

Newsletter

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

Contents/Highlights

- Guidance on the funerals of clerics or religious against whom there is a case to answer.
- Outline of the work of the National Case Management Committee.
- A Safe and Welcoming Church; Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2024.
- Outline of the 'Historical Child Abuse within Faith Organisations Project' and what the next steps are.

Introduction

September
2024

National Office
Staff

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

Chief
Executive
Officer

[Aidan Gordon](#)

Director of
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Support

[Lyn McDermott](#)

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[Ann Cunningham](#)

Dear Colleagues,
After a busy few months it's hard to believe that we are at our 3rd newsletter of the year already.



As we welcome the crisp air of autumn the National Board is taking some time to reflect on the activities of the last few months. The same exercise will be taking place in many Church bodies across Ireland and so through our newsletter we want to alert readers to where we think some of the current challenges in safeguarding within our Church lie. Unfortunately, the report of the Scoping Inquiry (O'Toole Report) was published too late for consideration in this issue, but it will be covered in our next edition. This quarter, while we continue to focus on the implementation of the revised safeguarding children policy 'A Safe and Welcoming Church: Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024'. We take some time to consider the funerals of clergy and religious who due to safeguarding concerns are not in ministry at the time of their death. As we are all aware, the funeral ceremony of an individual who has been accused of abuse of a minor has to be considered carefully.

If possible the funeral should be planned in advance with the individual prior to their death.

This can be a very distressing process and can be a really upsetting time for the family and friends of the respondent, as well as a harrowing and re-traumatising time for the complainants. The National Board provides guidance to support Church authorities in dealing with this situation and on Page 3 we highlight that guidance.

It is also available online at

<https://www.safeguarding.ie/our-services/policy-and-guidance>

During the summer we were also working on some of our plans for 2025 and we are delighted to announce we will be holding a National Conference later next year.

While we are at the early stages of planning we are confident the dates will be in the first week in September 2025 so please hold the 3rd-5th Sept 2025 in your diaries and stand by for further updates in the next newsletter.

This newsletter also provides information on:

- Changes to Church authorities
- Outline of the work of the National Case Management Committee
- A Safe and Welcoming Church: Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024.
- Upcoming training events.
- 'Historical Child Abuse within Faith Organisations' Research (NI)
- Practice Issue.
- External Resources.

Changes to Church Authorities

The National Board provides regular advice to Church authorities, and organises an induction for new Church leaders annually. 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.

Our website provides links to Designated Liaison Person's within each diocese along with contact details for additional help and support. If you notice any errors in any of this information please contact us so that we can make the appropriate amendments.

Ecclesiastical Provincial Area Meetings

As in previous years the National Board is organising a series of four meetings, hosted by the four archbishops. The purpose of the meeting is for staff from the National Office to meet with bishops, provincials, superiors and safeguarding personnel from dioceses, religious congregations and orders across the ecclesiastical province area, to discuss common issues of interest, and to consider how further improvements in safeguarding practice can be made. Meetings are being held on the following dates:

Cashel and Emly: 8/10/2024

Armagh: 15/10/2024

Tuam: 27/11/2024

Dublin: 28/11/2024

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

Responding Pastorally and Reporting according to Civil and Canon Law

R3.C Guidance on the Funerals of Clerics or Religious against whom there is a Case to Answer

Pastoral concern for complainants must be considered in the situation where a priest/religious dies and where there is a credible allegation of abuse of a minor. However, consideration must also be given to the family and friends of the priest or religious when deciding how to conduct the funeral and interment.

Careful thought should be given by the Church authority to the way the requiem liturgy and interment is conducted. Publicly praising the respondent's qualities as a priest could have a seriously detrimental impact on complainants.

