



# Child Protection Policy

Version: 4 February, 2026

## 1. Purpose and Christian Foundation

Providing a safe, caring and child-centred environment for children and young people is a core responsibility of the Lutheran Church in Ireland. Our commitment to safeguarding is grounded in the Gospel and in the example of Jesus Christ:

*“Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.” (Mark 10:13-16)*

Inspired by Christ's example, we affirm the dignity, worth and rights of every child. Children shall be respected, listened to, supported and protected from harm. Their physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual development shall be nurtured in a safe and inclusive environment.

## 2. Commitment to Safeguarding and Legal Framework

The Lutheran Church in Ireland acknowledges its duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice that:

- Complies with the Children First Act 2015
- Follows the Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children
- Aligns with Tusla – Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice
- Reflects best practice in child safeguarding

The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount in all circumstances.

## 3. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all clergy, staff, volunteers and helpers (paid and unpaid) involved in activities with children under 18 years of age, including but not limited to:

- Toddler Groups
- Children's Sunday Services
- Arts and Activity Groups
- Summer Camps and Activity Days
- Confirmation Classes
- Youth Groups

## **4. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **4.1. Relevant Person / Designated Liaison Person (DLP)**

In accordance with Children First legislation, the Church Council appoints a Relevant Person / Designated Liaison Person (DLP) who is responsible for:

- Acting as the first point of contact regarding safeguarding concerns
- Ensuring concerns are recorded and reported appropriately
- Liaising with Tusla and An Garda Síochána where required

All staff and volunteers will be provided with this policy and the contact details of the DLP.

### **4.2 Clergy, Staff and Volunteers**

All clergy, staff and volunteers have a responsibility to:

- Create a safe, child-centred environment
- Adhere to this policy and associated procedures
- Follow Codes of Behaviour
- Recognise, respond to and report child safeguarding concerns

## **5. Safe Recruitment, Vetting and Training**

- All staff and volunteers working regularly or in a leadership role with children must be Garda Vetted prior to engagement.
- Safe recruitment procedures apply to all roles.
- Children First safeguarding training is mandatory and provided by the Church.
- For young volunteers under the age of 18, a group contract will be provided, which will be guided by this policy and the code of behaviour in particular.

## **6. Code of Behaviour**

All clergy, staff and volunteers must comply at all times with the Code of Behaviour, as set out below and in this policy as a whole:

- Treat all children with respect, dignity and fairness.
- Listen to children, value their views and involve them appropriately.
- Create a positive, inclusive and supportive environment.
- Respect individual needs, abilities, backgrounds and personal space.
- Use age-appropriate language, materials and activities.
- Lead by example and promote mutual respect and trust.
- Maintain clear professional boundaries with children at all times.
- Avoid being alone with a child wherever possible.
- Do not use offensive, abusive or sexually suggestive language or behaviour.
- Do not engage in favouritism, bullying, humiliation or discrimination.
- Do not hit, chastise or engage in inappropriate physical contact.
- Do not develop or encourage inappropriate personal or online relationships with children.

## **7. Anti-Bullying Policy**

- Clergy/staff/volunteers should promote a positive anti-bullying ethos in their activities, raise awareness amongst clergy/staff/volunteers and children that bullying will not be tolerated and that anyone who witnesses an incident of bullying has a responsibility to report it. By emphasising the Code of Behaviour, clergy/staff/volunteers should create an environment in which children are valued as individuals and are encouraged and affirmed.
- The clergy/staff/volunteers should be aware that the safety of the child is paramount, and this can be maintained through appropriate supervision. Liaise with the parents/guardians in relation to a solution and possible actions.

## **8. Safeguarding Practice and Supervision**

- Adequate adult-to-child ratios and supervision will be maintained at all times.
- Gender-balanced leadership will be provided where possible, especially for overnight activities.
- Parents/guardians must provide informed consent for participation in activities.
- Parents/carers have the right to be consulted and involved in matters concerning their children.

## **9. Physical Contact, Care and Activities**

- Physical contact must always be appropriate, necessary and child-led.
- Comfort may be offered to a distressed child where clearly welcomed, with another adult present and within sight.
- Assistance with changing clothes or first aid will be carried out sensitively and, where possible, in the presence of a second adult.
- Activities involving risk (e.g. outdoor activities, camps, fires, hiking) require prior parental consent and appropriate safety measures.

## **10. Online Safety and Photography**

- Photographs of children may only be taken and published with the consent of their parents/guardians. Consent must be given in writing.
- An exception may be made for public events where photographs are taken of large groups. Nevertheless, every effort should be made to avoid photographing children, especially if these photographs are to be published online.
- Unauthorised photography, recording or sharing of images of children is prohibited.
- Online activities will follow clear agreements with parents/guardians and children.
- Electronic devices may be confiscated if used to access harmful or inappropriate content.
- Risks relating to online abuse and digital safety are addressed within this policy.

## **11. Managing Risk and Responding to Concerns**

- The Lutheran Church in Ireland has conducted written risk assessments for all activities involving children.

- All concerns, disclosures or allegations of abuse must be recognised, recorded and reported without delay.
- Mandated Persons must follow statutory reporting obligations.
- Concerns will be reported to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána as required

Failure to report concerns is a serious breach of this policy.

## **12. Allegations Against Clergy, Staff or Volunteers**

- If an allegation is made against a staff member or volunteer, there is dual responsibility in respect of both the child and the clergy/staff member/volunteer. There are two separate procedures to be followed:
  1. The reporting procedures to Tusla in respect of the child and the alleged abuser;
  2. The internal personnel procedures for dealing with the clergy/staff member/volunteer.
- Any concerns and allegations should be reported to the Designated Liaison Person. In addition to this every individual has the right to contact Tusla Social Workers and/or An Garda Síochána directly.
- There should be written notes on all steps of the procedure, which also provide transparency for the process in retrospect.

## **13. Insurance and Conduct**

- The Lutheran Church in Ireland maintains appropriate insurance for its activities.
- However, gross misconduct, neglect of duty or non-compliance with this policy are not covered.

## **14. Review and Implementation**

This Child Protection Policy is implemented as an ongoing process and will be:

- Reviewed during the term of office of the church council, or
- Updated sooner if there is a material change in legislation, guidance or church activities.