

## **S4.50 Child Safeguarding Statement & Risk Assessment for the Diocese of Meath**

This statement has been prepared to comply with the requirements of the *Children First Act 2015* and is derived from *Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland (2016)*. The policy of the Catholic Church in Ireland is based on standards of practice which contains indicators that assist in reaching these standards. These indicators can be used in assessing and managing risk.

### **Statement**

As a constituent member of the Catholic Church in Ireland, the Diocese of Meath recognises and upholds the dignity and rights of all children, is committed to ensuring their safety and well-being and will work in partnership with parents/guardians to do this. We recognise each child as a gift from God, and we value and encourage the participation of children in all activities that enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development. All Church personnel (including clergy, religious, staff, and volunteers) have a responsibility to safeguard children through promoting their welfare, health and development in a safe and caring environment that supports their best interests and prevents abuse.

### **Nature of service and principles to safeguard children from harm**

The Diocese of Meath as a constituent member of the Catholic Church in Ireland exists to promote the teachings of the Catholic Church. This includes the following ministry with children, as defined in *Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland (2016)*:

#### ***Ministries with Children:***

Altar Servers; Children's choir; Children's liturgy; Pre-Sacramental preparation; Ministers of the Word; Youth leaders/Parish youth teams; Youth pilgrimages; John Paul II Awards; Rainbows programme; Junior Pioneers; Junior Legion of Mary.

## Principles

The Diocese of Meath is committed to the following principles:

- **Mandatory reporting**

Each of us has a duty to notify the statutory authorities of suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations that a child is being or has been abused: physically; emotionally; sexually; through neglect. Suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations may relate to possible abuse by a member of Church personnel, but they can also relate to incidents in the child's family, or elsewhere in the community.

- **Caring for the welfare of all children and the adults who work with them**

Measures to create and maintain environments that are safe for children, that prevent abuse, and that create nurturing, caring conditions within the Church for children and the adults who work with them, will continue to be strengthened and reviewed. This will be done through training, support, communications and quality assurance.

- **Responding appropriately to child protection suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations**

Anyone who brings any suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation of current or past abuse of a child to the notice of the Church will be responded to sensitively, respectfully, actively and in a timely manner, in line with statutory child protection procedures and Church requirements. All suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations that reach the threshold for reporting to the statutory authorities (apart from those received in the Sacrament of Reconciliation) will be reported to the appropriate statutory authorities. This will be done irrespective of the status of the person (lay, cleric or religious) who is suspected of having been abusive to a child. If the allegation relates to a lay member of Church personnel, in addition to notifying the statutory authorities, the allegation must be reported to the Bishop. If the allegation relates to a cleric or religious, in addition to notifying the statutory authorities, the allegation must also be reported to the Bishop and the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

All Church personnel will cooperate with the statutory authorities in all cases. In responding to complaints of child sexual abuse relating to clergy and those in all forms of consecrated life, Church authorities will act in accordance with the requirements of civil law and canon law, and so will respect the rights and uphold the safeguards afforded in these, both to the complainant and respondent.

- **Caring pastorally for complainants and other affected persons**

Those who have suffered child abuse by Church personnel will receive a compassionate and just response, and will be offered appropriate pastoral care, counselling and support as they seek to rebuild their lives. An appropriate pastoral response to the family, parish, congregation or order and to the wider community will be provided, with due regard to the right of privacy of those directly involved, and to the administration of justice.

- **Caring pastorally for respondents and other affected persons**

The Diocese of Meath, in its response to suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations of child sexual abuse will respect the rights under civil law and canon law of an accused cleric or religious or other Church personnel. A legal presumption of innocence will be maintained during the statutory and Church inquiry processes. As the processes develop, additional assessment, therapy and support services may be offered to the respondent. The Bishop will take responsibility for ensuring that any cleric or religious who is considered to constitute a danger to children is managed according to a risk management plan. All requisite steps will be taken to restore the good name and reputation of anyone who has been wrongly accused of abusing a child. Respondents belong to families and diocesan or religious communities. The Bishop will be mindful of the need to provide support to members of families and communities affected by the respondent’s changed situation.

