



## Child Safeguarding & Protection Service

### **Working Safely with Children & Young People: Use of Information and Digital Technology (updated and amended February 2020)**

**Children and young people are welcome and encouraged to participate in parishes and Diocesan agencies in the Archdiocese of Dublin.**

Using appropriate and safe digital media is a good way to involve children and young people in diocesan and parish activities. Such communication must have at its core the best interests of children and young people.

We must **at all times** use appropriate language, images, photography and messaging.

Children and young people must be protected from all forms of online abuse, including such activities as online bullying, grooming and sexting.

#### **General guidelines on communicating with children and young people**

These guidelines apply to all forms of communication with children and young people:

- Informed parental/ guardian consent is central to all of our engagements with children and young people;
- The consent of children and young people should also be obtained in accordance with their age and understanding;
- Direct communication with individual children and young people (for example, asking them to attend a choir practice) is generally done through their parents rather than directly to the children and young people;
- It is permissible to send messages (by text or email) to older adolescents who are still minors (16 and 17 year olds), under certain conditions. These are that the young people and their parents have given consent, that the messages come from parish/diocesan accounts and that copies of them are sent to their parents/ guardians;
- Texts or emails should never contain personal information about a child or young person;
- Contact with children and young people should only be made during day times, that is, between 9am and 8pm.



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### Guidelines on the use of social and digital media

Those who minister and/or work for or on behalf of the Archdiocese of Dublin, its agencies and parishes must observe appropriate professional boundaries with the children and young people they encounter through their work or volunteering. This requirement applies to their use of information technology, mobile phones and social media.

Parish workers and volunteers **should not:**

- Gather or retain a young person's mobile phone number or email address other than for purposes of the event or activity;
- Provide a young person with his or her own personal mobile phone number or email address;
- Access the internet with a young person unless authorised to do so as part of their work;
- Befriend a young person on a social media website such as Facebook or Instagram;
- Take photographs of young people other than for purposes associated with the event or activity and then only with their permission and that of their parent or guardian.

### Organising activities and events involving children and young people

It is the responsibility of the event organiser to determine and explain the level of **mobile phone usage** deemed appropriate when working with children and young people.

- When participating in groups with children ensure that you have their parent's telephone contact details and that all arrangements are made with parents.
- In emergency circumstances where a call or message has to be sent to a minor (for example, if a young person has become separated from the group) follow this up with a telephone call to their parent / guardian to make them aware of the content.

**Using bundled text and e-mail messaging**, where the same message is sent to a group of young people, can minimise risks associated with this form of communication.

- Written consent must be obtained from the young person and their parents prior to using this method of communication.
- The contact details for a young people receiving such a message must not be visible to other recipients.
- The contact numbers and email addresses for the identified young people should only be used for information sharing about church activities.
- The young people's contact details must be stored in a password protected computer system or secure cabinet.
- All text and email messages must be sent via a bundle to a group of young people.



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- The text or email messaging system should NEVER be used to send a text or email to an individual.
- All texts or email messages must clearly identify who has sent the message.
- The texts and emails sent from this service must never contain any offensive, abusive or inappropriate language.
- All of the text and email messages sent must include an opportunity for the young people to “unsubscribe” from receiving further text and email messages.

### **Photography/ Digital Cameras**

- Photographs of children and young people on any device are only permitted with prior signed parental/ guardian consent.
- Children and young people’s consent should also be sought giving due consideration to their age and stage of development.
- Authorised personnel should only take photographs.
- When using a photographer ensure that they have completed Garda Vetting.
- Ensure the photographer wears identification at all times.
- Do not allow the photographer unsupervised access to the children and young people.
- Children and young people must not be identified in photographs.
- Written permission must be sought from children, young people and their parents if photographs are to be published in any forum i.e. print or online.
- Children must be fully clothed in images.
- Avoid images which depict children breaking rules or behaving in a dangerous fashion.
- Avoid photographing children and young people in vulnerable situations.
- If parents and parishioners are intending to photograph an organised event ensure that they are told what is allowed.
- Any photography concerns must be reported to the event organiser and CSPPS.

### **First Communion & Confirmation Ceremonies**

The taking of photographs during First Communion Masses or during Confirmation Masses is to be discouraged, both as a child safeguarding measure and to enhance the dignity and beauty of the ceremony. There is always ample time for taking photographs before and after the ceremonies.

### **Internet Usage/Websites**

- Avoid participating in accessing the internet with children and young people with whom you are working if it is not a direct requirement for the nominated activity.
- If internet usage is available as part of an activity seek prior expert consultation to ensure that safety requirements are met.
- Have a plan for responding to circumstances where unsuitable material is accessed.
- Seek expert advice when considering setting up a website.



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- Using a computer to access images of child abuse is a crime and will be reported to An Garda Síochána.
- Any use of information technology to access sites that are pornographic or illegal when working with children and young people is strictly prohibited.

### Social Media

- Never befriend children and young people with whom you are working on social media sites. This includes Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube (this list is not exhaustive).
- If you use social media remember to respect the privacy of others.
- Consider the implications of any posts.
- Report any inappropriate material that you come across to An Garda Síochána.

### Parish Webcams and CCTV

Web cameras should **only** be switched on for the duration of Mass or other Liturgy and switched off at the end. There should be no live streaming of Churches when there is no Mass or Liturgy taking place.

There are a number of Data Protection issues that must be met in relation to broadcasting on the internet.

Recording people via a web camera and the subsequent displaying of such images over the internet is regarded as the processing of personal data and one of the key provisions regarding the processing of such data is that it must be done with the consent or knowledge of the individuals concerned.

Camera shots (images) of the congregation should be wide shots – minimising the possibility of easily identifying individuals with close up images.

With regard to altar servers and others taking part in Liturgies (eg choirs, musicians, Ministers of the Word and of the Eucharist) consent should be obtained. In the case of children, consent by parents/guardians is essential.

Signs should be placed at a range of entrances to the church and in other prominent locations informing people that web cameras are in operation.

Parish workers and members of the clergy should sign forms consenting to their image being used for web broadcasting in the course of their regular duties. Copies of consent forms should be kept on parish records.