

# **ST. JOHN'S RETREAT CENTRE**

## **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY (2015)**

**Children and young people are an integral part of the Church community. It is the responsibility of all within this community to uphold Gospel values by respecting the dignity and rights of all children and young people and to work together to ensure their safety and well being.**

**The Retreat Centre's Child Protection Policy is compliant with the relevant sections of "Safeguarding Children - Standards and Guidance for the Catholic Church in Ireland", "Children First 2011 – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children" and the Trustees' Safeguarding Policy.**

### **Aims and Objectives of Policy**

(a) St. John's Retreat Centre aims to provide a safe environment for all children and young people who attend retreats or other events organised by the Centre.

(b) Staff are aware of child protection issues and of the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or anyone involved in the running of St. John's Retreat Centre.

(c) It is the policy of the Centre that all allegations are taken seriously and where there are reasonable grounds, are reported to the Civil Authorities, the Designated Liaison Officer, the Community Care Manager or the Gardaí.

(d) The Child Protection Policy is to be reviewed every September and June respectively.

(e) Furthermore, it is imperative to note that all team members deliver school retreats both in-house and off-site as of Monday, 1st September 2015. The current Child Protection Policy applies to both locations.

Both locations are as follows:

**(i) Within the grounds of 10 Le Fanu Rd, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10.**

**(ii) Within the surrounds of Glendalough, Co. Wicklow.**

### **1. Designated Person**

The designated person for all issues in relation to Child Protection within the Centre is Director Tom Farrell. In the event of his absence, the Assistant Director, Conor Deering will act as designated manager for such issues.

(i) The designated person for child protection issues provides information and advice on child protection matters within the Centre, ensuring that the Centre's Child Protection Policy is followed and adhered to on a continual basis.

(ii) The designated person also holds the responsibility of ensuring that confidential records are kept in relation to any reporting of incidents within the Centre.

(iii) Suffice to say, liaising with the Management Committee, the Community Care Manager and the Gardaí in relation to suspected or actual cases of child abuse is also a necessary requisite for the designated person.

## **2. Anti-Bullying Policy**

St. John's Retreat Centre defines bullying as follows:

*“Bullying is repeated destructive, aggressive behaviour, which can be verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or a group of individuals”.*

While most bullying occurs between children, bullying can be perpetuated by an adult to a child or between one adult to another. Examples of which include the following:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Direct / Indirect
- Cyber
- Intimidation
- Exclusion
- Homophobic
- Racial
- Sexual

The De La Salle Brothers, their staff and volunteers have a duty to report and give full attention to any incident that constitutes bullying or potentially bullying behaviour.

### **Actions to Prevent Bullying Behaviour and Reporting of Bullying Behaviour:**

- (a) Increase awareness of anti-bullying within the Centre and wider community where possible.
- (b) Encourage respect between Brothers, staff, students, accompanying teachers and parents and volunteers.
- (c) Create an awareness of bullying behaviours and encourage staff and students to report negative behaviours to teachers or staff if necessary.
- (d) If a member of staff witnesses an incident, which s/he feels can be easily resolved, s/he may challenge the behaviour as unacceptable. At the break, the teacher must be informed of the incident and an incident form will be completed by the close of the day.
- (e) If an incident is noticed, which may potentially constitute bullying; the staff member will decide, through consultation with the Director, the best course of action to take. Ultimately, suspected incidents of bullying are brought to the attention of the accompanying teacher and followed up through a telephone call to the Principal at the earliest possible convenience.
- (f) To report an incident an Incident Report Form (Appendix 1) must then be filled in and given to the Director. This form is available in the staff room. They will be kept as confidential material on file in the Director's office. Any

further notes/records taken during an investigation will also be stored with the original file.

### **3. Awareness of Child Abuse Issues**

All members of the staff of St. John's Retreat Centre should:

- (i) Be aware of signs of possible abuse and neglect (See pages 6-7).
- (ii) Be alert to these signs.
- (iii) Adhere to responding and reporting procedures detailed in this document.

