# Diocese of Elphin – HR Policy Handbook

**Document Name:** **Email Policy**
**Document No:** **3.1.2 (original)**
**Effective Date:** **15th February 2019**
**Written By:** **Frank Mitchell, HR Advisor**
**Approved By:** **+Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin**

*Operating under the patronage of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, the Diocese of Elphin aims to provide staff members with a safe, caring and supportive Christian environment in which to carry out their work. Work objectives are to be advanced with due regard to the needs and dignity of each staff member and with due regard for the individuals and communities the diocese serves.*

*This document outlines the Diocesan policy on Email. It is applicable to parishes, offices, agencies and any entity operating under the governance of the Diocese of Elphin (hereafter referred to as "the employer"). Line Managers (Bishop, Priests, Deacons, Religious, Lay Personnel who supervise staff members) are responsible for communicating this policy and having it signed off by their staff member(s).*

## Introduction

Email is a computerised electronic communications system that you are required to use in the performance of your duties as a staff member. While email is important to the normal conduct of business, it also carries considerable risks when used inappropriately. The intention of this email policy is to help staff to use electronic mail properly, to reduce the risk of intentional or inadvertent misuse and to ensure that official information transferred via email is properly handled. For that reason, the use of electronic mail is governed by acceptable usage as stipulated by this policy.

This policy covers the use of email services by all staff members of "the employer". Contract and temporary staff using computing resources belonging to "the employer" must also be made aware of, and comply with, this policy.

The policy may be amended from time to time and staff members will be notified of amendments by way of written notice and/or electronic notice.

## Privacy

All intellectual property rights in documents generated on "the employer's" computers/electronic equipment, and documents sent via "the employer's" email system, rest with "the employer". If there is a personal element to the email, the email nevertheless belongs to "the employer" and will be open to such monitoring and dealings as are appropriate.

Information stored on "the employer's" computers/electronic devices is regularly backed up, including information relating to email messages. Accordingly, you have no expectation of privacy in relation to the sending, or storing, of email messages. While "the employer" does not routinely monitor the content of email messages, it may, for computer maintenance and other purposes, analyse emails individually or collectively.

Circumstances giving rise to such analysis include, but are not limited to:
- investigations triggered by indications of misconduct;
- the detection of computer viruses;
- monitoring proper use;
- the location of information required for business purposes;
- responding to legal or regulatory requirements;
- fulfilment of obligations to parishioners, clients, third parties and relevant regulatory authorities.

# Diocese of Elphin – HR Policy Handbook

**Document Name:** **Email Policy**
**Document No:** **3.1.2 (original)**
**Effective Date:** **15th February 2019**
**Written By:** **Frank Mitchell, HR Advisor**
**Approved By:** **+Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin**

## Acceptable use of e-mail

E-mail as a resource is primarily to be used for authorised business purposes. Personal use of email should be kept to a minimum, such that it does not interfere with work commitments and is undertaken in your own time. Excessive use of email for personal purposes is strictly prohibited. Such use must also comply with the requirements of this policy.

You must protect your user ID and computer/device from unauthorised use. You are responsible for all activities carried out under your user ID and originating from your computer/device. Remember that external email should be considered a public, visible postcard, without any security. You must assume that any correspondence sent via the internet can be read by anyone desiring to do so.

You must use email as you would any official communications tool. This implies that when the email is sent, both the sender and the reader should ensure that the communication complies with normal communications guidelines.

If you need to send material which is confidential or sensitive, you should put it in an attachment and apply a password. The password should be communicated separately to the recipient.

No email communication sent via computers/devices provided for work purposes should be unethical, be perceived to be a conflict of interest, or contain confidential information.

