

# Newsletter

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



August 2020

## National Office Staff

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

The National Board has decided to issue an additional Newsletter during August, to provide you with an update on our work, during Covid-19 and to share with you our assessment of the CDF *Vademecum* (July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020) against National Board Guidance.

We are acutely aware of the impact of Covid-19 on your well-being and on your ministries, with many of you suffering loss. The period of lockdown and the effects of the health crisis have for many caused physical and emotional ill health, which may remain for some time. In the National Board, we recognise in particular the challenges for children, as we know that children in isolation, and therefore less visible in public, are more vulnerable to abuse. Children are not in school, not in youth activities and not in Church. Significant children's religious milestones will have been missed – Baptisms, First Communion, and Confirmation, and with that the opportunity to engage children in the life of the Church. Even with the easing of lockdown, there may be reluctance to engaging in children's ministries, so many of these ministries have been suspended. Some Church authorities are now proactively looking at reintroducing these important ministries and others are considering on-line children's ministries.

The National Board is keen that all such ministries are undertaken with great care, with due planning and consideration given to the physical and emotional well-being of the children involved, bearing in mind the additional risks associated with digital media and communication. In recognition of this changing world, the National Board has drafted safeguarding guidance for online children's ministry, which is part of a package of

training and support that we now have available on request. This newsletter will provide details about how to access the training and guidance, as well as other training that is being planned for the remainder of 2020.

In June 2020, the National Board issued its Annual Report (2019-20). This documents our work, with statistical information provided to us by Church authorities, with sections on training and on our engagements with Church personnel and external partners. You can read the Annual Report here

[https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Annual\\_Reports/NBSCCC%20Annual%20Report%202019.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Annual_Reports/NBSCCC%20Annual%20Report%202019.pdf)

National Office staff are continuing to work remotely, on reduced hours. If you require advice or access to information, we are still available and can arrange meetings either through video-conferencing or in Maynooth, following safe distancing guidelines. We may plan training in person rather than on-line for later in the year, but this is dependent on advice from the Governments in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland about travel, social distancing and the health and well-being of staff. In the short term, all training has been moved on-line using Microsoft Teams. The National Board has conducted a privacy impact assessment on this digital platform, and has put measures in place to ensure the security of data shared at any meetings or training events.

# Data Protection and Data Destruction

In line with the National Board's data protection procedures, we are pleased to report that all data relating to allegations notified up to 31st March 2019 have now been returned to the relevant Church authority. There remain a small number of allegations forwarded to the National Board by one Church authority relating to a member of another Church body. The National Board will contact relevant Church authorities to return this data.

Data relating to allegations notified from 1st April 2019 – end of March 2020 will now be destroyed. We have contacted all Church authorities and are awaiting a response from a small number as to whether they wish to see this data before it is destroyed.

# Garda Vetting

The Garda Vetting Unit has advised that in the coming months, Section 20 of The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016 will be commenced and will become law. Section 20 relates to the re-vetting of personnel who have relevant work with vulnerable persons and/or children. Church Guidance has been that Church personnel should be re-vetted every three years, in line with Section 20. In preparation, Church vetting officers should examine records to identify who requires to be vetted again, in line with the legislation. Should you wish to commence the process please proceed as if you are vetting someone for the first time; a vetting invitation needs to be completed, updates of address and other contact details need to be made.

## Reviews of Child Safeguarding Practice

Prior to lockdown, the National Board had completed six safeguarding reviews in dioceses, was in the process of a further one, and had commenced one review in a religious order. It is our experience in this second round of reviews and from feedback from Church personnel, that the voices and experiences of complainants, respondents, children and their carers, provide an invaluable additional element over previous reviews. We are happy to discuss with any Church authority a new timeframe for reviews during the latter part of 2020, but would be reluctant to lose the experience of direct engagement with these key people. If a Church authority can manage meetings using social distancing measures or secure video contact, we will proceed with those reviews planned prior to lockdown restrictions.

