

Newsletter

Latest News from the National Office
for Safeguarding Children in the
Catholic Church in Ireland

ALERT BOX

This part of the Newsletter is designed to draw the attention of Church authorities to important developments outlined below:

Revision of safeguarding children policy	p. 4
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December 2021

National Office Staff

Click on any of the links below to send an email directly to any member of staff

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[Teresa Devlin](#)

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[Peter Kieran](#)

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Introduction

As we enter the holy season of Advent, the directors and staff of the National Board wish you all a very happy and holy Christmas. We hope that this year you get the chance to spend time with family and friends and celebrate the joy together.

This Newsletter will provide information on:

- Changes to the National Board
- National Office working arrangements
- Reviews of Safeguarding Practice
- Review of NCMC
- Training:
- Evaluation of Head to Heart in formation
- Head to Heart in Diaconate formation
- International Support
- The revision of *Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016*
- Development of a one Church approach to vulnerable adults
- Annual Self Audits
- Changes to National Board Guidance
- Theology Videos and National Conference
- Resources

Changes to the National Board

After almost 13 years we say goodbye and thanks to Michael Ringrose who is retiring as Director of the National Board. Michael, a former Garda has been a strong advocate of safeguarding children in the Catholic Church; and has offered great wisdom and support to the work of the National Board. We wish Michael good health in his retirement.

The National Board welcomes Mr. Justice Garrett Sheehan, recently retired as a judge on the Court of Appeal, as a new Director. It is planned that Mr. Justice Sheehan will succeed our current Chairman, Mr John Morgan who will be retiring very shortly.

National Office Working Arrangements

After 18 months of working 4 days per week, staff have now returned to full-time working, and are available each day Monday-Friday 9am-5pm.

The National Office will close for Christmas from 23rd December, 2021 until 4th January, 2022.

Reviews of Safeguarding Practice

The National Board has appointed three new consultants to undertake Review work. These additional staff members mean that we will be in a good position as we move forward into 2022 to complete reviews of Dioceses and Religious Orders. If Covid-19 restrictions are still required, we will offer hybrid reviews with some of the engagement on-line, with other aspects face to face (with appropriate safeguards). To date we have completed reviews in 10 Dioceses, with 2 more in process; 4 religious orders, and a further 2 starting early in 2022.

If you are interested in requesting a Review by the National Board please write to Teresa Devlin at the National Office. teresa.devlin@safeguarding.ie

Theology Videos and National Conference

We are delighted to conclude the series of Theology of Safeguarding Videos which are all available to view at

<https://www.safeguarding.ie/national-conference-2022>.

We now intend publishing in hard copy the transcripts of all videos in time for the National Conference which will take place in Monaghan on 11th and 12th May, 2022.

Please save the date, more details to follow, once all speakers are confirmed.

Review of the NCMC

The Review of the National Case Management Committee has now been completed and the report presented to the National Board. Thank you to all of you who offered your views and suggestions for improvement. The NCMC have set aside a day in December, to consider the advice and to action suggested changes. Following this meeting, we will share the report in full, early in 2022.



Training and Support

Since the last Newsletter the following training events have been facilitated

- Train the Trainers course
- Safeguarding Committee training for two dioceses
- Training for new DLPs
- Four ecclesiastical provincial area meetings.

In 2022, concentration will be on revising and developing two Church policies – (1) Safeguarding Children; and (2) Safeguarding Vulnerable People. Given the anticipated engagement with Church personnel on these two important initiatives, there will be fewer training events organised by the National Board.

Training dates already scheduled for 2022 are available to book on the National Board's website here- <https://www.safeguarding.ie/news-events/events>.

Head to Heart- Child Safeguarding in Formation

The final module of the Head to Heart programme will be facilitated in February 2022.

Upon completion of the last module, the National Board will initiate an evaluation of the full programme. Peter Kieran has been appointed to carry out this evaluation and will be seeking the views of seminarians (past and present), formators; Church authorities and guest speakers. It is anticipated that the evaluation will be complete by April 2022.

The programme has now been accredited by St Patrick's college Maynooth, which means that all candidates will receive a certificate of achievement, upon successful completion of the programme.

Head to Heart and the Permanent Diaconate

At the request of those who manage and oversee the formation of deacons, the National Board submitted a proposal for the delivery of a revised edition of "Head to Heart" for men preparing for ministry as permanent deacons. It is hoped that Head to Heart will be embedded into the programme of deacon formation according to the Universal Norms and the Norms for Ireland. The National Board is preparing to deliver the modules beginning September 2022.

International Support

Periodically, requests are made for the National Board staff to facilitate training to Irish missionary orders who have ministry overseas. This training is written specifically to meet the request of the particular Church body, and focuses on exploring how best practice from Ireland can be transferred into another culture and context. We delivered this twice during 2021, and have scheduled two further dates before the end of the year.