### **Risk Assessment**

The table which follows sets out the identified risks to the safety of children involved in Church activities in the Diocese of Meath and the steps taken to minimise the risks of abuse.

All relevant procedures are available in the *Operational Guidelines* section of the website [www.meathsafeguarding.ie](http://www.meathsafeguarding.ie).

| <b>Risk Identified</b>   | <b>Procedure in place to manage risk identified</b>   |
|--|---|
| Risk of harm (as identified in <i>Children First Act 2015</i> ) of a child by Church personnel                         | Procedures to meet Indicator 1.1 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available from Section 1: Creating a Culture of Safety at S1.1; S1.2 and associated forms in Section 4 – S4.1-S4.6. |
| Risk of harm through bullying (as defined in <i>Children First Act 2015</i> ) of a child by Church personnel or peers  | Procedures to meet Indicator 1.2 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available in S1.4 and S4.10   |
| Children who use our service do not understand the roles and responsibilities in place to encourage positive behaviour | Procedures to meet Indicator 1.3 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available from S1.5 and associated forms S4.8 and S4.9.   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| The environment in which work with children is facilitated fails to meet effective safeguarding practice  | Procedures to meet Indicators 1.4 and 1.8 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available from S1.3; S1.9; S1.13; S1.14 and associated forms in S4.11 – S4.17. |
| External groups who use Church property are unsafe to do so   | Procedures to meet Indicator 1.5 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available from S1.11 and S4.18.   |
| Risk of harm (as defined in <i>Children First Act 2015</i> ) to a child during activities or trips away from home by Church personnel or other adults.                                      | Procedures to meet Indicators 1.6 and 1.7 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available from S2.15; S2.16; S2.17.  |
| Risk of harm to children (as defined in <i>Children First Act 2015</i> ) through the use of digital media (photography, video and social media)   | Procedures to meet Indicator 1.9 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available from S1.20 - S1.24.   |
| Church personnel fail to report an allegation, suspicion, concern or knowledge appropriately  | Procedures to meet Indicator 2.1 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available from S2.2 S2.9 and S4.34.   |
| Church personnel fail to understand their responsibilities to safeguard children  | Procedures to meet Indicators 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available from S1.26 ; S1.27 and S4.24 – 26.                         |
| Children and their parents do not understand the Church’s policy, procedures and structure to safeguard children and protect them from harm (as defined in <i>Children First Act 2015</i> ) | Procedures to meet Indicators 5.5, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available from S1.29; S1.30; S1.31.                             |
| The procedures for safeguarding children from harm fail to be implemented   | Procedures to meet Indicators 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available from: S3.3; S2.18; S4.44; S4.45;                                |
| The Church authority fails to ensure the appointment of a relevant person and maintain a list of mandated persons.  | Procedures to meeting Indicators 1.1, 6.1 and 2.1 of the Child Safeguarding Policy available from S1.1; S4.50; S2.35.                                     |
| Risk of harm of a child (as defined in the <i>Children First Act 2015</i> ) being disclosed during the Sacrament of Reconciliation  | Procedures to meet indicator 2.1 of the Child Safeguarding Policy in relation to the Sacrament of Reconciliation available from S2.10.                    |

## Localised Risk Assessment

Alongside the risks listed in the table above, all parishes of the diocese of Meath individually risk assess their activities with children and put in place procedures to manage these risks.

| Risk Identified   | Procedure in place to manage risk identified   |
|---|--|
| Local activity with children is risk assessed in each location in which the activity takes place as part of Indicator 1.8 of Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016 | For full details of localised risks and the procedures in place to manage these, please refer to the hazard assessments stored at local level. |

*Note: The above **Risk Assessment documents** are available as a [word document](#) or as a [pdf document](#) (revised and uploaded 8 December 2019).*

## Procedures

All procedures outlined in the risk assessment above are available at [www.meathsafeguarding.ie](http://www.meathsafeguarding.ie) in the section headed *Operational Guidelines*. This is subdivided into four sections:

**Section 1: Creating a culture of safety** – this provides guidance on meeting the requirements for implementing Standards 1, 5 and 6

**Section 2: Recognising, responding and reporting** – this provides guidance on meeting the requirements of Standards 2, 3 and 4

**Section 3: Quality assurance** – this provides guidance on meeting the requirements of Standard 7

**Section 4: Forms and templates** – this provides the forms which must be used.

The procedures listed above include the following: **Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/ volunteers of a child availing of our service.** This is part of Indicator 2.1 which is available from the Operational Guidelines, Section 2: Recognising, Responding, Reporting, using the following guidance and associated forms as required.

