

Archdiocese of Dublin



CHILD SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

This document has been prepared to comply with the requirements of Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland (2008)

CONTENTS

Introduction1

Whistle Blowing Policy.....3

Complaints Policy.....7

Dealing with Children who present with challenging behaviour.....9

Anti-Bullying Policy11

Intimate Care Policy13

Communication with Children and Young People Policy15

INTRODUCTION

The 'Archdiocese of Dublin: Child Safeguarding and Protection, Policy and Procedures' was launched in 2011, with a commitment to review and update as necessary to reflect changes in national and Church child protection guidelines. A review will be carried out in 2014 to take account of the findings of the forthcoming audit of the Archdiocese of Dublin by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland. The additional guidance contained here will be integrated into a revised policy and procedures document for the Archdiocese of Dublin after a period of consultation to be conducted under the guidance of the diocesan Safeguarding Committee.

The policies presented here should be considered as addenda to the current policy, in particular to Chapter 2: 'How to Respond to Child Protection Allegations and Suspicions'; and Chapter 3: 'Preventing Harm to Children'.

The policies are:

1. Whistle blowing policy
2. Complaints policy
3. Dealing with children who present with challenging behaviour
4. Anti-bullying policy
5. Intimate care policy
6. Communication with children and young people policy.

WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY

(addendum to Chapter 2 of 'Archdiocese of Dublin: Child Safeguarding and Protection, Policy and Procedures')

RATIONALE FOR POLICY

The aim of this policy is to encourage those who have concerns about the welfare or safety of children involved in Church activities to express those concerns without the fear that they will be victimised or harassed for so doing. The policy applies to all those who work for the Archdiocese of Dublin whether in a voluntary or paid capacity.

There are protections under civil law for people who report child protection concerns. Under the 'Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998', people are protected from civil liability when they report child protection concerns to designated officers of the HSE, provided that they do so reasonably and in good faith. It is an offence to report child abuse, knowing that the information provided is untrue.

It can be difficult for people to raise concerns about the practice or behaviour of

colleagues. People may be reluctant to do so because of:

- Fear of getting it wrong and damaging the career or reputation of a colleague
- Fear of disrupting working relationships
- Fear of not being believed
- Fear that the information will be used inappropriately, precipitating a chain of events that spiral out of control.

These concerns, however, have to be considered in light of the following:

- Each person working for or on behalf of the diocese, its parishes and diocesan agencies has a responsibility for the welfare and safety of children involved in church activities
- Raising a concern in a timely manner can prevent a bad situation spiralling out of control
- Raising a concern about one situation can reduce the risk of similar situations arising elsewhere

- Raising a concern about poor or inappropriate practice will prevent the person raising the concern from becoming implicated in such practice.

The Archdiocese of Dublin commits itself to ensuring that any person, staff member or volunteer, who raises a child protection concern reasonably and in good faith, will not be victimised, harassed or in any other way be disadvantaged by so doing in any of its parishes or diocesan agencies.

ESTABLISHING GROUNDS FOR CONCERN

The protections of this whistle blowing policy apply to those who act reasonably and in good faith. Any person who is worried about poor or inappropriate practice or behaviour towards children involved in church activities should try to establish the grounds for their concern. They may make a point of closely observing the practice or behaviour that is worrying them and making a note of their observations, asking about the rationale for doing things in a particular way, checking with children and parents if they are comfortable with the way things are being done and/ or discussing their concerns with colleagues.

ACTING ON THE CONCERN

Once the person has established that there are grounds for concern there are a number

of options open to them. They may choose to discuss the matter with the person about whose practice or behaviour they have concerns, they may choose to bring it to the attention of the group leader/ manager or the parish priest. However, if the person has information that clearly indicates that a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse that information must be referred without delay to the Director of the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service (CSPS), Andrew Fagan, or the Child Protection Officer, Sinead McDonnell. People also have the right to share such information directly with the civil authorities, by contacting their local HSE office or, if the matter is urgent, the local Garda Station.

Whatever step is taken the person has the right to expect that their concern will be taken seriously and acted on appropriately. If the person believes that they have not been heard or taken seriously or that they have suffered negative consequences for raising their concern, they should report this to the Director, CSPS.

DIOCESAN RESPONSE

The diocese will ensure that any person who reports a concern for the safety and welfare of a child or children involved in church activities reasonably and in good faith will suffer no negative consequences for doing so.

If the matter is reported to the CSPA, it will be discussed with the person raising the concern and an appropriate response determined. The response will depend on the seriousness of the concern raised. At one end of the spectrum it might involve encouraging and supporting the person to try to resolve the matter at local level. At the other end, it could involve reporting to the civil authorities. CSPA will inform the concerned person about the steps being taken to address their concerns.

CONFIDENTIALITY

If a person reports concerns anonymously, the CSPA will try to establish whether there are reasonable grounds to be concerned for the safety and welfare of children and act accordingly. However, it is difficult to act on anonymous information. For example, information may need to be clarified and this is not possible if there are no contact details for the informant.

