

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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October 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

Autumn is now upon us and the beauty of red and golden trees reminds us of the wonder of nature. We hope you had a chance to recharge your batteries over the summer before we take on the busy-ness of our safeguarding work over the next few months. Life is about to become very busy elsewhere as we enter the Synod on Synodality and pray that the Holy Spirit guides the listening and responses of those gathering in Rome over the next weeks. We know that a strong presence at the Synod will be the voices of survivors of abuse, and we hope that we can all open our hearts to the pain of those who have suffered within our Church as a consequence of abuse.

Our CEO has just returned from a week's plenary meeting with the Pontifical Commission on the Protection of Minors (PCPM) and she offers a few reflections on the discussions within this Newsletter.

The CEO has also indicated her desire to retire from her role this year, and therefore the Directors are currently involved in recruiting a new CEO. To view the advert, click on the following link

https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate_Publications/Job%20Advert%20CEO.pdf

This Newsletter provides information on:

- Revision of the 2016 Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland.
- Transitional Justice within the Church Context
- Changes to National Board Guidance
- Training
- Work of PCPM
- Resources
- Practice Issue

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

Thank you to all who attended Listening meetings, workshops, information sessions and those who sent in questionnaire responses as part of the consultation on the draft revised safeguarding children Policy.

Since the implementation of Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016, there have been significant changes in civil, criminal and canon law, which means that policy is now out of date. In addition the new Principles on safeguarding which will be issued shortly from the Holy See require that safeguarding policies detail governance, leadership and accountability standards. Taking both these imperatives and listening to those who are operational and who requested a reduction in the bureaucracy around safeguarding, the National Board and the Steering group entered into a comprehensive consultation, initially in 2022. There was overwhelming support for a revision of the Church's policy then, and again in 2023, when we engaged in a series of listening meeting and invited written responses on the revised draft policy. We received 88 comments on the draft policy - 80 suggestions for positive change were offered with some people making the same suggestion more than once. 2 comments were received on why there was a need to change the policy at all, 4 comments focused on the cost of changing materials in line with the new policy and 2 comments discussed the potential negative impact that a change in the policy would have on volunteers. **Overwhelmingly, therefore from the responses received there is positive support for the new policy, 90% in support and 2% questioning the need for change.**

Following the consultation some further changes and clarifications have been made to the draft policy. The National Board will formally offer the revised policy to Bishops and Religious Leaders for adoption, by December 2023. If adopted the National Board staff will review the existing guidance and begin a process of realigning that guidance in line with the new standards. We will then set up a series of induction meetings and realign the training, where necessary, to reflect the new policy.

Transitional Justice Within the Church Context

Transitional Justice approaches to dealing with abuse within the Church are being considered internationally in response to many survivors and Church personnel dissatisfaction with traditional responses. There are four key elements to this approach: truth; justice; reparation and commitment of non-recurrence.

The National Board staff have consulted with experts in the field over the last three months on the benefits of a transitional justice approach and will produce a GAP paper based on our research. Some Religious Orders and Dioceses have already engaged in aspects of transitional justice, and have reflected to us on the benefits, not only to survivors, but also to their own members who struggle with the truth and reality of abuse perpetrated by members of the Church. We hope you receive our paper with interest and a desire to consider adopting this approach within your safeguarding ministry.

Data Protection

Over the summer, staff at the National Board have embarked on an exercise to contact all dioceses and religious orders to update and clarify the details of safeguarding personnel we have permission to hold on our systems. This exercise is now complete and personnel who no longer wish to be on the database have been removed, to ensure that at all times the records we hold remain up to date in accordance with our obligations under GDPR and the Data Protection Acts.

National Board staff have completed work on developing a new more secure database to assist us with our work and ensure that our data is secure. Additional functionality of this new system now includes the ability for National Board registered trainers to log their training returns via the website. This will mean that trainers can log training returns online as soon as possible after the training is delivered do them, without the need to send hard copies annually. This system will be quicker and more environmentally friendly. If a trainer wants to find out how to do this please email niall.moore@safeguarding.ie.

Training and Support

Listed below are a number of training events that are scheduled to take place in the coming months

1. 11th October 2023- Governance and Lay Associations of the Faithful

This training event is for Church authorities and safeguarding personnel involved in ensuring groups using Church property and lay associations are safe to do so.

The day will include discussions and presentations on the following:

- Discussing how to ensure appropriate governance arrangements are in place to identify groups that are ministering on behalf of the Church or using property, and to ensure good safeguarding practice.
- Understanding lay associations of the faithful and the new procedure for groups to become recognised as associate members of the National Board.
- Discussing how to assist groups who are not national organisations but are carrying out important ministry with children in Church property.