### **4. Reporting of Abuse Allegations**

- (i) If students have concerns about possible abuse or inappropriate behaviour by anyone while in the Centre, they should report it to the following:
  - Tom Farrell, Director of St. John's Retreat Centre.
  - A member of staff.
  - The accompanying teacher from their school.
- (ii) If a member of the staff of the centre receives a report of abuse,
  - He / she should tell the child at the outset that he/she cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality, that it will have to be reported to the Director who is the designated person of child protection issues within the Centre, to the Principal of his/her own school, the H.S.E or the Gardaí.
  - He /she should record what has been said as accurately as possible
  - He / she should report the allegation, without delay, to the accompanying teacher and designated person of child protection issues.
- (iii) The designated person will make preliminary enquiries in a careful and sensitive manner to establish the basic facts. It is not the role of the designated person to interview the child or investigate the allegation. That is a matter for the H.S.E and/ or the Gardaí.
- (iv) If there are reasonable grounds, the designated person will inform the accompanying teacher from the school that an allegation has been made and that she will be reporting the matter to the Principal of the school from which the child came and to the Chairman of the Committee of Management.
- (v) The Chairman of Committee of Management will inform the Designated Officer for the Order who has the responsibility of reporting the allegation to the Civil Authorities – The Child Care Manager of the HSE and the Gardaí.
- (vi) It can happen that a member of staff might be subjected to erroneous or malicious allegations. Staff should therefore withhold judgement on any allegation and do nothing that might impede a proper investigation by the civil authorities from taking place.

## **5. Recording of Abuse Allegations**

- (i) All incidents, allegations, suspicions of abuse are recorded and kept securely in a confidential file.
- (ii) The designated staff member should maintain detailed and confidential records of all available information relating to the cause for concern and any subsequent action taken.
- (iii) Details of the school group in attendance each day should include:
  - Name of School.
  - Name and contact details of Principal.
  - Name of the accompanying teacher.
  - Names of all the students attending the retreat.
  - Names of the facilitators working with specified students in small groups.
  - Permission slip from the Principal.
  - Relevant information concerning students in attendance.

## **6. Whistle Blowing Policy**

All members of the Irish Province of De La Salle Brothers, staff members and volunteers who have suspicions that a child or young person may be suffering abuse; or who have concerns about the behaviour of a Brother, staff member or volunteer, should make their concerns known to the Designated Liaison Officer.

### **Reasons for Whistle Blowing:**

- Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour.
- To prevent the problem worsening or widening.
- To protect or reduce risks to others.
- To prevent oneself from becoming implicated.

### **What Stops People from Whistle Blowing:**

- Fear of getting it wrong.
- Fear of starting a chain of events that may spiral out of control.
- Disruption of the work project.
- Fear of repercussions or the damaging of career.
- Fear of not being believed.

### **How to Raise a Concern:**

- Express concerns, suspicions or uneasiness as soon as they are felt. The earlier a concern is expressed, the sooner an action can be taken.
- Contact the Designated Liaison Officer, Br. Daniel Carlin.
- Ideally, put your concerns in writing, outlining the background and history – including names, dates, times, location etc.).
- In line with the Protection for Person Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998, no action will be taken against the person raising the concern if it proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith.

## **Further Information:**

### **Designated Liaison Officer:**

Br. Daniel Carlin,  
De La Salle Provincialate,  
121 Howth Road,  
Dublin 3.  
Tel: 01 8331814.

### **National Office for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church:**

New House,  
St. Patrick's College,  
Maynooth,  
Co. Kildare.  
Tel: 01 5053124.

## **7. Code of Behaviour for Staff**

- (a) It is important for all concerned that staff, volunteers, children and young people have guidelines on what is accepted and what is not accepted, with respect to their behaviour. The conduct of staff towards children and young people attending the Centre must be above reproach.
- (b) All staff members are in a position of trust and any abuse of that trust must be regarded with the utmost gravity.
- (c) All staff should be sensitive to a child's reaction to physical contact and to act appropriately.
- (d) While physical contact is a valid way of comforting, reassuring and showing concern for children and young people, it is important not to touch them, however casually, on parts of the body, especially the breasts, groin or buttocks which might be considered as indecent.
- (e) Staff should avoid being alone with a young person in a room with the door closed or in a place which is not in public view.
- (f) While the occasion is unlikely to arise in the Centre, members of staff should never give lifts to individual young people in their cars.
- (g) Physical punishment is forbidden as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of necessary restraint to prevent the young person from causing injury to themselves, to others or to property. No more than the minimum force should be used.
- (h) Each young person should be treated with respect and therefore should not be subjected to sarcastic comments, verbal bullying, negative comments or actions.

- (i) Staff should not allow young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- (j) Staff should never make sexually suggestive comments about, or to a young person, even in fun.
- (k) The responsibility for the discipline or behaviour of children/young people attending the Centre rests with the accompanying teacher.
- (l) All staff should be vigilant and children should not be left unsupervised at any time.
- (m) All visiting students or children who have a physical disability must be accompanied by a Special Needs assistant (S.N.A).
- (n) The recommended ratio for working with individuals 10 years of age and older is one staff member for every 10 children (on-site, St. John's Retreat Centre, Dublin 14) and one staff member for every 15 children (within the surrounds of Glendalough, Co. Wicklow).