Revision of Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016

Changes in legislation, canon law and our experience of practice since the development of *Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016* require that we now review the existing Church policy and make recommendations for change. This means that National Office staff will engage in a detailed consultation exercise inside and outside the Church. We have started the process by setting up a series of Listening Meetings which are available to book on the National Board's website:

- [14/12/2021- Listening Meeting for DLPs and Advisory Panel Members](#)
- [16/12/2021- Listening Meeting for Safeguarding Coordinators and Safeguarding Committees](#)
- [11/01/2022- Listening Meeting for Support People and Advisors](#)
- [13/01/2022- Listening Meeting for Church Authorities](#)
- [19/02/2022- Annual Update and Listening Meeting for Trainers](#)
- [22/01/2022- Annual Update and Listening Meeting for Trainers \(alternative date\)](#)

If you have not received the notice of these meetings, please feel free to contact us at admin@safeguarding.ie to register your interest in attending.

We are also interested in hearing the views of children and their carers, complainants of abuse, respondents, priests, religious and lay people who minister in the Church and a range of other stakeholders.

It is our hope to seek the views of as many people as possible; more information on this will be available as the work develops.

Development of a one Church approach to Vulnerable Adults

The October Newsletter highlighted the request that has been made by the Irish Bishops' Conference (IEC) and AMRI for the National Board to initiate a one year programme to develop a one Church approach to vulnerable adults. Work is now well underway and by the end of 2021 we hope to have produced a Guidance and Practice Paper (GAP); considered a critique of existing Diocesan and Religious Order policies; developed initial guidance and conducted a series of listening meetings. The National Board is in the process of amending its Memo and Articles, and once complete we will engage with external experts, who will assist with this work.

Monsignor Joseph McGuinness, Secretary to the IEC and David Rose, Executive Secretary for AMRI are monitoring with us the work, as it progresses. We are also in the process of setting up a steering group to guide this work; if you are interested in joining this steering group, please contact Niall.moore@safeguarding.ie

Annual Self Audits

Please note that all Church Authorities are required to notify the National Board of the status of the annual self-audit by end March 2022. Self-audits are undertaken by safeguarding committees and DLPs and are a mechanism for Church Authority to satisfy themselves that all appropriate standards are being met within their Church body.

Changes to National Board Guidance

Over the last number of months, staff from the National Board have been working on a number of important guidance updates. These are outlined below:

- Children First Child Safeguarding Statement - following consultation with Tusla, the IEC and AMRI, changes have been made to the Church's Policy and guidance on managing disclosures received in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. As the policy and associated guidance reflects assessment and management of risk, changes have also been made to Children First child safeguarding statement template and the localised risk assessment procedures. These revised documents will all be available on the National Board's website here <https://www.safeguarding.ie/our-services/policy-and-guidance> by the end of the year.
- Guidance on Lay Associations – The National Board has approved guidance which enables some Lay Associations to apply to become associate members of the National Board. This guidance has been endorsed by a small working group on behalf of IEC and AMRI. The guidance also includes advice on managing allegations for lay associations who minister on behalf of a Church body. The guidance will be available on the National Board's website here <https://www.safeguarding.ie/our-services/policy-and-guidance> by the end of the year.
- Allegations against Bishops and their Equivalents (including actions and omissions)- Following consultation with the IEC and feedback from a number of sources, another working group was established to further refine the guidance. Recommendations for change will be incorporated into the guidance for final approval by the Spring meeting of the Bishops' Conference.

Resources

The Saint Luke Institute is probably best known for its residential assessment and treatment programmes at its facilities in the US and in England. The organisation's very informative website at <https://sli.org/> provides full descriptions of its direct service provision, and this is summarized in the following way:

We care for Catholic clergy, permanent deacons, and consecrated religious with mood and anxiety disorders, trauma and stress-related disorders, personality disorders, interpersonal issues, substance-related and addictive disorders (current or with previous treatment and relapse), ADHD, boundary issues with adults, pornography and sex addictions, and other mental disorders that may require clinical attention.

The services St Luke Institute provides include Candidate Assessments for individuals considering entering a seminary or house of religious formation; Intensive Outpatient Treatment for clergy and Religious who are struggling with any of the problems listed above; Clinical Evaluation over a five-day period; and Expert Consultation for Church authorities.

What may not be as well known is that the St Luke Institute also has an educational focus, and it provides a large number of online training programmes, as well as high quality briefing papers, each of which is illustrated by a relevant case study. The 120-plus online courses cover a very wide range of topics, some targeting people in Ministry, such as *Living Celibacy: Healthy Interpersonal Boundaries*, and *Ministering to Difficult Personalities*; while others are more generic, like *Eat Well, Feel Better: Understanding Nutrition & Mental Health*, and *Conflict Resolution*. Most of these have a cost (between \$25 and \$150, depending on the length), but there are a number that are free; and having a look at a free short course video is a good way of judging whether the approach taken suits you.

All of the 58-plus briefing papers, called Luke Notes, are totally free, and they build up into a really valuable resource library. These can be downloaded from www.sliconnect.org/category/articles/lukenotes/ and again, they cover a great variety of issues that are encountered in Church bodies, such as *Weathering Transitions in Religious Life*, *Benefits and Challenges of 12-Step Work*, and *Risk Assessment & Safety Plans*.

