

Protocol for Use of St. Bride's Parish Centre

Introduction

The Parish Centre is an asset to our parish community, offering a versatile space that supports a wide range of activities. This protocol outlines the guidelines and procedures for the use of the Parish Centre, ensuring it serves its intended purposes effectively while aligning with the ethos of the Church.

The Parish Centre is legally owned by the Diocese of Down and Connor. It is managed on behalf of the Diocese by the Parish Centre Manager who, as a Diocesan employee, is responsible to the Diocese for its use in compliance with Diocesan principles.

The Parish Centre is managed primarily for the benefit of St. Brigid's parish community and for all groups who wish to use the facility.

Purpose

The Parish Centre serves multiple functions, including:

- **Fostering Community:** Providing a welcoming environment where parishioners and their friends can gather, strengthening bonds, and building a sense of belonging and unity within the parish community.
- **Faith-Based Activities:** Hosting activities that promote spiritual growth and learning, such as prayer groups, and educational workshops.
- **Charitable Activities:** Facilitating initiatives aimed at supporting the less fortunate and other charitable endeavours.
- **Recreational Activities:** Offering space for recreational and cultural events, including sports, music, and art activities, promoting a holistic approach to parish life.
- **Commercial Hire:** Allowing the Parish Centre to be available for hire for commercial activities that align with the church's values, ensuring that the Centre remains a sustainable resource without draining parish finances.

User Groups

A variety of organisations involved in the above activities use the Parish Centre and can be considered under three categories:

1 Internal Parish Groups

The following conditions apply to internal parish groups:

- These are groups which have been recognised as Parish Groups by the Parish Priest.
- Where such a group works closely with children or adults at risk, they must comply with policies and procedures laid down by the Parish Safeguarding Committee.
- The procedure for requesting permission to use the Parish Centre is as detailed in the "Booking and Management" section above.

2 Independent External Catholic Church Groups e.g. SPRED, St Vincent DePaul

These are catholic groups which have not been formed by the parish, but which are recognised as catholic groups by the Parish Priest. The Parish Centre is available for such groups who may wish to use the Parish Centre to hold events, on the following conditions:

- They must comply with the safeguarding policies of the parish.
- If such a group wishes to use the Parish Centre from year to year, they must complete the annual parish audit of all groups which is carried out by the Parish Safeguarding Committee.
- If such a group is an occasional user of the Parish Centre, it will be required to satisfy the Parish Safeguarding Committee that it complies with safeguarding policies of the parish.
- The procedure for requesting permission to use the Parish Centre is as detailed in the “Booking and Management” section above.

3 External Independent and/or Commercial Groups.

These groups do not necessarily have any religious ethos and may belong to other Christian denominations or other religions. This is not a bar to applying to use the Parish Centre.

These groups apply to use the Parish Centre by completing and signing the Down and Connor Diocese Licencing Agreement. The Licencing Agreement has insurance requirements and requires evidence of compliance with safeguarding and data protection policies.

The Licencing Agreement is a legally binding document. The Parish Centre manager will liaise with the applicant in relation to completing the Licencing Agreement.

Booking and Management

Given that the Parish Centre is a limited resource, it is essential to manage bookings efficiently to prevent scheduling conflicts and ensure equitable access for all users.

All requests to book the use of the Parish Centre shall be processed in accordance with the booking approval procedure detailed below. While approval in principle may have been agreed with a parish committee or with the Parish Priest, an event will not take place until the booking approval procedure has been completed.

This will allow the Parish Centre Manager to manage it for the benefit of all users.

Approval Process

All event organisers who wish to use the Parish Centre must first complete the booking form which is available at the Parish Office. The booking form ensures that all necessary information is collected and that events comply with parish guidelines. These include the following steps: -

Initial Approval by the Parish Office:

- The booking form must first be submitted to Parish Office for approval.
- The application will be assessed as to whether the proposed activity aligns with the parish's values and mission, including safeguarding requirements.
- The Parish Centre Manager will advise if the application to use the Parish Centre has been granted.
- The Parish Centre Manager will verify the availability or otherwise of the requested time slot and manage the scheduling to avoid booking clashes.
- Late applications are not likely to be granted especially where other groups are already using the Parish Centre.
- The group organiser will liaise with the Parish Centre Manager on all matters relating to the running of the event in question.
- The group organiser will not make any arrangements to hold the event until the Parish Centre Manager has verified the details of the event.
- If any event is cancelled the group organiser will immediately inform the Parish Centre Manager.

Usage Guidelines

1. Alignment with Parish Ethos:

- All activities must reflect the values and mission of the Church. Activities that contradict the church's teachings or values will not be approved.
- All groups and activities must comply with this Protocol and with parish safeguarding and data protection policies.
- All documents are subject to inspection by and approval of the Parish Centre Manager and the Parish Safeguarding Committee to ensure compliance with safeguarding and data protection requirements.

2. Respect and Maintenance:

- Users are expected to treat the Parish Centre with respect, ensuring it remains clean and undamaged.
- Any damages or issues should be reported immediately to the Parish Centre Manager.

3. Timeliness:

- Events should adhere to the scheduled start and end times to respect other users' bookings.
- Late arrivals or extended use of the space without prior approval may result in restrictions on future bookings.
- The Parish Centre is not usually available at weekends and during holiday periods.

4. Clean up Responsibility:

- Organisers are responsible for cleaning up the space after their event, leaving it in the same condition as it was found.
- Dispose of all rubbish appropriately and ensure that any furniture or equipment used is returned to its original place.

Contact Information

- **Approval Authority:** Parish Office – see website for contact information.
- **Booking Coordination:** Parish Centre Manager email: stbrideshall@btinternet.com

Conclusion

The Parish Centre is an essential asset that enriches the spiritual and social lives of our parish community. By adhering to this protocol, we ensure that the Parish Centre is managed efficiently, remains aligned with our church's values, and continues to serve as a welcoming and supportive space for all.

This Protocol has been drafted by the Parish Community Association and approved by St. Brigid's Parish Priest.

Reviewed and dated February 2026.