Places can be booked at this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/events/governance-and-lay-associations-of-the-faithful>.

2. 8th November 2023 - Spirituality and Safeguarding in the Context of Catholic Social Teaching

This training event will be facilitated by Fr Dr Barry O’Sullivan who will provide information and reflections on the place of safeguarding in catholic social teaching and theology. The day will include an opportunity to reflect on the challenges in implementing safeguarding in line with Church teaching and how these can be overcome.

Places can be booked by following this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/events/spirituality-and-safeguarding-in-the-context-of-catholic-social-teaching>

3. 29th November 2023 - Influencing and Supporting the Child Safeguarding Practice of Female and Male Religious Orders Ministering with Children Internationally.

The purpose of this training day is to influence good child safeguarding practice amongst Irish missionaries who engage with children on an international context. The aim is to ensure that anywhere that Irish missionaries minister with children, that the safety and wellbeing of children will be prioritised and promoted.

The day will include information and presentations on

- Template policies and procedures for safeguarding children internationally.
- Information and advice on governance.
- Information and advice on embedding a culture of safeguarding including training.

This course is designed for Church authorities and Church personnel who have international ministries.

Places can be booked at this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/events/influencing-and-supporting-the-child-safeguarding-practice-of-female-and-male-religious-orders-ministering-with-children-internationally>

Guidance Updates

Two major changes have taken place in relation to guidance for the National Board.

1. A new notification form is now available for use, when informing the National Board of allegations of abuse against clerics and religious without using identifying information.
2. Updated guidance on safe use of technology.

To read more detail in relation to these changes follow this link

<https://www.safeguarding.ie/policy-guidance/view-latest-updates-to-the-guidance>.

Reporting Allegations against Deceased Clerics and Religious-NI Only

Following consultation with the Executive Office in Northern Ireland and Health and Social Care Trusts, we have been advised that **there is no need** to report allegations against deceased clerics and religious to Social Services in Northern Ireland. You must still report to PSNI.

We are still awaiting the outcome of the appeal on *McGrath v's HSE* judgement in ROI.

Changes to Church Authorities

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

Ecclesiastical Provincial Area Meetings

As in previous years the National Board are organising a series of four meetings, hosted by the four Archbishops. The purpose of these meetings are to update Church personnel on the work of the Board on the following dates:

14th November-Cashel
22nd November-Armagh
23rd November-Dublin
30th November-Tuam

Places can be booked online at this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/news-events/events>.

Reviews of Safeguarding Practice

If you would like to consider inviting the National Board to conduct a Review of Child Safeguarding practice in your Church body, we will host a further zoom meeting to explain our approach to reviews. Please contact teresa.devlin@safeguarding.ie for more information.

All Review Reports that have been approved for release can be found at <https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications/national-board-publications>.

Work of the Pontifical Commission on the Protection of Minors (PCPM)

Article 78 of the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, (reforming the governance and structures of the Roman Curia) provides a stable role for the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors within the Dicastery of the Doctrine of the Faith. It allows for independent and direct report to Pope Francis. Pope Francis asked the Commission in 2023 to oversee the application of Article 2 of *Vos estis lux mundi* (VELM) **Art. 2 – Reception of reports and data protection**

Pope Francis also asked the Commission to pay particular attention to victims and survivors of abuse, to influence how they are received and responded to by Church personnel.

Whilst we in Ireland have well established processes for receiving reports and offering services to victims and survivors, that is not the case in the Global South. In response, the PCPM is developing a number of 'Memorare Initiatives' with Bishops and Religious Leaders in Africa and Asia. A Memorare initiative (no one will be left behind) seeks to build local capacity to enable Church leaders to respond to allegations of abuse and offer care and support to those who have suffered abuse, and their families.

Finally, the Pope asked that the Commission prepare an annual report on safeguarding in the Global Church.

In late September 2023, the Commission members met to consider universal guidelines (consultation on key principles had taken place over Summer 2023). Revised guidelines will be issued after the end of October 2023. Please note that the revised Church Policy in Ireland has been drafted in accordance with the new international guidelines.

