

**FOCOLARE MOVEMENT**  
**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND**  
**ADULTS AT RISK**  
**Guidelines for helpers**

**Focolare Movement**  
**Safeguarding children and adults at risk guidelines**

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES

The Focolare Movement has policies in line with national standards for maintaining a safe environment for children and adults at risk. This means that all activities are organised with regard to the dignity, safety, and wellbeing of all concerned so that avoidable risks are anticipated and minimised and that all relationships are built on positive values.

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## **What is safeguarding**

Every human being has a value and dignity which we as Catholics acknowledge as coming directly from God's creation of male and female in his own image and likeness. We believe therefore that all people should be valued, supported and protected from harm.

In the Focolare this is demonstrated by the provision of carefully planned activities for children, young people and adults.

It is because we hold a variety of day and residential meetings for young people and adults that we need to take all reasonable steps to provide a safe environment for all which promotes and supports their wellbeing. This will include carefully selecting and appointing those who work with children, young people or adults at risk and responding robustly where concerns arise.

The main Government guidance setting out duties and responsibilities for all agencies and organisations who work with Children and Families is 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' which was published by the Department for Education in 2013; it provides guidance under the Children Acts 1989 and 2004.

'Working Together to Safeguard Children' refers directly to Faith Communities and sets out the responsibilities and expectations of all churches and faith communities in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare.

## **Child**

The term 'child' is used to include all children and young people up to the age of 18. Someone who has not yet had their 18th birthday.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:

Protecting children from maltreatment;

Preventing impairment of children's health and development;

Ensuring that children are growing up with safe and effective care;

Enabling children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully.

## **Child Protection**

Is a part of safeguarding and refers to the activities undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or are at risk of suffering Significant Harm.

## **Significant Harm**

'Harm' means ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development, including for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another;

'Development' means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development;

'Health' means physical or mental health; and

'Ill-treatment' includes sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical.

## **Child Abuse and Neglect**

Are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

### **Physical abuse**

May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

### **Emotional abuse**

Is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age and developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

### **Sexual abuse**

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative e.g. rape or oral sex or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual online images and photos, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. We are

becoming increasingly aware of the offence of viewing or downloading abusive images of children from the Internet. This is not a 'victimless' crime but is both evidence of abuse taking place and is a criminal offence. It should be referred on in all cases.

## **Neglect**

Is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, or at any age, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);

protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;

ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate carers);

ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

The above definitions are from Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013.

## **Domestic Violence**

This term is used to describe the physical, sexual or emotional (including verbal and financial) abuse between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. This form of abuse affects both the victim, who by the very nature of the offence is a vulnerable adult in this context, and any children in the household. In 2005, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 extended the legal definition of harming children to include harm suffered by seeing or hearing ill-treatment of others, especially in the home.

## **Adults at Risk**

'Abuse is a violation of a person's human and civil rights by another person or persons'

'Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented or cannot consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to or exploitation of the person subjected to it.' ('No Secrets', DoH 2000).

An adult is defined as 'at risk' or 'vulnerable' when they are in receipt of a 'regulated activity' in relation to vulnerable adults.

It is important to recognise however that any adult can be subject to abuse and that they do not have to be defined as 'vulnerable.' Any adult could be subjected to domestic abuse; financial abuse; physical, emotional, sexual abuse etc.

Within the Church context, it is important to recognise therefore that abuse can be perpetrated against adults who are not 'vulnerable' according to the statutory definition.

Where these incidents of abuse are substantiated they should be dealt with either as a criminal matter (e.g. sexual assault) and/or misconduct with the Church disciplinary structure.

A consensus has emerged identifying the following main different forms of abuse:

### **Physical abuse**

Including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.

### **Sexual abuse**

Including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the vulnerable adult has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting.

### **Psychological abuse**

Including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.

### **Financial or material**

Including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

### **Neglect and acts of omission**

Including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

### **Discriminatory abuse**

Including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

Any or all of these types of abuse may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance.

Neglect and poor professional practice also need to be taken into account. This may take the form of isolated incidents of poor or unsatisfactory professional practice, at one end of the spectrum, through to pervasive ill treatment or gross misconduct at the other. Repeated instances of poor care may be an indication of more serious problems and this is sometimes referred to as institutional abuse.

