Working Safely with Children & Young People:
Use of Information and Digital Technology

Archdiocese of Dublin

CHILD SAFEGUARDING & PROTECTION SERVICE

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General Guidelines on Communicating with Children and Young People.

General Principles

Children and young people should be welcomed and encouraged to participate in the parishes and diocesan agencies of the Archdiocese of Dublin. To facilitate this, communication with children and young people should use the language and media with which they are familiar and comfortable. Using appropriate and safe digital media is a good way to involve children and young people in diocesan and parish activities. Such communication should have at its core the best interests of children and young people. This is achieved by ensuring, at all times, the appropriate use of language, images, photography, and messaging.

Children and young people must be protected from all forms of online abuse and exploitation, including such activities as online bullying, grooming, and sexting. Complaints and/or allegations of inappropriate online communication with children and young people must be taken seriously. Any concern must immediately be reported to CSPS and/or Civil Authorities. The Civil Authorities who hold statutory responsibility for child protection, are An Garda Siochana and Tusla Child & Family Agency. If there is any issue of concern relating to a parish or diocesan agency, CSPS should be notified and a report to the Civil Authorities can be made by CSPS, or by the person concerned.

The Archdiocese is committed to involving children and young people in developing good digital practice and will seek their views regarding safe usage in any related activity. At the same time, informed parental/guardian consent is central to our safeguarding practice and must always be obtained whenever we engage with children and young people.

It should be noted that the age of "Digital Consent" in Ireland is sixteen (16) years of age.

Should a parish/diocesan group feel that they have exceptional cause to deviate from the policy outlined, they should discuss this matter with a member of the CSPS (Child Safeguarding and Protection Service) before taking such action.

Digital media is defined as any form of communication between two parties or more using electronic devices such as phones, computers, and tablets. (This list is not exhaustive)

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. This requirement applies to their use of information technology (IT), mobile phones, and social media. They should not use any of these media to initiate or maintain personal relationships with children and young people.

In particular, they must:

- be **Garda Vetted** by the parish. This should be renewed every three years;
- attend **Diocesan Safeguarding Training,** to be renewed every three years;
- complete a **Confidential Application/ Declaration Form**;
- be given a copy of the **Adult Code of Conduct for Staff & Volunteers**;
- **report** any suspicion, concern, or allegation of abuse to the CSPS and/or Civil Authorities;
- **be competent** in the use of the technology they use.

They should not:

- gather or retain a young person's mobile phone number (except where this is done for a specific purpose related to their work);
- provide a young person with their 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 forum such as WhatsApp, Snapchat, etc.

All forms of digital communication must have a minimum of **two** Administrators appointed by the parish authority. It is the role of these administrators to monitor all communications on the relevant platforms. Only parish devices (such as mobile phones or computers), or parish accounts (such as designated parish email), should be used to contact young people. Privately-owned devices should never be used to contact young people.

Where exceptions arise, such as trips away from home, this should be clearly communicated to parents/guardians prior to the event, and relevant consent sought.

Mobile Phones and Email

Mobile Phones

Many children and young people have access to mobile phones. Given that mobile phone devices can perform a myriad of tasks, 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/guardian's telephone contact details and that all arrangements are made with parents/guardians.
- Do not share your personal mobile phone number with children and young people.
- Do not communicate directly (via text or talk) with children under 16 years of age.
- In emergency circumstances where this is unavoidable, follow this up with a telephone call to their parents/guardians to make them aware of the content. A written record should be kept of any such contact.
- Text messages should never contain personal information about a child or young person.

Email and texting

- Communication (via email or texting) with young people under 16 years of age is not permissible.
- Communication (via email or texting) with young people aged 16 to 18 years old is only permissible with prior written consent from the young person and their parents/guardians using the Digital Media Consent Form. **(See Appendix 1)**
- Parents/guardians must be included in these emails and texts.
- Email communication should be made using the parish/diocesan email account only.
- Text communication should only be made using a parish/diocesan device.

Using bundled text and email messaging (that is, where the same message is sent to a group of young people aged 16 to 18 years) can minimise risks associated with this form of communication.

- When setting up text or email bundles, the ***BCC*** function should be used both for young people and parents/guardians. The contact details for young people receiving such a message must not be visible to other recipients.

- Texts or emails should be used for delivering information, a one-way communication channel. The exception to this is if a response is deemed essential. For example, a parent/guardian replying to inform a leader that a young person is unable to attend an event, or a young person replying to inform a leader they are running late to an event.

