



Newsletter August 2012

## **The Electronic Newsletter for the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland for August 2012**

Welcome to our fourth newsletter. The past months have been very busy for the NBSCCC and we welcome the opportunity that this newsletter provides to update you on those developments. Firstly, it is with great sadness that we have to record the death of one of our directors, Doctor Kate Ganter, who has died following a period of illness. Doctor Ganter had been a committed and enthusiastic member of the Board and had contributed greatly to its work over the years that she had been on the Board. We extend our condolences to her husband and family on their sad loss. She will be greatly missed.

There will be further change for us in the coming weeks as Sister Colette Stevenson is stepping down from her post in the National Office. Sister Colette has made an immense contribution to safeguarding children in the Church through many years. She was part of the initial Church response in Ireland to the problem of clerical abuse in that she helped to set up the Child Protection Office created by the Conference of Religious of Ireland in the mid-nineties. She later joined the initiative undertaken by the Bishops which eventually led to the setting up of the National Board. The Church owes her a great debt for all the hard work that she has contributed over the years.

Although Sister Colette is retiring, she will continue to support the work of safeguarding in the Church in a voluntary capacity. She is too valuable a resource for us to lose and we are greatly relieved that she will continue to contribute when she can as an enthusiastic volunteer. I am sure that many of you will join with me in wishing her well for the future.

### **Annual Report for 2011**

Our Annual Report was launched just prior to the Eucharistic Congress in May. The full text is available on our website for review. In it we communicated a year of steady progress in advancing the safeguarding agenda in the Church. Despite the limitations arising from the very difficult financial restrictions placed upon us all, progress is being made and we are moving forward. New allegations are still high but predominantly relate to abuse that took place many years ago. The safeguarding framework within the individual Church authorities continues to strengthen and this is evidenced in the findings of the Reviews that we are undertaking. We anticipate issuing our next Annual Report in May of 2013.

### **Guidance for Vetting and Appeals**

The guidance which has been agreed by the three Sponsoring Bodies for the Church has now been posted on our website and is available for downloading from there. The guidance sets out the approach that is recommended to be adopted across the various Church authorities in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland.



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### **Budget for the National Board**

We have had many inquiries as to what our operational budget is for the running of the National Board. For that reason, the Members have agreed that we should place on our website some financial information with regard to what our costs are. We have now done that for the past two years of our operation. As a limited company, we are required to produce audited accounts and submit those as a record of our work. We hope that this information may prove useful to those who have an interest in the level of resourcing involved in our work.

### **Reviews of Safeguarding Practice**

The second tranche of Reviews has now been completed and the final drafts have been submitted to the seven Church authorities involved. For the first time, we have included some religious as well as dioceses. We would like to take this opportunity to thank each of the seven authorities that invited us to undertake a review of their practice and for their support the process. They uniformly committed themselves to complete openness which we greatly appreciated. We understand that each of these authorities intends to publish their Review Reports in the near future. We will be starting the third tranche immediately and have already received a number of requests from both dioceses and religious to be included.

We are looking to recruit additional suitably experienced reviewers who could supplement the existing team. We believe that this will be possible on a self-financing basis through a charge for the service.

### **Developing guidance for Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults**

Last month we convened the first meeting of a working party drawn from across the Church to assist us in developing draft guidance that could be recommended to the Sponsoring Bodies for adoption by them with regard to how this matter may best be managed in the Church. The group meets again next month to further advance the task. We are anxious to draw upon the experience of others in related fields such as mental health. We are also seeking to review the work that has already been done in developing guidance by other voluntary organisations as well as those within the statutory sector. We will keep you briefed on our progress.

### **Training**

The new training and support manual has now been adopted across all Church Authorities and we have trained over 100 trainers in the delivery of the Church specific training programme. We would like again to thank the tutors for their significant input in delivering the training and assessing the new trainers. Initial feedback has been very positive, and we intend to carry out a formal review of training in December 2012. Within the training and support manual are posters and child friendly materials for use in



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Churches, we are delighted to note that some Church Authorities have translated the posters into the Irish language, and would welcome others translating the materials into Polish and other commonly used languages.

### **New Legislation in the Republic of Ireland**

Safeguarding practice in the Church is directly influenced by developments that take place in the legislative framework that exists in society as a whole relating to the care of vulnerable children. There are two significant bills that are coming before the Oireachtas in the coming months that will have an impact on our work. They are the placing of “Children First” on a statutory basis and the introduction of what has been described as “Mandatory Reporting”. Both will have implications for us that require detailed consideration. Through the legislation specific responsibilities are created and placed upon identified individuals within organisations that provide services to children. The Church would be one of these organisations and therefore it is important for us to consider what these responsibilities are and how well prepared we are currently to ensure that we discharge them appropriately in our future work. We will refer again to this matter in our next newsletter which we intend to issue in December.

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