

# **Mobile Phone Photography/IT**

## **Policy and Procedures**

Date of Publication:  
April 2014

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## **1.0 Policy Statement**

The possession and use of mobile phones by children and young people is now extensive in society at large and therefore impacts on safeguarding best practice within a church context. Mobile phone technology has advanced significantly over the last few years - and it continues to evolve. Wireless connections in particular have extended the capabilities of mobile phones, enabling access to a wide range of new content and services globally. Many phones now offer Internet and email access, alongside the most often standard functions of messaging, camera, video and sound recording.

Mobile phones, alongside other forms of technology are changing the way and speed in which we communicate. They can provide security and reassurance; however there are also associated risks. Children and young people need to understand these risks in order to help them develop appropriate strategies for keeping themselves safe. Risks to children and young people can be broadly categorised under the headings of content, contact and conduct and managed by reducing availability, restricting access and increasing resilience.

Photography is another aspect of today's technology that can cause child safeguarding issues. The majority of occasions when people take photographs of children and young people are valid and do not provide any cause for concern. Unfortunately there are also occasions when this is not the case. The key concerns regarding the use of images, video and photographs of children/young people relate to:

- The possible identification of children/young people when a photograph is accompanied by personal information and possible inappropriate use afterwards.
- The inappropriate use, adaptation of copying of images for use in child pornography or illegal websites.
- A common sense approach is required when deciding on what may or may not be appropriate as the Diocese does not wish to prohibit the recording of celebrations at parish level through the use of photography or recording on video equipment.
- Outlining photography and recording policy at the outset will clarify matters for all concerned.
- It should be noted that the Diocese has little or no influence on what photographs may be taken and published in local or national newspapers as such photography is covered by a different set of guidelines.

## **2.0 Scope**

This policy applies to all Church Personnel who have access to personal or work-related mobile phones and any person using photography equipment, working or ministering within a church context in the diocese of Killaloe.

### **3.0 Purpose of Policy**

- To make leaders/volunteers aware of potential for the misuse of mobile phone and photography technology.
- To ensure leaders/volunteers understand the risks to young people through the misuse of mobile phones and photography (bullying, inappropriate texting, uploading images, etc.).
- To provide guidelines for the correct use of mobile and photography/IT technology.

### **4.0 Risks Associated with Mobile Phones**

Use of mobile phones (particularly with the advent of increasingly sophisticated equipment and camera phones) presents a number of problems, including:

- Mobile phones can be valuable items and might render a child/young person vulnerable to theft.
- Mobile phones (and their cost and level of sophistication - or otherwise) can make young people objects of envy or disparagement and could have implications with regard to discipline and potential bullying.
- Even when apparently silent, the use of mobiles phones for texting purposes could be potentially undermining of established codes of behaviour within various church contexts.
- Use of phones with integrated cameras, sound recording facilities and internet access could lead to child protection and data protection issues with regard to inappropriate capture, use or distribution of images and audio recordings.
- Children/young people using vulgar, derogatory, or obscene language while using mobile phones.
- Children/young people using mobile phones to bully, menace, harass or offend another person.
- Children/young people engaging in personal attacks, harassment of another person by posting private information about another person using electronic messages, taking/sending photos, video recordings, audio recordings or objectionable images or video recordings, and phone calls.
- Children/young people posting images, video recordings, audio recordings of others on the internet.
- Privacy concerns mainly related to the ability of many phones to take photographs, make video recordings or record conversations in the ignorance of those being recorded.
- It is also recognised that mobile phones can cause an unnecessary distraction during church activities and can be intrusive when used in the company of others.
- When mobiles phones are misused it can impact on an individual's dignity, privacy and right to confidentiality. Such concerns are not exclusive to children and young people; hence there is a duty to protect the needs and vulnerabilities of all.

Notwithstanding the above it is not regarded as realistic to have a policy which prohibits clergy, staff, volunteers, children and young people from having mobile phones on their person within the various contexts in which they gather under the auspices of the Diocese. Not only would it be impractical to forbid individuals from carrying them, when the latest phones are so slim that they could be hidden easily, but it is understood that many parents would be concerned for health and safety reasons if their child were not allowed to carry a phone at all and might therefore be unable to contact their parents in respect of any situation that might arise.

