Child Safeguarding Statement of Diocese of Kerry

This statement has been prepared to comply with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015 and is derived from *A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024.* The policy of the Catholic Church in Ireland is based on standards of practice accompanied by criteria that assist in reaching these standards and which can be used in assessing and managing risk.

Name and contact details of the service provider
Diocese of Kerry
Bishop's House
Killarney
Tel: 064-6631168

Statement
The Gospel teaches the importance of ensuring that the Catholic Church community is a warm, welcoming and safe place for children.

> **Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. (Mark 10:14-15)**

Children are gifts from God, to be cherished and recognised for the joyful contribution they make as valued members of the Church.
Our challenge is to follow the example of Jesus in cherishing them. Safeguarding is key to this important task and should be seen, not as a burden, but as an opportunity to embrace and encourage children's ministry, following the example of Jesus Christ.

This Church body pledges to safeguard children and young people from harm and to support them in their development as valued and integral members of the Catholic Church in Ireland. The Church's ministry will be inclusive and will uphold their rights.

Consistent with Gospel values, and with civil and criminal law, those who minister will do so with dignity and integrity, honouring their calling to ensure that children and young people are welcomed, cherished and protected, following the example set by Jesus.

This Safeguarding Children Policy will be honoured and complied with by all ordained clerics, by vowed female and male religious, and by all lay staff and volunteers in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

Nature of service and principles to safeguard children from harm

The Diocese of Kerry 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 *A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024*:

All work or service undertaken by Church personnel with children i.e.

- Altar Servers
- Youth & Mixed Choir
- Children's Liturgy of the Word
- Faith Camps
- Youth Ministry, Youth Pilgrimage, ie Lourdes, Taizé
- John Paul II Awards
- Confirmation/Holy Communion Preparation Programmes
- Schools

All Priests/Deacons in active ministry are considered as having ministry with children.

As outlined in the *A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024* we are committed to the following standards:

- **Leadership, Governance and Accountability**. As a leader, the Church authority embodies and imparts the Catholic Church's vision, principles and values, which are reflected and apparent in the child safeguarding culture, structures and practices at all levels and in all ministries with children and young people. This demonstrates, through words and actions, the Church authority's personal commitment to fulfil the safeguarding mission of the Church.

- **Nurturing a Culture of Safeguarding**. Ensuring the creation and maintenance of a culture of safety, including a safe Church environment that is welcoming of children. Keeping children safe from harm is an imperative but more than that, the Church will promote the well-being of children through their participation in the ministry of the Church. The Church will create and maintain environments that uphold children's rights and that create nurturing, caring conditions where children will flourish in faith and love. Through fostering a culture of care, children feel safe and looked after and, in turn, they will be supportive of and respectful to their peers.

- **Responding Pastorally and Reporting According to Civil and Canon Law**. Caring for complainants and ensuring a just process of inquiry. 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 Church personnel have a responsibility to report suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations of child abuse that reach the threshold for reporting to the statutory authorities. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) can assist with this process. These reports will be made irrespective of the status of the person (lay, cleric or religious) who is suspected of having been abusive to a child. If the allegation being reported relates to a lay member of Church personnel, in addition to notifying the statutory authorities, the allegation must be reported to the Church authority. If the allegation being reported relates to a cleric or religious, in addition to notifying the statutory authorities, the allegation must also be reported to the Church authority 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 all those in 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.

Risk Assessment

The table below sets out the identified risks to the safety of children and young people involved in Church activities in Diocese of Kerry and the steps taken to minimise the risks of abuse, (as defined in the Children First Act 2015)

