



# Child Safeguarding & Protection Service

Safeguarding Guidance for the use of “*online audio and web conferencing platforms*” including Zoom, with Parents/Guardians and children (12 years old or younger) in a parish/diocesan setting

It is Diocesan policy that parish/diocesan groups should **never** engage with children under the age of thirteen, using “*online audio and web conferencing platforms*” including Zoom, other than in the presence of a parent or guardian.

Where a parish group such as a Family Mass Group or Sacramental Preparation group, wishes to engage with families (a parent/guardian always visibly present in the meeting) using these platforms, the following guidance should be adhered to.

- Parents should be informed of the format of the meeting, prior to it taking place. This allows them to make an informed decision as to whether they wish to take part or not.
- Parishes/diocesan agencies should not use the free version of Zoom as it does not include the security measures that the subscription versions do. The subscription should be taken out by the parish and should be managed by someone who understands the platform and who is appointed by the priest in charge.
- Church personnel should NOT use a private Zoom account to engage with children or vulnerable persons.
- If for any reason a meeting is infiltrated from the outside (Zoom Bombed), that is, if somebody not invited to the meeting appears, the meeting should be terminated immediately. The breach should be reported to Zoom and in the event that the organisers, parents or guardians feel that such a breach poses a threat of harm or abuse of the

children taking part, this should be reported to the Diocesan Child Safeguarding and Protection Service (CSPS) without delay.

- All leaders should be fully conversant with diocesan safeguarding policy as set out in the *“Child Safeguarding in the Archdiocese of Dublin: Statement, Reporting Procedures and Good Practice Guidelines 2018”* and the parents and guardians should be made aware of the Diocese’s commitment to the safety and welfare of their children.
- The usual child protection procedures apply whenever concerns for the safety and welfare of children are identified during these meetings, including reporting of such concerns to the diocesan and civil authorities. The diocesan safeguarding policy document is available on the CSPS website: [www.csps.dublindiocese.ie/policies/](http://www.csps.dublindiocese.ie/policies/)

### Garda Vetting and Safeguard Training

All church personnel engaging with children and their parents/guardians using online conference platforms are exercising “Public Ministry” and consequently:

- Must be Garda Vetted by their parish or diocesan agency,
- Must have completed appropriate safeguarding training,
- Should be competent in the use of whatever live platform they are using.