Who may be the abuser? Vulnerable adult(s) may be abused by a wide range of people, including relatives and family members, professional staff, paid care workers, volunteers, other service users, neighbours, friends and associates, people who deliberately exploit vulnerable people and strangers.

Applying these definitions to different circumstances may not always be easy. Many situations may involve combinations of these elements. If there is difficulty in defining a situation this should be discussed with the Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

## **GUIDELINES FOR GOOD PRACTICE WHEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**



## **Leaders/Helpers**

- Ensure that a minimum of two leaders/helpers are present.
- In groups of more than 20 there should be one additional leader/helper for every 10 (or part of 10) young people, maintaining the balance of gender.
- With activities away from the usual meeting place the ratio should be 1:7.
- With under 8's a ratio of leaders to children of 1:6 is recommended and should be encouraged. With one adult leader for every 3 children under 5
- Leaders/helpers of the same gender as the children/young people need to be present, especially with older children and young people.
- No person under the age of 18 should be left in charge of children of any age.
- All leaders/helpers should have completed the necessary personal details and declaration forms.

## **Planning the Programme**

- Careful planning of activities is important. Make sure that:
  - all helpers are aware of the details of the programme, the timings and each person's role
  - any children with special needs are known and any extra help identified.
- When planning an activity, ensure there is adequate space to play in.
- Ensure that any premises used are safe. Make sure you have carried out a risk assessment of the space you are using and any activities you will be undertaking.
- Know where the fire extinguishers and alarms are and also emergency exits.
- Encourage all helpers to be involved in appropriate training.
- Ensure that leaders/helpers know what to do in the case of suspected or alleged abuse through appropriate training.

## **During the Programme**

- No group of children under the age of 16 should be left unattended.
- Keep a list of all the children who are attending meetings, making sure you check that all children remain within the group.

- Leaders/helpers need to think and act carefully to avoid situations which could lead to embarrassment, accusations or temptations. An example of 'danger' is one leader/worker and one young person being together 'in private' – whether that be in counseling, or on a residential weekend, or driving someone home in a car.
- Make sure that everyone knows where the toilets are, and that for toddlers and younger children the appropriate supervision is given. It may be good to plan a comfort break for younger children. Encourage children to be independent and make sure there are always two helpers if children need assistance.
- Parents should be asked, where possible, to administer any necessary medication before a group meeting. It may, however, be necessary to administer emergency medication or to ensure a child away from home has medication. Care should be taken about the administration of medication to children and young people. Before administration of any medication (including paracetamol/aspirin etc) you are advised:
  - To clarify the requirements with parent/guardian directly.
    - To have instructions in writing.
    - To gain prior agreement in writing to 'no liability'.
- Ensure that someone knows where the group is if working away from the usual meeting place. Leave a note in the room stating where you are in case any parent may look for their child.

## Activities Involving Travel

- Please note: when traveling in a car or minibus, children under the age of 12 should always by law travel in the rear of the vehicle with the appropriate child seats.
- The number of children in any motor vehicle should not exceed the number of seat belts, and these should always be fastened.
- Ensure that where minibuses and/or private cars are used there is adequate insurance and any necessary permits.
- Please ensure that at least one person in the group has a mobile phone, and remember to check network coverage. If necessary, be aware of where the nearest telephone is for emergencies.

## CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR HELPERS

### Do's & Don'ts

#### You must:

- Operate within the Church's principles and guidance and procedures of the Focolare Movement.
- Treat all children, young people and adults at risk equally and with respect.
- Engage and interact appropriately with children, young people and adults at risk.
- Respect a child, young person's or adults at risk right to personal privacy.
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow - an environment which allows bullying, inappropriate shouting or any form of discrimination is unacceptable.
- Recognise that particular care is required in moments when you are discussing sensitive issues with children, young people and adults at risk e.g. maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Avoid situations that compromise your relationship with children, young people and adults at risk, and are unacceptable within a relationship of trust. This rule should apply to all such behaviours including those which would not constitute an illegal act.

#### You must not:

- Discuss topics or use vocabulary with children, young people and adults at risk which could not be used comfortably in the presence of parents or another adult.
- Arrange an overnight trip with a child, young person or adults at risk without ensuring that another approved person will be present and parental consent has been given.
- Take a chance when common sense suggests another more prudent approach.
- Physically, emotionally or sexually abuse, maltreat or exploit any child, young person or adults at risk.