Although each case is different, consideration should be given to the following:

- Advanced Planning
- If possible discuss the respondent's wishes for his funeral whilst setting up the interim management plan.
- Matters that should be considered are – where he will be buried; what public announcement can be made; who might celebrate the liturgy.
- What role will family have?
- Who will take responsibility for the funeral arrangements? If the Church authority is responsible, consider the following issues:
 - The appropriateness of a death notice from the Church authority in public communications;
 - How to inform complainants of the respondent's death, and whether they should be made aware of the funeral (a letter such as that shown in 4.3E Template 1 may be appropriate)
<https://www.safeguarding.ie/supporting-and-managing-respondents?task=document.viewdoc&id=511>
 - The role other clerics of the diocese/members of the religious community play in the funeral Mass.
- Give consideration to how the requiem Mass should be conducted:
- Discuss whether the location and timing of the funeral Mass would have a negative impact on the complainants;
- Carefully choose the readings;
- Ensure that the homily does not negatively affect the complainants;
- Balance the needs of the complainants with the deceased's family members.

- How interment should be conducted
- Consider which burial site is most appropriate;
- Address what an appropriate inscription on the headstone should be.

This is not an exhaustive list, but it should be used as a guide to help the Church authority deal as sensitively as possible with this situation.

The National Case Management Committee

Since the publication in 1996 of Child Sexual Abuse – Framework for a Church Response, it has been advised that all Church authorities – diocesan and religious – when considering how to respond to an allegation against one of their members would avail of an Advisory Panel, “... the members of which will be available to offer advice on a confidential basis, collectively and in their respective disciplines, when required”.

In order to support with the above advice, in 2011 the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (National Board) established a National Case Management Reference Group (NCRMGR) to which Church authorities who chose to do so could refer cases for advice and guidance.

Group members were selected for their knowledge, expertise and experience working in a particular field, relevant to safeguarding children. The knowledge/skill set includes: canon law; civil law; working with victims of abuse; assessment and management of those who present a risk; working with children in the child protection system.

The National Case Management Committee (NCCMC), which was formerly the NCRMGR, is an extension of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland in respect to its advice giving remit. This service is available to all dioceses and religious orders who have opted to become members through the signing of a data processing deed which allows the NCCMC committee members to access and offer advice on cases presented to them.

It is important that those accused of a credible allegation of child abuse are restricted in their ministry, and are supervised in order to reduce the likelihood of re-offending. Some of these respondents may be under the supervision of the civil authorities, and therefore any management plan needs to take place in consultation with the civil authorities. For others, the Church authority must take responsibility for putting in place a contract which sets out a range of living and behavioural conditions. The National Case Management Committee can play a key role in advising on the development and oversight of such a management plan.

To date the NCCMC has supported 295+ case discussions since its inception. As a working group it has also organised reviews of its purpose and function regularly and the last such review was completed in 2022. Following each review, changes were made to the committee’s operating procedures and its membership was reviewed.

For more information on the work of the NCCMC <https://www.safeguarding.ie/NCCMC>

A Safe and Welcoming Church; Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church In Ireland, 2024

It's now almost 3 months since release of the revised child safeguarding policy on the 11th of June 2024, so it is likely that Church authorities are well on their way to highlighting and implementing the new policy across all of the areas they are responsible for. The Policy Statement related to the new policy, which you will have found on Page 5 of the policy, should by now be displayed in all appropriate locations. Page 18, the commitment by the Church authority, should be signed by the Church authority and a copy returned to the National Board by email at admin@safeguarding.ie

The Children First Child Safeguarding Statement which is required in the Republic of Ireland should be updated to reflect the changes the revised policy brings. We have provided a template that has been approved by Tusla which can then be adapted to reflect your own Church authority details and also reference the locations of specific documents referred to within the control measures. Should you require the template you can access it on this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/tusla-child-safeguarding-statement> or contact the National Board for a copy at admin@safeguarding.ie

As you are all aware the new policy and the accompanying standards focus on leadership governance and accountability, nurturing a culture of safeguarding, and responding pastorally and reporting according to civil and canon law ensuring that the Church continues to prioritise the safety and well-being of its youngest members.

