

INTRODUCTION

1. Awareness and Safety

- 1.1 A handbook for all clergy, religious, paid and voluntary members of staff, parishes, dioceses and associated organisations involved in the care, welfare and protection of children, young people and adults at risk.

2. The Purpose of this Document

- 2.1 The purpose of this document is to provide a set of policies for those who have a responsibility for the protection of children, young people and adults at risk in the life of the Catholic Church in Scotland.
- 2.2 This document expresses the commitment of the Church to good practice in this area, including the development of effective structures for safeguarding children and adults at risk, for responding to concerns or allegations of abuse and for providing pastoral support and training.
- 2.3 This Awareness and Safety document should be used as a benchmark of requirements. The aim for all personnel, parishes, dioceses and associated organisations must be to make sure children and those adults who are vulnerable get the help they need when they need it and to achieve the best outcomes for those who need help, support and protection, in partnership with other agencies.
- 2.4 New legislation extends the protection offered to Scotland's children and introduces new protection for adults at vulnerable points in their lives. It builds on existing legislation, particularly The Protection of Children (Scotland) Act of 2003 and Part V of the Police Act of 1997.

3. The Code of Good Practice

3.1 In 1995 voluntary organisations including Churches used the guide 'A Code of Practice Protecting Children' to deliver child protection guidelines.

3.2 In 1997 the Bishops' Conference of Scotland instructed the dioceses to implement the Catholic Church in Scotland 'Keeping Children Safe' guidelines. This document contains the following articles which, when implemented, will help to ensure that the Church has taken all reasonable steps to provide a high standard of care to children and young people.

- ***Adopt a Policy Statement on safeguarding the welfare of children and young people.***
- ***Plan the work of the organisation so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children and young people might occur.***
- ***Apply agreed procedures for protecting children and young people to all paid staff and volunteers.***
- ***Give all paid staff and volunteers clear roles.***
- ***Use supervision as a means of protecting children and young people.***
- ***Treat all would-be paid staff and volunteers as job applicants for any position involving contact with children and young people.***
- ***Gain two references from persons who have experience of the applicant's paid work or volunteering with children and young people.***
- ***Explore in an interview prior to employment every applicant's experience of working or contact with children and young people.***
- ***Find out whether an applicant has any convictions for criminal offences against children and young people.***
- ***Make paid and voluntary appointments conditional on the completion of a probationary period.***
- ***Issue guidelines on how to deal with the disclosure or discovery of abuse.***
- ***Train paid staff and volunteers, their line managers or supervisors and policy makers in the prevention of child abuse.***

3.3 The main statements of this document are still current and relevant. Since the publication of this handbook and its revision in 2003 there have been significant developments in Scotland's safeguarding agenda:

- ***the implementation of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 which includes the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003;***
- ***a national commitment to review recommendations arising out of the Birchard Inquiry into the Soham murders;***
- ***Adult Support and Protection Act (Scotland) 2007;***
- ***a major review of child protection practice in Scotland leading to the Child Protection Reform Programme;***
- ***the publication of a National Children's Charter and Framework for Standards;***
- ***the appointment of a Commissioner for Children and Young People.***
- ***Sexual Offences Act (Scotland) 2009.***

3.4 All of these developments impact on the work with children, young people and adults at risk undertaken by the Church.

4. Current National Developments in the Care and Protection of Children and Young People

4.1 *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*

4.1.1 Children's Charter

4.1.1.1 The *Charter* is made up of 13 statements which are presented as statements **from** children and young people **to** adults; these are:-

- ***"get to know us"***
- ***"speak with us"***
- ***"listen to us"***
- ***"take us seriously"***
- ***"involve us"***
- ***"respect our privacy"***
- ***"be responsible to us"***
- ***"think about our lives as a whole"***
- ***"think carefully about how you use information about us"***
- ***"put us in touch with the right people"***
- ***"use your power to help"***
- ***"make things happen when they should"***
- ***"help us be safe"***

4.1.2 The Framework for Standards

4.1.2.1 The *Framework* is written for all staff and agencies involved in the protection of children, both directly and indirectly. It includes the voluntary sector. It applies to all staff and volunteers who work with children or any adults who are parents/carers or have significant contact with children.

- Standard 1** Children get the help they need when they need it.
- Standard 2** Professionals take timely and effective action to protect children.
- Standard 3** Professionals ensure children are listened to and respected.
- Standard 4** Agencies and professionals share information about children where this is necessary to protect them.
- Standard 5** Agencies and professionals work together to assess needs and risks and develop effective plans.
- Standard 6** Professionals are competent and confident.
- Standard 7** Agencies work in partnership with members of the community to protect children.
- Standard 8** Agencies, individually and collectively, demonstrate leadership and accountability for their work and its effectiveness.

4.1.3 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 should help groups within the Church in Scotland to think about the ways in which our policies in this handbook help with:

- *how we view children and young people and their rights;*
- *how we respond to a child who tells you they are being harmed/abused or when this is suspected;*
- *how we manage confidential information about a child and their family;*
- *how effective our referral procedures are;*
- *the steps and care we take to recruit workers and check their suitability to work with children and young people;*
- *how we view your place in the local and national child protection framework.*

4.1.4 You can get copies of 'The *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*' from the Scottish Executive's website - **www.scotland.gov.uk/childprotection**.

4.1.5 It is also the Scottish Executive's vision for Scotland's children and young people that they are:-

- *safe*
- *nurtured*
- *healthy*
- *active*
- *respected*
- *responsible*
- *achieving*
- *included*

4.1.6 We can best protect our most vulnerable when all those involved with them work together, talk to each other and know what kind of issues may give rise to or cause for concern.

4.1.7 It is everyone's responsibility to protect children and all children have the right to grow up in a safe caring environment. As the Scottish Executive Framework for Standard states:

"Every adult in Scotland has a role in ensuring all children live safely and can reach their full potential" (page 5).