## **Good relationships principles**

Children and adults should always be treated with respect and consideration. Those working in ministry with the young and vulnerable should portray at all times a positive role model by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, courtesy, tact and maturity.

## **Physical Contact – Respectful Touch**

Appropriate affection between adults and between adults and children is important for development, in the case of children, as well as being a positive part of ministry.

Touching is an essential part of life and necessary for:

- Basic care
- Showing love and reassurance
- Praise and communication

It should be safe, appropriate and not overdone. It should be remembered that touch can be perceived as a sign of warmth and friendliness or as a sign of dominance.

Touch should always be related to the recipient in terms of:

- Their needs at the time
- Limited duration
- Appropriateness given age, stage of development, gender, disability and culture.

All people have the right to decide how much or how little physical contact they have with others. Except in exceptional circumstances, such as when they are in need of immediate medical attention, their wishes should always be respected.

## Good practice guidance:

- It may be appropriate to hold and comfort a distressed child but be aware how this contact may be interpreted by the child.
- Everything should be in public. A hug or a touch in a group or openly, visible to others is very different from that done behind closed doors or in an unobservable place.
- Physical contact is an essential element of some ministries (sports, music, dance etc). All those involved in such ministries should practice safe touch, asking permission, explaining and defining the reason for the physical contact.
- When ground rules for activities or events are being discussed, event leaders or those supervising activities should introduce the idea of safe touch.
- Providing care for those with additional needs or disabilities may require levels of physical contact. In some circumstances consultation with the individual, their parents, carers etc is essential to fully understand the requirements and abilities of the person being cared for.
- Children and adults with additional needs may require levels of physical contact. In some circumstances consultation with the individual, their parents, carers etc is essential to fully understand the requirements and abilities of the person being cared for.
- Children and adult with additional needs may require higher levels of personal support in such areas as washing, dressing, toileting, feeding and mobility. Special arrangements may have to be made in these circumstances and agreed and supported by the individual, their parents, carers, care workers etc.

As far as possible support the person in their own care. Always avoid doing things for them if they are able to do it alone or for themselves. If they are able to help, this should be encouraged. Where the person is dependent upon your help, try and offer choices.

- In a group, team members, as part of good practice, should monitor one another in relation to physical contact. They should be able to help each other by pointing out anything that could be misunderstood or uncomfortable for a child, young person or adult;

- If an adult engages in inappropriate touch with a child, young person or adult, this must be challenged. If there are any concerns about an adult's contact then this must be reported to the Safeguarding Representative or Safeguarding Office for advice.

NB: Any activity that is, or may be thought to be, sexually inappropriate must be avoided at all times. Care should also be taken to only touch on "safe" parts of the body.

## **Managing Challenging Behaviour**

An integral part of the way love and care for others is shown, is the way we cope with disruptive or difficult behaviour.

Children, young people and adults need to feel safe and be prevented from harming themselves or others, or getting into situations where this may happen. The first step to creating an environment where people feel safe and therefore cared for is to establish clear expectations and boundaries for all concerned.

Where possible, i.e. when age and ability permit, event leaders and participants will together agree on what expectations they can reasonably have of each other and what will happen if these expectations are not honoured.

### **Good Practice**

- Event/activity leaders set and maintain safe, consistent and understandable boundaries;
- Expectations regarding behaviour are explained, discussed and negotiated between leaders and participants to develop an ethos of care and control within activities;
- Each individual's circumstances are taken into account in deciding measures to be taken in responding to them in relation to what is appropriate touch and any physical restraint;
- Positive behaviour will be rewarded.

### **Sanctions**

Sanctions must always be the final resort after instruction and problem solving.

**Under no circumstances is physical chastisement acceptable.**

- Sanctions to be utilised by event/activity leaders should be explored and agreed prior to the event/activity taking place;
- Any sanction must be proportionate to the misbehaviour and only about the issues in hand. Do not bring up previous incidents to confuse the issue;
- Any sanction should be for a short period of time;
- No sanction is an end in itself and should assist the individual in understanding how they should be behaving.

It is the behaviour not the person that is not welcome.



## **ANTI-BULLYING**

### **Objectives of This Policy**

- Bullying will not be tolerated;
- All adults involved in the activity/event as well as children and young people should have an understanding of what bullying is;
- All adults involved in the activity/event must know this policy on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported;
- All children/young people and parents should know what the policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises;
- Children, young people and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

### **Statement of Intent**

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our children and young people so they can develop in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable in any Focolare activity. If bullying does occur, all children and young people should be able to tell and be confident that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the group leaders.

