

Dromore Diocese

Safeguarding

Digital Media Policy (January 2021)

Children today are highly skilled in the use of technology and it is their preferred medium of communication. We therefore need to encourage positive use of technology which keeps children safe.

What is Digital media

Digital media is defined as electronic communication examples of which include online forums, software, digital images, digital video, video games, web pages and websites, including social media, data and databases, digital audio, such as MP3 and electronic books. Digital media often contrasts with print media, such as printed books, newspapers and magazines, and other traditional or analogue media, such as images, movies or audio tapes.

The use of digital media enables communication and interactive dialogue between persons or parties and allows the sharing of information. Whilst the use of digital media is positive, it can also provide the opportunity for abuse. It is therefore important, in the Diocese of Dromore, to be aware of the risks involved, and to put in place good safeguarding practice to protect children online. Abuse of children online can take many forms, including grooming, cyber bullying, pornography, exploitation and emotional abuse; Through this policy, and code of behaviour, we aim to offer safeguarding guidance to protect the children in our care.

What the law in Northern Ireland Says

<p>Northern Ireland Title Main Provisions Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 This is a comprehensive statutory instrument that in Section 3 defines a number of sexual offences against children:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rape of a child under 13.• Assault of a child under 13 by penetration.• Sexual assault of a child under 13.• Causing or inciting a child under 13 to engage in sexual activity.• Sexual activity with a child (under 16 years).• Causing or inciting a child to engage in sexual activity (under 16 years).• Engaging in sexual activity in the presence of a child (under 13 years; or under 16 years, if not reasonable to believe that child is over 16 years).• Causing a child to watch a sexual act (under 13 years; or under 16 years, if not reasonable to believe that child is over 16 years.)• Arranging or facilitating commission of a sex offence against a child (under 16 years).• Meeting a child following sexual grooming etc. (under 16 years).
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abuse of position of trust: sexual activity with a child (under 13 years; or under 18 years if not reasonable to believe that the child is over 18 years). • Abuse of position of trust: causing a child to watch a sexual act (under 13 years; or under 18 years if not reasonable to believe that the child is over 18 years). • Sexual activity with a child family member (under 18 years). • Inciting a child family member to engage in sexual activity (under 18 years). • Paying for sexual services of a child (under 13 years; or under 18 years if not reasonable to believe that the child is over 18 years). • Causing or inciting child prostitution or pornography (under 13 years; or under 18 years if not reasonable to believe that the child is over 18 years). • Controlling a child prostitute or a child involved in pornography (under 13 years; or under 18 years if not reasonable to believe that the child is over 18 years). • Arranging or facilitating child prostitution or pornography (under 13 years; or under 18 years if not reasonable to believe that the child is over 18 years). • Amending The Protection of Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 (NI 17) on indecent photographs of children – age raised to under 18 years.
<p>There are further minor amendments of other previous legislation contained in the 2008 Order. Protection of Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 Section 3 - (1) any person who—</p>	<p>(a) takes, or permits to be taken any indecent photograph of a child; or (b) distributes or shows such indecent photographs; or (c) has in his possession such indecent photographs with a view to their being distributed or shown by himself or others; or (d) publishes or causes to be published any advertisement likely to be understood as conveying that the advertiser distributes or shows such indecent photographs or intends to do so, shall be guilty of an offence.</p>

Principles in working safely online to protect children from abuse

Good child safeguarding practice in this area is informed by policy, legislation and practice, in particular the four principles enshrined in the UNCRC. When working with children and young adults in Dromore Diocese we must be mindful of their rights and best interests.

1. Non-discrimination:

Children join the Church through the Sacrament of Baptism and participate in Church life through a variety of ministries including altar serving, children's liturgy, sacraments, prayer services, gospel teachings, and a range of youth ministry activities. Ministry with children should be a joy and embraced as a living, joyful experience for all involved. Almost all children, irrespective of age, race, or ability use technology in a positive way, and for many, electronic communication has replaced direct contact and conversation as their communication method of choice. In this changing cultural context of childhood and adolescence, it is important and appropriate that in Dromore Diocese we are aware of the risks involved in children using digital media, and have safeguards in place.

2. Best Interests of the Child:

Communication with children through digital media should always have at its core the best interests of the child. This can be achieved through ensuring at all times appropriate use of language, images, photography and messaging. The purpose of communicating with children through digital media within the Church is to provide them with information about God's teaching. That includes simple messaging, such as arranging meetings, through to profiling the work of the Church body as it relates to children. The needs of the child should at all times govern the communication, which should never be used in an overt or covert way to harm a child.

