or using the images for church purposes, agreements about when it is appropriate (or not) for parents or other people present to take pictures should be agreed at each event or group in line with the guidance provided here:

Data-Protection-Photography-Guidelines---August-2025.pdf

PHOTOGRAPHERS EMPLOYED AT EVENTS

If parishes or dioceses are employing a photographer at an event, it is important to 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

- Do not 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 photographs, the first name should not be matched with their image in the photo in order, e.g. do not use 'L-R: Jane, Tom, Jackie, Sally – prize-winners in the painting competition'.
- Only use images of children in suitable clothing.
- 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 as detailed in the consent form.

1.3K TEMPLATE 1: SAMPLE CONSENT FOR PHOTOGRAPHS OR RECORDED IMAGES

The Parish of / Diocese of:

recognises the need to ensure the welfare and safety of all children. In accordance with our Child Safeguarding Policy, parents/carers and children (where appropriate) are asked to sign a consent form for the taking of photographs and recorded images on the understanding that photographs and recorded images may be used in hardcopy, online publications or social media by the Parish and/or the Diocese as outlined in the form below. The photos may also be retained for continued use by the Parish/Diocese until consent is withdrawn.

PARENT/CARER CONSENT

I consent to the photographing or recording of

Name of child:

while involved in activities run by

[INSERT NAME OF PARISH/DIOCESE]

and give my consent for these images or videos to be used in media as outlined below:

Newsletter (Hardcopy or online)	Yes:		No:	
Social Media Sites *[INSERT NAME OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITE]*				
	Yes:		No:	
Parish/Diocesan website	Yes:		No:	

Signed: Date:

CHILD'S CONSENT

I consent to photographing or recording of my involvement in activities run by

[INSERT NAME OF PARISH/DIOCESE]

and give my consent in line with Parent's/Carer's above.

Yes: No:

I understand that my consent may be withdrawn at any time.

Signed: Date:

(This consent may be incorporated into the Sample Consent Form 1.3C Template 1)

In line with Data Protection regulations, we are committed to protecting the personal information given on this form. By providing the information requested, you are giving us permission (consent) to use this information for Safeguarding, legal or regulatory purposes and we will use it for no other purpose without further consent unless mandated or required to do so under the Data Protection Act 2018 or equivalent legislation. If you have any questions about how we process your personal data, please contact a member of the Parish Panel.

1.3L GUIDANCE ON SOCIAL AND DIGITAL MEDIA

In all their contacts and communications with the children of their group, all church personnel must be open and transparent in their digital communication with children, as in all other forms of communication.

Church personnel should not communicate with children using their personal social media accounts or personal email.

For a group/Parish using/publishing a social networking site a thorough Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment should be undertaken ***(Guidance 1.3A)***. The following guidelines should be considered as part of this.

- An Acceptable Usage Policy should be devised when publishing a social networking site or using church I.T. equipment.
- Be aware that different platforms have different restrictions in relation to age. Church personnel must ensure compliance with age restrictions within the terms and conditions of use of your chosen platform.
- Avoid the use of social media platforms that share contact details with all users. Church personnel may inadvertently connect young people up with other people as an unintended consequence.
- There are a range of video conferencing platforms available. When using these platforms, ensure you use the most up-to-date guidance for security. For applications which allow for password access, only use password/passcode protected meetings, create a new password for every meeting, and send details securely to participants (do not, for example, share details on social media). The password should be held by at least two people. Passwords should only be sent to parents/carers of children and young people and not directly to the child/young person. Enable the 'waiting room' feature, where available, which allows the host to have the discretion to allow invitees in to attend the meeting.
- Use of social media is beyond the normal running of your group and therefore needs clear permission before use in the following ways:
  - You must have Select Vestry/Parish Panel approval – speak to your Rector, Parish Panel or Select Vestry to discuss and minute that this is happening. Why not trial a video conference with some of these people first? This does not need to be a complicated process.
  - You need parental consent – set up an email which explains what you are doing, the date and time of the video conference session, which youth leaders are participating and what you roughly will be doing. We advise these conference calls not to take place after 9:00pm at night. Ask for a reply as a form of consent and keep these emails in a separate folder.
  - Use parents'/carers' email addresses to send the meeting invite to as this ensures parents/carers are aware that it is happening and can set up the young people to access the session appropriately with any oversight if they want.
  - For children under 11 a parent/carer must be in the room when they are taking part in an activity online.

- 'Normal' youth group rules would apply, including with regards to recruitment and safeguarding process – i.e. you need at least two safely recruited youth leaders present who would normally have 'real time' contact with this group. Make sure both leaders are live before young people arrive. Ideally use the same time slot as your normal youth group meeting.
- Codes of Behaviour for church personnel should be followed as you would expect in the usual youth group setting.
- As always, be inclusive – are there any young people from your group who would struggle to participate in this way, and what extra support can be put in place for them?
- As well as the video interface, there is usually space to write comments and participants can screen share too. Consider use of this facility and whether to disable it, or ensure it is appropriately monitored and controlled.
- Be aware of and sensitive to technical difficulties! There can be issues with speakers and microphones! Chances are young people will have this sussed, but leaders may have issues. Use the software with leaders first to try and sort out any difficulties in advance of the meeting.
- DO NOT RECORD. Most video conferencing software allows for the session to be recorded – this is an option for the host of the meeting only. Avoid doing this, as you would need separate permission for data capture and there are all sorts of issues around storage, data protection, etc.
- The site should be monitored by a designated supervisor.
- Any inappropriate posts should be removed by the designated supervisor immediately after it comes to their attention. 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 not be used even if sites are 'private' or 'closed', as 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. If in doubt church personnel should seek advice from the Parish Panel.

Church personnel using a social media apps for church activities or to communicate with young people:

- Parents/carers should be asked to give their consent for church personnel to communicate with their child via email, social/digital media (1.3K Template 1). For those parents/carers who wish to become members of any church-related 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. They should also be informed that their participation in such a social network group is subject to these standards.

- Should not 'Friend' or 'Follow' children on social media (unless a familial relationship exists). It is possible that children will seek to 'Follow' church personnel on social media, so church personnel should make sure any content they post is appropriate or ensure their privacy settings are set appropriately so that children cannot access the content.
- Messages left to or from children on social network sites should be written on an open page and not in a private message, or by using 'chat' [one-on-one].
- Should not network with members of their group via closed [one-on-one] communication, e.g. Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, etc. Networking should be done through 'Group Chats' with a minimum of two adults in the group chat as administrators.
- Any events or activities run by the group/Parish that are organised or publicised on the site should be a closed event so that non-members cannot access the event without suitable permission by the site administrators.
- Church personnel should be cautious sending emails directly to children. Any emails sent should also be sent to at least one other church person and should be done with the consent of the child's parent/carer. BCC should be used when sending group emails to avoid sharing other children's email addresses.
- 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, church personnel should not do so in a way that could be misconstrued or misinterpreted by the recipient. Simply sign your name.
- Any disclosures of abuse reported through a social networking site must be dealt with according to the reporting procedures ***(Guidance 2.1A).***

1.3L TEMPLATE 1: CONSENT FORM FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Insert name of group:

SOCIAL/DIGITAL MEDIA CONSENT FORM

The clergy, staff and volunteers of the above group wish to use social/digital media to contact your son/daughter (aged 13 years plus) to inform him/her about the ongoing activities and special events of the group.

CONSENT

Name of Child:

I give permission for

Insert name of group:

to contact my son/daughter directly via the following methods:

Please tick the boxes below to give permission for the particular item.

Text messages

E-mails

Insert social networking site:

Contact Details (of child) - fill in if applicable

Mobile:

Email:

Signed parent/carer:

Date:

(This consent may be incorporated into the Sample Consent Form 1.3C Template 1).

In line with Data Protection regulations, we are committed to protecting the personal information given on this form. By providing the information requested, you are giving us permission (consent) to use this information for Safeguarding, legal or regulatory purposes and we will use it for no other purpose without further consent unless mandated or required to do so under the Data Protection Act 2018 or equivalent legislation. If you have any questions about how we process your personal data, please contact a member of the Parish Panel.

1.3M GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF MOBILE PHONES AND DIGITAL DEVICES

Those who work with children need to be aware of the opportunities for abuse through the misuse of mobile phones or other devices and 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. Church personnel must also take care to protect themselves.

- Church personnel involved in youth and children's work should only have children's mobile numbers with parental knowledge and consent and if the nature of their involvement requires them to phone or message children. This practice should be avoided when working with children under 13 years. Such church personnel might include those running a group for older teenagers, or those involved in co-ordinating youth work.
- Written parental consent should be sought in advance if the member of church personnel will be contacting children via mobile phone ***(1.3L Template 1).***
- A method of accountability should be arranged, e.g. also sending to another church person.
- If a member of church personnel has a child's phone number, it should be used only for the purposes it has been given; i.e. church personnel should not share this information.
- Texts should be used for relaying relevant information and not for conversation.
- It is recommended that staff/clergy have a separate phone for work purposes rather than using their personal phone for contacting children.
- A group agreement should address the use of mobile phones during activities and trips, as well as identifying a named member of church personnel as the primary point of communication, including in relation to emergencies.
- Church personnel and children must 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.
- Church personnel and, where appropriate, children themselves 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 years of age.
- Where church personnel plan to use electronic devices, such as computers, tablets, games consoles, Smart TVs, etc. as part of their activities to engage the children, it is essential that several additional safety measures are undertaken. The electronic devices being used should have appropriate parental control software installed to ensure that the children do not gain access to inappropriate material. Church personnel should supervise the access to the electronic devices closely to ensure that they are not used inappropriately.

