

## **Overview Report**

### ***Overview of Safeguarding Practice arising from 30 Child Safeguarding Reviews, including 13 male, 16 female Orders and Congregations and 1 Personal Prelature.***

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) has been conducting reviews of child safeguarding practice since 2009. The framework for assessment has been the 2009 *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland*, where Church bodies have ministry with children.

Overall, a large number of congregations are decreasing in numbers and increasing in age profile and have moved away from ministry with children. For these congregations a more appropriate assessment framework was employed which assessed their child safeguarding policy, their ministry with children and their management of allegations. Both sets of Terms of Reference can be found on the NBSCCCI's website [www.safeguarding.ie](http://www.safeguarding.ie). During the period of fieldwork for the reviews being published today, the NBSCCCI presented a revised Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards document (2016) for adoption by all Church Authorities. The revised document allows for a tailoring of the Standards to the specific ministry of a diocese or religious Order/Congregation, thus making future reviews proportionate to the ministry exercised with children.

Of the reviews undertaken in this last tranche of reviews under the current framework, four congregations cannot be reported on or published, as they are included in the statutory review currently being undertaken as part of the Historical Inquiry into Child Abuse in Institutional Care in Northern Ireland (HIA). The NBSCCCI reports of these congregations will be publicly available following publication of the HIA report in 2017.

As with all previous reviews, the current reviews began in December 2015 with the signing of a data protection deed which allowed the NBSCCCI access to all data held by the religious Orders and Congregations. Those Orders, who had previous substantial ministry with children and some current ministry, were assessed against the seven safeguarding standards contained in *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland* (2009). An assessment of their past and present ministry with children was established and this, along with evidence of allegations, dictated the type of review methodology that was employed.

The NBSCCCI engaged the seven independent reviewers, who are now experienced in conducting child safeguarding reviews for the Catholic Church in Ireland to undertake fieldwork, examine case files, engage with those in the safeguarding structure and undertake a full assessment of the policies and procedures of the Order/Congregation.

The seven standards contained within *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland* were the benchmarks used in assessing the practice within the following religious Orders:

1. The Blessed Sacrament Fathers
2. The Brothers of Charity
3. Hospitaller Order Of Saint John of God
4. The Marist Brothers.

And

1. The Personal Prelature of Opus Dei

The remaining 25 Orders and Congregations have limited if any ministry with children in Ireland. A number of these have received allegations of abuse and a critique was made of the Orders' management of those allegations.

The Orders with allegations who were assessed against the shorter framework as they no longer have ministry with children in Ireland include:

1. The Society of St Paul
2. The Society of Divine Saviour (Salvatorians)
3. The Daughters of the Cross of Liege
4. The Comboni Missionaries Of The Heart of Jesus

The remaining Orders/Congregations with no allegations and no/limited ministry with children are:

- 1 Alexian Brothers
- 2 Benedictine Monks – Stamullen
- 3 Franciscans Conventual
- 4 Franciscan Renewal-Limerick and Derry
- 5 Marianists
- 6 Sons of Divine Providence
- 7 Adorers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Montmartre
- 8 Blessed Sacrament Sisters
- 9 Carmelites - Aged and Infirm - Dalkey
- 10 Carmelites - Enclosed - x 10
- 11 Clarissian Missionary Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament
- 12 Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Littlehampton
- 13 Franciscan Missionaries of Mary
- 14 Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady
- 15 Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
- 16 La Retraite Sisters
- 17 Missionaries of Charity-NON CORI
- 18 Missionary Sisters of St Peter Claver
- 19 Poor Clares - Enclosed x 6

- 20 Sisters of Providence
- 21 Sisters of St Joseph of Lyon

The Terms of Reference for each type of review is attached to each congregation's review report and can be read by following the link below;

<http://www.safeguarding.ie/review-terms-of-reference/>

The reviews related to complaints reported from 1st January 1975 to the period of the review.

Where there were allegations of sexual abuse against living members, all cases files were examined. In addition, at the request of the Church Authority, allegations of other forms of abuse, physical and emotional were also examined. The Terms of Reference are clear in stating that in terms of allegations, the concentration is on current risk, in other words the reviewers read files relating to living priests/brothers/sisters. There was also a small sample of either former or deceased member's case files examined, because the review of those cases merited comment in terms of future child safeguarding practice.

None of the Orders/Congregations in this group of reviews have significant current ministry with children. In the past many had, running a range of specialist services for children, including services for children with special needs. The historical context of all Orders/Congregations has been referenced in the early section of the reports as important backdrops to the ministry they had with children, the allegations made against their members and importantly, how allegations were addressed. Some of the Congregations/Orders in this tranche of reviews were examined under the Ryan/Redress processes. The allegations presented to those State inquiries fall outside the terms of reference of the NBSCCCI's reviews as the legislation underpinning those processes forbade disclosure of information outside those inquiries.

The focus of the NBSCCCI's reviews however is on current risk, and the past practice, prior to 2009 with the adoption of *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland* has not been laboured, except where the reviewers felt that significant lessons still need to be learned.

For the larger number of congregations, mostly female in nature, their ministry with children is extremely limited.

However, two of the male Orders had a single allegation against one of its members – Society of St Paul and the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus.