[2.1 Definitions of abuse](#)

[2.2 Reporting Allegations of Abuse](#)

[2.3 Responding to Allegations against Church Authorities](#)

[2.5 Responding to an Adult Making an Allegation of Abuse](#)

[2.6 Responding to a Child Making an Allegation of Abuse](#)

[2.7 Responding to an Anonymous Allegation of Abuse](#)

[2.9 Allegations against lay personnel](#)

[2.9 Responding to Someone \(Lay or Religious\) who Admits to Abusing a Child](#)

[2.15 Dealing with Complaints](#)

[2.16 Protected disclosures \(Whistleblowing\)](#)

[2.17 Disciplinary and Grievance procedures for all Church personnel working with children](#)

[2.18 Process for dealing with non-compliance with safeguarding policy/ procedures](#)

Procedure for the **safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children**. This is part of Indicator 1.1 available from Section 1: Creating a Culture of Safety using the following guidance and associated forms:

[1.1 Safe Recruitment Procedures](#)

[1.2 Vetting: The Catholic Church's Standards and Expectations](#)

[1.3 Maintaining Adequate Supervision Ratios](#)

[1.4 Codes of Behaviour for Church Personnel](#)

[1.6 Dealing with Breaches of Codes of Behaviour.](#)

[1.10 Trips Away with Children](#)

[1.13 One-to-One Contact with Children](#)

[1.14 Risk/Hazard Assessment of Activities with Children](#)

Procedure for **provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information**, including the identification of the occurrence of harm. This is part of Indicators 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 available from Section 1: Creating a Culture of Safety using the following guidance and associated forms:

[1.25 Training and support](#)

[1.26 Training Needs Analysis](#)

[1.27 Basic Safeguarding Awareness Training](#)

[1.28 Support and supervision](#)

Procedure for the **reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla**. This is part of Indicator 2.1 which is available from Section 2: Recognising, Responding, Reporting using the following guidance and associated forms:

[2.2 Reporting Allegations of Abuse](#)

[2.3 Responding to Allegations against Church Authorities](#)

[2.5 Responding to an Adult Making an Allegation of Abuse](#)

[2.6 Responding to a Child Making an Allegation of Abuse](#)

[2.7 Responding to an Anonymous Allegation of Abuse](#)

[2.8 Responding to Someone who makes an Allegation that does not relate to Church Personnel](#)

[2.9 Allegations against lay personnel](#)

[2.9 Responding to Someone \(Lay or Religious\) who Admits to Abusing a Child](#)

[2.37 Responding to Allegations Against a Deceased Cleric or Religious](#)

Procedure for maintaining a **list of the persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated**. This is part of Indicator 2.1 which is available from Section 2 – Recognising, Responding, Reporting at 2.37.

[2.35 Mandated Persons](#)

Procedure for appointing a relevant person. This is part of Indicators 1.1 and 6.1 available from Section 1 – Creating a Culture of Safety at 1.1 Safe Recruitment and Procedures and 1.30 Communications Policy.

## **Implementation**

The Diocese of Meath is committed to safeguarding children through the implementation of *Safeguarding Children : Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland (2016)*.

This Child Safeguarding Statement and our practice supports our desire to keep children safe from harm while in our ministries.

We will review the effectiveness of our practice as outlined in this statement against the relevant indicators of the safeguarding standards as part of our annual audit and will revise it as appropriate.

**+ Tom Deenihan** (*in signed original document*)  
Bishop of Meath

*For any queries relating to this statement please contact:  
Mr Alan Doran through the Diocesan Office [via this link](#).*