1.3N GUIDANCE ON TAKING CHILDREN ON OUTINGS/RESIDENTIALS

If planning an activity off parish premises or staying away from home overnight, church personnel should consider the following:

Before the trip

- Participate with the children and young people to help plan the trip.
- Conduct a thorough Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment before arriving ***(Guidance 1.3A)***. Measures to mitigate risk will include:
  - Ensuring that all leaders are appropriately recruited including training and Access NI/Garda Vetting ***(Guidance 1.1B)***.
  - Obtaining written parental consent to participate on the trip. This form should include contact details (including emergency contact details), medical consent and media consent for photographs, social media, etc. ***(Guidance 1.3C)***.
  - Identifying a key leader who has overall responsibility for the trip.
  - Ensuring adequate and appropriate child-to-adult supervision ratio (taking account of gender) ***(Guidance 1.3F)***.
  - Appointing a contact person who will not be on the trip but who has access to all information and contact details.
  - Ensuring appropriate insurance cover.
  - Conducting an equipment, safety and first aid kit check ***(Guidance 1.3I)***.
  - Developing a group agreement for children and the adults with clear procedures for dealing with a breach of the agreement ***(Guidance 1.2C).*** The agreement and the procedures are made known to parents/carers.
  - Having clear emergency procedures for a variety of incidents, including when a child goes missing.
  - Making provision for returning home early, should that become necessary.
  - Ensuring that any off-site location is compliant in relation to child protection and health and safety and enquiring about any additional policies which may impact your group.
  - Ensuring that there are appropriate sleeping arrangements for young people, with separate and appropriate sleeping arrangements for leaders.
  - Ensuring there is an anti-bullying procedure in place ***(Guidance 1.3E)***.
  - Ensuring there is a system of keeping records in line with data protection and confidentiality.

- If there are children with additional needs attending the trip, ensure that you have met with the parents and the child to consider how they take part in the trip and any additional measures that need to be considered. Depending on the specific needs of the child this may including consideration of:
  - Administration of medicines. It is important that church personnel are adequately trained to administer medicines, are willing to do so, and have obtained parental consent. Additionally, any administration of medicines should be recorded in keeping with data protection. You should also check with your insurers in this regard.
  - Showering and intimate care.
  - Access to bathrooms.
  - Suitability of accommodation.
- Agree a system of monitoring an evaluation of the trip.
- Meet with the leaders of the group to ensure that they are fully aware of the Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment and procedures to mitigate the risks.
- Meet with the parents/carers of the children and young people attending in order to inform them of the procedures in place to ensure the safety of their child. This includes sharing the following with them:
  - The consequences of breaching the group contract.
  - Agreement about the use of mobile devices and which children can be contacted.
  - Appropriate clothing needed for the trip.
  - Contact details for leaders and accommodation and transport company.

On the Trip

- Review the Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment to see if there are additional risks that haven't been considered and develop mitigation measures.
- Agree boundaries around unstructured time and bedtimes.
- Review the code of behaviour and ensure everyone is aware.
- Agree safeguarding procedures and ensure the children know who to go to if they are worried or concerned.
- Monitor and evaluate in line with the agreed procedure.

After the trip

- Conduct an evaluation with the children, parents/carers and leaders.
- Review the Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment and establish if there were additional risks that should have been considered in advance to help with future planning.

Planning a Trip Abroad

If planning a trip abroad, church personnel should consider the following in addition to considerations in the previous section:

- Appropriate paperwork should be in place in relation to passports, visas, health and medical conditions.
- Copies of documents and passport numbers should be retained by leaders at home and abroad.
- Insurance cover should be in place for all aspects of traveling and staying abroad.
- A detailed travel itinerary should be prepared and shared with parents/carers including contact details.
- Currency, legal differences, climate, time zones, cultural differences and vaccinations should be accounted for.
- A contingency plan and budget should be in place should any member of the group need to return home at short notice.

Transport

Children should not be transported by church personnel on their own. Church personnel should ensure that another adult member of church personnel is present, or other children are present in the vehicle.

- If a situation occurs when a child has to be transported alone, ensure other church personnel and the parents/carers know this is happening, have given consent and that the child is in the rear seat. Ensure everyone wears their seatbelts. Current seatbelt and child seat legislation must be adhered to.
- Those church personnel transporting children must have a relevant licence and appropriate insurance cover for the transport of children as part of their vehicle insurance policy.
- Where church personnel agree to transport children, it is a private arrangement between that person and the child's parents and is covered on the church personnel's own car insurance.
- When using public transport to transport children to activities, church personnel should complete a head count when embarking and disembarking the mode of transport. A plan should be in place if a child gets lost or is separated from the group when using transport. This plan should be agreed in advance and communicated to the group.
- Have a back-up plan in case the 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 AccessNI/ Garda Vetted driver will be supplied to drive the bus on the day.

1.4A GUIDANCE ON A COMPLAINTS PROCESS

The Church of Ireland is committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of all members and to try to ensure that children have a positive and enjoyable experience when participating in church activities. Children, parents/carers, staff and volunteers should be facilitated in raising a concern or complaint. Parish Panels should ensure that a written complaints procedure is in place, and that they are adopted by the Select Vestry or equivalent and communicate them to all staff, volunteers, children and parents/carers. The guidance here can be used to develop a complaints procedure.

This complaints procedure aims to cover any situation which may arise, when children or their parents/carers are not happy with the way children were treated while they were at an activity run by the church. For example:

- An alleged breach of the code of behaviour by a staff member or volunteer.
- Perceived poor attitude of a staff member or volunteer.
- A child feeling unhappy about an incident or an event.
- A parent/carer feeling unhappy about an incident or event involving their child.
- Dissatisfaction in relation to an aspect of the service being provided.

Any serious complaints regarding the conduct of bishops or clergy must be referred to the Complaints Administrator. This may trigger the complaints procedure as laid out in Chapter VIII of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland, which will then follow that process.

Please note that every possible effort should be made to resolve complaints locally.

It is important that if anyone has a concern about a breach of the Code of Behaviour by church personnel, that this is reported to the Parish Panel, or at an appropriate level to avoid any conflict of interest, as follows:

- Where the concern relates to a Panel member, reports should be made to another Panel member or the Incumbent.
- Where the concern relates to the Incumbent or other member of the clergy, reports should be made to the Bishop.
- Where the concern relates to a bishop, reports should be made to the Archbishop of the Province or, in his or her absence, to the Archbishop of the other Province and the Chief Officer in Church House.
- In the case of a complaint against an Archbishop, it should be made to the Archbishop of the other Province or, in his or her absence, the next most senior bishop.

WHAT COMPLAINTS ARE NOT ACCEPTED?

1. Complaints involving child protection concerns must be dealt with in accordance with reporting procedures as set out in Guidance 2.1 A and not through this Complaints Procedure.
2. Serious complaints relating to a member of the clergy are dealt with through the clergy discipline procedure.

There are basic rules for the acceptance of complaints:

- Complaints must be raised within three months of the complainant knowing the facts.
- The Church does not generally investigate anonymous complaints.
- Complaints that are broadly or substantively the same as a previous complaint, which have already been addressed, will not be accepted.
- Complaints which are believed to be vexatious or malicious will be refused.

WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT?

Complaints can be made by:

- Children who are involved in church activities.
- Parents/carers.
- Staff members, volunteers or member of the clergy.
- Other advocates on behalf of children.

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

1. If the complaint is in relation to the safety and welfare of children, the complaints should be made to the Parish Panel.
2. Other complaints should be made to the member of church personnel in charge of the group of which the child is a member, with whom the complainant should raise the concern orally (informal complaint).
3. If the complainant does not want to discuss the matter with the member of church personnel in charge of the group, if the member of church personnel cannot answer the complainant's concern, if the complainant is dissatisfied with the initial response of the member of church personnel to a complaint, or the complaint is more serious the complaint can be made in writing to the Parish Panel (formal complaint).

INFORMATION THE COMPLAINANT NEEDS TO PROVIDE

Complaints should be made, in the first instance, orally to the member of church personnel in charge of the group and provide them with the following information to allow them to investigate the complaint:

- Name of child affected and the group or event they were involved in.
- The name and contact details of the person making the complaint.
- Exactly what the complainant is dissatisfied with and identification of the person(s) against whom the complaint is made.
- The name of the staff member/volunteer who dealt with the matter the complainant is dissatisfied with.

Complaints made in writing should be made on the Complaints Form ***(1.4A Template 1)*** and give as much factual details as possible to allow the matter to be investigated.

HOW WILL A COMPLAINT BE DEALT WITH?

The complaint will be dealt with fairly and objectively in a positive and pro-active manner and expect resolutions and outcomes to contribute to a process of continuous improvement.

Informal complaint

The member of church personnel in charge of the group will likely need to speak to a number of other people about the complaint but will endeavour to be able to provide a response to the informal complaint within ten days. If the member of church personnel in charge of the group is unable to respond to the informal complaint substantively within this time frame, they will endeavour to revert to the person who made the complaint to update them on the situation.

Formal complaint

It may take time to process a complaint; however, the person who raised the complaint will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint with an acknowledgement of a formal complaint within seven days. Endeavours will be made to provide a response to the complaint within four weeks. However, where it is not possible to respond to the complaint within four weeks, the person who made the complaint will be provided with an update within that period and the matter resolved at the earliest possible opportunity.