### **What is Bullying?**

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

Bullying can be:

- Emotional: (being unfriendly)
- Physical: (pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use or threat of violence including via emails or text messaging)
- Racist: (racial taunts, graffiti, gestures)
- Sexual: (unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments)
- Homophobic (because of, or focusing on the issue of sexual orientation)
- Verbal (name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing including via emails or text messaging)
- Related to a person's impairment or disability may include name calling or ridiculing
- Directed at an adult as well as a child or young person

## **Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?**

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Children and young people need to learn different ways of behaving. We have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

## **Signs and Symptoms**

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should consider the possibility that the child may be bullied. Further information can be obtained from Kidscape.

## **Prevention**

Strategies can be adopted to prevent bullying. As and when appropriate, these may include:

1. Writing a set of group rules;
2. Signing a behaviour contract;
3. Writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about bullying;
4. Reading stories about bullying or having them read to the group;
5. Making up role-plays;
6. Having discussions about bullying and why it matters;

## **Procedures**

1. Report bullying to staff, event or activity leaders or organisers as appropriate;
2. In cases of serious or persistent bullying, the incidents will be recorded by staff, event or activity leaders or organisers;
3. In serious or persistent cases parents will be informed and asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem;
4. If it is thought that an offence has been committed, contact the police;
5. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and all bullying stopped quickly;
6. An attempt will be made to help the bullies change their behaviour;

Adapted from Creating a Safe Environment for vulnerable people, CSAS

## **WHAT TO DO IF A CHILD TELLS YOU THEY ARE BEING ABUSED**

### **Do**

- Take it seriously
- Reassure they are right to tell
- Listen carefully
- Record the conversation in the child's words and note the time
- Sign and date the record you make
- Explain what will happen next

### **Do Not**

- Ask leading questions
- Make promises you cannot keep
- Jump to conclusions
- Speculate or accuse anybody

Any allegation or incident of abuse must be reported to your group leader in the first instance. They will contact one of the Safeguarding Children team who will decide what to do next.

**It is not your responsibility to decide if the allegation is true or not**

### **Principle**

The internet, mobile phones, social networking and other interactive services have transformed the way in which we live. The new technologies offer tremendous opportunities to reach, communicate, evangelise and engage with those involved in the Focolare Movement and those in our communities who may have an interest in the church and the wider society.

The Focolare Movement is keen to promote the safe, and responsible, use of communication and interactive communication technologies within all their activities.

These guidelines seek to ensure the message of safe and responsible use of communication and interactive technologies is understood and guidelines are followed within the Focolare Movement.

### **Photography**

As an aspect both of celebration of faith, of personal achievement and evangelisation it has long been common practice to take and display photographs of children and young people on displays, websites and in newsletters and newspapers.

We know that the overwhelming majority of images taken are entirely appropriate and are taken in good faith. There are also opportunities however to distort the original intention behind taking such photographs. It is important for this reason to consider potential risks such as:

- The inappropriate use, adaptation or copying of images for use on child abuse website on the internet;
- The identification of children when a photograph is accompanied by significant personal information that will assist a third party in identifying the child. This can lead, and has led, to children being 'groomed.'

In addition, under the Data Protection Act 1998 photographs constitute 'personal data' and where it is possible to infer a person's religious beliefs from that photograph, constitute 'sensitive personal data.'

In view of that the following guidelines should be followed.

## **DO**

- Ensure you have parental consent to use photographic images of a child or young person if it is to be used in the public domain e.g. parish noticeboard, websites, newsletters or papers.
- Where possible focus on the activity rather than the individual.
- Ensure that all featured in photographs are appropriately dressed.
- Be general in labelling photographs e.g. Mariapolis Group 2017 rather than naming or tagging each child. A list of names may always be provided separately.
- When commissioning photographers ensure they are clear about what is expected by establishing who will hold the recorded images, what they will be used for, where they will be displayed.

## **DON'T**

- Publish or display photographs with the full name of a person or person's featured unless you have written consent to do so and have informed parents as to how the image will be used;
- Use an image for something other than which you have obtained permission.