It is expected that anywhere that the previous 2016 policy has been referenced, perhaps through your posters or on your websites, you have or are in the process of updating with the 2024 policy details.

A frequently asked question over recent months relates to what guidance is newly developed, and we will endeavor to keep you apprised of any revisions as they occur.

The National Board remains at your disposal to provide any guidance or support in the implementation or understanding of the new policy.



Updates to Guidance

Over recent months we have made some further updates to our guidance based on queries from some of you.

- Blank risk assessment template added to Nurturing a Culture of Safeguarding.
- Clarification on the role of the relevant person along with a definition of the mandated person role added to Appendix A.
- The annual audit and guidance on same has been updated.

Trainers Corner

Upcoming Training Events

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

23/10/2024 10:00 – 16:00: *Resilience and Supervision in Leadership*- Within the revised policy 'A Safe and Welcoming Church: Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2024' a commitment is made to providing support for the sometimes challenging road leaders with the Church can find themselves on when managing safeguarding situations on a day to day basis.

With this in mind we have created this training that looks at creating and maintaining resilience along with the benefits of robust self-care strategies such as availing of regular supervision.

The training day focuses on understanding

- What supervision is and what it is not
- The benefits of supervision
- The core elements of supervision
- Building and maintaining resilience.

This day is for Church authorities, DLPs, leaders and those involved in managing safeguarding across our Church.

Train the Trainer

The next ***Train the Trainer*** course will run for 5 days on 9th,10th, 22nd, 23rd and 24th of November 2024. Attendance at the full 5 days is required.

Thank you to all who have responded to our communications and nominated new trainers.

The course is only for those who you wish to become registered trainers for three years with the National Board and any delegate must be nominated by their Church body. For further information or to express an interest please email acunningham@safeguarding.ie

Training Returns

Training returns are an important part of monitoring our practice and ensuring we are actively keeping up to date with our safeguarding responsibilities. Completing training returns should be done following each training session; this will make it easier for yourselves as trainers to keep track of where and whom you trained along with eliminating a bigger task at the year-end. Registering training is very simple and can be completed in a matter of minutes on the National Board website. One key point for sessions where two trainers delivered in partnership is to agree which trainer will record the training on the site. One trainer can then complete on both trainers' behalves.

Trainers can log their training by:

- Using the trainers' login button on www.safeguarding.ie given to each trainer as part of their registration.
- Following log in, click the 'log a training event online' button on the top right hand side of the screen.
- Filling in the relevant details and then submit.
- The event will automatically be added to the database.

Please can you complete this process for every training event facilitated.

Submitting online is a much more efficient way of submitting returns. If you need any help with login or have forgotten your user name and password please contact acunningham@safeguarding.ie

Training survey and meet up

In July we wrote out to all trainers seeking their valuable feedback on training experiences and or challenges in training delivery. We intend to use this feedback and also our planned discussions with trainers in September to further enhance the learner experience and knowledge. Below are the locations of the planned meet ups (some have occurred already and many thanks to those who attended) so if you can attend any of the locations please email lyn.mcdermott@safeguarding.ie . We look forward to engaging with all of you on this vital part of the work of safeguarding in Ireland.

18/09/2024	Maynooth:	18/09/2024: 7pm-8pm
19/09/2024	Limerick:	19/09/2024: 10:30-11:30
21/09/2024	Maynooth:	21/09/2024: 10:30-11:30
25/09/2024	Armagh:	25/09/2024: 11am-12:00
7/10/2024	Ballina:	7/10/2024: 14:00-15:00

The 'Historical Child Abuse within Faith Organisations Project'

What is the Historical Child Abuse within Faith Organizations project?

The Executive Office in Northern Ireland has commissioned a programme of work to look at allegations of child abuse related to faith organisations that has not yet been examined by previous Inquiries such as the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry (HIAI). The HIAI was an independent inquiry into the abuse of children in residential institutions (other than schools) in Northern Ireland (NI) between 1922 and 1995. Abuse that did not take place in a residential setting fell outside the scope of that inquiry.