The member of church personnel in charge of the group or Parish Panel member may need to speak to the person who made the complaint and a number of other people to fully understand the complaint and the circumstances surrounding it.

Ultimately the member of church personnel in charge of the group or Parish Panel member will decide about the complaint and inform the person who raised the complaint whether it is upheld or not and the actions that will be taken as a result.

ACTIONS THAT MAY BE TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO THE INVESTIGATION OF A COMPLAINT:

Responses to a complaint might include:

- An apology (either verbal or written) to the complainant and/or the member.
- An explanation provided to the complainant and/or member, e.g. as to why something happened.
- A review of a decision made.
- An assurance that any poor practice identified in the investigation will be addressed at future activities.
- A meeting with the person who is the subject of the complaint and the complainant in order to resolve the situation.
- Compulsory attendance by the person who is the subject of the complaint at a specific training event.
- A period of supervision of the person who is the subject of the complaint by other members of church personnel invovled in the group.
- In the case of a serious incident the suspension or dismissal of the member of church personnel (in line with disciplinary procedures – see below).

This list is not exhaustive and in the individual circumstances of a specific complaint the response to that complaint may include one or more of the above items or may not include any of them.

WHAT IF THE PERSON WHO HAS MADE THE COMPLAINT IS NOT SATISFIED WITH THE OUTCOME?

If the person who raised the complaint is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint or the way in which it was handled, they may appeal. Any appeal must be made within 21 days of being given the decision and outcomes of the complaint.

The appeal must be formally lodged in writing to the Parish Panel. In the appeal, you must clearly explain the basis of the appeal and the preferred outcome to resolve the issue.

The Panel will consider the process undertaken to handle the original complaint and the outcome of the original complaint. The person who made the complaint will be kept informed of the progress of the appeal with an acknowledgement of the appeal within seven days and a response within four weeks. Where it is not possible to complete the appeal within four weeks, the person who made the complaint will be provided with an update within that period and the matter resolved at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Panel may need to speak to the person who made the complaint and a number of other people to fully understand the appeal and the circumstances surrounding the investigation of the complaint.

The Panel will make a decision about the appeal and will inform the person who made the complaint whether the appeal is upheld or not and the actions that will be taken as a result.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES IF A VOLUNTEER IS FOUND IN BREACH OF THE CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

Each breach of the Code of Behaviour will be assessed in line with the Complaints procedure above. If a volunteer is deemed to be in breach of the Code of Behaviour the following procedures should be followed:

Informal Process Stage:

At this early stage, the main aim of the procedure is to help the volunteer achieve the required standard of performance or behaviour. It should be the Parish's aim to be able (where possible) to resolve issues at this stage and not invoke any formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the matter it is up to the Parish Panel to decide whether or not to initiate this procedure. It can be in the form of a supervision meeting and the Panel will:

- Informally meet with the volunteer to discuss with them the unacceptable behaviour or underperformance.
- Agree on improvement measures and the timeframe for these improvements.
- Offer to support and coach the volunteer in improving their performance.
- Decide on a date to review the progress.

- Inform the volunteer in a clear manner of the next steps in the procedure if agreed standards of improvement are not achieved.
- Maintain a record of the meetings held.

Formal Process Stage:

This disciplinary procedure allows for warnings to be given for failure to meet standards of Code of Behaviour where the matter cannot be dealt with at the informal process stage.

Disciplinary meetings:

Disciplinary meetings will be held with the volunteer so that they can respond. The Parish Panel will never give a warning or decide on the level of a warning until after this meeting takes place and the volunteer is given a fair hearing under the principles of natural justice. The meeting will always be adjourned, and all aspects considered before a discipline or warning is imposed. A discipline/warning may not be imposed if the volunteer's response is satisfactory.

Stage One - Verbal Warning:

The Panel will convene a disciplinary meeting. The volunteer will be given the opportunity to state their case. The meeting will be adjourned to decide what course of action will be taken, the volunteer and their representative will be asked to re-join the meeting, and they will be informed of the decision. The verbal warning should be given by the Panel (more than one Panel member should be present for this). The Panel will inform the volunteer:

1. What the issue/matter is.
2. What action or improvement is required from the volunteer.
3. Set a date for review meeting.
4. What will happen if there is no improvement made by the volunteer.

The verbal warning will be issued verbally and in writing and in duplicate, a copy of which the volunteer will be asked to sign. This should be returned to the Panel. This verbal warning remains active for a period of 6 (six) months. All warnings issued can be appealed, please see below for the appeals process.

Stage Two - Written Warning:

If the matter is not resolved at stage one, stage two is initiated. The same process as stage one is applied; however, the warning is in writing and remains active for a period of 12 (twelve) months.

Stage Three - Final Written Warning:

If the matter is not resolved at stage two, stage three is initiated. The same process as stage two is applied.

Stage Four - Removal from Role:

If there are further breaches of discipline after the third stage or if an incident is so serious that the matter cannot be dealt with at stages 2 or 3, then the panel may decide to remove the volunteer from their role. The process for dismissal is:

1. An appropriate investigation and consideration by the Panel.
2. A meeting with the Panel, the volunteer and their representative in order to dismiss the volunteer.
3. Outline the parish position to the volunteer.
4. Consideration to be given by the Panel to the volunteer and their representative's position.

The dismissal will be issued in writing and will include information on the appeals process.

Volunteers Rights:

At each stage of the disciplinary procedure, volunteers have the right:

- To be informed of the complaint against them and be given sufficient opportunity to present their case and call witnesses to support their case, as appropriate.
- To be accompanied to disciplinary meetings by a representative (this can be in the form of a colleague or friend).
- To be given an opportunity to present their case before a decision regarding the discipline to be imposed is reached.
- To be informed and encouraged to use the right of appeal.

Appeals Process:

An appeal should be made by the volunteer to the Incumbent in writing within two weeks of the disciplinary action having been taken.

An appeals panel will be set up to investigate the appeal. This panel will consist of members from the Select Vestry.

The person hearing the appeal should not have a previous knowledge of the matter. A meeting will take place within two weeks of the application to appeal the disciplinary decision.

The outcome of the appeals process will be issued to the staff volunteer in writing within one week.

If a serious allegation of abuse is made against a volunteer the procedure for dealing with an allegation should be followed as outlined in ***Guidance 2.1A***.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES IF A STAFF MEMBER IS FOUND IN BREACH OF CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

Each breach of the Code of Behaviour will be assessed in line with the Complaints Procedure outline above. If a staff member is deemed to be in breach of the Code of Behaviour the disciplinary procedures in the staff member's contract or staff handbook shall be followed where it is a serious incident which may potentially warrant suspension or dismissal of the staff member.

If a serious allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff the procedure for dealing with an allegation should be followed as outlined in ***Guidance 2.1A***.

1.4A TEMPLATE. 1: COMPLAINTS FORM FOR STAFF MEMBER OR VOLUNTEER

(PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS)

Your Name, Address and Contact Number:

Date on which the Alleged Incident happened:

Location of Alleged Incident:

Nature of complaint (e.g. Harassment, Bullying, etc.):

Name of party or parties involved:

Please give a detailed account of the alleged incident:

Signed: Date:

PLEASE NOTE THAT A COPY OF THIS FORM WILL BE FORWARDED TO ALL RELEVANT PERSONS INVOLVED.

Received by: Date:

In line with Data Protection regulations, we are committed to protecting the personal information we hold on you. By providing the information requested, you are giving us permission (consent) to use this information for Safeguarding, legal or regulatory purposes and we will use it for no other purpose without further consent unless mandated or required to do so under the Data Protection Act 2018 or equivalent legislation. If you have any questions about how we process your personal data, please contact a member of the Panel.

1.4B GUIDANCE ON WHISTLEBLOWING

1. INTRODUCTION

Allegations, suspicions, knowledge and concerns about the abuse of a child which meet the threshold must be reported in line with ***Guidance 2.1A*.**

This guidance relates to concerns about malpractice in child safeguarding.

All staff and volunteers ministering or volunteering within the Church of Ireland have an individual responsibility to bring matters of concern about any dereliction of duty to safeguard children, to the attention of the appropriate person within the Church or statutory authorities. This could be the Incumbent, Bishop and/or relevant agency managers. Although this can be difficult to do, it is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

You may be the first to recognise that something is wrong, but you may not feel able to express your concerns out of a feeling that this would be disloyal to colleagues, or you may fear harassment or victimisation. These feelings, however natural, must never result in a child or young person continuing to be unnecessarily at risk. Children need an advocate to safeguard their welfare.

Don't think, 'What if I'm wrong?' Think, 'What if I'm right!'

2. WHAT IS WHISTLEBLOWING?

Whistleblowing can be defined as 'raising concerns about wrong-doing or misconduct within an organisation or within an independent structure associated with it'. It differs from raising concerns about allegations of abuse.

The concern could relate to:

- a breach of the church body's child safeguarding procedures
- practice which falls below the standards set out in the safeguarding standard
- a breach of the law
- failure to comply with legal obligations
- a possible miscarriage of justice
- a health and safety risk
- misuse of public money
- corruption or unethical conduct
- deliberate concealment of any of these matters.

This guidance sets out the circumstances under which these disclosures may lawfully be made.

