

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:

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March 2023

National Office Staff

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

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Introduction

Welcome to our first Newsletter of 2023. As we enter spring and see snowdrops appear, we are reminded that this delicate flower symbolise new beginnings, hope, rebirth and the ability to overcome challenges. Within our work on child safeguarding, there continues to be many challenges. As we write this Newsletter, we learn of two international inquiries; the first of these was into abuse by Jean Vanier of L'Arche, and the second, an inquiry conducted by an independent Commission set up by the Episcopal Conference of Portugal, into sexual abuse by priests and other Church officials. A summary of both these reports can be found on our website here <https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications/national-board-publications>.

This Newsletter will provide information on:

- Revision of Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland (2016)
- Report on work relating to development of a vulnerable adults template policy for the Catholic Church in Ireland
- Training
- Storage of Data within the National Board
- Annual Self Audits
- Training Returns
- Reviews of Safeguarding Practice
- Changes to National Board Guidance
- Resources
- Practice Issue

Reviews of Safeguarding Practice

All Diocesan Reviews are now in process, and it is anticipated that Review fieldwork and Review reports will all be completed by July 2023. Those Dioceses whose Reviews have already been finalised have consented to the National Board placing the report on our website at www.safeguarding.ie/publications/national-board-publications

Having received senior counsel advice on data protection, the National Board suggests that Reviews of safeguarding practice are part of the accountability process and are in the “Public Interest”. We now invite Religious Congregations to come forward with a request to be reviewed. Seven Reviews of Religious Order have been completed to date, and one is in process.

The National Board will undertake a Review at the request of a Church Authority of an Order / Congregation that has ministry with children, and/or is managing cases or allegations of abuse. If you are unclear about whether your Order / Congregation should be reviewed by the National Board, or 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.

Storage of Data Held by the National Board

As a data controller and processor, the National Board is required to observe good data storage practices. In 2022, we were successful in obtaining funding from *Porticus* to develop a more efficient and secure Salesforce database. The work of development of this database will be carried out by an Irish charity called Enclude. This will involve the amalgamation of our three existing databases which are:

1. Contacts and trainers- used to hold personal information relating to all Church personnel we engage with and the training records of registered trainers.
2. Head to Heart database- used to hold personal information relating to all seminarians and deacons undertaking the Head to Heart formation programme.
3. Allegations and advice- this is used to hold anonymised allegations reported to us (and destroyed following the publication of our Annual Report annually) and advice offered to Church authorities as evidence of our work product.

In relation to the first two databases we have written to everyone to outline the process of moving their information onto the new system. This process is well underway and this part of the new database is almost operational.

In relation advice that the National Board offers to a Church authority or member of Church personnel, we recognise that some of it is particularly sensitive. To protect that data, we will follow these steps:

- Identifiable sensitive data will not be stored in the new cloud based database, this will remain stored on National Board servers.
- Where the National Board has data which contains identifying information (usually from advice offered before the introduction of GDPR), this will be stored on National Board servers and will only be accessible by National Board staff.
- Anonymised data relating to advice and allegations will be manually migrated onto the new system by National Board staff and not by Enclude staff.
- The new database offers two factor authentication to access which will be enabled to better protect data.
- The new database offers a facility to allow access to the database by set IP addresses, which could be locked for National Board staff (and Enclude temporarily if needed for technical support purposes). This means that the data could only be accessed by those with the named IP addresses, which the National Board could determine. We will explore the applicability of this option to provide enhanced security.

We will write to all Church authorities outlining this process when development of this part of the database begins. Data will not be transferred onto the new system before Church authorities have been notified.

Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for Catholic Church in Ireland (2016) Revision

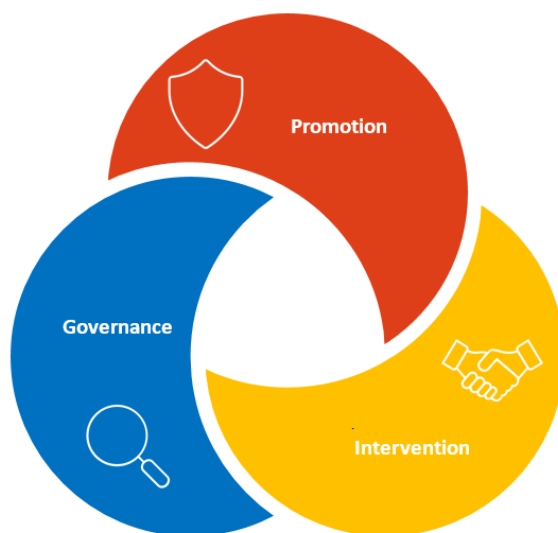
Following extensive listening meetings throughout 2022, the National Board will conclude this phase of consultation. The valuable exchange of ideas have been drafted into a revised policy. The policy has taken into account lessons from our own past as well as some international learnings, particularly from the experiences of other Anglophone countries.