## **Establishing a Website**

Websites or social networking profile pages are the centrepiece of any social media activity. The following are recommended guidelines for the establishment of a site. These can apply to a profile or fan page on social networking sites such as Facebook, a blog, a Twitter account, etc.

- Site administrators should be adults;
- There should be at least two site administrators (preferably more) for each site, to allow rapid response and continuous monitoring of the site;
- Do not use personal sites for Focolare programs. Create separate sites for these;
- Passwords and names of sites should be registered in a central location, and more than one adult should have access to this information;
- Be sure those establishing a site know these key rules:
  1. Abide by Focolare guidelines;
  2. Appreciate that even personal communication reflects the Focolare.  
Practice what you preach;
  3. Write in the first person. Do not claim to represent the official position of the Focolare Movement or the teachings of the Church, unless authorised to do so;
  4. Identify yourself. Do not use pseudonyms or the name of the Focolare event program, etc., as your identity, unless authorised to do so;
  5. Abide by copyright;
  6. Do not divulge confidential information about others. Nothing posted on the Internet is private;
  7. Do not cite others, post photos or videos of them, link to their material, etc. without their permission. Once posted material often becomes property of the site;
  8. Practice Catholic teaching and morals;
  9. Consider adding the Click CEOP Help button [2].

## **Social Networking Sites**

Alongside the very beneficial aspects of modern communication technologies we have to recognise that there are also increased risks to children and young people. We must take all reasonable steps to appropriately manage these risks.

If a group, decides that the most effective way of communicating to children or young people is via a social networking site then it is advisable to set up an account in the name of that group. It should also be made explicit as to how that site should be used and for what purpose.

The following is best practice in relation to social networking.

### **DO**

- Ensure all the privacy settings are located so that pages are only used for their intended purpose and not for meeting, sharing personal details or having private conversations;
- Nominate a named individual to monitor the networking page regularly and report on any content that causes concern and remove access for anyone behaving inappropriately;
- Make sure that this person is known to all parties using the social network and how they may be contacted in order to pass on any concern;
- Obtain parental consent before access is provided to any child or young person;
- Keep a record of any inappropriate, threatening or offensive material and report to the Safeguarding Coordinator.

### **DON'T**

- Accept as a friend any child or young person on social networking sites set up within the Focolare Movement;
- Share your own personal details or social networking sites with any child or young person;
- Make contact with children or young people known through Focolare social networking site outside the context of the Focolare Movement or other social networking sites;
- Use internet or web based communication to send personal message not related to Focolare events to a child or young person;
- Engage in any personal communications, 'banter' or comments.

## **Using Texts and Emails with Children & Young People**

It is strongly recommended that texting should not be considered as a method of communication between adults involved in Focolare Movement and children or young people.

If texts and emails are to be used in specific circumstances then:

### **DO**

- Get signed consent from parents to allow use of these methods of communication.
- Explain to parents the purpose and method of this, who may communicate with their son or daughter and what that communication is restricted to.
- Only use group texts or emails and always copy parents in.
- Ensure that all such communications are strictly about specific aspects of Focolare related activities, such as change of date, time or venue.

### **DON'T**

- Use texts or emails for personal conversation, sending pictures or jokes or other items of a personal nature;
- Respond to emails from young people other than those directly related to Focolare related activities. Advise the Focolare Safeguarding Representatives if you receive any inappropriate texts or emails.



## Access to Computers - Children and Young People

Where children and young people have access to computers as part of focolare activities, the event leader has a duty to ensure that:

- a. Measures are in place to ensure that the likelihood of children and young people accessing inappropriate materials is reduced e.g. parental controls and software to filter out internet material;
- b. Children and young people are aware that their personal details e.g. last name, address, school, passwords, e-mail address and telephone numbers are private and should not be disclosed unless approval is given by the event leader.
- c. Children and young people know that they should never send photographs and should be wary of chat rooms;
- d. Children and young people are aware that they should advise a leader about any e-mails or anything on line that makes them feel uncomfortable or bothers them;
- e. Children and young people are aware that they should advise a leader and their parent of a request to meet up with someone they have met on line and not to make plans to do so without alerting an adult and never go alone to such planned meetings;
- f. Children and young people are advised of a code of conduct for using chat rooms.