3. Right to life, survival and development:

Children must be safeguarded from all forms of abuse online and through digital media. There should be a zero tolerance approach to bullying online, grooming, sexting etc. Complaints and allegations of inappropriate communications from child to child or from adult to child must be dealt with decisively and firmly; and any unacceptable behaviour must be reported and addressed without delay.

4. Respects for the views of the child – Children have the right to express their opinions:

It is well known that one aspect of child abuse by adults has been the silencing of children. This disempowerment of children and the secrecy demanded of them have compounded the abuse and disabled children from speaking out at an early stage. When they have had the confidence to raise concerns, all too often they have not been believed. It is critical that children are empowered and given a voice as part of good child safeguarding practice. They should be involved as far as possible in developing good digital practice, and they should be informed of the Church's procedures and be given opportunities to express their anxieties if they feel under threat.

Risks to children online

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the web, whether through social networks, playing online games or using mobile phones. Children and young people may experience cyber bullying, grooming, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or emotional abuse. Among the risks online - when using the Internet, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, e-mail and chat-rooms - is exposure to inappropriate material, whether through verbal messages, or the use of photography or imaging.

Use of Abusive Images:

Photos and videos can be taken of children, which show them in a sexualised way or actually being abused. In addition, images of children can be manipulated to depict them in sexualised positions. The term indecent is often used, though it is difficult to get a strict legal definition of this term. Therefore it is a matter for a court to decide whether a particular behaviour or image was indecent. Irrespective of this, the dissemination of such photographs /videos / images is damaging to the subject, and once they are placed online they can be communicated multiple times and be spread across the world in seconds; they can be downloaded and stored; they can be copied; and they are difficult to delete. Adults and children can, and do, make and spread indecent and abusive images which have significant negative emotional impact on the subject.

Pornography and sexual abuse online:

Child Pornography can be described as the depiction of children, often in a sensual or erotic way (in pictures or in written descriptions) intended to cause sexual excitement for the viewer/reader. Children are abused and exploited in the making of pornography and are further abused each time their image is viewed. There is an international element to the production and spreading of indecent images, photographs, and videos of children, whereby those who make them can be located anywhere in the world. Innocent pictures of children can be manipulated for the purposes of sexual gratification of abusers. There is some evidence to suggest that young people have become involved in the viewing, possession, making and distribution of indecent and/or child abuse/pornographic images. It is an offence in both jurisdictions for children who have reached the age of criminal responsibility, and for adults, to produce and/or disseminate images which exploit and sexually abuse children.

Sexting:

Sexting involves a child / adolescent sending text messages which use sexually explicit language, images or video on their mobile phone, computer or tablet. A child receiving such messaging may feel under pressure to pose in sexually explicit ways and send images of themselves naked and/or performing sexual acts. Equally, an adult can send sexually inappropriate and sexually explicit images to a child through sexting.

Sextortion:

Sextortion is the solicitation of minors for sexual purposes. 'Predators that practice sextortion pressure their victims to give them sexually explicit photos and/or favours in exchange for their secrecy of previously obtained private information or for a promise to hold off on future violent acts'¹⁶. Because the images are still available, the abuser may continue to post the images into the victim's adulthood; and of course they may have been circulated far outside the original circle

Exploitation:

Children can be exploited by adults and by other children for their sexual gratification, in person and online. Exploitation involves using children for sexual purposes and it can take the form of engaging a child in sexual acts directly or by video/webcam. As is the case for all forms of sexual abuse, children who are trapped by sexual exploitation may feel threatened, caught and despairing.

Emotional abuse:

Children who are sexually abused also suffer long lasting emotional abuse. This is true whether the sexual abuse happens in person or online. Children may feel responsible for the abuse, if they have unknowingly engaged in conversation online. They may have been threatened with exposure and as a consequence are forced to lead secretive online lives. The consequences are damaging and can be long term.

Cyber Bullying:

Cyber Bullying, whether by Internet, mobile phone or any other method, is the use of new technologies that allow bullies to anonymously torment their victims. Cyber bullying is online bullying between children and young people. It mimics everyday "bullying" through threats, telling lies about someone, making fun, spreading rumours or gossip and posting stories which may be true or false, but which could have a devastating impact on the child being bullied. Cyber bullies can post messages, images or videos, which seek to demean and embarrass another child. While a young person may or may not be in physical danger, they may receive email, chat or text messages that make them feel embarrassed, upset, depressed or afraid. This can damage their self-esteem and pose a threat to their psychological wellbeing.

Cyber bullying includes

- sending threatening or abusive text messages
- creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- 'trolling' - the sending of menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups
- setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- encouraging young people to self-harm
- voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name

- sending explicit messages, also known as
- sexting
- pressuring children into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual conversations.