The Steering Group has considered the core elements of the revised policy as:

- A statement of commitment to safeguarding children by all members who minister and engage in children's ministry.
- Bearing in mind the additional responsibilities of Church leaders, key governance requirements.
- Practices that promote good child safeguarding, including systems to create a safe environment and embed a culture of safeguarding, as well as training and communication.
- An approach to responding to allegations and concerns that recognise legislative requirements, as well as the pastoral care needs of complainants and their families, and the rights of respondents to a fair inquiry process.

Below is the timeline of next stage of the revision process:

- Current draft being reviewed by Steering Group members who will respond to the National Board by 20th March.
- National Board will review, amend and recirculate to Steering Group by 17th April.
- Final text to be agreed and submitted to National Board in April.
- Draft to be submitted to IEC and AMRI by end May/June.
- Further consultation if approved by IEC and AMRI – June, July and August.
- Consideration of further amendments – September 2023.



Training and Support

The following Training Events are now available to book on the website:

- 5th April- *Embedding a Culture of Safeguarding*- The National Board will host an event which seeks to explore what safer, healthier Christian cultures look like in the Irish Catholic Church. We will be discussing what safer healthier cultures look like, why it is important, and how we create them. To find out more and book your place, please follow this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/events/embedding-a-culture-of-safeguarding>.
- 26th April- *Case Management Training*- this training event is for those involved in the management of allegations and cases and will cover information relating to reporting, the case management process itself, and the implications for data protection and information sharing. To find out more and to book your place please follow this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/events/case-management-training>
- 24th May- *Risk Assessment and Local Audit* - This training day is for those whose Diocese or Order is involved in ministry with children. This training event will cover information on understanding the localised risk assessment process and template, exploring best practice in terms of carrying out the safeguarding audit (Standards 1, 5 and 6) and the DLPs annual file audit (Standards 2, 3 and 4) and discussing alternative methods for conducting the annual audit. To book your place please follow this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/events/risk-assessment-and-local-audit>.
- 7th June- *Reporting Processes for those Involved in Pastoral Formation and Spiritual Direction* - This short workshop will focus on understanding what to do when a child abuse allegation is received during spiritual direction or pastoral support. To find out more or to book your place please follow this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/events/reporting-allegations-for-those-involved-in-pastoral-care-of-spiritual-direction> .

Annual Training Returns

In order to maintain registration with the National Board, all trainers are required to complete a training return for each training event delivered between 1st April 2022 and the 31st of March 2023. The training returns form can be found here: <https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/StandardsDocs/5.3B%20Template%203-%20Training%20Returns%20Form.doc>.

Please complete this as soon as possible and send to niall.moore@safeguarding.ie.

Annual Self Audits

In line with current Standard 7, all Church Authorities should have undertaken, or should be in the process of undertaking, a review of safeguarding practice within their Church body. For those Church bodies that no longer have ministry with children and are not involved in any aspect of case management, the full extent of your responsibilities rests with ensuring that members who are clerics or religious meet their mandatory reporting obligations. For all others, the annual self-audit provides the Church leader with an opportunity to examine what is working well, and if there are gaps in practice, to identify what needs to be put in place to make improvements.

It is a matter for the Church Authority to determine how to undertake the self-audit, but guidance is available at www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Standards/Standard%207.pdf .

Please note that all Church Authorities are required to inform the National Board of the status of the annual self-audit by the end of March 2023.

Guidance Updates

There have been two significant changes to National Board guidance since the last newsletter.

- Reporting Allegations against Deceased Respondents - following a court judgement in the Republic of Ireland and a change in policy from Tusla, the guidance in relation to reporting deceased respondents has changed. This means that in reporting allegations against deceased respondents both the Gardaí and Tusla need to be informed.

The National Board has engaged with the Department of Health in Northern Ireland on this issue, and they are exploring the implications of reporting allegations against deceased persons to Social Services. Until further advice is offered from the Department of Health in Northern Ireland, the position in relation to reporting remains as per the guidance on our website here

<https://www.safeguarding.ie/reporting-concerns?task=document.viewdoc&id=334>.