- All of the text and email messages sent should include a sentence at the bottom that provides young people with the opportunity to unsubscribe from receiving further text and email messages.

- Contact numbers and email addresses for young people should only be used for information sharing about church activities.

- The parents/guardians and young people's contact details must be stored in a secure cabinet or a password-protected computer system.

- 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, including emojis.

Photography and Digital Cameras

Photography and Digital Cameras

- Taking photographs of children and young people is not permitted without 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.
- Photographs should only be taken by authorised personnel with a suitable reason with prearranged consent from parents/guardians and children and young people.
- 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 or young people, and their parents/guardians if photographs are to be published in any forum (i.e. print or online).
- Children and young people must be fully clothed in images.
- Avoid images that depict children and young people breaking rules or behaving in a dangerous fashion.
- Avoid photographing children and young people in vulnerable situations.
- Any photography concerns must be reported to the event organiser and CSPS.

Celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation

The taking of photographs during First Communion Masses, Baptisms or Confirmation liturgies 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 these ceremonies.

If parents/guardians wish to hire an external photographer for these celebrations, it is the responsibility of those hiring the photographer to ensure that all necessary measures are in place (contracts, insurance, appropriate behaviour).

Internet Usage and Websites

Internet Usage and Websites

- Avoid participating in using 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.

- 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

Social Media

- Communication via social media platforms with young people under 16 years of age is not permissible.

- The use of social media by parish groups should be for the purpose of broadcasting information about the specific parish activity involved. It should not be used as a form of social interaction between the leaders and the young people.

- Any contact with young people (16 years upwards) via social media, must be done using a parish account. Leaders should never use their own personal accounts.

- All parish social media accounts must have at least two administrators.

- Administrators of parish social media accounts should monitor these regularly for any traffic or comments which could be deemed offensive or inappropriate.

- Written parental/guardian and child consent is required before engaging with young people (16 to 18) on social media.

- Never befriend young people with whom you are communicating on social media sites. This includes Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok. (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 the CSPS and/or to the Civil Authorities.

- Where possible, turn off private messaging on whatever platform you are using.

Live Video Platforms

Live Video Platforms
(Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Cisco etc.)

For the purpose of clarity, a teenager is a person aged thirteen years of age and older. Live video platforms should not be used to engage with children under the age of thirteen unless a parent/guardian is visibly present throughout the meeting.

- Parishes/diocesan agencies should not use the free version of Zoom as it does not include the security measures that the subscription versions do.

- Subscriptions to live video platforms, in general, should be taken out by the parish, and not by individuals.

- This should be managed by someone who understands the platform and who is appointed by the priest in charge.

- Church personnel should **NOT** use a private Zoom account to contact teenagers.

If for any reason a meeting is infiltrated from the outside, that is, if somebody not invited to the meeting appears, the meeting should be terminated immediately. The breach should be reported to the platform provider.

In the event that the organisers feel that such a breach poses a threat of harm or abuse of the teenagers taking part, this should be reported to the Diocesan Child Safeguarding and Protection Service (CSPS) without delay. Parents/guardians should also be informed so that they can decide if they want their child to continue using the platform going forward.

Consent Forms and Disclosures

Consent Forms

Parental/Guardian consent is required to participate in virtual youth programs using a Media Consent Form. During the Covid-19 Pandemic, this can be secured over a parent/guardian's email. You should also take measures to give them a call to ensure that it is the parent/guardian's permission that you have received. The standard Parental/Guardian Consent Form used in parishes is not sufficient for this. The group leaders must use the specific Digital Media Consent Form.
(**See Appendix 1.**)

Disclosures

Being part of this group requires mutual trust. Authentic, expressive discussions make groups great, but may also be sensitive and private. It should be explained at the beginning of the meeting that the forum is not a suitable place for anyone taking part to disclose that they themselves or someone they know has been abused or is at risk of abuse. Should anyone have a concern, they should be encouraged to contact the relevant agencies. All leaders should be fully conversant with the reporting procedures as set out in the ***Child Safeguarding in the Archdiocese of Dublin: Statement, Reporting Procedures and Good Practice Guidelines 2018.***

This document is available on the CSPS website at www.csps.dublindiocese.ie

When emailing the live video platform link to young people and their parents/guardians, a copy of the ***Code of Conduct*** should be included in this email.

