



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.

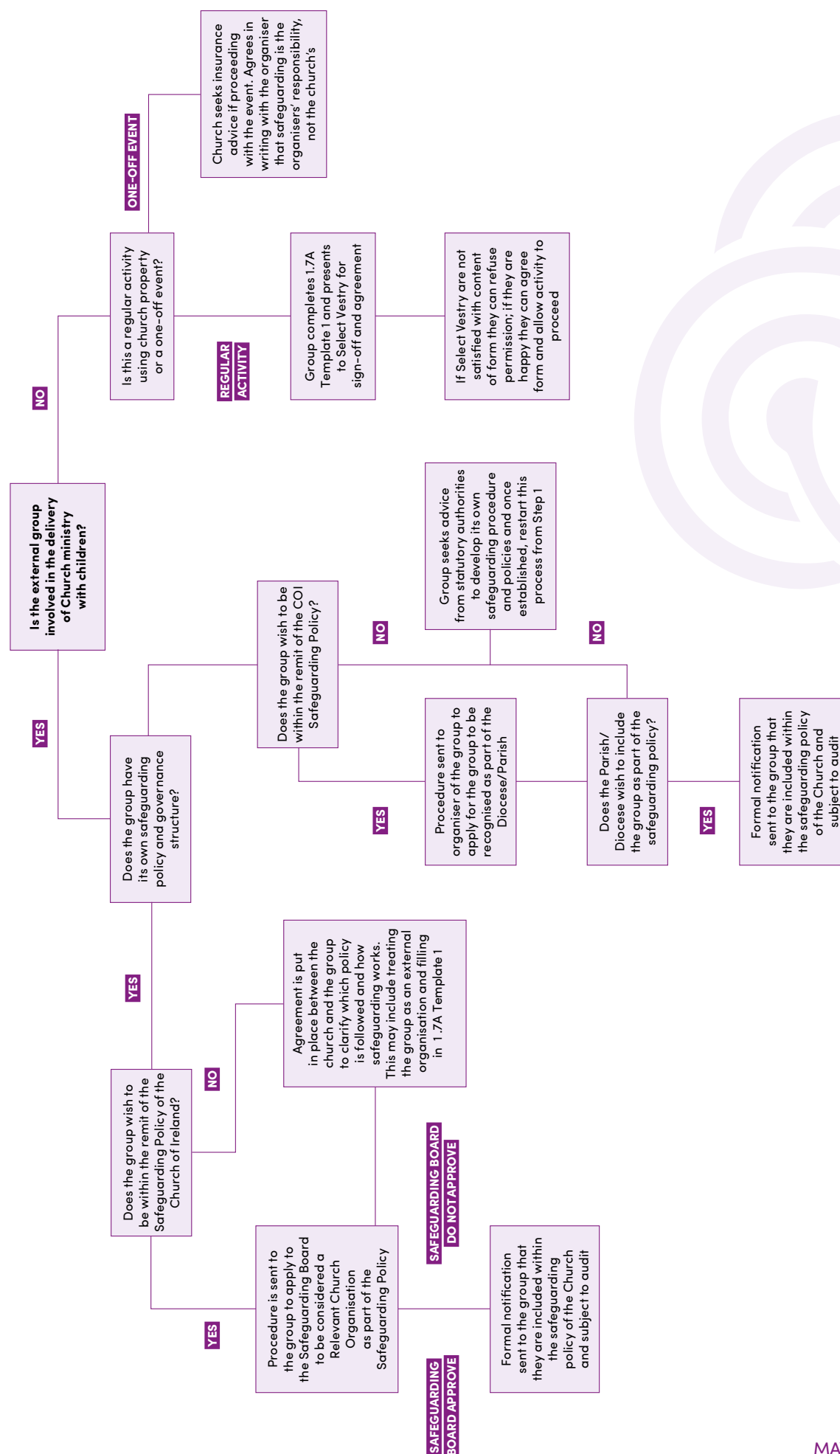
2. Procedure

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



**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:

