

## J. PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM HARM – IRELAND

### Children

The term 'children' herein relates to any persons under the age of 18 with whom the church has contact through any of its activities.

It should be noted that the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stipulates that in order for disabled children to be able to realise their rights, they need to be provided with disability and age-appropriate assistance.

### Why are we concerned about taking action to protect children?

An abused child will often experience more than one type of abuse, as well as other difficulties in their life. Abuse and neglect can happen over a period of time, but can also be a one-off event. They can have major long-term impacts on all aspects of a child's health, development and well-being. At any time that it is believed that a child may be in need of services to them or their family, or that a child is being harmed or is likely to be, we should refer immediately to the Health Board. Therefore, concerns should be immediately reported to your Responsible Person or Designated Safeguarding Person. The Church is committed to taking prompt action to protect our young people.

### What is safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children?

Safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children can be described as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;
- taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances.

**Child protection** is part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

### What are abuse and neglect?

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm on, or by failing to act to prevent significant harm to, the child. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or another child. The abuse can be perpetrated through physical contact or via the internet. The four main categories of abuse are:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual
- Neglect

Other forms of harm include domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation (FGM). Details of the definitions and possible indicators of abuse can be found under Appendix 15: Definitions of Abuse.

Disabled children may be especially vulnerable to abuse, in part because they may have an impaired capacity to resist or avoid abuse. They may have speech, cognition and communication needs which may make it difficult for them to understand or to tell others what is happening.