Breaches to the code of conduct will result in the teen being removed from the meeting. Incidents should be recorded with as much detail as possible immediately after the meeting has ended.

Adult/Child Ratio

Adult/Child ratios

When using live video platforms to engage with teens, there should always be a minimum of two adults, vetted and trained by the diocese/parish in charge.

If you are planning on using the breakout room facility, there needs to be at least 2 leaders in each meeting room. E.g. If you have a group of 24 and you break out into 3 meeting rooms, you should have 6 leaders, leaving two people, the tech host managing the tech in the background and MC, in the main room.

Further information relating to Zoom can be accessed on the CSPS website www.csps.dublindiocese.ie under policy documents.

Webcam and CCTV

Webcams and CCTV

These guidelines for web broadcasting were developed by the Diocesan Communications Office in conjunction with the Diocesan Data Protection Co-ordinator.

Guidelines for Parishes Broadcasting on the Internet

Parishes should strive to get the best possible quote for installation and streaming costs from your webcam service provider. This should be reviewed by your parish on a regular basis. Competition between suppliers has seen a significant decrease in costs recently. Consider and consult on whether a web streaming service is of any particular benefit to your parishioners or could they access Mass online from another Dublin or Irish church that already provides this service free.

Web Broadcasting Guidelines

Cameras should be installed with due care and respect to church buildings. They should not be permanent fixtures; they should be easily removable without any impact on the building.

Cameras should only be switched on for the duration of Mass or other Liturgies 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.

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.

With regard to altar servers and others taking part in Liturgies (e.g. choirs, musicians, Ministers of the Word, and Eucharistic Ministers) it is advised that consent be also obtained. In the case of children, consent by parents/guardians is required. More detailed information on the use of CCTV and parish webcams can be accessed by logging in to the Parish Secure Area, on the Diocesan website.

Contact Details

Contact Details

Diocesan Child Safeguarding & Protection Service (CSPS)

Designated Liaison Person:
Mr. Andrew Fagan, Director,
Child Safeguarding & Protection Service,
Holy Cross Diocesan Centre,
Clonliffe Road,
Dublin DO3 P2E7.

Tel: 01 836 0314
Email: andrew.fagan@dublindiocese.ie
(Mon–Fri: 09:00 – 17:00)

Deputy Designated Liaison Person:
Ms. Deirdre Donnelly,
Safeguarding & Support Officer,
Child Safeguarding & Protection Service,
Holy Cross Diocesan Centre,
Clonliffe Road,
Dublin DO3 P2E7.

Tel: 01 836 0314
Email: deirdre.donnelly@dublindiocese.ie
(Mon–Fri: 09:00 – 17:00)

For further information on the above policy, please contact:
Garry Kehoe (Training & Compliance Manager)
Mob: 086 084 1734
Email: garry.kehoe@dublindiocese.ie

Tusla, Child and Family Agency:
Contact details of your local office are given on the parish safeguarding notice and on www.tusla.ie

An Garda Siochana:
Contact details for your local Garda station are given on the parish safeguarding notice and on www.garda.ie.

If there is an immediate concern for the protection of a child, the Gardaí should be contacted without delay on **999 or 112.**

Working Group Members

Garry Kehoe (Training and Compliance Manager - CSPS)

Deirdre Donnelly (DDLP & Safeguarding and Support Officer - CSPS)

Fr Bill O'Shaughnessy (Curate - Parishes of Springfield, Brookefield, Jobstown)

Noelle Dowling (Diocesan Archivist and GDPR Officer)

Kirsten Mahon (Pastoral Communications - Office of Mission and Ministry)

Natalie Doherty (Faith Development Worker - Kilnamanagh-Castleview Parish)

Siobhan Tighe (Parish Pastoral Worker - Balbriggan Parish)

Appendix 1 & 2

Child Safeguarding
& Protection Service

Appendix 1.

Digital Media Consent Form

ALL sections must be completed by the Parent/Guardian

The Archdiocese of Dublin, and its parishes may communicate and engage with children and young people who are involved in diocesan or parish activities using digital media, in line with its policy *"Working Safely with Children & Young People- Use of Information and Digital Technology"* (Jan, 2022) Parents should always be fully informed of any proposed contact via digital media, and must provide written parental consent.