3. LEGISLATION UNDERPINNING WHISTLEBLOWING

There is legislation in both jurisdictions related to whistleblowing; this applies to clerics, employees of church bodies, as well as to agency workers in certain circumstances; to contractors and consultants engaged on contract by the Church; and to trainees, temporary workers and those on work experience with the Church. In the Republic of Ireland this definition also includes volunteers.

Republic of Ireland

In the Republic of Ireland, the legislation is called the Protected Disclosures Act 2014, which has been amended by the Protected Disclosures Amendment Act 2022.

The Protected Disclosures Act 2014 and the Amendment Act of 2022 aim to protect people who raise concerns about possible wrongdoing in the workplace. These Acts are often called the Whistleblower Legislation. They provide for redress for those defined as 'workers' who are penalised for having reported possible wrongdoing in the workplace.

'Worker' means an individual working in the private or public sector who acquired information on relevant wrongdoings in a work-related context and includes:

(a) an individual who is or was an employee,

(b) an individual who entered into or works or worked under any other contract, whether express or implied and (if it is express) whether oral or in writing, whereby the individual undertook to do or perform (whether personally or otherwise) any work or services for another party to the contract for the purposes of that party's business,

(c) an individual who works or worked for a person in circumstances in which —

  (i) the individual is introduced or supplied to do the work by a third person, and
  (ii) the terms on which the individual is engaged to do the work are or were in practice substantially determined not by the individual but by the person for whom the individual works or worked, by the third person or by both of them,

(d) an individual who is or was provided with work experience pursuant to a training course or programme or with training for employment (or with both) otherwise than under a contract of employment,

(e) an individual who is or was a shareholder of an undertaking,

(f) an individual who is or was a member of the administrative, management or supervisory body of an undertaking, including non-executive members,

(g) an individual who is or was a volunteer,

(h) an individual who acquires information on a relevant wrongdoing during a recruitment process,

(i) an individual who acquires information on a relevant wrongdoing during pre-contractual negotiations (other than a recruitment process referred to in paragraph (h)), and

(j) an individual who is deemed to be a worker by virtue of subsection (2)(b), and any reference to a worker being employed or to employment shall be construed accordingly.

Under the Acts, a protected disclosure is made by church personnel (identified as worker above) who discloses relevant information in a particular way. Information is relevant if it came to the church personnel's attention in connection with their ministry, volunteer role, employment or recruitment process and they reasonably believe that it tends to show wrongdoing.

Wrongdoing is widely defined in the Act and includes bullet points below:

- criminal offences
- failure to comply with a legal obligation (other than a worker's employment contract)
- miscarriage of justice
- endangerment of health and safety
- damage to the environment
- unlawful or improper use of public funds
- oppressive, discriminatory or negligent behaviour by a public body
- breaches of EU law
- concealing or destroying evidence of wrongdoing.

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland the law that covers whistleblowing is The Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (as amended in October 2017). Whistleblowing is more formally known as 'making a disclosure in the public interest'. The law states the importance of disclosing concerns, knowing that you are protected from losing your job and/or being victimised as a result of what you have uncovered and made public.

An easy-to-read guide to the effect of this legislation is available to download from *www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/public-interest-disclosure-guidance.pdf*

4. RAISING A CONCERN OF MALPRACTICE (IN LAW THIS IS CALLED A DISCLOSURE)

For church personnel and employees raising a concern/disclosure of malpractice, to be protected by the law, the concern/disclosure must be made to the right person and in the right way. If someone makes a qualifying disclosure in good faith to a bishop, or through church procedures which the bishop has authorised, the law protects that person.

It is important to:

- Voice any concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as possible. The earlier a concern is expressed the sooner and easier action can be taken.
- Try to pinpoint exactly what practice is concerning and why.
- Approach your immediate superior/supervisor/manager.
- If your concern is about your immediate superior/supervisor/manager, please contact the Diocesan Support Team or the statutory authorities.

- Confirm your concerns with factual information (dates, times, details, history, giving names, dates, locations and any other relevant information) in writing.
- You are not expected to prove the truth of your disclosure, but you need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for concern.
- Seek a satisfactory response in writing; do not let matters rest, if you do not receive a response within a reasonable timeframe, write again seeking a written response. A failure to respond should be included in any further disclosure to the statutory authorities.
- Follow up if the person to whom you reported has not responded within a reasonable period of time, and if that follow-up is not acted upon, report the matter to the relevant statutory authorities.

5. REQUIRED RESPONSE BY RELEVANT CHURCH PERSONNEL

Reporting Mechanisms for Parishes/Dioceses (ROI only)

All parishes or dioceses with 50 or more employees must establish internal channels for their workers to report:

- The internal channel should be designed and operated in a secure, GDPR-compliant, manner that ensures the confidentiality of the reporting person and any other person(s) named in the report.
- Designation of a person or function to operate the channel, who will maintain communication with the reporting person, follow up on the report and provide feedback to the reporting person.
- This person or function should have sufficient independence and authority within the organisation to carry out the functions specified in the Act.
- Persons operating the internal channel should be adequately trained in the handling of reports.
- The church body must promote the existence of the internal channel and ensure workers have access to the procedures under which it operates.
- Church bodies can outsource the internal channel function, if they wish.

Response by the Church Leader

- The person to whom the disclosure is made should acknowledge receipt in writing within 7 days of receiving it.
- Diligent follow up must then be taken by the Parish or Diocese.
- Relevant information (including feedback on actions taken or planned to be taken) on the nature and progress of any enquiries resulting from the concern must be shared with the person who made the disclosure after 3 months and further feedback provided if requested every 3 months. It is acknowledged that confidential sensitive data cannot be shared so the response should include general information about internal inquiries and statutory referrals made.
- The church person to whom the disclosure is made should keep detailed notes of the disclosure, action taken, who was consulted and the outcome of the inquiries.

6. PROTECTION OF WHISTLEBLOWER

- Anyone who raises a concern through these whistleblowing procedures in good faith must be protected from harassment or victimisation.
- Whilst reporting may remain confidential, in most instances this cannot be guaranteed. Everyone has the right to know who makes a complaint against them. This should not deter one from raising the concern but is a reminder of the importance of providing evidence to support the concern.
- No action will be taken against the whistleblower if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith.
- Any act of penalisation that causes detriment to a reporting person is prohibited. Penalisation includes dismissal and also any other form of unfair treatment, such as suspension, reduction in wages or hours, demotion and transfer of duties as well as intimidation and harassment.
- Penalising a reporting person is a criminal offence.
- Reporting persons who suffer detriment can seek compensation at the Workplace Relations Commission (ROI) or the courts.
- Reporting persons are protected from any civil or criminal liability for reporting confidential information, provided it is done so in accordance with the law.
- Non-disclosure agreements cannot be used to prevent a person reporting a wrongdoing.
- Employers and regulators must keep the identity of the reporting person confidential.

7. SELF-REPORTING

There may be occasions when a member of staff or a volunteer has a personal difficulty, perhaps a physical or mental health problem, which they know to be impinging on their professional competence. Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to discuss such a situation with their line supervisor/superior/manager so that professional and personal support can be offered to the member concerned.

8. DISCLOSURE TO AN EXTERNAL PERSON, OTHER THAN STATUTORY BODIES, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS OR THE RCB.

A disclosure made to an external person, for example, a journalist, may be a protected disclosure if it meets a number of conditions:

- You must reasonably believe that the information disclosed, and any allegation contained in it, are substantially true.
- You must not make the disclosure for personal gain.
- For making of the disclosure in public in all the circumstances, to be reasonable, at least one of these conditions must be met:
  - At the time you make the disclosure you must reasonably believe that you will be penalised if you make the disclosure to the Bishop, statutory personnel or a government minister, or RCB.

- Where you reasonably believe that it is likely that the evidence will be concealed or destroyed if you make the disclosure directly to the Bishop, statutory body or RCB.
- You have previously made a disclosure of substantially the same information to the Bishop, statutory personnel, government minister or RCB.
- The wrongdoing is of an exceptionally serious nature.

The assessment of what is reasonable takes account of, among other things: the person the disclosure is made to, the seriousness of the wrongdoing, and whether any action was taken in cases where a previous disclosure was made. In the Republic of Ireland if a person feels that they do not want to report to their employer or reporting to their employer has not worked, they can report to a regulator, known as a 'prescribed person'.

A list of prescribed persons can be found at: *www.gov.ie/prescribed-persons*

They can also report to the Protected Disclosures Commissioner who will refer the report to a suitable prescribed person. See: *www.opdc.ie*

If all other options fail, workers can make a public disclosure in respect of non confidential informaiton. Such disclosures are subject to more stringent conditions to qualify for protection.

1.5A GUIDANCE ON INDUCTION PROCESS FOR ALL CHURCH PERSONNEL

As soon as possible after their appointment, all church personnel should undertake an induction process. A core component of this must include child safeguarding.

This induction process should include the following steps:

A representative of the Parish or Diocese meets with the newly appointed member of church personnel and provides them relevant sections of the Child Safeguarding Policy or a copy of the Child Safeguarding Policy and relevant procedures or guidance. ***1.6A Template 3*** may be useful to provide.

During this meeting:

- The newly appointed member of church personnel is asked to carefully read the provided document and to come back to the representative of the Parish or Diocese with any questions they have;
- The newly appointed member of church personnel is made aware that they will be required to attend a basic child safeguarding awareness training event, appropriate to their role, in line with ***Guidance 1.5B***;
- The newly appointed member of church personnel is made aware of how to access support regarding their role.