## **5.0 Guidelines on the use of Mobile Phones**

- Church personnel should be aware of the potential misuse of mobile phone technology and should take appropriate steps to prevent it occurring.
- Church personnel when responsible for the supervision and safety of young people should not use mobile phones, for social or business purposes, unless in the case of emergency. To do so in front of children or young people would be considered both unsafe and inappropriate conduct. Anything which compromises the ability to maintain a safe environment and give full attention to the supervision of children should be actively discouraged.
- Many mobile phones have a facility to take photographs and videos which can be immediately uploaded onto the web or social networking sites without permission. Therefore, group leaders should discourage the use of mobile phones during church activities. Each particular group may wish to produce its own mobile phone code of conduct to ensure safe usage.
- Mobile phones with photographic and video facilities are not to be used in changing facilities or residential accommodation.
- Contacting children by phone or text should never be undertaken without parental knowledge or consent. Additional communication should be directed to the child's parent/guardian.
- Other than in agreed exceptional circumstances, phones must be switched off/put on silent and calls and texts must not be taken or made during gatherings of children and young people within the church context.
- Any child or young person who uses vulgar, derogatory, or obscene language while using a mobile phone will face appropriate sanctions as pre-determined by the particular activity code of conduct.
- It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace, harass or offend another person. As such, if action as sanctioned by the group leader is deemed ineffective, as with all such incidents, the particular group leader may consider it appropriate to involve the Gardaí. Hence, children/young people with mobile phones must not engage in personal attacks, harass another person, or post private information about

another person, via SMS messages/chat rooms/social network sites, taking/sending/uploading photos, phone calls.

- Circulating objectionable images will also be treated as a serious disciplinary issue.
- Children/young people using mobile phones to bully others will face appropriate sanctions as pre-determined by the particular activity code of conduct.
- Appropriate sanctions for breaking with code of conduct will include confiscation of mobile phone until group activity is completed and informing the parent/guardian. Illegal activity will result in the matter being referred to the Gardaí.
- There are situations when access to a mobile phone will make a positive contribution to the safety and welfare of children, particularly when an emergency occurs.

## **6.0 Photography Guidelines**

The underlying principles that should be addressed in relation to use of photography include:

### **6.1 Consent / Permission**

The written consent of parents/carers (and children/young people of appropriate age) should be sought before any photographs are taken. An organisation may seek overall consent from its members for photography; however the guidelines should be clear about the reason and purpose for that decision. There should be explicit consent to display photographs in Church/Church Buildings.

### **6.2 Reason and Purpose**

Photographs should only be taken by an authorised person who has a valid suitable reason related to the child or organisation. The use of the photographs thereafter should be fully explained.

### **6.3 Appropriateness of Images**

No images of children to be taken, which capture them in what are commonly understood as non public activities like toileting or changing clothes, or which show body parts not usually visible in public settings. Children should be fully clothed. Images involving groups should be about that activity, not the individual child.

#### **6.4 Identification of Subjects**

A photograph should not allow an unauthorised person to identify a child or their whereabouts. If the full name of a child or young person is used, there should be no photograph; if a photograph is being used the full name should not be given. Children in vulnerable circumstances, e.g., those in care should not be photographed at all unless there is clear consent of their legal guardian.

#### **6.5 Photography for Public Display**

You can decide whether you will allow publicity photographs and if so you should inform the press of your policies before they arrive. It is worth noting that it is not illegal to take photographs at a public event even if asked not to do so, but if your event is private then you can insist that your own policy is followed. Photographs of children in activities should try to include groups of children, and not show them in breach of rules, or behaving in a reckless or dangerous fashion. Images should never be stored on personal computers.

#### **6.6 Use of Mobile Phone Photography**

Mobile phones are easily used without the subject being aware and their main function is to transmit images to others, not to be retained by an authorised person as a keepsake. Their use should be discouraged though the spread of this technology does make this difficult. This is something to be aware of when hosting an event. You may choose to ban the use of mobile phone photography at your event but this is difficult to police.