## **8. Types of Abuse and Signs of Abuse / Neglect**

### Note of Caution

*Even for "experts" it is often very difficult to decide if a child has been abused. Signs listed below are possible indicators of abuse but could have other explanations. Many of the signs are unlikely to be evident in a retreat situation.*

### **(a) Types of Abuse**

1. **Neglect** - persistent failure to meet a child's physical or emotional needs. Neglect becomes apparent over a period of time rather than at a specific time.
2. **Physical Abuse** – Causing physical harm to a child (Details of any accident or illness occurring during the day should be recorded).
3. **Sexual Abuse** - sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent. (A child under the age of 18 cannot legally permit or give consent to such activity. The legal age for sexual intercourse is 17).
4. **Emotional Abuse** – criticism, sarcasm, belittling, taunting, blaming, rejection. (Usually found in the relationship between parent/guardian and child).

### **(b) Signs of Neglect**

1. Constantly hungry
2. Being dirty or "smelly"
3. Inappropriate dress for the conditions
4. Underweight
5. Being constantly tired

**(c) Signs of Physical Abuse**

1. Unexplained and untreated injuries
2. Refusal to discuss injuries
3. Cigarette burns
4. Bite marks or welts
5. Arms and legs kept covered (hot water)
6. Improbable excuses given to explain injuries
7. Admission of punishment which appears excessive
8. Fear of parents being contacted
9. Withdrawal from physical contact
10. Fearful watchfulness
11. Fear of returning home
12. Fear of medical help
13. Self destructive tendencies
14. Aggression towards others

**(d) Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse**

1. Soreness or bleeding in genital or anal area
2. Bruises on inner thighs or buttocks
3. Difficulty in walking or sitting
4. Being inappropriately seductive
5. Telling of a 'friend' who is being abused
6. Inappropriate language or sexual knowledge for age group
7. Being chronically depressed or suicidal
8. Tendency to self mutilate
9. Being withdrawn, isolated
10. Become excessively worried
11. Have outbursts of anger or irritability
12. Substance / drug abuse
13. Anorexia / Bulimia

**(e) Signs of Emotional Abuse**

1. Sudden speech disorders
2. Attention seeking behaviour
3. Self-mutilation
4. Physical, mental and emotional developmental lags
5. Over-reaction to mistakes
6. Continual self depreciation
7. Neurotic behaviour
8. Fear of parents being contacted

## **9. Responding to a Child Making an Allegation**

DO	DON'T
Stay calm	Panic
Listen carefully	Promise confidentiality
Be sensitive	Dismiss the concerns
Keep an open mind	Ask child to repeat
Reassure	Probe for more information
Tell them they are not to blame	Make negative comments about accused
Tell them what you intend to do next	Offer alternatives
Record in writing as soon as possible	Remove child's clothing
Report	Disclose details except to Designated Person
Date and keep your report	

## **10. Reporting Procedure**

It is the responsibility of the Director to ensure that any allegation that a member of staff has abused a child/young adult, is taken seriously and that the reporting procedure is complied with, as soon as possible.

### **(a) Allegation Against a Director**

The following is the current procedure that follows the reporting of an allegation against the Director:

#### **Phase One:**

The person who receives the complaint:

- Notifies the Chairperson of the Management Committee who then notifies the Trustees.
- Notifies the Trustees directly if the Chairperson is not available.

#### **Phase Two:**

The Chairperson informs the Director of the allegation/suspicion against him/her and:

- Warns him/her that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.
- Inform him/her of his/her right to consult his legal advisor.
- Give him/her an opportunity to respond if he/she so wishes.
- If it appears that there are reasonable grounds for the allegation/suspicion, the Chairperson reports the matter, together with the Director's response to the Trustees, to the H.S.E Community Care Manager in the area and to the Gardaí.
- The alleged abuser must be kept informed on a regular basis of the investigations which have been, or are being, made and their outcome.

#### **Phase Three:**

The matter is then brought to the attention of the H.S.E and the Gardaí, where:

- It is for the H.S.E to investigate suspected abuse and to determine what action to take, including notifying parents.
- It is not the responsibility of St. John's Retreat Centre staff to make enquiries of parents or guardians and in some cases it could be counter productive for them to do so.



- If there is indisputable evidence that an individual has abused a child, the matter should be reported directly to the Gardaí.
- Where reasonable grounds for the allegation/suspicion have been established, the alleged offender should be suspended with pay.

**Suspension of a Member of Staff is a Neutral Act and Would be Considered:**

- (1) If a child/young person is at risk.
- (2) If an allegation is so serious that dismissal for gross misconduct may be considered.
- (3) If it was necessary in order to allow the conduct of the investigation to proceed unimpeded.
- (4) If there was an occasion where a child or young person made an accusation against a staff member. Such complaints may also be made by a third party. Preliminary enquiries must therefore be made with an open mind.
- (5) If the Chairperson reports the procedures followed as soon as possible to the person to whom the allegation was made in the first place.