SECTION A: The Organisation	
GROUP/ACTIVITY NAME	
ORGANISATION	ARCHDIOCESE OF DUBLIN
PARISH	
LEADERS	
AUDIENCE	

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SECTION B: The Young Person	
NAME	
ADDRESS	
DATE OF BIRTH	

SECTION C: Consent to Participate		
I have read all the information provided concerning the programme of the above activity and I hereby give permission for my son/daughter/ward to participate in the above activity. *(Please circle)* **YES** **NO**		
SIGNED (PARENT/GUARDIAN)		**DATE**
Parent/Guardian Email Address Parent/Guardian contact number		
Insert name of Group or Activity: _____		

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This activity will involve contact with young people via (*tick as appropriate)*:

- Text messaging
- WhatsApp
- Email
- Zoom
- Other _____(insert name)

Parents/guardians will be copied in on any contacts with the young person.

No leader will contact a young person outside what has been agreed for the purposes of the group/activity.

All members of the Youth Team have been Garda Vetted and have completed Safeguarding Training.

Teens and parents must read and agree to the Code of Conduct set out below.

Anyone who breaks the rules or acts inappropriately will be removed from the group/activity

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SECTION D: Code of Conduct for Young Person

1: Be kind and courteous

We're all in this together to create a welcoming environment. Let's treat everyone with respect. Healthy debates are natural, but kindness is required.

2: No hate speech or bullying

Make sure that everyone feels safe. Bullying of any kind isn't allowed, and degrading comments about things such as race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, gender or identity will not be tolerated.

3: Respect everyone's privacy

Being part of this group requires mutual trust. Authentic, expressive discussions make groups great, but may also be sensitive and private.

4: No contact outside group/activity

Do not make contact with leader via any digital media forum outside what has been agreed for the group/activity unless there is a very important reason for doing so.

5: Attendance Log

An attendance log of any online meetings will be retained by the parish/Diocese in accordance with Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

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I acknowledge that I have read, and do hereby accept the Code of Conduct set out by the Archdiocese of Dublin

_____ _____

Guardian Signature **Young Person Signature**

The personal data provided on this form will be managed in accordance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Laws (2018).

Archdiocese of Dublin

Child Safeguarding
& Protection Service

Appendix 2.

Code of Conduct for Staff & Volunteers

Staff & Volunteers in the Archdiocese of Dublin are uniquely placed to act as positive role models to children and young people participating in Church activities. Such participation provides the opportunity to promote the development of self-confidence and enhance the wellbeing of the children & young people with whom we interact. This agreement serves to articulate the expectations of adult behaviour when working with children & young people in the Archdiocese of Dublin. It aims to provide confidence to children & young people, staff, volunteers, and parents that safeguarding children and young people is of paramount importance.

To uphold positive safeguarding practices all Staff & Volunteers in contact with children should:

- Treat all people with respect;
- Provide children with good role models;
- Operate within Church and State child safeguarding and protection principles and guidelines;
- Be visible to others when working with children and young people;
- Challenge and report abusive and potentially abusive behaviour;
- Develop a culture where children and young people can talk openly, ask questions and express any worries or concerns they may have;
- Respect each child and young person's boundaries;
- Parish and diocesan workers and volunteers work in partnership with parents and guardians and share information with them.

Staff & volunteers must avoid actions and behaviour that could be construed as poor practice or potentially abusive. Therefore, they should never:

- Abuse a child or young person in any way;
- Physically chastise a child or young person;

- Develop a relationship with a particular child or young person that is exclusive of others;
- Place a child or young person at risk of harm;
- Speak to a child or young person or behave in a manner that is offensive, developmentally inappropriate or sexually provocative;
- Contact or interact with a child or young person via telephone, mobile phone messaging or any social media forum, unless parental consent has been provided and such contact has been agreed as part of a Diocesan group or activity;
- Take photograph(s) of a child or young person without parental consent.
- Do things of a personal nature for a child or young person that he or she can do for him/herself;
- Condone unacceptable behaviour in a child or young person;
- Discriminate against any individual or group;
- Ask a child or young person to keep a secret.

Child Safeguarding
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Safeguarding Policy Agreement

I confirm that I have read and understood the expected Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers working with children in the Archdiocese of Dublin. I agree to abide by and adopt these standards in all aspects of my work with the Archdiocese of Dublin.

Name: _____

(Printed)

Ministry: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

The personal data provided on this form will be managed in accordance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Laws (2018).

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www.csps.dublindiocese.ie