Following the meeting:

Having read the document provided and relevant procedures, and having any questions about it answered by the appropriate representative of the Parish/Diocese, the newly appointed member of church personnel is then asked to sign and date a Declaration of Acceptance of Child Safeguarding Policy form ***(1.5A Template 1)*** to say that they have read and understood the Child Safeguarding Policy and that they will abide by it, in their role within the Parish/Diocese.

This form ***(1.5A Template 1)*** is returned to the appropriate church representative, who stores it safely and securely.

1.5A TEMPLATE 1: DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF THE CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

DATA PROTECTION

This form will be held on file in accordance with the data protection policy of

[INSERT NAME OF PARISH/DIOCESE]

The data entered will be used only for the following purposes

[INSERT DETAIL]

It may be accessed by *[INSERT DETAIL]*

Declaration

As part of the recruitment process for the post of

I confirm that I:

- Have been provided with a copy of the Child Safeguarding Policy and relevant procedures;
- Have been given an opportunity to have any questions addressed by a representative of the Parish/Diocese;
- Have read and understood the Child Safeguarding Policy and relevant procedures I have been provided with;
- Will abide by the requirements of the Child Safeguarding Policy and procedures;
- Will attend a relevant safeguarding training programme (as appropriate).

Name:

Signed: Date:

1.5B GUIDANCE ON LEVELS OF SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

BASIC TRAINING

Current basic child safeguarding awareness is offered in five different programme types. These programmes have been written to meet the learning objectives outlined in statutory guidance in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Each accredited trainer with the RCB is trained to deliver five training programmes and the key learning outcomes. The six programmes are:

1. **Full child safeguarding training**: this training lasts approximately 3 hours or until the key learning expectations are met.
2. **Information sessions**: these sessions are shorter in length (typically 2 hours or until the key learnings are delivered effectively) and cover topics including the reporting procedures.
3. **Refresher sessions**: these are shorter in length (1.5 hours or until the key learning outcomes are met) and cover the topics listed in the full child safeguarding training for those who have already attended the full training previously.
4. **Mandated Persons Training**: this is a short approximately one-hour session specifically for those who are defined as mandated persons in the Republic of Ireland. The content can be delivered as part of the other sessions above.
5. **Training for Young Leaders**: this is 3 hours in length and covers the same content as the information sessions but has been designed for young people who are taking on a leadership role with other children or young people.
6. **Training for Parish Panels or Equivalent**: this is training specifically for those who are involved in Parish Panels or Diocesan Support Teams.

WHO DELIVERS THE TRAINING?

The Diocesan Support Team of each diocese should coordinate training and its delivery. The Diocesan Council and Diocesan Support Team must ensure that audits and parish returns are completed, in order to identify church personnel who require basic safeguarding awareness training. This process forms part of the safeguarding plan (written by the Diocesan Support Team) which includes a training strategy ***(Guidance 1.5C Template 1).***

The Training listed above is delivered only by trainers registered and trained by the RCB Safeguarding Team.

WHO IS THE TRAINING DELIVERED TO?

Using the information gathered from the parish return, the Diocesan Support Team must make a decision as to the level of training required for each person, depending on the extent of their involvement with children. To do this, the following guidance should be used as a minimum requirement:

- For each church activity that involves children, all leaders must attend the full child safeguarding training programme once, thereafter they can attend a refresher session.

- All members of the clergy who are in active ministry with children must attend the full child safeguarding training programme once; thereafter they can attend a refresher session.
- Any personnel with a key position of responsibility for child safeguarding must attend a full child safeguarding training programme (e.g. Parish Panel member, Advisor, Support Person, Diocesan Panel Member, Diocesan Support Team Member) once; thereafter they can attend a refresher session.
- All other church personnel must be given the opportunity to attend an information session every three years.
- Those that are designated as Mandated Persons must have attended the mandated persons session every three years (this content can be delivered as part of the full child safeguarding session, refresher or mandated persons training).
- Those that are young leaders should attend the young leaders training every three years.

WHEN SHOULD PERSONNEL BE RETRAINED?

The RCB Safeguarding Team will update training and deliver this to registered trainers, in line with developments in best practice and new legislation. It is expected that if there are significant changes, the trainers will deliver updates to new and existing personnel in each diocese. How this is delivered can be decided on in consultation with the Diocesan Support Team and appropriate child safeguarding personnel.

If updated training is not required, all personnel should be retrained at least every three years. It is the role of the Diocesan Support Team to plan how training is delivered.

ROLE SPECIFIC TRAINING

Role specific training (excluding basic training) will be delivered by the Safeguarding Team in line with the RCB Safeguarding Strategy.

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

The Bishop of the Diocese shall ensure all clergy, lay readers, diocesan readers, parish readers attend relevant training in line with the guidelines above.

The Bishop of the Diocese and Diocesan Council shall ensure that those in ministry in their dioceses shall receive continuing training in relation to child safeguarding.

1.5C GUIDANCE ON DEVELOPING A TRAINING STRATEGY

The Diocesan Support Team on behalf of the Bishop and Diocesan Council shall be responsible for the provision of safeguarding training within the Diocese. The Diocesan Council shall ensure that the necessary resources are provided to carry out the training strategy.

The Diocesan Support Team shall maintain a database of all those who attend training and provide information to parishes on the staff and volunteers and panel members from that parish who have attended training.

Each Parish Panel shall maintain a register of training information which shall include:

- Details of clergy, staff, volunteers and panel members who attended trainings.
- Details of level of training completed by each staff member, member of the clergy, volunteer and panel member.
- Details of when clergy, staff, volunteers and panel members should next attend training.
- Details of staff and volunteers who have completed the Declaration of Acceptance.

Every Trainer registered with the RCB will be required to submit their training figures to the RCB to maintain their registration.

The Diocesan Support Team shall utilise the information provided on the parish returns and triennial audit forms to identify church personnel who require training and the level of training necessary.

1.5C TEMPLATE 1: DIOCESAN TRAINING STRATEGY TEMPLATE

The aim of this strategy is to ensure that all church personnel within the Diocese of

[INSERT NAME OF DIOCESE]

are familiar with the Child Safeguarding Policy and ancillary policies and how to implement them in their children's work at parish and diocesan level.

Using the information on the parish returns and triannual audit and ***Guidance 1.5B***, the following is a plan for the next year.

Target Group	Training Required	Delivered By	Date

1.6A GUIDANCE ON A COMMUNICATION PLAN

The dissemination of information throughout the Church of Ireland about safeguarding children is an essential element of promoting a safe environment. It is important that all stakeholders are informed and have an opportunity to have their say, including children and young people who have a right to be protected, consulted and treated with respect. Dioceses and parishes shall devise a communications strategy, which sets out how communication about safeguarding at a local level will be disseminated.

Communicating what child safeguarding procedures and practice are in place is a core element of the Church of Ireland's approach to safeguard children. Policies and procedures are only effective if everyone, including children, understand their purpose and know how to use them.

Church personnel who are appropriately trained must be available to listen to and communicate with children, their parents/carers and regarding the Church of Ireland's approach to safeguarding.

There must be a range of methods to communicate what the Church of Ireland is doing to create safe environments for children, and how it is responding appropriately to allegations of child abuse.

It is helpful to identify what current communication practices are in place. The following checklist suggests some ideas for the Diocesan Support Team to consider.

Does the Parish/Diocese:

- Have a written communications plan, stating what you wish to communicate, to whom, by whom, and how often?
- Display contacts details for reporting child safeguarding suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations (***1.6A Template 1*** completed with relevant numbers from ***Appendix F)***;
- Place information on relevant websites about safeguarding children including whom to contact if an individual wishes to make a complaint?
- Ensure that communications between the Parish/Diocese and parents/carers/ children/community leaders take account of language or communication differences?
- Ensure that parents/carers, children and relevant people know about the safeguarding policy and reporting procedures?
- Have a process for enabling people, including children, to make a complaint and ensure that this process is publicised so that everyone knows about it?
- Involve parents/carers, as well as children, in developing codes of behaviour, e.g. about anti-bullying?
- Devise ways of obtaining feedback from parents/carers/children/the church community to find out what you are doing well, and what is not working?

Using the information gathered in answer to the questions above, the Parish/Diocese should gather any further information necessary to develop a communications plan that

reflects transparency, openness, accountability and responsibility. The aim of this plan is to make information available about all aspects of policy and practice, which keep children safe in church and related activities.

To develop this plan, the Diocesan Support Team needs to develop information on the following:

- Who are the target groups? The Diocesan Support Team should consult with relevant personnel to establish the target audiences for inclusion in the wider safeguarding plan. It is likely that the main target groups with whom a church body needs to communicate regarding its Child Safeguarding Policy and procedures are:
  - church personnel
  - lay faithful
  - children/parents/carers
  - parish staff and volunteers
  - external organisations, e.g. Tusla, PSNI, An Garda Síochána, HSCT (Health and Social Care Trust)
  - other relevant external agencies, the general public and the media.

- What are the safeguarding messages? Although child safeguarding messages must be consistent, the information needed may change depending on your target audience. Child safeguarding messages may include:
  - Information on what is meant by child safeguarding
  - Information on the Child Safeguarding Policy
  - Information on the procedures for reporting allegations, suspicions and concerns
  - Contact details of the Safeguarding Casework Officer
  - For children and parents/carers: how to keep safe; what to do if you, or someone you know, is in danger of being harmed; sources of advice and support; roles of agencies involved in child safeguarding; how the referral process works
  - For church personnel: how to deliver best practice; safe recruitment; dealing with allegations; accessing advice and support; availability of training; contact details for relevant child safeguarding personnel.