Grooming:

While grooming can happen at any time, it can be more prolific online where the identity of the groomer can remain anonymous. Grooming is the development of a relationship between an adult and a child, where the adult is pretending to be the child's friend online. This can be done by either masking his/her identity or age. The purpose is to gain the child's trust so that they can then move to using the child for sexual gratification, abuse or exploitation. This technique is often known as 'online enticement', 'grooming' or 'child procurement'. Great care needs to be taken to ensure that children do not divulge personal information, such as their full name, age, address, email address, phone number, hobbies, name of their school etc.; to someone they meet on the internet.

Physical Danger:

Risk of real physical danger arises when there is an encouragement for them to the person who has contacted them online. Often the invitation to meet is from an adult masking as a child.

Online Cliques:

There are risks for some young people who may be encouraged to engage in inappropriate, antisocial or illegal behaviour while using digital technologies. Just as in the real world, groups or cliques can form online and activities that start out as harmless fun, such as voicing an opposing opinion to another member of a chat room, can quickly escalate to something much more serious.

Anonymity of abuser online:

The identity of the abuser online can be disguised through the use of false names, age, and location. Adult abusers can groom children by pretending to know their networks and by hiding their real identity in order to obtain identifying information from the child. In doing so the abuser can trick the child into sending photographs, performing sexual acts online, and/or agreeing to meet. Great care needs to be taken when developing online relationships so that each user is aware of exactly who they are speaking to. All concerns must be reported to the criminal investigating agencies [police] if there are doubts about the true identity and motive of the person a child is engaging with online.

Protections

Each user is responsible for the information or data that is on their electronic device. In Dromore Diocese we have taken steps to ensure safe use of the digital media. The following principles and guidance must be followed.

It is not acceptable to behave or communicate in ways which might suggest that you are trying to develop a personal relationship with a child.

- It is never appropriate to post any content that could be deemed abusive, defamatory, obscene or libellous.
- It is never appropriate to post comments that indicate or appear to endorse grossly irresponsible behaviour or law breaking of any kind.

In Dromore Diocese we

- Have e-safety agreements.
- Have appropriate software to improve security.
- Have a web camera use procedure.
- Have protocols about adults' communication with children which is in keeping with the ethos of the organisations and in line with the need to safeguard children.

When engaging with children we will not:

- Send personal messages to a child, using personal social networks.
- accept a child as a friend on a personal page.

At all times we will:

- Ensure that all forms of abuse online, including bullying, grooming etc. are reported.
- Ensure that all material posted online is appropriate (both age-appropriate and content appropriate), is not misleading and is socially acceptable.
- Ensure that the online material is monitored regularly and that any offensive or inappropriate material is removed.
- Protect personal information by not allowing public access to e-mail addresses, mobile numbers etc.
- Ensure sharing of information will be monitored to ensure compliance with the Diocesan policy
- Ensure photographs and images are only used for defined purposes and having appropriate consents.

Good Practice guidelines

DO

- Ensure your mobile phone, computer, notebook and other technological equipment is password/ PIN protected. This will ensure that other people cannot use your equipment.
- Have a separate online account/ identity which is not your personal one to distinguish between personal communication and your ministry.
- Have clarity around the use of personal equipment when communicating with children in ministry.
- Make sure that anything that is posted online by you is appropriate; remember that once it is posted online it is public. This includes chats and images/ photographs.
- Switch off Bluetooth, as this allows another person to access your equipment and pretend to be you.

DO NOT

- Share your personal information with children. This includes personal mobile phone numbers, social networking accounts, personal website/ blog URLs, online image storage sites, passwords/ PIN numbers etc.
- Use your personal mobile phone to communicate with children/young people either by phone call, text, email, social networking site.
Access or share inappropriate images of children.
- Add or allow a child whom you are ministering to join your contacts/friends list on personal social networking profiles.
- Play online games with children; always check before you play online with someone you do not know.

If you are worried and have concerns:

As a user of digital media, you may become concerned about something you see or read. It is important that you share your concerns and report anything which you feel believe is inappropriate or abusive towards children. In line with Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016, all allegations, suspicions and concerns must be reported to the police and the statutory child protection services. If in doubt, you should consult with the Church body's,

DLP: Mrs Pat Carville 07789917741

Childline: 0800 1111

NSPCC: 0808 500 5000

Social Services 9-5pm 0800 785 7745 or 028 3741 5285

Given the international nature of abuse online it may be appropriate for the police to liaise with colleagues across the world, and your computer may need to be examined by the police to obtain contact information that may assist their investigations.