A sample code is **CHAT**

**C** = Careful - People online might not always be who they say they are.

**H** = Hang - Hang on to your personal information. Never give out your home address or other information.

**A** = Arranging - Arranging to meet can be dangerous. Never arrange to meet someone unless you are sure who they are.

**T** = Tell - Tell your friends or an adult if you find something that makes you feel uncomfortable.

## **E-Safety: Children Exposed to Abuse through the Digital Media**

### **1. Definition**

'Internet Abuse' relates to four main areas of abuse to children:

Abusive images of children (although these are not confined to the Internet);

A child or young person being groomed for the purpose of Sexual Abuse;

Exposure to pornographic images and other offensive material via the Internet; and

The use of the internet, and in particular social media sites, to engage children in extremist ideologies.

The term digital (data carrying signals carrying electronic or optical pulses) and interactive (a message relates to other previous message/s and the relationship between them) technology covers a range of electronic tools. These are constantly being upgraded and their use has become more widespread through the Internet being available using text, photos and video. The internet can be accessed on mobile phones, laptops, computers, tablets, webcams, cameras and games consoles.

Social networking sites are often used by perpetrators as an easy way to access children and young people for sexual abuse. In addition, radical and extremist groups may use social networking to attract children and young people into rigid and narrow ideologies that are intolerant of diversity: this is similar to the grooming process and exploits the same vulnerabilities. The groups concerned include those linked to extreme Islamist, or Far Right/Neo Nazi ideologies, various paramilitary groups, extremist Animal Rights groups and others who justify political, religious, sexist or racist violence.

Internet abuse may also include cyber-bullying or online bullying (see Bullying). This is when a child is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another child using the Internet and/or mobile devices. It is essentially behaviour between children, although it is possible for one victim to be bullied by many perpetrators. In any case of severe bullying it may be appropriate to consider the behaviour as child abuse by another young person.

Sexting describes the use of technology to generate images or videos made by children under the age of 18 of other children; images that are of a sexual nature and are indecent. The content can vary, from text messages to images of partial nudity to sexual images or video. These images are then shared between young people and/or adults and with people they may not even know. Young people are not always aware that their

actions are illegal and the increasing use of smart phones has made the practice much more common place.

E-Safety is the generic term that refers to raising awareness about how children, young people and adults can protect themselves when using digital technology and in the online environment, and provides examples of interventions that can reduce the level of risk for children and young people.

The chapters relating to Organised and Complex Abuse should be borne in mind depending on the circumstances of the concerns.

## **2. Risks**

There is some evidence from research that people found in possession of indecent images/pseudo images or films/videos of children may currently, or in the future become, involved directly in child abuse themselves.

In particular, the individual's access to children should be established during an assessment and section 47 investigation to consider the possibility that they may be actively involved in the abuse of children including those within the family, within employment contexts or in other settings such as voluntary work with children or other positions of trust.

Any indecent, obscene image involving a child has, by its very nature, involved a person, who in creating that image, has been party to abusing that child.

Similarly, children may be drawn to adopt a radical ideology through a failure to appreciate the bias in extremist material; in addition, by repeated viewing of extreme content they may come to view it as normal.

## **3. Indicators**

Often issues involving child abuse come to light through an accidental discovery of images on a computer or other device and can seem to emerge 'out of the blue' from an otherwise trusted and non-suspicious individual. This in itself can make accepting the fact of the abuse difficult for those who know and may have trusted that individual. Partners, colleagues and friends often find it very difficult to believe and may require support.

The initial indicators of child abuse are likely to be changes in behaviour and mood of the child victim. Clearly such changes can also be attributed to many innocent events in a child's life and cannot be regarded as diagnostic. However, changes to a child's circle of friends or a noticeable change in attitude towards the use of computer or phone could

have their origin in abusive behaviour. Similarly, a change in their friends or not wanting to be alone with a particular person may be a sign that something is upsetting them.

Children often show us rather than tell us that something is upsetting them. There may be many reasons for changes in their behaviour, but if we notice a combination of worrying signs it may be time to call for help or advice.

#### **4. Protection and Action to be Taken**

Where there is suspected or actual evidence of anyone accessing or creating indecent images of children, this must be referred to the Police and Children's social care in line with the Children – Management of Allegations and Concerns Procedure.

Where there are concerns about a child being groomed, exposed to pornographic material or contacted by someone inappropriately, via the Internet or other ICT tools like a mobile phone, referrals should be made to the Police and to Children's Social Care in line with the Children – Management of Allegations and Concerns Procedure.