- How are you going to promote child safeguarding? Before deciding how you will do this, it is important to consider the most effective methods for reaching out to key groups of people. Methods could include:
  - Diocesan and parish websites that could host material such as the Child Safeguarding Policy, any additional resources developed in relation to child safeguarding, the annual training plan, a safeguarding children newsletter, or signposts to other websites such as the RCB or the statutory authorities;
  - Diocesan newsletters providing general information and updates on safeguarding;
  - Parish newsletters with information on child safeguarding events and key

contact details;

- Diocesan/parish printed publications such as copies of Child Safeguarding Policy, handbooks and information pamphlets, posters for display in the church (***1.6A Template 1***)completed with relevant numbers from ***Appendix F***;
- National/local press releases announcing annual reports, updated resources, etc.;
- Other innovative methods: it is important to develop positive messages when promoting child safeguarding within the Church. Use the skills and expertise of key people in the church body to develop creative ways to put forward the positive child safeguarding message of the Church. This could include suggestion boxes, 'Safeguarding Sundays', meetings of key child safeguarding personnel, questionnaires, and workshops with children and young people.

Using the information outlined above it is important to identify who is responsible for each method of delivery. It must be understood that within each parish or diocese, the overall responsibility for implementing the Child Safeguarding Policy remains with the Select Vestry and Parish Panel. The overall responsibility for ensuring that each diocese implements effective child safeguarding practice lies with the relevant Bishop.

It is important that each plan has clear, realistic and achievable time frames within which each target can be achieved.

It is the responsibility of the Diocesan Support Team to write the communication plan using an appropriate format. This plan will form part of the overall safeguarding plan.

It is important to remember that communication is a two-way process. Developing mechanisms for consultation and feedback to review the communication plan is critical to ensure that the child safeguarding message is effectively heard, understood and revised in order to meet the needs of the target groups.

1.6A TEMPLATE 1: SAFEGUARDING INFORMATION POSTER

The Church of Ireland acknowledges its duty of care to safeguard, protect and promote the welfare of all children sharing in its ministry. We are committed to ensuring that safeguarding reflects statutory responsibilities, government regulation and complies with best practice.

The Church of Ireland pledges to work alongside parents, carers and statutory authorities to value and support children as important members of our church community, to ensure they have a positive and safe experience in church activities.

The Child Safeguarding Policy applies to all church personnel and is recognised in Chapter XVI of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland.

WHOM TO CONTACT TO DISCUSS SAFEGUARDING ISSUES WHICH ARE NOT RELATED TO ABUSE:

Parish Panel Members or equivalent

[INSERT DETAILS]

WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU HAVE A SUSPICION, CONCERN, KNOWLEDGE OR ALLEGATION OF ABUSE:

RCB Safeguarding Casework Officer

[INSERT DETAILS]

IF IT IS AN EMERGENCY SITUATION OR YOU DO NOT WISH TO CONTACT THE RCB SAFEGUARDING CASEWORK OFFICER YOU CAN CONTACT:

Police contact for allegations that do not relate to members of the Clergy

[INSERT DETAILS]

Police contact for allegations that relate to members of the Clergy

[INSERT DETAILS]

Child Protection Service

[INSERT DETAILS]

For any other safeguarding queries contact safeguarding@rcbcoi.org

1.6A TEMPLATE 2: CHILDREN'S POSTER

HELLO CHILDREN!

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

IN OUR PARISH WE WANT YOU TO FEEL HAPPY AND SAFE.

IF SOMETHING IS MAKING YOU FEEL SAD OR WORRIED TALK TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST SUCH AS A PARENT, OTHER FAMILY MEMBER OR LEADER.

Scan here for more information on our child safeguarding policy

THESE PEOPLE ARE ALSO HERE TO HELP:

NAME:	NAME:	NAME:	NAME:
TEL:	TEL:	TEL:	TEL:

WHOM TO CONTACT...

Whom to contact to discuss safeguarding issues which are not related to abuse

Parish Panel or equivalent:

.....

.....

Whom to contact if you have a suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation of abuse

RCB Safeguarding Casework Officers:

.....

.....

If it is an emergency situation or you do not wish to contact the RCB Safeguarding Casework Officer you can contact

Police contact for allegations that do not relate to members of the clergy:

.....

.....

Police contact for allegations that relate to members of the clergy:

.....

.....

Child Protection Service:

.....

.....

For any other safeguarding queries contact:
safeguarding@rcbcoi.org

AND WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF YOU? TO ACT JUSTLY AND TO LOVE MERCY AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD.

MICAH 6:8

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

To view the complete Child Safeguarding Policy and accompanying Guidance go to:

www.safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org

EMAIL

safeguarding@rcbcoi.org

CHURCH OF IRELAND 2026

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

SUMMARY LEAFLET

CHURCH OF IRELAND 2026

POLICY STATEMENT

The Church of Ireland acknowledges its duty of care to safeguard, protect and promote the welfare of all children sharing in its ministry. We are committed to ensuring that safeguarding reflects statutory responsibilities, government regulation and complies with best practice.

The Church of Ireland pledges to work alongside parents, carers and statutory authorities, to value and support children as important members of our church community, to ensure they have a positive and safe experience in church activities.

The Child Safeguarding Policy applies to all church personnel and is recognised in Chapter XVI of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland.

The Child Safeguarding Policy is structured under 3 standards (Protecting, Responding and Complying). These are broken down into a series of indicators which are contained in this leaflet. Further detailed procedures to assist with implementation of this policy are included in the Guidance available at: *www.safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org*

STANDARD 1: PROTECTING INDICATORS

Dioceses, parishes & relevant church organisations **must**:

1.1	Ensure the safe recruitment of personnel who work with children including AccessNI checks for those in regulated activity and Garda vetting checks for those undertaking relevant work
1.2	Ensure the implementation of effective codes of behaviour for children and the adults that work with them
1.3	Ensure that all activities with children (whether in person or online) are assessed and mitigation measures are put in place to manage safeguarding risks
1.4	Have clearly written complaints and whistleblowing procedures which are easily accessible
1.5	Ensure that all church personnel attend safeguarding training, induction and role specific training relevant to their needs
1.6	Have in place a plan and process to ensure the communication of safeguarding to children, their parents and carers, members of the Church and external bodies
1.7	Ensure that relevant procedures are in place to manage groups not covered by this policy but using church property to work with children

STANDARD 2: RESPONDING INDICATORS

Dioceses, parishes & relevant church organisations **must**:

2.1	Ensure there is effective reporting and risk management procedures for child safeguarding suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations which meet the threshold for reporting. These procedures must be compliant with national and church law and respect the primacy of any investigation by the statutory authorities
2.2	Ensure that appropriate support and care is in place for the complainant if the respondent is a member of church personnel
2.3	Ensure that appropriate support and management is in place if the respondent is a member of church personnel
2.4	Ensure there is effective risk management and mitigation measures in place when the statutory authorities conclude their investigation if the respondent is a member of church personnel
2.5	Ensure effective practice in line with national and church law on the management of persons of concern taking part in church services or activities
2.6	Ensure effective information sharing procedures are in place to manage risk to children in line with civil law and statutory guidance

STANDARD 3: COMPLYING INDICATORS

Dioceses, parishes & relevant church organisations **must**:

3.1	Maintain a robust system of compliance with regular audit and reporting
3.2	Have in place and implement a safeguarding plan to address recommendations or non-compliance with this policy including the provision of training and communication

1.6B GUIDANCE IN WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS/CARERS

The Church of Ireland sees the welfare of children as paramount and therefore seeks to form positive relationships between church personnel and parents/carers to encourage mutual trust and support; therefore dioceses/parishes should adopt a policy for working in partnership with parents/carers ***(1.6B Template 1)***. This policy should include the opportunity for parents to receive copies of the Safeguarding Policy (including its guiding principles) on request.

1.6B TEMPLATE 1: TEMPLATE WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS/CARERS POLICY

Working in partnership with parents/carers helps to safeguard children.

[INSERT NAME OF PARISH/DIOCESE]

sees the welfare of children as paramount and therefore seeks to form positive relationships between clergy, staff/volunteers and parents/carers to encourage mutual trust and support.

Partnership with parents/carers and families involves information sharing and consultation regarding all aspects of their child's participation in

[INSERT NAME OF PARISH/DIOCESE/DIOCESAN BODY/ORGANISATION]

In order to foster positive relationships and a good working partnership between clergy/staff/volunteers and parents/carers

[INSERT NAME OF PARISH/DIOCESE/DIOCESAN BODY/ORGANISATION]

shall:

- Ensure that all clergy, staff and volunteers working with their child are introduced to parents/carers.
- Provide parents/carers with information leaflets on Child Safeguarding Policy.
- Make available to parents/carers, via their website, all relevant policies and procedures.
- Ensure that clergy/staff/volunteers make themselves available to talk to parents/carers informally on a regular basis.
- Allow parents/carers the opportunity to visit their child's activity from time to time.
- Regularly provide information on activities and events both verbally and in writing.
- Regularly provide feedback to parents on their child's progress and participation.

