PART 1: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

POLICY

“It is the policy of the Church of Ireland to safeguard all children sharing in its ministry and to protect them from all forms of harm and abuse.”

PURPOSE

The Church of Ireland believes that children should never experience abuse of any kind. Everyone has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and to keep them safe. The Church of Ireland is committed to implementing procedures and practices which safeguard all children.

PREMISE - LEGAL CONTEXT

Safeguarding Trust has been developed in line with the following legislation and guidance documents which seek to protect and safeguard children.

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948.
- Safeguarding Board Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.
- Section 75 Northern Ireland Act 1998.
- Relevant government guidance on safeguarding children.

PRINCIPLES

Thousands of children visit Church of Ireland premises for worship and other social, educational and recreational purposes each week. The Church’s ministry to them is a priority for the Church and it is
only possible because of the voluntary commitment of adults who are prepared to take responsibility for children in their care. **Safeguarding Trust: the Code of Good Practice for Ministry with Children** is designed to protect and to enhance that ministry.

**Safeguarding Trust: the Church of Ireland Code of Good Practice for Ministry with Children** is designed to enable all parties within the Church of Ireland to fulfil their proper responsibilities within this ministry:

- To create a safe environment which will promote healthy and fulfilling participation of children in spiritual, educational and recreational activities and minimise the possibility of harm, either deliberate or accidental.
- To encourage safe practices for those who work with children.
- To set out the appropriate responses and procedures in the event of accident or abuse taking place.
- To safeguard those who work with children from the consequences of unfounded accusations.

The Church of Ireland recognises that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount;
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all forms of harm or abuse;
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues;
- working in partnership with children, their parents/guardians and other agencies is essential for promoting the welfare of children.

Bishops, clergy, staff and volunteers exercising the Church of Ireland’s ministry with children are committed to implementing procedures and practices which promote the welfare of children and protects them from harm. The policy, procedures and practice contained in **Safeguarding Trust** will be reviewed at regular intervals, at least every two years.

The Church of Ireland will seek to safeguarding children by:

- valuing them, listening to them and respecting them;
- adopting child protection practices through procedures and a code of behaviour for all staff and volunteers;
- implementing robust recruitment and selection procedures including required vetting and reference checks;
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training;
- reporting concerns to statutory agencies and involving children and parents/guardians appropriately;
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents/guardians, staff and volunteers;
- ensuring adherence to safety procedures.
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INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

PROMOTION OF SAFEGUARDING TRUST

Safeguarding Trust provides a framework for those ministering within the Church of Ireland for how to recognise, respond and report any concerns of any safeguarding nature regarding children. Safeguarding Trust sits alongside the Adult Safeguarding Policy and Dignity in Church Life policies to support and protect all those who work in the Church of Ireland as staff or volunteers.

The panel notice (section reference required) and the Child Safeguarding Statement should be prominently displayed in each of the Church’s premises and everyone involved in the Church and its activities should receive or have access to a copy of the Safeguarding Trust policy document.

Safeguarding Handbooks on Safeguarding Trust shall also be made available to staff/volunteers, parents/guardians, children and select vestry members.

DEFINITIONS

Child means a person under 18 years excluding a person who is or has been married.

Staff means anyone with a formal contract of employment who is employed and paid by a parish, the RCB, or any other Church of Ireland organisation to undertake relevant work or activities relating to children (see www.sg.ireland.anglican.org).

Clergy or Member of the Clergy shall, unless otherwise specifically provided, mean a deacon or priest of the Church of Ireland or of a church in full communion with that Church serving in or retired from ministry of the Church of Ireland: beneficed, licensed or with Permission to Officiate.

Incumbent: In addition to the ordinary meaning of ‘incumbent’ within the law of the Church of Ireland (being a beneficed member of the clergy), the term shall, for the purposes of the implementation of this policy also include licensed clergy, or other officiating clergy (such as Clergy with Permission to Officiate), lay ministers (such as a Church Army Officer), who are in charge of a parish, including those temporarily in charge during a vacancy in an incumbency. The term shall not include a deacon serving in an internship.

Volunteer means anyone in a position of responsibility or assisting with a group or organisation providing activities to children, or care or supervision of children, and who is not paid for this involvement.

Parish Panel means the representatives appointed to over the implementation of Safeguarding Trust: the Church of Ireland Code of Good Practice for Ministry with Children in each parish or those appointed to discharge the same function at diocesan or central level.

Parish shall, in addition to the ordinary meaning of the term, include groups or unions of parishes, cathedrals (whether a parish or not), trustee churches, and also other non-parochial ecclesiastical units (e.g. church plants) in which a licensed member of the clergy of the Church of Ireland officiates as determined by the bishop and diocesan council.
**Statutory Authorities** refers to Gateway which is the statutory body responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children and to the Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) who are empowered under legislation to investigate these matters.

**Select Vestry** refers to the select vestry of parishes and cathedrals howsoever described, and the Trustee body of every Trustee church howsoever described.

**Safeguarding Trust** refers to *Safeguarding Trust*: The Church of Ireland Child Safeguarding Policy.

**Review Board** means those appointed by the bishop of the diocese to undertake the risk assessment following the outcome of an allegation against a staff member or volunteer.

**RCB** or Representative Body refer to the Representative Church Body, located in Church of Ireland House, Church Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin 6, D06 CF67.