#### **6.7 Using Digital Video**

All church organisations have a duty of care to ensure that children and young people remain unidentifiable if images are shown on a website, thereby reducing the risk of inappropriate contact from outside the organisation. It is essential to get informed written parental permission before embarking on any digital project for all involved in the project. If the names of children and young people are used in the credits, use only their first names and do not link individuals to specific roles.

#### **7.0 Use of the Internet and e-mail**

Many parishes and diocesan groups have websites and use e-mail as a form of communication with children and families. Through these websites they give information on many things including Catholic faith and social teaching, parish and diocesan activities, activities organised by other agencies whether community or faith based and they give links to other websites. Information relating to groups working with young people should only be included in diocesan/parish websites if they adhere to a child safeguarding policy which has been sent to the diocesan safeguarding team for approval.

## **7.1 Acceptable Internet use Guidelines**

Use of the internet by church personnel to promote, inform and educate, is encouraged where such use supports the ethos of the diocese.

It is the responsibility of those church personnel using the internet and the Parish Priest/Administrator/Diocesan Contact Person for each of the diocesan groups to ensure that they:

- Comply with current legislation.
- Use the internet in an acceptable way.

It is recognised that many young people communicate through social networking sites and personal e-mails. This method of communication is generally not shared with parents/guardians. It is therefore the responsibility of the group leader/organiser to ensure that any information shared with a child through a social networking relationship or through e-mail is shared with parents. Advice in this area can be sought from the Diocesan Safeguarding Office. The following are some guidelines to follow:

- All e-mails sent to and received from children should be retained and archived.
- Young people should only be contacted by group e-mail and should also be forwarded to parents.
- It is the right of each individual to decide who has access to their e-mail address. All e-mail providers offer a BCC function which allows the sender to send an e-mail to many people without revealing the addresses of the other people receiving the e-mail. In order to ensure the privacy of children and parents/guardians and of individual addresses, group e-mails should be sent using the BCC box. If you are unsure how to do this contact the Diocesan Office and someone will advise you
- Group e-mails should give individuals the opportunity to have their contact details removed from the list by including a statement such as: "If you wish to be removed from this e-mail list please contact the administrator".

If a diocesan or parish group uses the internet or emailing as part of its activities, the group leader must ensure that each leader and young person is aware of what is acceptable and unacceptable usage, using the above points as a guide. The area of cyber bullying should also be addressed in drawing up and implementing an anti-bullying policy.

## **8.0 Data Protection**

This policy is underpinned by the Data Protection Act 1988, amended 2003.



## **9.0 Safeguarding Guidelines for Parish Website and Parish Social Media sites**

The following guidelines have been drawn up by the Diocesan safeguarding Committee to ensure best practice:

- Only authorized people nominated by the Parish Priest should have access to update the website / social media sites.
- Any Parish photographer must have Garda vetting.
- Prior written consent of a parent/guardian must be obtained before photographs or images of children (under 18 yrs.) can be uploaded to the site.
- If the pictures are taken by the Parish photographer, a written consent form must be signed by the parent/guardian and stored in the Parish Office.
- If the parish are asked to put pictures from other sources, such as School, local community groups, etc. the parish must ask if written consent of parent/guardian has been sought. The response needs to be documented and filed.
- Any pictures of Priest's out of Ministry, Diocesan or non-Diocesan must not be put up on the website or social media sites.

## **10.0 Safeguarding Children Online Resources**

Resources to Support the Development of a Culture of Safety - further help and guidance about online safety is available from the following:

For adults - *Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)*

- [www.ispai.ie](http://www.ispai.ie)
- [www.copine.ie](http://www.copine.ie)
- [www.ceop.gov.uk](http://www.ceop.gov.uk)
- [www.childline.org](http://www.childline.org)

For information on Cyber Bullying

- [www.bullying.co.uk/schools/cyberbullying](http://www.bullying.co.uk/schools/cyberbullying);

For children - *Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)*

- [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)