Finally, the Saint Luke Institute publishes a series of free Renew and Reflect short papers, 59 in total, and these can be accessed at www.sliconnect.org/category/articles/renew-reflect/

Practice Issues- International Inquiries

The Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church (CIASE) was set up the Catholic Bishops (CEF) and the Conference of Religious (CORREF) in France.

The Commission had 4 objectives:

1. To shed light on the sexual violence committed in the Catholic Church since 1950;
2. To examine the extent to which these cases were, or were not, dealt with;
3. To assess the measures taken by the Church to “treat this scourge”;
4. To make recommendations.

In the first section of the report, the Commission presents an overview of the phenomenon of sexual violence committed against children and vulnerable persons in the Catholic Church in France from 1950 to the present day. CIASE sought to acknowledge the trauma and the stories of victims, many of whom they suggested were speaking for the first time; were being listened to and recognised as victims for the first time. CIASE suggested that there were long-term consequences of sexual abuse, in particular when suffered in childhood or adolescence.

The Commission put the phenomenon in perspective by placing it in an historical, geographical and sociological context. Setting within the context of the evolution of French society – and of the Catholic Church at its heart, there was a period of secularization, individualization, the evolution of the place of women and children and the transformation of social ideas of sexuality and sexual violence.

The Commission suggests that against this backdrop, the phenomenon of sexual violence in the Catholic Church falls broadly into three periods:

- 1950-1970 can be described as the height of the abuse;
- 1970-1990 was a period in which the abuse appeared to decline;
- Early 1990s which marked an apparent resurgence, based on information available, without it being possible to conclude with any certainty that there was a definite increase during this period.

The Report concluded:

- Sexual violence, according to the report is on an equally massive scale occurred across French society: 14.5 % of women and 6.4% of men, i.e. approximately 5 500 00 people suffered sexual assault in their childhood. Acts of sexual violence committed by clerics, monks or nuns represents just under 4% of this total. Those committed by persons connected to the Catholic Church (including laypersons) represents 6% of the total.
- Whilst the vast majority of sexual violence against children was perpetrated by family or friends (3.7% of persons aged 18 or over in mainland France suffered sexual abuse as children by a member of the family, 2% by a family friend and 1.8% by a friend or acquaintance) significantly more such acts were committed within the Catholic Church (1.16% by persons connected to the Catholic Church of whom 0.82% by clergy, monks or nuns) than any other sphere of socialization (0.36% in youth holiday camps, 0.34% in state school, 0.28% in sports clubs and 0.17% in the context of cultural and artistic activities). The Report concludes that Catholic Church is, with the exception of family and friendship circles, the environment in which the prevalence of sexual violence is by far the highest.

- Church archives, the justice system and the press, as well as data gathered from the appeal for testimonials, led to an estimation of between 2900 and 3200 aggressors.
- A ratio of 2.5% and 2.8% of clergy and monks from 1950 to today (approximately 115 000 clergy and monks).

The picture drawn by the Inquiry, suggests that the phenomenon of sexual violence in the Catholic Church from 1950 to the present day is massive; that it has decreased over time but is still present; that it is based on numerous clearly identified traits of a systemic nature.

The trauma suffered by the victims is compounded by the perpetrator's standing.

The Commission came to the conclusion that a rate of approximately 3% of ecclesiastical perpetrators of sexual violence constitutes a minimum estimate and a pertinent basis of comparison with other countries

CIASE stated that it was only from 2010 that the Church began to recognise victims when it started reporting cases to the judicial system, imposing canonical sanctions and accepted that dealing with aggressors should no longer be an internal affair.

CIASE, suggested that the Church's attitude could be summarized as one of concealment, relativization or even denial, with only a very recent recognition, dating from 2015, and even then, unequally accepted by dioceses and religious institutions.

CIASE recommended that the Church engage in an ambitious process of responsibility, recognition and compensation:

- Taking Responsibility for the systemic nature of abuse and its cover-up
- Recognising the scale of abuse within the Church in France, recognising the seriousness of the harm caused by clerical abuse. This should be done through public ceremonies or memorials, undertaken with humility and sincerity.
- In response to the need for justice expressed by victims, who are frequently confronted with the limitations of criminal proceedings or the statute of limitations, despite the evolution of criminal law during the period studied, the Commission suggests that two main avenues should be explored: restorative justice, and that of the enabling a system to establish the truth, irrespective of how long ago acts were committed. The principle of restorative justice is to attempt to repair the harm done to the very being of victims, over and above the physical harm. This necessitates carrying out investigations regardless of the length of time since the violence has been perpetrated, in order both to respond to the need for justice and recognition, as well as the need to prevent future violence.
- At the end of the process described above, a system of compensation should be put in place, with some chance of it achieving what it set out to do. The Commission heard from many victims that money could not make up for the irreparable damage incurred, and worse, if badly executed, could feel like the price of silence. But many also insisted on the symbolic dimension of such a scheme, or on the desire to use compensation money other than for purely personal purposes. The Commission also looked at systems put in place in other countries: Germany, Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands, the United States and Australia.

To read the National Board's shortened summary please follow this link to the briefing paper here <https://bit.ly/3duc2xW>.