One Order – The Society of Divine Saviour (Salvatorians) received a number of allegations against one of its members (now deceased). The member, in addition, disclosed within an assessment, that he had abused a large number of children. While this Order no longer ministers in Ireland, the large number of allegations and concerns about the management of this deceased priest, presents grave cause for concern and merits particular mention. The concerns are noted in the bullet points contained in the *Summary of Key Findings*.

One Congregation whose involvement with children (Daughters of the Cross of Liege) formed part of the Ryan Report (Chapter 16) had two documented allegations; neither allegation names individual Sisters.

None of the other female Congregations have received allegations of sexual abuse.

Within this tranche of reviews are contemplative Orders who have no direct ministry with children. They are interestingly amongst the Orders where there are younger members. The Nuns within these Orders regularly receive prayer requests, which potentially could contain disclosures and information relating to child abuse. It was reassuring to the reviewers that these Orders take their child safeguarding responsibility seriously and are completely committed to working with the NBSCCCI to improve their practices further.

The majority of the female Congregations has an aging profile and they are decreasing in numbers. A shorter review of their situation including policy, procedures and practice is proportionate to their ministry. Many of these Congregations have not had contact with the civil authority agencies.

All reports have been checked for factual accuracy, have been reviewed by the NBSCCCI's lawyer and have been scrutinized by an independent Reference Group, made up of Dr. Helen Buckley, TCD, Paul Harrison, Independent Consultant, formerly of TUSLA and John Toner, Independent Consultant and Chair of SBNI Safeguarding Panels in Northern Ireland. This process ensures that all comments contained in the reports are based on evidence and represents a fair assessment of the fieldwork findings.

## **Key Findings of the Reviews**

- In the aggregate there have been 288 allegations made against 90 priests, brothers or sisters.
- In the aggregate there have been 10 criminal convictions.
- Allegations relate to the period between 1950 and 2002 with one incident in 2013
- In some Orders, child safeguarding has not been given sufficient priority.
- Poor record keeping evidenced in a number of Orders making assessment of practice difficult.
- Poor monitoring of those accused of child abuse.
- Practice has improved overtime, but prior to 2009 there was inconsistent practice in relation to the management of those accused of child abuse.

- Inconsistent or poor support for complainants.
- A small number of new Orders who are developing their ministry in Ireland need to increase their awareness of child safeguarding.

<b>Order/ Congregation/ Prelature</b>	<b>Numbers of Priests/Brothers</b>	<b>Numbers of allegations, suspicions and concerns (sexual, physical and emotional)</b>	<b>Numbers convicted</b>
Blessed Sacrament Fathers	4	6	2
Brothers of Charity	43	132	4
Hospitaller of St John of God	24	97	0
Marist Brothers	15	39	3
Opus Dei	1	1	0
Society of St Paul	1	1	0
Society of Divine Saviour	1	9	1
Daughters of the Cross of Liege	0	2	0
Comboni Missionaries	1	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>10</b>

The following positive themes emerged:

- In the main the female and contemplative Orders have prioritised child safeguarding. Continued engagement with local dioceses and the NBSCCCI would be encouraged to ensure support for their child safeguarding practices.
- Examples of good management of allegations from the Marist Brothers, where significant lessons were learned by the Order.
- Where reviews took place initiated by the Order themselves practice improved considerably.

## **Conclusion**

A small number of these Orders have had a significant history of ministry with children in education, health care and specialist care for children with disabilities. Some of the Orders have been reviewed as part of the Ryan Report and have put corrective practices in place. In all Orders ministry with children has now reduced. Services have moved away from management by the Order into independent companies which are regulated by HIQA.

A review of current practice of child safeguarding shows considerable improvement in responding to allegations and in responding to those who come forward.

Where there has been significant time and energy spent on developing policies and procedures which meet the standards set out in *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland* 2009, practice has improved. Some Orders need to engage more meaningfully with the NBSCCCI to develop a better understanding of child safeguarding and their responsibilities. The NBSCCCI would not wish any Order to feel that the worst is passed – there is no room for complacency as is evidenced in there being an allegation and a conviction against a member in 2013.

New ministries in particular need to increase their awareness of child safeguarding.

One case stands out as being shocking and the NBSCCCI believes that considerable work needs to be undertaken by the Order to identify and support complainants and to acknowledge the serious damage caused by the priest in question.

**Message from NBSCCCI**

It is important that complainants come forward if there are still unreported allegations of abuse. The NBSCCCI encourages reporting to the diocese/religious order and to the civil authorities.

NBSCCCI also would encourage anyone who has suffered abuse to contact ***Towards Healing***, counselling and support service for Survivors of clerical and religious congregations' abuse, which is totally independent although funded by the Catholic Church.

**Contact details are:**

***Towards Healing*** - Click to visit the website: [www.towardshealing.ie](http://www.towardshealing.ie)

**Free phone** 1800303416 (Republic of Ireland) Free phone 0800 0963315 (Northern Ireland)

Monday - Thursday 11am - 8pm

Friday - 11 am - 6 pm

***Towards Peace***- Spiritual support for survivors of abuse by Catholic Church personnel in Ireland.

Contact: Ms. Una Allen, Director

Ms. Colleen Brown, Administration and Development Coordinator

Phone: + 353 (0) 1 5053028

Mobile: + 353 (0) 86 7710533

**Monday – Thursday: 10am – 5pm**

Email: [towardspeace@iecon.ie](mailto:towardspeace@iecon.ie)

Website: [www.towardspeace.ie](http://www.towardspeace.ie)