The *[PARISH/DIOCESE/DIOCESAN BODY/ORGANISATION]*

shall encourage all parents/carers to:

- Ask questions about policies and procedures.
- Make suggestions or comments.
- Ask about their child's experiences in the organisation.
- Talk to clergy/staff/volunteers about how their child is getting on in activities.
- Keep clergy, staff and volunteers informed about family events/situations that may be causing children anxiety.
- Attend events organised by the *[PARISH/DIOCESE/DIOCESAN BODY/ORGANISATION)]*

It is essential that this working partnership is based on mutual respect and value so that if an occasion arises whereby a clergy, staff member or volunteer has a concern about a child, this can be discussed with parents/carers if appropriate.

[INSERT NAME OF PARISH/DIOCESE/DIOCESAN BODY/ORGANISATION]

may seek to speak with parents/carers if a concern arises about their child or before a report is going to be made to the statutory authorities in line with the Child Safeguarding Policy; however, there may be circumstances in which it is not possible or appropriate to do so.

Adopted by the Select Vestry on

1.7A GUIDANCE ON EXTERNAL GROUPS WHO USE CHURCH PROPERTY

DEFINITIONS

External organisation – is a group that, while not operated by the church, wishes to use church premises, or to partner with the church to deliver children's ministry. Such organisations may be specifically youth organisations, or organisations which occasionally work with children.

Church Ministry – ministry with children which is associated with faith development and usually delivered by a church or parachurch organisation.

1. General guiding principles

It is recognised that churches and organisations are interdependent, and it is therefore vital that constructive working relationships are developed and maintained, to ensure the welfare of children is the paramount consideration.

The church will not be responsible for safeguarding within an organisation that is operated independently of the church but wishes to use church property for ministry with children. However, it is recognised that the church still has a responsibility in confirming a safeguarding policy and appropriate insurance is in place, before making a decision to permit the external organisation to use church property.

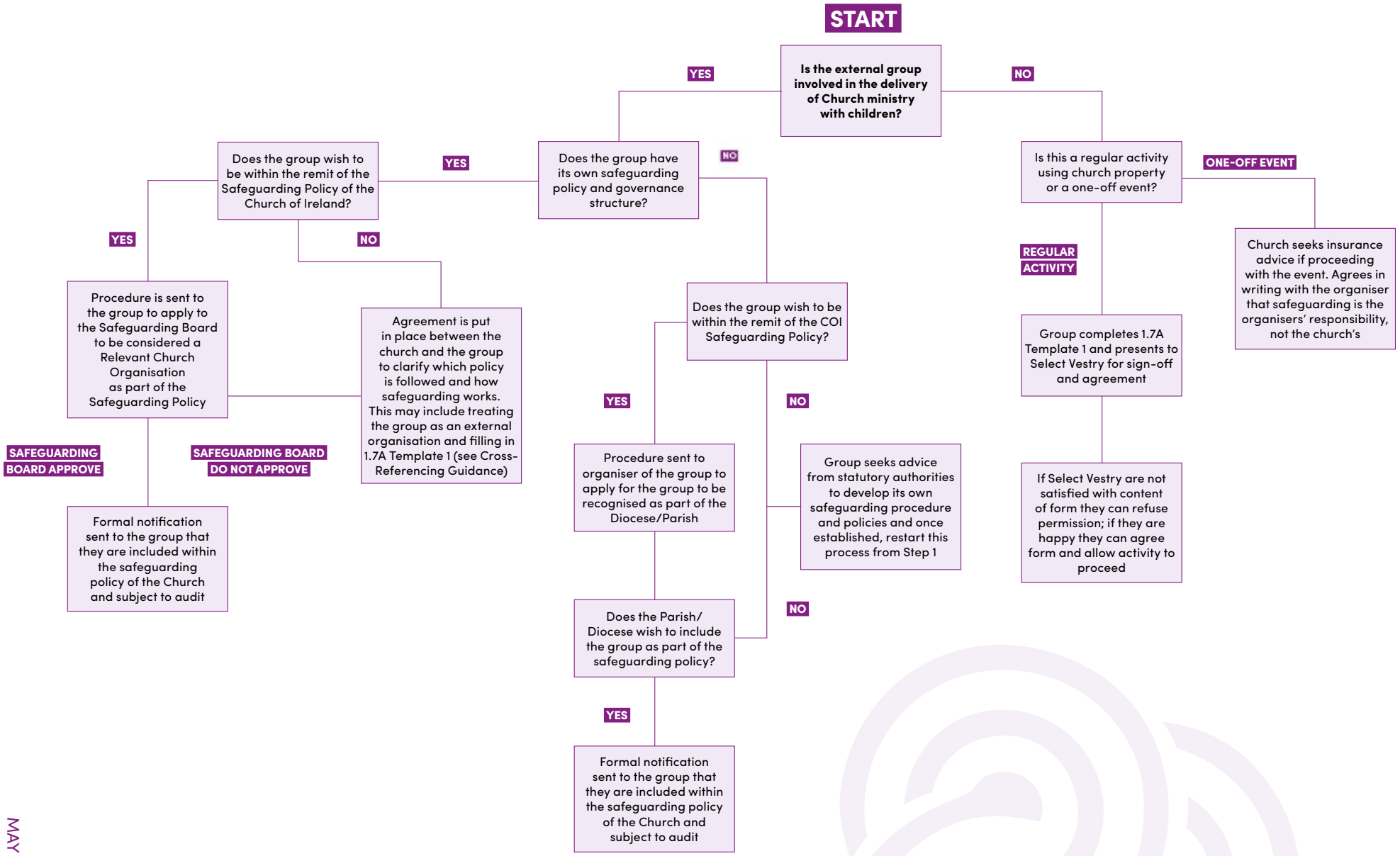
If a church has safeguarding concerns over practice with children (which are not allegations of abuse), these should be raised with the organisation leader and/or the headquarters of the organisation. If the concerns are not satisfactorily dealt with, the church may withdraw permission for use of the premises by that organisation.

It is the duty of the external organisation to ensure that the premises are suitable and appropriate for the planned activities. The external organisation shall also seek to ensure that activities shall be carried out safely. Any safety concerns regarding the premises shall be notified by the organisation leader to the appropriate person within the church as soon as possible.

2. Procedure

The following diagram should be used to help understand the different types of organisations and groups who use church property and the steps that the Parish or Diocese should take to ensure clarity on responsibilities for safeguarding children.

The diagram outlines different types of organisations which are involved in the delivery of ministry and work with children. As each organisation may have a different governance structure it is important that decisions are made by the central leadership of each organisation (where applicable) and are communicated effectively to each branch or group involved in delivery.


START
Is the external group involved in the delivery of Church ministry with children?
YES
NO
Does the group have its own safeguarding policy and governance structure?
YES
NO
Does the group wish to be within the remit of the Safeguarding Policy of the Church of Ireland?
YES
NO
Procedure is sent to the group to apply to the Safeguarding Board to be considered a Relevant Church Organisation as part of the Safeguarding Policy
SAFEGUARDING BOARD APPROVE
SAFEGUARDING BOARD DO NOT APPROVE
Formal notification sent to the group that they are included within the safeguarding policy of the Church and subject to audit
Agreement is put in place between the church and the group to clarify which policy is followed and how safeguarding works. This may include treating the group as an external organisation and filling in 1.7A Template 1 (see Cross-Referencing Guidance)
Does the group wish to be within the remit of the COI Safeguarding Policy?
YES
NO
Procedure sent to organiser of the group to apply for the group to be recognised as part of the Diocese/Parish
Group seeks advice from statutory authorities to develop its own safeguarding procedure and policies and once established, restart this process from Step 1
Does the Parish/ Diocese wish to include the group as part of the safeguarding policy?
NO
YES
Formal notification sent to the group that they are included within the safeguarding policy of the Church and subject to audit
Is this a regular activity using church property or a one-off event?
REGULAR ACTIVITY
ONE-OFF EVENT
Group completes 1.7A Template 1 and presents to Select Vestry for sign-off and agreement
If Select Vestry are not satisfied with content of form they can refuse permission; if they are happy they can agree form and allow activity to proceed
Church seeks insurance advice if proceeding with the event. Agrees in writing with the organiser that safeguarding is the organisers' responsibility, not the church's

A) External organisations not carrying out Church ministry who wish to use church property on a regular basis (e.g. dance class)

- The organisation completes ***1.7A Template 1.*** Using the information contained in this form the Select Vestry (or equivalent) make a decision whether to permit the organisation to use the premises of the parish or diocese. If the church agree, this needs to be confirmed in writing to the organisation and reviewed on an annual basis. If the church disagrees this needs to be confirmed in writing to the organisation.
- It is the organisation's responsibility to ensure they have adequate insurance and child safeguarding policies including Vetting/AccessNI checks if applicable. A copy of the insurance should be provided and requested annually.
- The organisation shall ensure that leaders and helpers in the organisation receive appropriate child protection training and are aware of the organisation's reporting procedures.
- If a report has been made by the organisation of a child protection concern, suspicion or allegation through its procedures, the statutory authorities will make a decision as to whether any information can be shared with the Parish/Diocese.

B) External organisations not carrying out Church ministry who wish to use church property for a one-off event (e.g. parent using the church hall for a birthday party)

- As this is a one-off event, the group are not involved in regular activity and therefore will likely not have insurance or a safeguarding policy.
- The group should outline the specific nature of the activities they are planning to run with children to the Parish or Diocese.
- The Diocese or Parish should seek insurance advice before proceeding.
- If the Parish or Diocese decide to proceed and allow the activity, the Parish/Diocese should agree in writing with the organiser that safeguarding is the responsibility of the group and not the Parish/Diocese.

