1.9A Guidance on Use of Technology

Church authorities need to assess the benefits of technology and how this can be used safely and effectively, in line with rules that respect the dignity and rights of all users, particularly children.

Detailed policies and procedures should be provided on the use of technology, including digital and online systems such as:

- The internet (Guidance 1.9B);

- Texting and emailing (Guidance 1.9C);

- Photography (Guidance 1.9D);

- CCTV and webcams (Guidance 1.9E).

The majority of occasions when people use mobile phones, computers or take photographs of children do not provide any cause for concern. However, there are occasions when this is not the case.

At the outset it is important to identify the risks associated with the use of technology, and then to minimise the risks by putting in place measures outlined below.

Consent

The consent of parents/guardians and children should always be sought prior to engaging in any activity that involves the use of IT equipment, such as those outlined above.

A Church body may seek overall consent from its members/group leaders (1.4A Template 3), or it may ask for permission for set occasions (1.9A Template 1).

When seeking consent for the use of images or videos for Church purposes, the following should be considered:

- The issue of consent for photography/videoing for Church purposes should be addressed with parents/guardians and children prior to the sacramental day, and the policy should be explained to all families who will be attending;

- In seeking consent for photography/videos, children and families should be reminded about the rights to privacy and data protection of other children, their families and the wider community;

- Those organising an event for Church purposes, and who are seeking consent for photography/video usage, should be sensitive to the fact that many parents/guardians are reluctant to allow the general viewing of their children, or of children in their care, on sites such as YouTube, Facebook, etc.

Purpose

Guidelines should be clear as to the reason and purpose of the use of the particular form of technology:

- Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour and use of equipment;

- Provide guidance on acceptable language;

- Provide guidance on storage of information;

- Provide guidance on use of photography: if using an external photographer/videographer, seek confirmation about any publications that will be made by them after the event, and ensure that they have been vetted, have identification and do not have any unsupervised access to children or one-to-one photo sessions at events;

- Images of children should never be taken that capture them in what are commonly understood as 'non-public' activities. Children should be fully and appropriately dressed and related images should always be about the activity and not focused on any individual child;

- Images should not allow the identification of a child or their whereabouts. The full name of a child should not be used;

- Children in vulnerable circumstances (e.g. those in care or victims of any type of abuse) should not be photographed without the consent of those who hold parental responsibility;

- Provide guidance on the use of mobile phones, and especially on the use of mobile phone cameras, which can be easily used for offensive actions without the subject being aware of their use;

- Provide guidance on how to communicate this policy with parents/guardians and young people.