**If you would like to invite the National Board to review your child safeguarding practice, please send a letter of invitation to Teresa Devlin so that a suitable timetable can be developed for 2020 or 2021.**



# Training and Support

## Training Delivered

Since the last newsletter a significant amount of training has now been delivered online, which includes the following:

- **Training Update for Trainers** - over 10 sessions (each session 2 hours in length) all registered trainers who were unable to attend the trainers update day in Maynooth have now been trained on the new training manual.
- **Training for Safeguarding Committees** - one religious order has undertaken training for their Safeguarding Committee online. This will continue over the coming months with other Church bodies having scheduled training during September and October. For more information or to book a place, follow this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/index.php/component/content/article/87-training/209-training-for-safeguarding-committees-co-ordinators-3?Itemid=557>
- **Self-audit Training for Category 3 Church bodies** - over 3 online sessions (3 hours in length). Church authorities from Church bodies that have no ministry with children were trained in the procedures for self-audit, and in how to ensure that the safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented in practice.
- **Training for New DLPs** - an online session was dedicated to delivering role-specific training for new DLPs.
- **Ministering with Children Online** - Two sessions have now been delivered dealing specifically with how to engage with children in ministry online. If you wish to book your place, you can find out more information here <https://www.safeguarding.ie/news/19-joomla/284-training-for-those-ministering-with-children-online>

## Upcoming Training

- **Training for local safeguarding representatives** - The National Board has been contacted by a number of Church authorities who have recruited local safeguarding representatives but who have been unable to train them due to the ongoing pandemic. As a result, the National Board is offering to do this online in groups of 9 people, on a date and at a time that suits the participants.  
The training will focus on the role of the local representative, including the local audit and assisting the parish priest or local superior with implementing effective safeguarding practice. The training will be delivered online via Microsoft Teams to a maximum of 9 participants, and will be charged at €35.00 per person. As training will be delivered online, it is essential that each participant has access to a device with a camera and microphone.

Should you wish to take part in this training, please contact [acunningham@safeguarding.ie](mailto:acunningham@safeguarding.ie) with the number of participants and your preferred date.

**Please note that this training is not a replacement for the full day's training offered by safeguarding trainers registered with the National Board. All local representatives will still be required to attend this when in-person training restarts following the health crisis.**

- **Train-the-Trainers Course** - A number of Church authorities have requested dates for a new Train-the-Trainers course. At present we are looking at the possibility of facilitating this in early December. However, this is entirely dependent on Government advice to ensure that it is safe, both for participants and facilitators.

Should a Church authority need to train new trainers please contact [niall.moore@safeguarding.ie](mailto:niall.moore@safeguarding.ie) and we can ensure that you are contacted once we finalise the dates and process for training to take place.

**We are continuing to explore how we deliver some of our planned training online, however if there is training you require on any aspect of safeguarding children please contact [niall.moore@safeguarding.ie](mailto:niall.moore@safeguarding.ie)**

## Training Manuals Pickup

As noted above, as all of the trainers have now been trained, the PowerPoint slides from the updated training manual have been uploaded onto the trainers' section of the National Board website. If any trainers are having any trouble logging on or have forgotten their log in details please contact [niall.moore@safeguarding.ie](mailto:niall.moore@safeguarding.ie). There are three different versions of the slides to accommodate those trainers who want to use different software and who have different types of hardware. These are:

- PowerPoint slides with animation
- PowerPoint slides without animation
- Apple Keynote slides

All of the slides have embedded audio clips to make it easier for trainers to use the PowerPoint effectively.

New versions of the certificates have also been provided on the website - one version that can be printed and completed by hand; and another version that can be completed on the computer and then sent on to participants.

In terms of the hard copy manual, these are in Maynooth and ready for collection, subject to Government restrictions being lifted for County Kildare. We would encourage all trainers to contact [imeldaashe@safeguarding.ie](mailto:imeldaashe@safeguarding.ie) to arrange a time that is mutually convenient to pick up the hard copy version of the manual. If other personnel from your Church body are in Maynooth on other business, it is fine for them to collect the manual on behalf of the trainer.

## Guidance Updates

There have been two updates to the Guidance both in Standard 1:

The first involved clarifying the language in the Vetting guidance in relation to visiting clerics of religious who are providing more than incidental ministry

The second is a significant update to the Whistleblowing guidance.

