



SECTION 2: CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SAFEGAURDING CHILDREN

Definitions

Child: a person who is under the age of 18 years. Throughout this Code of Conduct any reference to either 'child' or 'children' is a reference to a person or persons under the age of 18.

Child abuse includes:

(a) any act committed against a child involving:

- a sexual offence
- an offence under section 49B(2) of the **Crimes Act 1958** (grooming)

(b) the infliction on a child of:

- physical violence
- serious emotional or psychological harm

(c) serious neglect of a child.

Grooming. The term 'grooming' refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and influencing a child, and, in some circumstances, members of the child/young person's family, for the purpose of sexual activity with the child/young person. These actions are designed to establish an emotional connection in order to lower the child/young person's inhibitions and gain access to the intended victim. In this respect, grooming involves psychological manipulation that is usually very subtle, drawn out, calculated, controlling and premeditated. Grooming can also occur on line.

Parent/Guardian: Is a person who has the authority and responsibility for the day-to-day care of a child.

INTRODUCTION

20. This section sets out general guidance for parishioners and employees of St Patrick's Parish in regard to the care, protection and safety of children. It is also intended to communicate to parents and guardians St Patrick's standards for children's activities.
21. The principles set out in this Code of Conduct are intended to support and underpin the pastoral care role of Parish Priests, religious brothers and sisters, pastoral associates, pastoral workers, employees, contractors, and the invaluable contribution of parishioners and other volunteers. The principles aim to address perceptions of risk in interactions between children and adults and to provide guidance as to behaviours and practices that are beyond reproach. They are not intended to unnecessarily restrict the work of clergy, religious and lay people but to promote an open and



accountable environment in which the dignity and safety of adults and children alike is paramount.

*'Let us find the courage needed to take all necessary measures and to protect in every way the lives of our children, so that such crimes may never be repeated. In this area, let us adhere, clearly and faithfully, to 'zero tolerance'.
Pope Francis, December 2016*

CREATING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

22. The protection and promotion of children's wellbeing is the responsibility of all adults. Adults who are involved in children's activities within St Patrick's Parish are responsible for creating a harmonious, safe and nurturing environment by:
- a) Being a positive role model. Children's encounters with adults in the Church have lasting consequences. It is important for children's formation that such encounters create a positive experience of the Church. Adult behaviour that positively embraces Gospel beliefs and values is of paramount importance.
 - b) Treating children with dignity and respect; listen to and value their ideas and opinions.
 - c) Involving children, where possible and appropriate, in decision making.
 - d) Rewarding efforts as well as achievements, and provide praise and positive encouragement where appropriate.
 - e) Respecting everybody's privacy – for example avoid discussing a child's personal problems or situations in a group setting unless the child has consented to and feels comfortable with the discussion.

PROVIDING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

23. When planning an activity, consider the possible risks associated with the activity and how likely those risks are to eventuate. Consider what actions can take or how can the activity be structured to minimise those risks and, if a situation should arise, to manage it effectively. Consider each circumstance on its merits.
- a) Structure any activity to minimise the possible risks.
 - b) Ensure there are sufficient adults at the activity to properly care for children' taking into consideration their ages, the nature of the location and children with special requirements.
 - c) Ensure the physical environment is safe considering the ages of children involved and issues such as obvious hazards like sharp edges, poisonous substances or water hazards.
 - d) Be aware of emergency procedures applicable to the immediate physical environment of any activity especially egress in case of a fire alert.



APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR FOR ADULTS

24. When caring for children or young people, adults are in a position of trust and authority and should:
- a) Take care not to form inappropriate relationships; for instance, by placing yourself in a position where they may come to rely on you emotionally in an inappropriate manner, or by attempting to act as a surrogate parent
 - b) The provision of tobacco, alcohol or illicit drugs to a child is unacceptable and illegal and use of these substances by a child in the context of a Parish activity cannot be condoned, nor can the misuse of other medication.
 - c) No person who is caring for children or involved in any activity with children should consume or be under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs or have misused other medication. It is not appropriate to smoke tobacco while in the presence of children.
 - d) If you are taking a child home at the end of an activity, ensure that a parent/guardian has given prior consent (whether verbal or written) and that, as a general rule, you are not alone with the child.
 - e) As with any unlawful behaviour, any illegal activities conducted over the internet or through use of a computer should be reported to the appropriate authority in accordance with this Code of Conduct.
 - f) It is best practice to always have another adult with you when you are with a child or children, and/or to have other children present. Avoid being alone with a child or children unless an open and supervised environment can be maintained.
 - g) Activities, which by their very nature give rise to one-on-one child/adult encounters (such as the Sacrament of Reconciliation), should be conducted in a manner and space in clear view of other people. This creates an environment that safeguards both the child's wellbeing and the adult's integrity.
 - h) Do not touch a person in an inappropriate or unnecessary fashion. In particular, do not touch breasts, buttocks or groin, and avoid touching or behaviour which could be construed as sexual.
 - i) Any steps you take to manage disruptive or unsafe behaviour should not degrade or isolate the person. Corporal punishment is never acceptable.
 - j) If a person's behaviour is causing immediate danger to those around him or her, you should ask for assistance and, if necessary, contact police. Physical restraint should only be used as a last resort or in an emergency.
 - k) Favouritism to any particular child; for instance, through gifts or continually showing greater attention than is given to others should not occur.
 - l) It is inappropriate to secretly spend time alone with a child, to privately arrange to meet a child or children, or to make personal contact with children through social networking sites or through mobile phones (such as texting). Never send personal photographs or messages by mobile phone or by the use of a social networking site. Do not accept or offer friend status on social network sites from a child for whom you have a duty of care.



- m) Avoid providing assistance of a personal nature that the individual can manage for him or herself (such as using the toilet or changing clothes) except where their developmental level or incapacity is such that he or she requires assistance. Ensure the presence of another adult in such circumstances.
- n) Take care not to swear or use offensive language.
- o) Avoid behaving or speaking in a manner that may embarrass or humiliate.

PROMOTING APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR BY CHILDREN

25. It is always the responsibility of the adult, not the child, to set appropriate guidelines and boundaries.
- a) Provide children with guidance about what constitutes acceptable behaviour. This will vary with the group and developmental level of the children in your activity. It may be useful to discuss acceptable and unacceptable behaviours appropriate for their age group.
 - b) If children act outside acceptable limits, use verbal directions to manage behaviour. Ensure that the children know how and to whom they can report anything they are worried about
 - c) A child's behaviour (whether verbal, physical, psychological or sexual) which could be construed as bullying is not acceptable.
 - d) Where a child's behaviour is disruptive to the group activity or unsafe you will need to take steps to manage the behaviour. The steps you take should be appropriate having regard to the circumstances, behaviour and age of the child.

AWARENESS OF CHILD GROOMING BEHAVIOUR

26. Identifying grooming is a complex and difficult task, mainly because grooming can consist of a range of behaviours, techniques and activities many of which may not be clearly of a sexual or abusive nature in themselves. Grooming behaviours can also co-exist with other regular behaviour or functions within an otherwise normal relationship with a child.
27. Sexually inappropriate behaviour with a child often begins with grooming. In some instances, children are made to feel special and protected; buying gifts or looking for opportunities to be alone with the child to build a rapport of trust, leading to greater intimacy and sometimes dependency. The behaviours are varied and mostly conducted secretly, usually in isolated settings and away from easy line of sight or supervision. On-line grooming is especially prevalent.
28. Many of the inappropriate behaviours listed in this Code of Conduct could be seen as activating grooming especially when multiple violations occur. Staff and volunteers should always be sensitive to such perceptions and conduct their relationships with children in a transparent and open manner so that there can be no misconception that grooming is a possibility.