- Use of Church Property for One off Private Functions- following discussions with Allianz the guidance in this area has now changed. You can view the guidance here <https://www.safeguarding.ie/use-of-church-property-by-external-groups?task=document.viewdoc&id=269>

In the coming months we will review the guidance on webcams and will publish this in time for the next newsletter.

Please Note the following advice from the Garda Vetting Unit, who have reviewed the role of the Parish Safeguarding Representative (PSR):

Bureau staff are now satisfied that the role meets the criteria to be considered relevant work or activity. They agree that a PSR is likely to have overarching care responsibility for children attending parish events through ensuring that Church activities are provided in a way that ensures the safety and well-being of the children involved.

Changes to Church Authority

The National Board provides regular advice to Church authorities and annually organises an induction for new Church leaders. When the Church leader changes it is important that you inform us and provide us with the contact details of the new Church Leader.

Adult Safeguarding

The one year project was completed in September 2022 with four pieces of work including:

1. A literature review.
2. A draft policy and template with limited guidance.
3. A short paper outlining recommendations for change to support adult safeguarding.
4. A paper outlining areas which fell outside of the scope adult safeguarding project.

The project was finished on time and sent to AMRI and the Bishops' Conference in October 2022. The National Board will now await further instruction from AMRI and the IEC.

To access the National Board's report please contact David Rose at AMRI or Monsignor McGuinness at IEC.



Update on International Inquiries in Europe on Child Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church

In response to the growing numbers of allegations of abuse, a number of Inquiries have been established (some already reported on). The National Board has produced briefing papers on the Inquiries in UK, France and Portugal as well as Jean Vanier. These can be accessed at www.safeguarding.ie/publications/national-board-publications.

Below is a short summary of Inquiries/reports that have been commissioned across Europe:

Portugal - An independent Commission for the prevention of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults, was set up by the Catholic Bishops' Conference in November 2021. Composed of qualified lay people and "some non-Catholics", the commission collected more than 500 validated testimonies, although the revelations involve a total number of victims estimated to be at least 4,815, according to the figure released in February 13th, 2023.

Spain - The issue of sexual abuse in the Church came under scrutiny following the publication in 2021 of an investigation by the national daily *El País*. The Church commissioned a lawyer to conduct an audit on the subject in February 2022. Conclusions are expected later in March 2023.

France - In France, the Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Church (CIASE), submitted its conclusions on October 5, 2021. The final report estimated that 330,000 children have been victims of priests, religious and people working in Catholic institutions since 1950.

Germany - An investigation undertaken by three universities in 2014 concluded that more than 3,600 children, had been victimised between 1946 and 2014 by approximately 1,700 religious, or 4.4 percent of the clergy. Another investigation conducted in 2017 found that at least 547 children in the Regensburg Cathedral Choir were allegedly abused between 1945 and the early 1990s. Also, according to another report from June 2022, at least 610 children were sexually assaulted by clerics in the Münster diocese over a period of 75 years.

Belgium - Several bodies have worked on the issue since the early 2000s. In 2010, a first report by the Adriaenssens Commission received 488 complaints incriminating 320 perpetrators of sexual abuse. Nine years later, in February 2019, the Church published a report on sexual abuse of children within the Church, which listed 1,000 new complaints filed with the "arbitration center" created by the Church.

The Netherlands - In 2010, following several press reports of sexual abuse, the Bishops' Conference of the Netherlands and the Conference of Dutch Religious Institutes announced that they wanted a "comprehensive, external and independent" investigation. The final report, which was released 18 months later, said approximately one in ten Dutch people aged 40 and over have been abused by someone outside their family. Among the alleged victims, "several tens of thousands of minors" were sexually abused within the Catholic Church between 1945 and 2010.

Ireland – There have been a number of Inquiries – The Ryan Report in 2009, The Redress process; The Commission of Inquiry into the Archdiocese of Dublin; the Diocese of Ferns and the Diocese of Cloyne. In Northern Ireland there was an independent review established by the Northern Irish Assembly into Historical Institutional abuse. The National Board conducted Reviews of all Dioceses and Religious Orders between 2009 and 2016. A second iteration of reviews began in 2018. All review reports can be accessed at www.safeguarding.ie/publications/national-board-publications.