The Serious Crime Act (2015) has introduced an offence of 'sexual communication with a child'. This applies to an adult, who communicates with a child and where the communication is sexual or, if it is intended to elicit from the child a communication, which is sexual and the adult reasonably believes the child to be under 16 years of age. The Act also amended the Sex Offences Act 2003 so it is now an offence for an adult to arrange to meet with someone under 16 having communicated with them on just one occasion, previously it was on at least two occasions.

Due to the nature of this type of abuse and the possibility of the destruction of evidence, the referrer should first discuss their concerns with the Police and Children's Social Care before raising the matter with the family. This will enable a joint decision to be made about informing the family and ensuring that the child's welfare is safeguarded.

All such reports should be taken seriously. Referrals will normally lead to a Strategy Discussion to determine the course of further investigation, enquiry and assessment. Any intervention should be continually under review especially if further evidence comes to light.

Where there are concerns in relation to a child's exposure to extremist materials, the child's school may be able to provide advice and support: all schools are required to identify a Prevent Single Point of Contact (SPOC) who is the lead for safeguarding in relation to protecting individuals from radicalisation and involvement in terrorism.

Suspected online terrorist material can be reported through [www.gov.uk/report-terrorism](http://www.gov.uk/report-terrorism). Reports can be made anonymously, although practitioners should not do so as they must follow the procedures for professionals. Content of concern can also be reported directly to social media platforms – see Safety features on Social Networks.

## **5. Issues**

When communicating via the internet, young people tend to become less wary and talk about things far more openly than they might when communicating face to face.

Both male and female adults and some young people may use the internet to harm children. Some do this by looking at, taking and/or distributing photographs and video images on the internet of children naked, in sexual poses and/or being sexually abused.

Children and young people should be supported to understand that when they use digital technology they should not give out personal information, particularly their name, address or school, mobile phone numbers to anyone they do not know or trust: this particularly includes social networking and online gaming sites. If they have been asked for such information, they should always check with their parent or other trusted adult before providing such details. It is also important that they understand why they must take a parent or trusted adult with them if they meet someone face to face whom they have only previously met on-line.

Children and young people should be warned about the risks of taking sexually explicit pictures of themselves and sharing them on the internet or by text. It is essential, therefore, that young people understand the legal implications and the risks they are taking. The initial risk posed by sexting may come from peers, friends and others in their social network who may share the images. Once an image has been sent, it is then out of your control, it could be shared with others or posted elsewhere online. The Criminal Justice and Courts Act (2015) introduced the offence of Revenge Porn where intimate images are shared with the intent to cause distress to the specific victim.

In some cases, adults may also groom a young persons into sending such images which can then be used to blackmail and ensnare them – see Child Sexual Exploitation.

## **Further Information**

Child Safety Online

See UK Safer Internet website and CEOP, thinkUknow website.

### Childnet Advice on Sexting

Behaviour that is illegal if committed offline is also illegal if committed online. It is recommended that legal advice is sought in the event of an online issue or situation. There are a number of pieces of legislation that may apply including:

#### **Data Protection Act 1998**

This protects the rights and privacy of individual's data. To comply with the law, information about individuals must be collected and used fairly, stored safely and securely and not disclosed to any third party unlawfully. The Act states that person data must be:

Fairly and lawfully processed;

Processed for limited purposes;

Adequate, relevant and not excessive;

Accurate;

Not kept longer than necessary;

Processed in accordance with the data subject's rights;

Secure;

Not transferred to other countries without adequate protection.

#### **Freedom of Information Act 2000**

The Freedom of Information Act gives individuals the right to request information held by public authorities. All public authorities and companies wholly owned by public authorities have obligations under the Freedom of Information Act. When responding to requests, they have to follow a number of set procedures.

#### **Communications Act 2003**

Sending by means of the Internet a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character; or sending a false message by means of or persistently making use of the Internet for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety is guilty of an offence liable, on conviction, to imprisonment. This wording is important because an offence is complete as soon as the message has been sent: there is no need to prove any intent or purpose.

#### **Protection of Children Act 1978**

It is an offence to take, permit to be taken, make, possess, show, distribute or advertise indecent images of children in the United Kingdom. A child for these purposes is anyone under the age of 18. Viewing an indecent image of a child on your computer means that you have made a digital image. An image of a child also covers pseudo-photographs (digitally collated or otherwise). A person convicted of such an offence may face up to 10 years in prison.

