



## ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN

ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE, DRUMCONDRA ROAD LOWER, DUBLIN 9, D09 H4C2

Dear Parishioners

This year the theme of our diocesan Safeguarding Sunday is working to make our society safer for children and young people. We have been on a difficult and painful journey over the past 30 years or so towards making our Church a safer place for children and vulnerable adults. We have learned some lessons along the way that may be of benefit to the wider society to which we all belong.

Recently published data from the Central Statistics Office tell us that the incidence of the abuse of children and young people in Ireland has not lessened in recent times. In fact, the situation has disimproved in some respects. However, the risks to the safety of children and young people have changed. As a society we are highly aware of the abuse of children that occurred in institutions such as schools, sporting associations and faith communities. The CSO data suggest that that is less of a feature now than in the past. That is good news. It means that all the work that has been done in our parishes and other church organisations and the similar work that has been done in sports and recreational organisations has been effective in making these organisations safer places for children. We have learned from past failures and have applied the lessons to good effect. We must continue to do so.

The CSO data show a significant rise in peer abuse, that is, the abuse of children and young people by other children and young people. UK research has found that even very young children are exposed to violent and graphic images on their phones and electronic devices. This has been found to be associated with very distorted perceptions of relationships and sexuality. It is not hard to see how this is placing children and young people at greater risk of sexual violence.

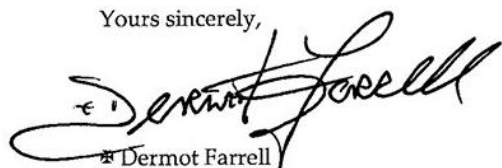
We know from our experience that when people come together with determination to protect children, the results are positive. It is not enough to condemn: we have to act with purpose. There are ways in which we can help this situation, such as:

- Challenging societal misogyny and the debasement of women and girls;
- Supporting campaigns to curb the activities of companies that profit from children and young people having access to online pornography;
- Cooperating with other civil society groups who share our commitment to child protection and sharing resources with them where we can;
- Engaging with children and young people and involving them in the life of our parishes.

One to the saddest consequences of the scandal of child abuse is that the majority of children and young people no longer participate in church activities. We are concerned that our attempts to engage with children and young people will be misinterpreted or misconstrued. This, however, makes the world less safe for children and young people. Children and young people need responsible adults who can provide care and protection and model appropriate relationships for them.

I ask you to remember in prayer those who have suffered and continue to suffer as a consequence of abuse in childhood.

Yours sincerely,



\* Dermot Farrell  
Archbishop of Dublin