**(b) Allegation against a Team Member**

**Phase One**

The person who receives the complaint should notify the Director.

- The Director notifies the Chairperson of the Management Committee.
- The Chairperson notifies the Trustees immediately.
- 

**Phase Two**

The Chairperson and the Director proceed to inform the accused staff member of the allegation/suspicion against him/her and:

- Warn him/her that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed
- Remind him/her of the right to contact his/her legal advisor
- Give him/her an opportunity to respond if he/she so wishes

**Phase Three**

If it appears that there are reasonable grounds for the allegation/suspicion:

- The Chairperson reports the matter, together with the accused staff member's response to the Trustees, the Community Care Manager and to the Gardaí.
- It is for the Gardaí and the H.S.E to investigate suspected abuse and to determine what action to take.
- If there is indisputable evidence that an individual has abused a child, the matter should be reported directly to the Gardaí.
- Where reasonable grounds for the allegation/suspicion have been established, the alleged offender should be suspended with pay.
- The Chairperson reports the procedures followed as soon as possible to the person to whom the allegation was made in the first place.

**(c) Allegation or Suspicion of Sexual Abuse against someone other than the immediate Retreat Centre Team (e.g. ancillary staff, occasional workers)**

The person who receives the complaint first reports to the Director. If the Director is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds:

- He/she informs the Chairperson of the Management Committee.

- The Chairperson together with the Director reports the matter to the Community Care Manager.
- **N.B** - Do not make enquiries of parents or guardians - that is the function of the Community Care Manager.

**(d) Allegation Against a Member of the Order**

- The Director reports to the Chairman of the Management Committee.
- The Chairman reports to Br. Daniel Carlin, Designated Officer for the Order, who is responsible for reporting to the Civil Authorities.

**11. Confidentiality**

1. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in dealing with any alleged instance of child abuse.
2. No promise of confidentiality can or should be given when abuse is alleged.
3. While at present, mandatory reporting is not a legal requirement, it is the policy of this Centre that all allegations of child abuse will be reported in accordance with the Reporting Procedure.
4. Sharing of information is confined to those who have an obligation to receive it.
5. Staff members who receive information about children and their families in the course of their work should share that information only with those who have a right to know.
6. Staff should be aware that an allegation may prove to be unfounded and irreparable harm may be done to an accused person if confidentiality is broken.

**12. Establishing Reasonable Grounds**

- (i) A preliminary investigation should be carried out by the Director, as designated officer, or the Assistant Director, if the allegation is against the Director.
- (ii) A preliminary investigation entails:
  - The identity of the person involved.
  - Details of the young person making the allegation.
  - A description of the abuse in general terms.
  - Time and place of the incident(s).
  - Possible alibi for the accused.
  - The use of witnesses, if any.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Director

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman Management Committee

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX I**  
**Child Protection Recording Form**

1. Date of disclosure / concern: \_\_\_\_\_  
Time of disclosure / concern: \_\_\_\_\_  
How was the information received? (Please circle).  
Telephone      Letter      Email      In person
  
2. Details of person making disclosure / concern:  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to child or alleged victim: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Details of child / alleged victim:  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
D.O.B: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ethnic Origin: \_\_\_\_\_  
Language: \_\_\_\_\_  
Disability: \_\_\_\_\_  
Special Needs: \_\_\_\_\_  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Parent / Carer details:  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_  
Are they aware of allegation / suspicion / complaint? (Please circle).  
Yes              No
  
5. Details of person against whom complaint is made:  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to child / alleged victim: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address at the time of incident: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Special needs: \_\_\_\_\_  
Parish / congregation (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Current contact with children (e.g. school, parish, sports etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Additional information: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Details of concern / allegation / complaint:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Witnesses present (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

Incident details: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is the child aware that this allegation is being formally reported? (Please circle):  
Yes                      No

7. Action taken:

Has the incident been referred to the Civil Authorities? (Please circle):  
Yes                      No  
If yes, please detail Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

If no, please explain why: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Who have you referred this incident to? \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Next steps:

What actions have been taken and by whom when the matter was referred to the Congregation / Civil Authorities?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are there any immediate child protection concerns? (Please circle).

Yes                      No

If yes, please detail your concerns:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Designated Liaison Person details:

**Br. Daniel Carlin,**  
**De La Salle Provincialate,**  
**121 Howth Road,**  
**Dublin 3.**  
**Tel: 01 8331814**

Date form sent: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Details of person completing the form:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Form completed:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_