Italy - The Catholic Church in Italy has refused to conduct an independent investigation, but several lay associations have spoken out on the subject. Nine of them joined together in February 2022 to demand the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry on the model of France's CIASE. The Italian association Rete l'ABUSO, in conjunction with the international association ECA Global (Ending Clergy Abuse), published a report listing 418 cases of priests convicted or accused of sexual violence against minors over the past 13 years.

Poland - In Poland, a document released in 2021 by the state commission on "pedocriminality" revealed that between 2017 and 2020, 30% of sexual abuse of minors was committed by Catholic priests and religious. The Polish Church had already been shaken by the 2019 release of a documentary on the subject, authored and directed by journalist Tomasz Sekielski. In the wake of this documentary, the Catholic bishops published a document reporting 382 cases of sexual abuse in the Church, a figure widely criticized by victims' associations, who considered it underestimated. Hundreds of complaints of sexual assaults on minors committed by clergy have also been filed in the country since 2018.

Resources

Some Irish websites are worth visiting from time to time to be updated on matters related to the safeguarding of children. A number will be listed here. It is recognised that this is not an exhaustive list, and readers are invited to send further suggestions to peter.kieran@safeguarding.ie

The text describing the organisations and agencies below is taken from their respective websites.

Rape Crisis Network Ireland - The Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI) was set-up in 1985. At that time, there were six Rape Crisis Centres (RCCs) in Ireland, offering support, information and counselling. These RCCs came together to exchange information, pool expertise and unite in their common goals of changing Irish society - www.rcni.ie

Rape Crisis Northern Ireland - Rape Crisis Northern Ireland is a non-governmental organisation and support service for anyone who is 18 and over and has experienced serious sexual assault and rape in adulthood - www.communityni.org/organisation/rape-crisis-northern-ireland

Crime Victims Helpline - The Crime Victims Helpline is a national support service for victims of crime in Ireland. We are here to listen with empathy and without judgement. We provide time and space for you to talk about your experience in confidence. We can answer your questions about the criminal justice system, provide information about your rights and guide you to local, or specialist victim-support services - www.crimevictimshelpline.ie/

Victim Support NI - Victim Support NI is an independent charity, which helps people affected by crime. We offer a free and confidential service, whether or not a crime has been reported and regardless of how long ago the event took place - www.victimsupportni.com/

Nexus – leading Northern Ireland charity in supporting people affected by sexual trauma - <https://nexusni.org/about/>

One-in-Four - Our programmes help adults who have experienced childhood sexual abuse, their families, and those who have engaged in sexually harmful behaviour. We work in all aspects of sexual violence in an effort to break the cycle of abuse www.oneinfour.ie/

Psychology Today - Sexual Abuse Counselling in Northern Ireland - www.psychologytoday.com/gb/counselling/northern-ireland?category=sexual-abuse

CARI - CARI is a leading voluntary organisation with a proven track record in providing child centred specialised therapy and support to children, families and groups affected by child sexual abuse, regardless of means - www.cari.ie/ .





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

Practice Issues

It takes courage to come forward to disclose abuse. It is important that they are received with care, compassion and an open mind. Over the last year National Board staff have been engaging with complainants to understand how they have been received by Church personnel. The responses we received will be used to inform the revision of the Safeguarding Children Policy and to produce new guidance and resources. Below is a summary of some of the key responses that you may find useful when you meet with complainants:

- Make time and space to listen.
- Ensure the complainant is supported by a friend of a Church Support person.
- Do not approach the meeting with any pre-conceived judgements.
- Invite the person to share their story and acknowledge how painful it must be.
- Before the person begins, remind them of your reporting obligations.
- Ask in advance if it is OK to take note. If the person does not want you to do that during the meeting, as soon as possible after the meeting make a good record.
- Share your report and ask the complainant to correct any factual mistakes.
- Complainants may find it very difficult to talk, they may feel guilt, shame and will want to know that you believe them.
- It is important that you tell the complainant that it is not their “fault”.
- Do not probe or ask pointed questions – it is OK to check if what you heard is what the complainant said, but it is not your job to interrogate or interview – you are there to listen.
- Offer counselling and support services.
- Tell the complainant what you will do with their information and get back to them to confirm that you have done so.
- Keep in touch and keep the complainant informed.
- The complainant may ask questions that you are unable to answer – be honest and explain why you cannot answer.
- Thank the complainant for talking to you.

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THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR
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IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IRELAND

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