### **Sexual Offences Act 2003**

The offence of grooming is committed if you are over 18 and have communicated with a child under 16 on one occasion (including by phone or using the Internet) it is an offence to meet them or travel to meet them anywhere in the world with the intention of committing a sexual offence. Causing a child under 16 to watch a sexual act is illegal, including looking at images such as videos, photos or webcams, for your own gratification. It is also an offence for a person in a position of trust to engage in sexual activity with any person under 18, with whom they are in a position of trust. (Typically, teachers, social workers, health professionals, connexions staff fall in this category of trust). Any sexual intercourse with a child under the age of 13 commits the offence of rape.

### **Serious Crime Act 2015**

The Act introduces a new offence of sexual communication with a child. This would criminalise an adult who communicates with a child for the purpose of obtaining sexual gratification, where the communication is sexual or if it is intended to elicit from the child a communication which is sexual and the adult reasonably believes the child to be under 16.

## **REPORTING AND MONITORING**

- The Focolare Movement should appoint appropriate adults to monitor the content of their websites;
- Children and young people should be advised to always tell an adult they trust about communications that make them feel uncomfortable or where they have been asked

to keep communication secret;

- Any discovery of inappropriate use (of a safeguarding nature) of social networking sites, computers, email or texting should be reported to the Focolare Safeguarding Representatives;
- Focolare personnel must report unofficial sites that carry the Focolare logo to the Focolare Safeguarding Representatives. It is important that the owner is able to protect its identity and prevent unwanted publications. Any misinformation found on a site, such as Wikipedia, should also be reported to the Focolare Safeguarding Representatives;

### **USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES**

The **UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS)** is a voluntary organisation chaired by Ministers from the Department for Education and the Home Office. UKCCIS brings together over 180 organisations and individuals from government, industry, law enforcement, academia, charities and parenting groups. Some of the organisations UKCCIS works with include: Cisco, Apple, Sony, Research in Motion, the four largest internet service providers, Facebook and Microsoft.

The **Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)** has numerous resources for parents and carers and children using the internet, see also **Think U Know, CEOP website**.

The **Catholic Youth Work website** has detailed guidelines on the use of social networking sites and they can be found under resources for youth workers.

[2] The **CEOP** help button gives access to help on viruses, hacking, online bullying and enables reporting of people acting inappropriately online.

**Policy Adapted from Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS) July 2014**



## **FOCOLARE EVENTS CODE OF CONDUCT**

Everyone is expected to be courteous and to act in a way that will ensure a safe and supportive environment for all.

Everyone is expected to respect and care for each other and each other's property.

Your participation in the activity or programme is an important part of you being in the group.

You are asked to respect all areas of the place you are visiting e.g. not to drop litter, not to cause damage etc. Any non-accidental damage will be charged to the group.

It is everyone's responsibility that the law on under-aged drinking is followed and this will be strictly enforced amongst all those taking part in the event.

Anyone over the age of 18 consuming alcohol is asked to do so responsibly.

On any outing or group activity leaders will give instructions which are intended for the guidance, health and safety of you and the whole group – everyone is asked to listen carefully to them and ensure all participants in the group are informed of them.

This Code of Conduct is for your health and safety and that of all present – it is therefore very important.

Anyone breaking this code or behaving in an unacceptable manner will be asked to leave.

## Code of Conduct for young people for Focolare event, Mariapolis

*The following example is taken from a more detailed Focolare Policy that describes similar circumstances:*

We allow **16 – 17 year olds**, who are known to us, to take part in all events and to stay at single sex accommodation as part of the group. This is on condition that the young people and their parents/guardians agree on the “Code of Conduct” (see below) set out by the adults responsible for the accommodation and all aspects of the trip/event. This “Code of Conduct” has to be signed by the parents/guardians and also the young people to ensure that the parents/guardians are informed about the nature of the accommodation and events taking place during the Mariapolis and that the young people who participate in the activities, adhere to the code of conduct and do not undertake any activity that might be of risk to themselves or others.

### **The arrangements are outlined below:**

The young people are expected to take part in the activities organised by the Mariapolis and any organised for the age group 16+.

During the Mariapolis, the group leaders will be in charge of the young people. The leader will take all reasonable care **but** they may not be *constantly* supervised. The young person should not absent himself/herself from any activity without the agreement of the group leaders.