For more information go to [www.safeguarding.ie/guidance](http://www.safeguarding.ie/guidance)

## Annual Self Audits

Indicator 7.1 of the Child Safeguarding policy and standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland outlines the requirement that Church authorities ensure that an annual self-audit is completed. While this audit is for the Church authority to ensure the implementation of effective safeguarding practice, there is also a requirement to notify the National Board that the audit has been completed. Given the impact that Covid 19 has had on ministry, parish and religious life, added to the absence of children attending for a significant part of this year, there is **no requirement** to notify the National Office whether you have conducted a self-audit for the period 2020.

# Vademecum

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) published a Vademecum (an 'instruction manual') a step-by-step guide to on points of procedure relating to the canonical processes following receipt by a Church authority of an allegation of abuse against a cleric. The guide does not introduce new norms, but rather explains in more detail than hitherto what action a Church authority should take at the point of receipt of an allegation; the process of a preliminary investigation under canon law; and the penal outcomes.

There are four particular areas that the *Vademecum* identifies:

- **Care of the Complainant and the Respondent:**

- Protection of the complainant. The Church authority must 'ensure that the alleged victim and his or her family are treated with dignity and respect'. They are to be offered '...welcome, attentive hearing and support, also through specific services, as well as spiritual, medical and psychological help, as required by the specific case'.
- Rights of the accused. Even if the '...commission of the delict is manifestly evident...', the accused must always be guaranteed the right to self-defence.

- **Careful verification of information:**

The Church authority must '...scrupulously and accurately verify all the information received regarding an alleged case of abuse. Even if there has not been a formal complaint, even if the news was first published via the mass media (social media included), even if the source is anonymous, the *Vademecum* suggests the attentive evaluation of any type of information received'.

- **Secret of office and public notification**

Complainants and witnesses should not be silenced during the preliminary investigation; however, care should be taken in relation to public communication so as not to prejudice the outcome of such inquiries.

- **Collaboration between Church and State**

All allegations must be reported in line with civil legislation and care needs to be taken not to interfere with the statutory inquiries.

Other instructions that are referenced in the *Vademecum* include the following:

- Precautionary measures imposed following receipt of an allegation should not be considered a 'punishment', but are to be seen as '...an administrative act that can be imposed at the beginning of the preliminary investigation to protect both the good name of the persons involved and the public good, to avoid scandal, the covering up of evidence, or possible threats to the alleged victim. Once the reason for such precautionary measures no longer exists or the process has concluded, they can be revoked'.
- The use of the terminology *suspensio a divinis* to indicate the prohibition of the exercise of the priestly ministry imposed as a precautionary measure, should be avoided in the preliminary investigation as this indicates a penalty which '...cannot yet be imposed at this stage'. The *Vademecum* recommends the use of the term '...*prohibition* from the exercise of the ministry'.
- During the preliminary investigation, there must not be a transfer of a priest to another ministry.

The National Board has assessed the requirements of the *Vademecum*, against our guidance, and some minor changes are now required and are being made. To view the full National Board assessment, follow this link [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate\\_Publications/Analysis%20of%20the%20Vademecum.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate_Publications/Analysis%20of%20the%20Vademecum.pdf).

# Practice Issues- Covid 19 Resources



THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR  
**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN**  
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IRELAND



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There are a number of online resources that may be of interest to readers but which are not directly related to child safeguarding within the Catholic Church. Children and their carers have been affected by restrictions resulting from public health guidance during the Covid-19 pandemic; and there is online information available to both groups that has been produced in direct response to the new circumstances to which they have to adjust. Here are samples of what is accessible online:

- Watch online safety films created by young people, at [www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/watch-online-safety-films-created-young-people](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/watch-online-safety-films-created-young-people)
- Looking after our own and our children's emotions during COVID-19, at [www.publichealth.hscni.net/node/5264](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/node/5264)
- COVID-19: guidance on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing)
- COVID-19 (Coronavirus): Information for parents at [www.gov.ie/en/publication/73ed20-covid-19-coronavirus-information-for-parents](http://www.gov.ie/en/publication/73ed20-covid-19-coronavirus-information-for-parents)
- Education Restart - Frequently Asked Questions for Children and Young People, at [www.education-ni.gov.uk/education-restart-frequently-asked-questions-children-and-young-people](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/education-restart-frequently-asked-questions-children-and-young-people)
- Coronavirus / Covid-19 - Advice and resources for parents and students, at [www.education.ie/covid19](http://www.education.ie/covid19)
- Supporting your child with gaming, at <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-gaming>