An informant may be prepared to give their name when reporting a concern but ask that it be kept confidential. CSPA will discuss this with the informant when the concern is reported. (See Appendix 5 of the diocesan policy: 'Confidentiality and Exchange of Information').

HELP AND SUPPORT

The Child Safeguarding and Protection Service is available to provide advice and support to those who are worried about the safety and welfare of children. Andrew Fagan and Sinead McDonnell can be contacted on 01 8360314.

COMPLAINTS POLICY

(addendum to Chapter 3 of Archdiocese of Dublin: Child Safeguarding and Protection, Policy and Procedures)

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction. A person who makes a complaint is stating that they are unhappy about something. The aim of a complaints policy is to outline how complaints can be addressed in order to deal with the unhappiness or dissatisfaction of the complainant. A complaints procedure can run in parallel with a child protection procedure but is separate from it. A child protection policy addresses the management of risk to the safety of children.

For a variety of reasons people are often reluctant to use the word 'complaint' or to make statements beginning 'I wish to make a complaint about...'. Nonetheless people who are working with children ought to be able to tell from their behaviour, demeanour or from verbal cues, when children are unhappy or upset about something and these indicators should never be ignored. The simplest and best way to address such matters is as close as possible to the source of

the problem. For example, if an adult leader speaks to a child in a manner that upsets the child, a simple, direct and unqualified apology is the most appropriate response.

It may be hard for a child, or the parent of a child, to tell an adult leader involved in a children's activity that the child has been hurt or upset by something that the adult has done. For this reason, it is important that, for every activity involving children in the parish or diocesan agency, there is a designated person to whom the children and parents can take their concerns.

The designated person should assist the parties to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of all concerned, for example, through negotiation or mediation. Where resolution cannot be achieved, the matter should be referred to the designated person's line manager or to the parish priest. At this point a note should be made of the incident giving rise to the complaint and the outstanding issues. The line manager or the parish priest will determine the next steps to be taken.

Some complaints may raise issues to do with the conduct of the person whose behaviour has given rise to the complaint or issues to do with the safety and welfare of a child or children. In this case, other procedures may have to be invoked, such as the disciplinary procedure for employees or the diocesan child protection procedure. Even where these procedures are invoked, they are additional to and not a substitute for attempts to resolve the unhappiness or dissatisfaction of the child or parent.

The Child Safeguarding and Protection Service is available to assist in the resolution of complaints by children or parents in parishes or diocesan agencies. Some matters may require some third party intervention by way of investigation or mediation. However, CSPS will endeavour to assist the parties to a complaint to find the most appropriate means of resolving outstanding issues and restoring good relationships.

DEALING WITH CHILDREN WHO PRESENT WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

(addendum to Chapter 3 of Archdiocese of Dublin: Child Safeguarding and Protection, Policy and Procedures)

Those running activities for children in parishes or diocesan agencies may encounter situations where children behave in ways that pose a risk to their own safety, the safety of others or that otherwise undermine the viability of the group. There may be a variety of reasons for such behaviour, such as bereavement, problems in the family home, learning difficulties and so on. The adult leaders may have a limited awareness or even no awareness of these issues and may also lack the specialist skills to manage very challenging behaviours. Nonetheless, there are some general approaches that can be helpful.

Research tells us that the overall ethos of an institution has a major impact on the behaviour of the people within it. A well run school is less likely to have problems with the behaviour of the pupils than a poorly run one. The ethos of an institution is rooted in its

values. If we want children's activities in our parishes and diocesan agencies to run smoothly we have to ensure that our Christian values of love, acceptance and tolerance are reflected in the manner in which adult leaders behave towards the children. That is why in managing challenging behaviour in children involved in church activities, we must ensure that we have a child centred approach, as set out in Chapter 3 of 'Archdiocese of Dublin: Child Safeguarding and Protection, Policy and Procedures'. This is much more important than any specific behaviour management technique. Indeed the application of such techniques in the absence of the appropriate ethos is likely to be counter-productive.

It is not acceptable under any circumstances to physically punish a child, to threaten to do so or to belittle or humiliate a child in any manner whatsoever.

In dealing with behavioural issues with children, the aim should always be to promote appropriate behaviour. This can be done by:

- Working with the children to develop a

code of conduct that promotes values such as respecting each other, sharing and including everyone

- Informing parents of the behavioural expectations of their children and asking them to share any information that might be significant to the management of their children's behaviour
 - Managing the children's environment in a manner that does not place unrealistic expectations on them, for example, minimising the amount of unstructured time
 - Paying attention to and responding to verbal and non verbal cues that children give out about whether or not they are comfortable, anxious or distressed
 - Ignoring attention seeking or irritating behaviour that does not undermine the viability of the group or the safety of its members
 - Communicating directly and simply with children when their behaviour does undermine the viability of the group or the safety of the members
 - If necessary asking the child to take a short 'time-out' from an activity and then helping him or her to reintegrate
 - Keeping parents informed of behavioural problems and asking their assistance, where appropriate
 - Excluding the child from the activity only where it is clear that there is no other means of ensuring the viability of the activity and safety of the participants
- Keeping careful records of all the steps taken to resolve the difficulties.