Consequently, the Inter-Departmental Working group (IDWG) have commissioned a programme of work on behalf of the Executive Office to look at this. The aim is to help them understand the nature and prevalence of abuse which has been alleged to have occurred relating to faith organisations and the impact on victims/ survivors. Please note that the research covers all faith organisations in NI, and also a range of people who have been employed by, volunteered with or otherwise worked with or alongside faith organisations. It also covers all forms of child abuse.

Those who have been commissioned to contribute to this programme have a remit to review literature and examine the records around allegations of abuse relating to faith organisations held by faith groups, criminal justice agencies and social services. The team is a consortium with many years' experience in undertaking sensitive research of this nature. It includes Dr Helga Sneddon, Professor Máiréad Enright, Professor Chérie Armour and Kat Hinfey.

The work will examine records available relating to child abuse that was alleged to have occurred between 1922 and 2010 inclusive in NI and the team are approaching all faith organisations which may have had activities in NI since 1922 (excluding residential institutions).

Those conducting the research are only interested in abuse which has occurred outside residential institutions in NI and which therefore was not examined in the previous Historical Abuse Inquiry. For the purposes of the programme, the term 'abuse' includes neglect, exploitation, and physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse.

It is anticipated that different faith groups will have kept records in different ways over such a lengthy time period, and the nature of the information recorded will also vary. So the first stage of the project is for the team to scope out what type of information exists and how accessible it is. They have already spoken to different faith organisations about some of the complexities and sensitivities of undertaking this type of research, and their feedback has influenced how the team are gathering the information.

Based on this initial scoping, recommendations will be made about the best approach to use after October to collect any more detailed information for Stage 2 of the project.

What are you being asked to do?

Those of you who work or have worked in Northern Ireland in the specified period will be asked to complete an online questionnaire about the type of information and records held by your faith organisation at a local level. The questions focus on what type of information has been recorded during a range of time periods and what form these records take, rather than details of any individual cases.

This questionnaire was sent out to Safeguarding/Diocesan offices toward the end of last month (August 2024) with a request that those who received same send it onto the relevant person to complete and return to the research team prior to 6th October 2024. It is appreciated that everyone is very busy, but hopefully this will give enough time for you to make your response. The link to the questionnaire is at:

[Response; faithScoping](#)

Practice Issue and Resources.

Many children and young people use social media to communicate, responsible social media use is crucial for children/young people as it equips them with essential skills to thrive in today's digital world. 87% of children in the UK own a social media account, although most social media is limited to those over 13 a recent survey completed for <https://www.littlelives.org.uk> shows that 78% have been able to join while under 13 years.

We are beginning to recognise that digital or online platforms are the preferred method of communication of many children. In order to ensure the safety and dignity of children on line we need to ensure that we have strategies in place to manage, reduce or eliminate any potential risks.

At a minimum we need to be looking at

1. Purpose and method of online communication.
2. What platform to be used.
3. Ensure we have a clear code of conduct for both children and adults involved.
4. Ensure we have reviewed all potential risks to children and managed these appropriately.

The National Board are happy to offer training on guidelines for using online mediums with children. For further information please contact lyn.mcdermott@safeguarding.ie



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A welcome visitor



Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor pictured with Aidan Gordon CEO and Dr Keith Holmes Chair of the National Board.

On the 3rd of September the National Board was delighted to welcome the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor to our offices in New House, Maynooth. Archbishop Montemayor met the team and heard about the work of the National Board. He expressed his support for the continuing work of the National Board and assured us of the priority of safeguarding of children is for himself and indeed for Pope Francis.

Farewell

We end this Newsletter by saying a fond farewell to our outgoing Chairman of the National Board Mr. Garrett Sheehan. A clear thinker with sound values and wide-ranging experience, Garrett lead with wisdom and calmness. We want to thank Garrett for his support to all the staff of the National Board office during his time as Chair. All Directors and staff of the National Board wish him well in his retirement.