To read the press release of the latest plenary please click the following link

https://url6.mailanyone.net/scanner?m=1ql6Qp-000BpQ-4D&d=4%7Cmail%2F90%2F1695728400%2F1ql6Qp-000BpQ-4D%7Cin6i%7C57e1b682%7C10898842%7C10474387%7C6512C33F872EEA35EF8CF768C1D982DA&o=%2Fphtw%3A%2Fwtsauw.ielmttruno%2F.ogrm%2Faidem&s=8_t0nodSCdu2fdGXkxkjfevtEnA

Resources

The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, *Tutela Minorum*, has an interesting website, which can be accessed at <https://www.tutelaminorum.org/>. The menu for the site has four tabs. These are Mission; The Commission; Outreach and Safeguarding; and News and Events.

The Mission page has a very useful timeline that tracks the development of the work of the Commission since 2013 – Our Safeguarding Journey. The Commission page has information about the leadership and membership of the Commission.

The tab under which many useful resources can be accessed is the Outreach and Safeguarding one. Here, there are links to 34 individual articles, under the headings of Outreach; Safeguarding; Norms and Procedures; Assessing Safeguarding; and Education and Formation.

The Outreach and Safeguarding page also has a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs), which provides an alternative way to access the articles.

The News and Events page does not restrict itself to carrying information about the Commission, but there is also coverage of child safeguarding news from the global Church.

You can subscribe to the Commission's occasional Newsletter at newsletter@tutelaminorum.org

Practice Issue

It is challenging at times as a member of a Church safeguarding team to engage with complainants / victims / survivors of child abuse within the Church. Unresolved trauma, damaged trust, and emotional resistance to becoming involved with Church personnel are some of the factors that affect survivors when they consider such involvement. Sometimes survivors are more comfortable working with peers who share a similar abuse history, and by who they feel heard.

LOUDfence - Survivors Voices - <https://survivorsvoices.org/loudfence/> - is a UK organisation that has been set up by survivors themselves.

LOUDfence is a visible display of support and solidarity with those affected by abuse. The ribbons tied to each fence represent the voices of those who wish to speak out in support and defence of those affected by abuse.

They recently attended the Plenary Meeting of the Pontifical Commission on the Protection of Minors and met Pope Francis.

Their founder Antonia Sobocki states, “We want all survivors and victims of abuse to know that we believe you, we will hear and support you and we will do all we can to prevent this happening again. People are invited to join in by tying a ribbon, pausing to reflect, offering a prayer and making a resolution in solidarity with survivors,”

Loud fence Survivors Voices have engaged with Bishops and Religious Leaders in England, and in France to support victims and survivors who wish to make a silent or prayerful demonstration of their trauma by to tying a ribbon and a message of support to Church railings. They also include time for worship and reflection, and provide information about support, at part of their Safeguarding Seasons.

The values of the organisation as stated on its website give an overview of what it is, what it does, and what it wants to achieve.

LOUDfence values

Survivors Voices has always been a survivor-led organisation. We recognise the shared perspective of anyone who has experienced abuse, trauma or violence as a child or an adult and the power of sharing stories with those who understand. We call this enlightened self-help and our passion is to see this available for all survivors who want it.

We believe that survivors are experts in their own healing and as such, their stories and perspectives need inform policy and practice in response to abuse, trauma and violence. We have felt the empowerment of being heard, finding the help you need and enabling things to be better for those that come after you.

We have needed the strength, wisdom and love of those that support us, whether family, friends or professionals and recognise that often our pain is their pain. So Survivors Voices has always involved supporters and offered support, resources and training for families, friends and professionals.





Practice Issue Continued

LOUDFence Values

- We trust the wisdom of each individual on their journey of recovery, healing and development
- We can all offer and benefit from mutual support especially with others who share similar experiences
- We are committed to the inclusion of all, in all our diversity (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, experience, culture, all faiths or none)
- We will promote a safe space based on a culture of tolerance, mutual respect and co-operation
- We recognise spirituality and faith as a source of justice, strength and healing for many
- We seek to remove barriers that divide people and we encourage everyone to participate as much as they want to.

LOUDFence Core Principles

- We recognise both structural and individual oppression affecting different groups in society and will take steps to address inequality and adopt anti-oppressive practices in our work and organisational life
- We will strive to develop and maintain an organisational culture based on consultation, empowerment and listening
- We believe that accountability for the use of power is paramount and that the abuse of power is the heart of all abuses. As such we will ensure that systems of accountability and feedback are developed, communicated transparently and maintained
- We will strive to develop a culture of openness, learning and fun where it is okay to make mistakes and where the weakness and frailty of our humanity can be acknowledged.

Loudfence - Survivors Voices is open to Irish survivors, so you may want to explore their website and documentation to see if it might be of support and assistance to individuals who you have encountered in the course of your Church safeguarding work. There is a Peer Support tab at the top of the home page of the website

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