

“To such belongs the kingdom of God”
Child Protection Policy of The Lutheran Church in Ireland
February 2018

Providing a safe and supportive environment for children is a central part of the work of the Lutheran Church in Ireland. We aim to follow the example of Jesus:

„And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.” (Mark 10:13-16)

Christ’s example encourages our staff to deal with children in a way which expresses appreciation of all children and demonstrates our respect for them. They will be listened to and their views appreciated, they will receive attention and guidance to develop their confidence.

Voluntary and employed members of staff in the Lutheran Church are expected to give all children entrusted to their care space to develop their spiritual, intellectual, and physical gifts. Children shall be encouraged to independent, tolerant thinking, while showing responsible and respectful social behaviour. For us, supporting children means guiding them towards a basic confidence in life, trusting in God who is accessible in Jesus Christ. Any emotional, physical or sexual abuse (including physical chastisement, indoctrination, bullying, and humiliation) is absolutely incompatible with this respect for God’s children.

In this, our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2017), and Tusla’s *Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice*. In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment, the following procedures support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our service:

I) A designated liaison person (child protection officer) as specified in ‘Children First’ 4.75 is appointed by the Church Council and accessible through same. Staff members and volunteers working with children will be provided with a written copy of this policy and the contact details of the liaison officer. Any concern regarding the welfare of children should be raised with this officer and could be proceeded to Tusla.

II) The Lutheran Church in Ireland has appropriate insurance covering accidents and public liability for its entire employed and voluntary staff. Gross misconduct, clear neglect of responsibility and non-adherence to this policy are not covered.

III) Where the Lutheran church has reliable information on persons being prone to paedophile or other inappropriate behaviour towards children, these persons will be requested to refrain from attending events and services involving children. Persons who are legally convicted in cases of paedophilia are not allowed to attend services and other events as every service and meeting is open to families. Any indication of possible non-compliance will lead to the person being identified to those in charge of the respective activities.

IV) In the Lutheran Church we aim for a gender balanced leadership. Children and youth groups, in particular when their activity includes overnight stay (e.g. scouts camp, confirmation camp) shall be accompanied by male and female leaders. If no

regular leaders of each other sex are available, a member of the other sex should be within easy reach and on call.

V) Staff and volunteers working with children are required to be Garda vetted.

VI) Our Values

- a. Adults working with children and young people in our church are expected to guide them in non-violent conflict management. Physical competition in a supervised context and with clear rules will be permitted, as we see this as part of a healthy childhood development.
- b. Children and teenagers will be challenged spiritually and intellectually to move beyond their comfort zone and discover new areas of thinking for themselves. Our children and youth leaders are expected to guide and support this process, so that it will prove fruitful for their lives.
- c. Voluntary and employed staff will help children and all young people to open up to different views of life, to discuss matters of faith and interpreting the world, and to understand others and other opinions. Mutual respect and tolerance for different world views are essential ingredients of this openness.

VII) Good Practice and Safeguarding Measures

- a. Providing for a healthy development of children will comprise exploring nature and own physical abilities and limitations. Voluntary and employed children and youth leaders are entitled to organize such opportunities for experience (among them climbing of trees or hills, hiking on wild paths, camping, lighting fire). Parents are to be notified of such activities in advance, preferably in written form, and have to give their consent. No comment will be interpreted as agreement. Adequate safety measures have to be taken.
- b. In the case of a child feeling sad or hurt, employed and voluntary staff in our church are allowed to offer consolation (hug) even beyond the purely verbal comfort, if children or young people clearly seek such support or protection. Another second adult should be present and within sight.
- c. If children get wet during supervised church time, group leaders can help them with changing if a child wishes it and parents are not within reach. Reasonable steps will be taken to ensure the presence of a second adult person, but supervision of other children should not suffer.

VIII) Risk Management

1. Voluntary and employed members of staff have to offer first aid to children who have suffered an injury whilst in their responsibility. Reasonable steps will be taken to ensure the presence of a second adult person, but supervision of other children should not suffer. Parents are to be informed immediately. If the parents cannot be reached, the member of staff will have to decide whether a medic or hospital has to be consulted.
2. Alcohol may be confiscated if discovered in the possession of young people using church services. In repeated instances or in the case of misuse of alcohol the parents are to be informed and have to collect their child immediately.
3. Electronic media such as mobile phones, tablets, laptops etc. can be confiscated if children entrusted to our care are seen to visit websites with

discriminatory content, e.g. racist, violent, or politically extreme comments or images.

4. On suspicion of abuse of children, youth, or indeed other vulnerable persons, staff and volunteers have the duty to report to the designated liaison person. The appropriate steps to be taken (i.e. meeting with parents, consultation with social worker, or report to Garda) will be decided by the liaison person in consultation with the pastor.
5. In the case of children behaving extremely difficult or being repeatedly aggressive, the liaison person has to be consulted.
6. In critical situations or concerns requiring immediate intervention, the statutory social worker on duty (Tusla), or even An Garda Síochána will be involved.

Drafted by

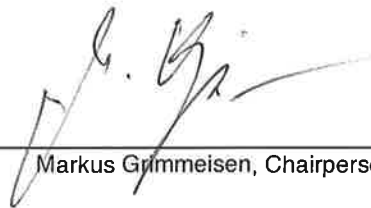
Isolde Blau Principal clinical psychologist (in employment by HSE), Liaison Person,
Stephan Arras, Pastor of the Lutheran Church in Ireland.

Reviewed and confirmed by the Church Council 5th February 2018.

On behalf of the Church Council,



Dublin, 5th February 2018, Pastor Stephan Arras



Markus Grimmeisen, Chairperson