Risk Identified	Procedure in place to manage risk identified
Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) of a child by Church personnel or visitors to Church premises.	Procedures for safe recruitment and creating and maintaining a safe environment as outlined within the criteria of 'Nurturing a Culture of Safeguarding' (*A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024)* which can be viewed at https://www.safeguarding.ie.
Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) of a child through bullying by peers.	Anti-bullying procedures as outlined within the criteria of 'Nurturing a Culture of Safeguarding' (*A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024)*. Codes of behaviour for children involved in any Church-related activities and codes of conduct for adults that promote best practice and integrity in ministry are in place and can be viewed at .https://www.safeguarding.ie
The environment in which work with children is facilitated fails to protect them from harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015).	Procedures to create and maintain safe environments including localised hazard assessments as outlined within the standard and associated criteria of 'Leadership, Governance and Accountability' (*A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Children Policy and* Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024). The Church authority has in place a system of governance that identifies clear procedures, accountability structures and quality assurance, in which roles and responsibilities are explicit. These are specified in the Strategic Safeguarding Plan of the Diocese of Kerry and can be viewed at https://www.safeguarding.ie
Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) to children involved with external groups who use Church property.	As outlined within standard 'Nurturing a Culture of Safeguarding' (*A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024)* procedures are in place and available at for managing external groups, including lay associations of the faithful; visiting clerics and male and female religious; those ministering in external organisations; and groups using Church property. The Church body who is leasing the property should follow the procedure at https://www.safeguarding.ie
Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) to a child during outings or trips away (including overnight) from home from peers, Church personnel or strangers.	The Church authority has in place a system of governance that identifies clear procedures, accountability structures and quality assurance, in which roles and responsibilities are explicit. These are specified in the Strategic Safeguarding Plan of the Diocese of Kerry and include guidelines on trips away from home procedures, localised risk assessment and safe recruitment available at https://www.safeguarding.ie
Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) through the use of digital media (photography, video and social media).	Procedures for the safe use of digital media as outlined within the criteria of 'Nurturing a Culture of Safeguarding' (*A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024)* are in place and can be viewed at https://www.safeguarding.ie
Church personnel fail to report an allegation, suspicion, concern or knowledge appropriately.	The Church authority has in place a system of governance that identifies clear procedures, accountability structures and quality assurance, in which roles and responsibilities are explicit and is available at https://www.safeguarding.ie As outlined within the standard 'Nurturing a Culture of Safeguarding' (*A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024)* procedures are in place to create and maintain written records which reflect that all safeguarding action is taken in line with appropriate data protection and information-sharing protocols and which can be viewed at https://www.safeguarding.ie

Church personnel fail to take action during and following any investigation into allegations of abuse against clerics and religious to ensure children are protected from harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015).	Procedures for managing allegations after the civil investigation has concluded and which meet the criteria associated with the standard 'Responding Pastorally and Reporting According to Civil and Canon Law' (*A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024)* are in place and available at https://www.safeguarding.ie
Church personnel fail to support those who are victims of abuse.	Procedures to support complainants which meet the criteria associated with the standard 'Responding Pastorally and Reporting According to Civil and Canon Law' (*A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024)* are in place and available at https://www.safeguarding.ie
Church personnel fail to understand their responsibilities to safeguard children.	Procedures for child safeguarding training and support which meet the criteria associated with the standard 'Nurturing a Culture of Safeguarding' (*A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024)* are in place and can be viewed at https://www.safeguarding.ie
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 the Children First Act 2015).	Procedures to develop communications, training and support relating to child safeguarding to meet the criteria associated with the standard 'Leadership, Governance and Accountability' (*A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024*) are in place and can be viewed at https://www.safeguarding.ie
The procedures for safeguarding children from harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) fail to be implemented.	Procedures to ensure compliance with the child safeguarding standards outlined within the criteria of 'Leadership, Governance and Accountability' (*A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024)* are in place. The Church authority has in place a system of governance that identifies clear procedures, accountability structures and quality assurance, in which roles and responsibilities are explicit and is available at https://www.safeguarding.ie
The Church authority fails to ensure the appointment of a relevant person and maintain a list of mandated persons.	Procedures to include the appointment of a relevant person and DLP are in place in Diocese of Kerry. A list of mandated persons is maintained. The Church authority has in place a system of governance that identifies clear procedures, accountability structures and quality assurance, in which roles and responsibilities are explicit and is available at https://www.safeguarding.ie
Risk of harm of a child (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) being disclosed during the Sacrament of Reconciliation	A policy in relation to the Sacrament of Reconciliation is in place and can be viewed at https://www.safeguarding.ie

Risk Assessment

Alongside the risks listed in the table above, all parishes/religious communities in the Diocese of Kerry 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 national policy *A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024*	For full details of localised risks and the procedures in place to manage these please refer to the hazard assessments stored at Diocesan Office, Bishops House, Killarney.

Procedures

All procedures outlined in the risk assessment above are available at www.dioceseofkerry.ie

The Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, and *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2017).

The procedures listed above include the following:

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against staff/volunteers towards a child availing of our service. Available at www.dioceseofkerry.ie
- Procedures for managing allegations against clerics, religious and all in formation for the priesthood and religious life. Available at www.dioceseofkerry.ie
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers to work with children. Available at www.dioceseofkerry.ie
- Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including on the identification of the occurrence of harm. Available at www.dioceseofkerry.ie
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla and An Garda Síochána. Available at www.dioceseofkerry.ie
- Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated persons. Available at www.dioceseofkerry.ie
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person. Available at www.dioceseofkerry.ie

Implementation

The Diocese of Kerry is committed to safeguarding children through the implementation of: A Safe and Welcoming Church, Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024.

This Child Safeguarding Statement and our practice supports our desire to keep children safe from harm while in our ministries. As part of our annual audit against the relevant criteria of the child safeguarding standards, we will review the effectiveness of our practice as outlined in this statement and will revise it as appropriate based on those findings.
In addition, we will revise this statement at least every 24 months or as appropriate due to changes in ministries or legislation/guidance.

Signed +Ray Browne

Date 25th June 2024

For any queries relating to this statement please contact the relevant person who is:

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