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

(addendum to Chapter 3 of Archdiocese of Dublin: Child Safeguarding and Protection, Policy and Procedures)

All children and young people involved in church activities in the diocese of Dublin will be treated with respect and dignity by those adults who run the activities and by the other children who participate in them. It is not permissible to discriminate against any child or young person on the basis of age, gender, race, religion, culture, disability, sexuality or political views.

Bullying, defined as repeated acts of physical, verbal or psychological aggression, is not acceptable and those who run activities involving children must take steps to ensure that the risk of bullying is minimised. This involves following the guidance set out in Chapter 3 of 'Archdiocese of Dublin: Child Safeguarding and Protection, Policy and Procedures', with particular reference to:

- Having a child centred approach
- Choosing carefully those who work with children
- Ensuring that diocesan workers and volunteers behave appropriately in their dealings with children
- Making proper arrangements when

organising activities and outings (including ensuring adequate levels of supervision of children and young people)

- Keeping good records.

In addition, the policies outlined above on complaints and dealing with challenging behaviour, must form part of the anti-bullying strategy.

Research has shown that bullying is an important child protection issue, one that causes a lot of misery to children and can, in some situations, lead to children taking their own lives. It must, therefore, be treated with the utmost seriousness.

Bullying of children by adults is a form of child abuse and must be reported to the Designated Person, Andrew Fagan, Director of the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service or to Sinead McDonnell, Child Protection Officer at 01 8360314.

The Child Safeguarding and Protection Service is available to provide assistance and support to parish and diocesan groups on the management of bullying behaviour by children and young people or by adults.

INTIMATE CARE POLICY

(addendum to Chapter 3 of Archdiocese of Dublin: Child Safeguarding and Protection, Policy and Procedures)

Intimate care involves those activities that people generally do for themselves, such as, washing, dressing and toileting. Diocesan and parish personnel are not ordinarily involved in the provision of intimate care and are not authorised to carry out such tasks.

There are diocesan organisations that, for example, care for children with disabilities where intimate care is provided. The members of such organisations are authorised to provide such care by virtue of their membership of the organisation. They are subject to the policies and procedures of the organisation. For example, some of the children who go on the Dublin Diocesan Children's Pilgrimage to Lourdes at Easter every year may require some degree of intimate care. The volunteers who accompany the children are given guidance and direction on these matters by the committee that organises the pilgrimage.

The school children (generally aged at least 17) who accompany the (adult) pilgrims on the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes in September each year are not permitted to provide intimate care for the sick pilgrims. Such care is provided by the nursing and other adult volunteers. The school children are required to wear blue shirts to ensure that they are easily distinguishable from the other volunteers and do not find themselves in a situation where they are asked to provide such care.

It is not possible to anticipate every eventuality and situations can arise when adults are required to depart from normal practice.

In general, adults should not do for children what the children can do for themselves. A child who has a toileting accident, for example, may need some adult assistance but that does not necessarily mean accompanying the child to the toilet.

Touching children may be appropriate in certain situations, for instance, in comforting a distressed child. Some rules apply.

Offering physical comfort/ reassurance should always be done in response to the child's needs and wishes. Adults need to be sensitive to what is being communicated by the child's behaviour (children who are not comfortable being touched will draw back from contact). Any physical contact should take place in the presence of others. Children should only be touched over their clothes and above the waist (and away from the breast area for girls).

As in all such situations, knowing as much as possible about the children for whom the adults are responsible will help the adult staff and volunteers respond appropriately to their needs. Parish and diocesan groups that are involved in planning activities and trips away should always ask the parents of the children whether there is any information that needs to be shared with the adult carers.

COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY

(addendum to Chapter 3 of Archdiocese of Dublin: Child Safeguarding and Protection, Policy and Procedures)

It is fundamental to diocesan child safeguarding policy that children participate in church activities in the Archdiocese of Dublin with the knowledge and consent of their parents. For such consent to be valid, it must be informed. Therefore, information about church activities involving children must be shared with the parents, rather than directly with the children. For example, parents should be informed when their children are expected to serve at mass or attend choir practice.

It is not appropriate for any person acting on behalf of the diocese, its parishes or agencies to collect, retain or use a young person's personal mobile phone number or email address, to become a child's 'Facebook Friend' or similar or otherwise to use social media to enter into personal communication with a child or young person.

Parish and diocesan agencies may use text or email to inform older young people (16 and 17 year olds) of events and arrangements provided that they have obtained the consent of their parents to do so. Such messages should come from a parish or agency account rather than from a personal phone or email address. Messages should be sent only between 9am and 8pm. They should not contain any personal information about young people.

Photographs of children and young people can only be placed on the websites of parishes and diocesan agencies with their consent and that of their parents.

Groups considering setting up their own website or webpage as a means of communicating with young people are strongly advised to seek professional advice and guidance. Careful consideration must be given to the following: who will be responsible for setting up, managing and moderating (overseeing, reviewing and responding to posted content) the site; what content is to be uploaded onto the site; who

can be linked to the site; and communication or interaction with users.

The Child Safeguarding and Protection Service is available to provide assistance and support to parish and diocesan groups on communicating with children and young people.