

Information Pack for Parish Groups Working with Children

Codes of Conduct are essential for effective safeguarding practice. It is important to carefully read these guidelines and follow them at all times. Codes of Conduct should be reviewed annually by each group. Below are guidelines, each group should develop their own codes of conduct based on these.

Code of Conduct for Adults

It is important for all personnel to:

- Treat all children with respect and dignity.
- Treat all children equally.
- Model positive and appropriate behaviour to all children we come into contact with.
- Be aware of the Church's child protection and child safeguarding policy.
- Challenge and report abusive and potentially abusive behaviour.
- Develop a culture of openness, honesty and safety.
- Develop a culture where children have permission to tell and to talk about any concerns or worries that they may have.
- Respect each child's boundaries and support them to develop their own understanding and sense of their rights.
- Be aware of their responsibility for the safety of all children in their care.
- Work in open environments.
- Help children to know what they can do if they have a problem.

Adults must never:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse children.
- Develop sexual relationships with children.
- Develop relationships with children that could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive.
- Act in any way that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse.
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice that is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
- Do things for a child of a personal nature that they can do themselves.
- Condone or participate in behaviour that is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Act in any way that is intended to intimidate, shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade.
- Engage in discriminatory behaviour or language in relation to race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation or political views.
- Consume alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs while having responsibility for or in the presence of children.

In general, it is inappropriate to:

- Take children away or to your own home, especially where they will be alone with you.
- Involve children in one-to-one contact; activities should usually be supervised by at least two adults.
- However, there may be circumstances where this may occur:
 - In a reactive situation, for example when a young person requests a one-to-one meeting with you without warning, or where a young person has had to be removed from a group as part of a code of behaviour.
 - In the event of an emergency where it is necessary to make a journey alone with a child, make a record of this and inform the child's parents or guardians as soon as possible.

Where it becomes necessary to depart from the code of conduct, the reasons for doing so should be carefully recorded, and steps should be taken to avoid the recurrence of such a situation in the future.

Code of Conduct for children and young people

Children should be involved in drawing up a code of conduct for themselves; however, it is important that in working with children, an appropriate adult with relevant skills and competencies participates to support them in developing the code of conduct.

The methods used in creating a code of conduct should be age and ability appropriate, with children being encouraged to avoid merely drawing up a list of prohibitions. Instead, the code should be comprised of positive statements about respect, and should consider what consequences ensue if the code is broken.

In developing the code, consideration should be given to the following:

- Treating everyone with respect.
- Treating property with respect.
- Not consuming alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs.
- Agreeing not to bring any physical item into the Church activity that may cause offence or harm to others.
- Acting as a good role model.
- Attending activities on time.
- Signing in and out.
- Turning off your mobile phone.
- Telling someone you trust if you feel uncomfortable with any situation or individual.
- Not using bad language when communicating by phone or email.
- Never bullying anyone or sending threatening messages.

Dealing with accidents involving children

If a child has an accident and injures himself/herself while attending a Church-run event, these procedures should be followed:

1. Assess the injury and reassure the child. If the injury is severe or the child has lost consciousness, please contact the emergency services.
2. If the emergency services are called, contact with the child's parents/guardians must be made urgently.
3. If the parents/guardians are not available, it may be necessary for a leader to travel with the child to the hospital. If medical treatment is required, Church personnel may be asked about known allergies or existing medical conditions. Again, this information can be found on the Child and Guardian Joint Consent Form.
4. If the injury is minor, local application of treatment should be available from the first-aid box. There should be a fully stocked first-aid box to hand at all Church-related events. Remember to make a note of what has been used from the first-aid box so that it can be replaced at the earliest opportunity. Under no circumstances should any medication be given to a child, unless under parental or medical supervision.
5. As soon as possible after the accident, write up a report using an Accident/Incident Form - available from the diocesan website. Once completed, this form should be stored in a safe place, in line with data protection, and treated as a confidential document.
6. Always inform parents/guardians of any accident that has occurred involving their child, regardless of how minor you consider it to be. It is good practice to give a copy of the Accident/Incident Form to parents/guardians.
7. It is good practice to keep blank copies of the Accident/Incident Form with the first-aid box so that one can be easily filled out in the event of an emergency.

Complaints procedure

A complaint is defined as a grievance and/or the raising of a concern about breaches of codes of behaviour. Allegations or suspicions of child abuse do not fall into this category of general complaints.

All complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with fairly and confidentially. Efforts will be made to quickly and informally resolve complaints through discussion with the parents/guardians, children/young people, volunteers/members of staff and clergy, as appropriate.

If a parent/guardian, young person or child is not satisfied with any aspect of the running of a particular activity, or the behaviour of any individual involved in that activity they should make a complaint. Initially, all complaints of this nature should be resolved using an open dialogue with the person responsible for the group or the Parish Priest. If resolution is not possible, the following step should be taken.

Steps to take:

1. Complete *Complaint Form* and submit to the Parish Priest.

A letter acknowledging receipt of the complaint will be sent, enclosing a copy of the complaints procedure. All complaints must be thoroughly investigated.

3. The Parish Priest may organise a meeting to discuss and hopefully resolve the complaint.

Following the meeting or discussion, the Parish Priest will write to the complainant to confirm what took place and to set out any solutions that were agreed upon.

If a meeting is not agreeable or possible, the Parish Priest will issue a detailed written reply to the complainant, setting out their suggestions for resolving the matter.

If the complainant is still not satisfied at this point, they should contact the Parish Priest again. At the conclusion of this step, the Bishop may decide to take further action on the complaint.

Whistle-blowing procedure

All staff and volunteers must acknowledge their individual responsibility to bring matters of concern to the attention of their supervisor/superior/manager.

Reasons for reporting: 1) Each individual has a responsibility to raise concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour. 2) To prevent the problem worsening or widening. 3) To protect or reduce risks to others. 4) To prevent yourself from becoming implicated.

It is important to undertake the following steps:

1. Voice any concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as possible. The earlier a concern is expressed the sooner and easier action can be taken.

2. Try to pinpoint exactly what practice is of concern and why.

3. Approach your immediate superior/supervisor.

If your concern is about your immediate superior/supervisor, please contact your Parish Priest/Bishop/DLP/Statutory Services/NBSCCCI.

5. Make sure a satisfactory response is secured – don't let matters rest.

Ideally, concerns should be placed in writing, outlining the background and history, giving names, dates, locations and any other relevant information.

You are not expected to prove the truth of your complaint, but you need to demonstrate sufficient grounds for concern.

Reporting allegations of abuse

The Diocese of Waterford & Lismore provides guidance and training on recognition of abuse, and clear procedures on what to do when a child protection concern arises, so that everyone knows how to respond appropriately.

If you want to report a suspicion, concern or allegation of abuse please contact our Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for the Diocese of Waterford & Lismore, Fr John Harris, on 087 966 1959.

The DLP will discuss the process of reporting with you.

If you are unsure about whether the concern meets the threshold for reporting it is important to talk it through with the DLP. He will be able to inform you if the concern reaches the threshold for reporting.

Details of personnel to contact if you are concerned about the welfare and safety of children:

Diocese of Waterford & Lismore

Designated Liaison Person - Fr. John Harris

087 9661959

Tusla, Child & Family Agency

051 842827

An Garda Síochána

051 305300