## Inappropriate use

In making use of email, you must NOT:

- use someone else's ID to send mail;
- use email to circulate joke mail or chain letters, internally or externally;
- use email to harass or intimidate another person, broadcast unsolicited messages, or send unwanted mail;
- communicate to another in any manner that could cause him or her distress, embarrassment, or cause unwarranted attention. There must be no personal attacks, inclusive of those based on gender, race, national origin, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or membership of the Travelling Community;
- use email, or other system resources, to gain access to, or possession of, pornographic materials;
- accept/open electronic mail messages that might be harmful to "the employer's" computing resources, or to information stored thereon;
- use vulgar, abusive, or hateful language;
- save, download, transmit or purposely view sexual, pornographic, racist, profane or other offensive material;
- download software, graphical or other forms of information for personal use;
- produce advertising or listings for personal benefit;
- use the email system to send mail that may be damaging to "the employer";
- engage in any activity that is in competition with the interests of "the employer;
- subscribe to any contracts, unless you are authorised to do so within the terms of "the employer's" policy on purchasing;
- accept any material by email that may give rise to a breach of the intellectual property rights of any outside party;
- engage in any other activity that does not comply with the principles presented above.

# Diocese of Elphin – HR Policy Handbook

**Document Name:** **Email Policy**
**Document No:** **3.1.2 (original)**
**Effective Date:** **15th February 2019**
**Written By:** **Frank Mitchell, HR Advisor**
**Approved By:** **+Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin**

## Potential Risks

The internet is the medium for external email communications. Because of its design, the internet cannot guarantee security or message integrity. Many risks attached to the sending of emails, including the following.

- Email messages to a particular addressee may be intercepted, viewed by other persons in the addressee organisation, forwarded without your knowledge, altered, or cut and pasted into another e-mail or medium without authority;
- An email message may go to persons other than the intended recipient. If the email contains confidential or sensitive information, this could be damaging to "the employer";
- Emails should be regarded as potentially public information. There is, therefore, a heightened risk of legal liability for the sender, the recipient and "the employer" for which they work;
- Email is a form of publishing. Therefore, defamation laws apply to emails;
- Personal data contained in emails may be accessible under data protection legislation. Furthermore, emails to Government and other public bodies may be accessible under freedom of information legislation;
- Email is speedy and therefore messages written in haste, or written carelessly, can be sent without the opportunity to check or rephrase. This could give rise to legal liability on "the employer's" part, such as claims for defamation, etc;
- Information contained in, or attached to emails may belong to others and there may be copyright implications in sending or receiving them without permission;
- An email message may legally bind "the employer" contractually in certain instances without the proper authority being obtained in advance;
- Email messages can carry computer viruses that are particularly dangerous to "the employer's" computer operations.

You are required to be conscious of the above risks and to ensure that, in your use of email or other resources, you do not expose "the employer" to any such risks.

Be particularly careful when replying to an incoming email, not to forward it to others without checking that there is no external information attached which they should not see. Similarly, care needs to be exercised not to use the "reply all" option, unless your reply is actually intended for all those to whom the incoming email was sent.

When sending a group email, consideration should be given to using the BCC option, which avoids passing the email addresses of correspondents to others who may not be intended to have them.

## Protection of Staff

"The employer" is committed to protecting its staff from the effects of inappropriate use of email by others. If you receive any offensive, unpleasant, harassing, or intimidating messages via email, you should inform your manager immediately. It is important that the sources of such emails are traced as quickly as possible. The message should be printed and kept for investigative purposes.

# Diocese of Elphin – HR Policy Handbook

**Document Name:** **Email Policy**
**Document No:** **3.1.2 (original)**
**Effective Date:** **15th February 2019**
**Written By:** **Frank Mitchell, HR Advisor**
**Approved By:** **+Kevin Doran, Bishop of Elphin**

## Enforcement

If any breach of this email policy is observed, then disciplinary action up to and including dismissal may be taken.

This policy is not exhaustive. In situations that are not expressly governed by this policy, you must ensure that your use of email is at all times appropriate and consistent with your responsibilities towards "the employer". In case of any doubt, you should consult with your manager or the HR Advisor.

*For further information please contact:*
HR Advisor
Elphin Diocesan Office
St. Mary's
Temple Street
Sligo F91 KTX2
Email: hr@elphindiocese.ie
Mobile: 087 240 4882