C) National external organisation carrying out Church ministry with its own safeguarding policy and national governance structure who wish to be part of the Church of Ireland Safeguarding Policy

- The group can apply to become a relevant Church organisation via the Safeguarding Board. For further information see guidance on applying to be a Relevant Church Organisation.
- If the Safeguarding Board approve this application, a formal notification is sent to the group, and they are no longer regarded as an external organisation but part of the COI Safeguarding Policy and subject to the requirements of the policy.

- If the Safeguarding Board do not approve the application of the group, then an agreement is put in place as to whose safeguarding policy is applied if the activity is taking place in church premises. This agreement should be completed at central leadership level and may include information on what services each organisation is responsible for (e.g. reporting, recruitment including Vetting/AccessNI and training) and may include treating the group as an external organisation and asking them to complete ***1.7A Template 1*** and follow the procedure outlined in part A of this guidance. This agreement should be communicated to each branch or group carrying out the activity.

D) National external organisation carrying out Church ministry with its own safeguarding policy and national governance structure who do not wish to be part of the Church of Ireland Safeguarding Policy

- An agreement is put in place as to whose safeguarding policy is applied if the activity is taking place in church premises ***(Guidance 1.7B)***. This agreement should be completed at central leadership level and may include information on what services each organisation is responsible for (e.g. reporting, recruitment including vetting and AccessNI and training) and may include treating the group as an external organisation and asking them to complete ***1.7A Template 1*** and follow the procedure outlined in part A of this guidance. This agreement should be communicated to each branch or group carrying out the activity.

E) Local external organisation carrying out Church ministry without its own safeguarding policy who wish to be part of the Church of Ireland Safeguarding Policy

- A procedure is sent by the Diocese or Parish to the group to ascertain certain information for the Select Vestry (or equivalent) to consider whether the organisation should be part of the ministry of the Parish/Diocese and be included within the Safeguarding Policy.
- If the Select Vestry (or equivalent) approve this application, a formal notification is sent to the group, and they are no longer regarded as an external organisation but part of the COI Safeguarding Policy and subject to the requirements of the policy.
- If the Select Vestry (or equivalent) do not approve the application of the group, then the group should be advised to seek the advice and guidance of the statutory authorities to develop a safeguarding policy; following this they can follow the process outlined in part A of this guidance.

F) Local external organisation carrying out Church ministry without its own safeguarding policy who do not wish to be part of the Church of Ireland Safeguarding Policy

- The group should be advised to seek the advice and guidance of the statutory authorities to develop a safeguarding policy; following this they can follow the process outlined in part A of this guidance.

1.7A TEMPLATE 1: EXTERNAL GROUPS FORM TO BE COMPLETED BY EXTERNAL ORGANISATION

Name of group/organisation:

Purpose or proposed activities:

User group, e.g. children, adults:

Facilities required:

Date of commencement of use:

Date of completion of use:

Frequency of use:

Hours of use:

(1) Commence at:	(a.m./p.m.)
(2) Finish at:	(a.m./p.m.)

Names and phone numbers of persons who will be in charge during use:

(1) Name:	Tel:
(2) Name:	Tel:

Does the group have its own child safeguarding policy and procedures? Yes: No:

Does the group have appropriate (public liability and/or employer's liability and professional indemnity if appropriate) insurance cover for the activity, and have the parish received a copy? Yes: No:

Name of insurance company:

Policy number:

Period of cover:

Limit of indemnity:

TO BE SIGNED BY OFFICIAL/COORDINATOR OF THE ORGANISATION/GROUP

Signed: Date:

1.7B GUIDANCE ON CROSS REFERENCING SAFEGUARDING POLICIES

INTRODUCTION

All church personnel are required to follow the safeguarding policy for the Church of Ireland. There are circumstances where more than one child safeguarding policy may overlap with another. This guidance is designed to offer advice and guidance to deal with the following situations:

1. Member of the clergy or other person who are ministering on behalf of another diocese in the Church of Ireland

If a member of the clergy or other person wishes to minister for a Church of Ireland diocese outside of that to which they belong, they firstly must have Permission to Officiate from the Bishop of the Diocese in which they are seeking to minister. If this permission is granted, they are bound by the procedures of the Diocese in which they are ministering, including safeguarding and notification of allegations.

If a child safeguarding suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation is raised with the member while in ministry, they must report it using the safeguarding procedure of the Diocese in which they are ministering.

If there is an allegation against the member while ministering with another diocese, the following will be observed:

- If the allegation relates to an incident that took place in the Diocese (other than that to which the member belongs), the reporting procedures will be initiated by the Diocese in which the member is ministering in accordance with their safeguarding procedures. In this instance, the name of the casework officer assigned to that Diocese should be displayed as the contact person for reporting suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations.
- If the member is the respondent, they will either directly inform their own Bishop, or give permission for the casework officer or Bishop to inform the Bishop of the Diocese of which the respondent is a member; this must be done only in consultation with the statutory authorities.
- Any decision to suspend the member from that Diocese rests with the Bishop for whom the member is ministering.
- Any decision to remove the respondent from ministry of the Diocese to which they belong rests with the Bishop to which the member belongs.
- Internal Church processes regarding the care and management of the respondent will be followed upon conclusion of any criminal investigation and other organisational disciplinary proceedings.
- Consideration will be given to the appropriateness of sharing the information about the allegation with the other organisations. Advice from Tusla/HSCT/PSNI/Garda should be sought as to how this should be done.

2. When working/volunteering for another organisation

If a member of the clergy or other person works or volunteers for another external organisation, they are bound by the policies and procedures of that organisation, which include safeguarding and notification of allegations. Therefore, if a suspicion, concern or allegation is raised with that member while in the employment of that organisation, they must report it using the safeguarding procedures of the organisation.

If there is an allegation against the member while working or volunteering with that organisation, the following will be observed:

- If the allegation relates to that organisation, the reporting procedures will be initiated by the Safeguarding Officer/Designated Liaison Person (DLP) of that organisation in accordance with their safeguarding procedures.
- The respondent will either directly inform their Bishop or give permission for the Safeguarding Officer/DLP of the organisation to inform their Bishop; this must only be done in consultation with the statutory authorities.
- Any decision to suspend the member from that organisation rests with the management of the organisation.
- Any decision to remove the member from ministry rests with the Diocese to which they belong.
- Internal Church processes regarding the care and management of the respondent will be followed upon conclusion of any criminal investigation and other organisational disciplinary proceedings.
- Consideration will be given to the appropriateness of sharing the information about the allegation with the other organisations. Advice from Tusla/HSCT/PSNI/Garda should be sought as to how this should be done.

3. If children and young people are using church property as part of church-related activity with staff or volunteers from an external organisation

This situation can occur in a number of different ways, including schools visiting the church, school choirs practising in the church, and youth groups on retreat in church property that are being facilitated by church personnel. Each of these situations is individual and should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The Church of Ireland Parish/Diocese should agree with the external organisation in writing:

- Whose safeguarding policy applies and when.
- Who is responsible for the children and when.
- Which organisation will take responsibility for reporting allegations.

This should be recorded and stored appropriately in line with data protection legislation and guidance.

4. Covenant Churches

Covenant Churches refers to the formal relationship established in 2002 between the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland, creating a Covenant to share a common life, mission, and resources.

In terms of safeguarding, when a Covenant Church is created it is necessary to establish the following in a written agreement signed by the church authorities responsible for the Covenant. This may form part of the Covenant Partnership agreement and must include:

- A statement as to which church safeguarding policy is to be followed in the Covenant Church. This includes training and all associated procedures.
- Members of the clergy who are ministering in both the Methodist Church and the Church of Ireland, need to be recruited appropriately including Garda Vetted and/or AccessNI checks by both Churches and having been granted permission to officiate or equivalent. This includes situations of interchangeability where a Methodist minister is covering for a Church of Ireland member of the clergy.
- Details of the insurance policy which applies in the Covenant Church.
- A statement outlining which safeguarding policy will be followed during the period of transition when the Covenant Church is moving to its new status. It is recommended that this is in place as soon as possible to avoid duplication of safeguarding training and ease the process of transition.
- A statement produced on an annual basis to share with the church partner (whose safeguarding policy is not being followed by the Covenant Church), that outlines:
  - How many allegations have been received and reported on using the agreed safeguarding policy.
  - That Garda Vetting and AccessNI procedures are being followed.
  - That safeguarding policy and procedures are being implemented appropriately.

If there is an allegation against a member of church personnel while working within the Covenant Church, the following will be observed:

- If the allegation relates to the Covenant Church, the reporting procedures will be initiated as per the agreed safeguarding policy of the Covenant Church.
- The respondent will either directly inform their Bishop/District Superintendent (Methodist Church) or give permission for the Safeguarding Officer/DLP of the Covenant Church to inform their Bishop; this must be done only in consultation with the statutory authorities.
- Any decision to suspend the member from the Covenant Church is in line with the agreed safeguarding policy of the Covenant Church.
- Any decision to remove the member from ministry within the Church of Ireland or Methodist Church rests with the authorities in the Church to which they belong.

- Internal Church processes regarding the care and management of the respondent will be followed upon conclusion of any criminal investigation and other organisational disciplinary proceedings by the Church to which the respondent belongs.

Consideration will be given to the appropriateness of sharing the information about the allegation with the other organisations. Advice from Tusla/HSCT/PSNI/Garda should be sought as to how this should be done.

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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