

Child Safeguarding Statement of NET Ministries Ireland

This statement has been prepared to comply with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015 and is derived from *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*. The policy of the Catholic Church in Ireland is based on standards of practice which contain indicators that assist in reaching these standards. These indicators can be used in assessing and managing risk.

Statement

As a lay organisation of missionaries that serves the Catholic Church in Ireland, we recognise and uphold the dignity and rights of all children, are committed to ensuring their safety and well-being and will work in partnership with parents/ guardians to do this. We recognise each child as a gift from God, and we value and encourage the participation of children in all activities that enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development.

All NET Ministries staff and volunteers have a responsibility to safeguard children through promoting their welfare, health and development in a safe and caring environment that supports their best interests and prevents abuse.

Nature of service and principles to safeguard children from harm

NET Ministries, as a lay organisation of missionaries that serves the Catholic Church in Ireland, exists to promote the teachings of the Catholic Church. This includes all of the work of NET since we serve in youth ministry with children, as defined in *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016* and implemented in our own policies and training.

As outlined in the *Safeguarding Children 2016 Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland* and implemented in our own policies and training we are committed to the following principles in all aspects of our ministry:

- **Mandatory reporting:**

Each of us has a duty to notify the statutory authorities of suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations that a child is being or has been abused:

- physically
- emotionally
- sexually
- through neglect

Suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations may relate to possible abuse by a member of Church or NET Ministries personnel, but they can also relate to incidents in the child's family, or elsewhere in the community.

- **Caring for the welfare of all children and the adults who work with them:**

Measures to create and maintain environments that are safe for children, that

prevent abuse, and that create nurturing, caring conditions within the Church and within NET Ministries for children and the adults who work with them, will continue to be strengthened and reviewed. This will be done through training, support, communications and quality assurance.

- **Responding appropriately to child protection suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations:**

Anyone who brings any suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation of current or past abuse of a child to the notice of NET Ministries will be responded to sensitively, respectfully, actively and in a timely manner, in line with statutory child protection procedures and Church requirements.

All suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations that reach the threshold for reporting to the statutory authorities will be reported to the appropriate statutory authorities. This will be done irrespective of the status of the person (lay, cleric or religious) who is suspected of having been abusive to a child. If the allegation relates to a lay member of Church personnel, in addition to notifying the statutory authorities, the allegation must be reported to the Church authority. If the allegation relates to a cleric or religious, in addition to notifying the statutory authorities, the allegation must also be reported to the Church authority and the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

- **All NET Ministries volunteers and staff will cooperate with the statutory authorities in all cases.**

In responding to complaints of child sexual abuse relating to clergy and all those in forms of consecrated life or relating to NET Ministries volunteers and staff, NET Ministries will act in accordance with the requirements of civil law and canon law, and so will respect the rights and uphold the safeguards afforded in these, both to the complainant and respondent.

- **Caring pastorally for complainants and other affected persons.**

Those who have suffered child abuse by NET Ministries volunteers or staff will receive a compassionate and just response, and will be offered appropriate pastoral care, counselling and support as they seek to rebuild their lives. An appropriate pastoral response to the family, parish, congregation or and to the wider community will be provided, with due regard to the right of privacy of those directly involved, and to the administration of justice.

- **Caring pastorally for respondents and other affected persons.**

NET Ministries in its response to suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations of child sexual abuse will respect the rights under civil law and canon law of an accused cleric or religious or other Church personnel. A legal presumption of innocence will be maintained during the statutory and internal inquiry processes. As the processes develop, additional assessment, therapy and support services may be offered to the respondent.

NET Ministries will take responsibility for ensuring that any volunteer or staff member who is considered to constitute a danger to children is managed according to a risk management plan.

All requisite steps will be taken to restore the good name and reputation of anyone who has been wrongly accused of abusing a child.

Respondents belong to families and diocesan or religious communities. NET Ministries will be mindful of the need to provide support to members of families and communities affected by the respondent's changed situation.

Risk Assessment

The table below sets out the identified risks to the safety of children and young people involved in activities organised by NET Ministries Ireland and the steps taken to minimise the risks of abuse.

Risk Identified	Procedure in Place to Manage Risk Identified
Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) of a child by NET Ministries staff or volunteers	Procedures under Standard 1 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie
Risk of harm through bullying (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) of a child by NET Ministries staff or volunteers or peers	Procedures under Standard 1 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie
The environment in which work with children is facilitated fails to protect them from harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015)	Procedures under Standard 1 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie
The environment in which work with children is facilitated fails to meet effective safeguarding practice	Procedures under Standard 1 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie
Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) to a child during activities or trips away from home from NET Ministries staff or volunteers or other adults	Procedures under Standard 1 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie
Risk of harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) through the use of digital media (photography, video and social media)	Procedures under Standard 1 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie
NET Ministries staff or volunteers fail to report an allegation, suspicion, concern or knowledge appropriately	Procedures under Standard 2 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie
NET Ministries staff or volunteers fail to take action during and following any investigation into allegations to ensure children are protected from harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015)	Procedures under Standard 4 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie
NET Ministries staff or volunteers fail to support those who are victims of abuse	Procedures under Standard 3 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie
NET Ministries staff or volunteers fail to understand their responsibilities to safeguard children	Procedures under Standard 5 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie
Children and their parents do not understand NET Ministries' policy, procedures and structure to safeguard children and protect them from harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015)	Procedures under Standards 5 & 6 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie

The procedures for safeguarding children from harm (as defined in the Children First Act 2015) fail to be implemented	Procedures under Standard 7 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie
NET Ministries fails to ensure the appointment of a relevant person and maintain a list of mandated persons	Procedures under Standards 1, 2, & 6 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie
Local activity with children is risk assessed in each location in which the activity takes place	Procedures under Standard 5 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie

Procedures

All procedures outlined in the risk assessment above are available at www.netministries.ie. The procedures listed above include the following:

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service. This is part of Standard 2 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children. This is part of Standard 1 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie
- Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm. This is part of Standard 5 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to TUSLA. This is part of Standard 2 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie
- Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons (if any) in the relevant service who are mandated persons. This is part of Standard 2 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person. This is part of Standard 1 & 6 of the NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy available from www.netministries.ie

Implementation

NET Ministries Ireland is committed to safeguarding children through the implementation of the *NET Ministries Child Safeguarding Policy, 2020*. This Child Safeguarding Statement and our practice supports our desire to keep children safe from harm while in our ministries. As part of our annual audit against the relevant indicators of the child safeguarding standards, we will review the effectiveness of our practice as outlined in this statement and will revise, as appropriate.

Signed _____ *Executive Director, NET Ministries Ireland*

Date _____