



Electronic Newsletter - July 2011

Briefing on the work of the National Board for Safeguarding Children

It is always a challenge to ensure that information on the work of the National Board is disseminated effectively across the many parts of the Church on Ireland. This electronic newsletter is an attempt to supplement the already existing briefing channels through the Bishops' Conference, Conference of Religious of Ireland and the Irish Missionary Union. Specifically we are looking to target the designated officers/ delegates across the Church in recognition of the vital role that they occupy in the safeguarding framework that exists within the Church.

A newsletter will be issued electronically four times a year and will seek to provide an update on the work of the National Board. Further information on any of the topic can be gained by calling the National Office or by emailing me at ian.elliott@safeguarding.ie

Policy update

The National Board has a responsibility to provide advice on the development of policy for safeguarding in the Church. To meet this responsibility it provides draft new policies where deficits exist. The National Board does not have the authority to create policy. This lies, in the first instance, with the nine Members of Coimirce who are Cardinal Sean Brady, Archbishop Martin, Archbishop Neary, Archbishop Clifford, Bishop William Lee, Sr. Marianne O'Connor, Sr. Evelyn Greene, Fr. Con Casey and Fr. Eamon Aylward. They may determine that wider consultation with constituents who have executed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Board is required. The Members meet twice a year with the directors of the National Board. There is also a Liaison Group which currently comprises Archbishop Martin, Sr. Marianne O'Connor and Fr. Eamon Aylward which meets quarterly with the Chair and the CEO of the National Board. The Liaison Group deals with important and relevant issues of concern to Members and the National Board and operates under the aegis of the Internal Charter agreed between Coimirce Members and the Board in November 2009.

It is only when the Members of Coimirce decide that a policy should be adopted that it becomes guidance for the Church. This is what occurred in relation to the Recording Guidance that can be viewed on our website www.safeguarding.ie This guidance has the same status as the *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance* issued in February 2009. Whenever a new policy is adopted it will be posted on our website.

Currently, we have prepared a draft procedure in relation to *Leave from Sacred Ministry*. This draft has been approved by CORI and IMU but is still waiting for final clearance by

the Bishops' Conference. We anticipate that this will occur in September when the Conference reconvenes. It will then be issued.

We have also prepared and presented guidance on *Vetting and on Vetting Appeals* to The Bishops Conference, CORI and IMU and are awaiting endorsement of these before issuing later this year.

The matter of providing guidance for vulnerable adults and safeguarding has been raised with the Members on foot of the new norms issued by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith last summer. They are currently considering how best to address this matter in a way that satisfies statutory and canonical requirements. We will keep you informed of developments.

As signalled in our Annual report, work is continuing on a number of additional standards to be added to the seven that have already been adopted. This work is well advanced and will be brought to conclusion by the end of the summer. If the standards are adopted by the Members their introduction will be supported by training coordinated by the National Office.

The Review of Safeguarding Practice in the Church

As you know, the National Board was asked to undertake this Review following the crisis that occurred in the Diocese of Cloyne. Terms of Reference for the Review were agreed in June of last year and a methodology approved. This 'fourteen step guide' is available on request from the National Office by any designated officer / delegate. To date we have completed the Review of three dioceses and expect to complete a further three by the end of July.

You will be aware that data protection concerns have been raised which have inhibited the progress of the Review. It is understood that these have been solved through the creation of a *Data Processing Deed* which is entered into by the Church authority and the National Board for the purpose of completing the Review. It is planned to complete all of the dioceses by next year, after which the religious and missionary societies will be processed.

Notification of New Referrals to the National Board

In June of last year the new recording guidance was signed off by the Members for adoption across the Church. Under that guidance the receipt of all new referrals should be communicated to the National Office.

Increasingly we are being asked for information with regard to when the alleged abuse took place or whether the complaint is a repeat or second complaint. To assist in ensuring that these matters are addressed we have asked that new referrals are reported to the National Office with whatever supporting information is available. Resource 16 provides a template for this (Page 89 Standards and Guidance document).

In April of each year the National Board publishes an Annual Report. Within it, we provide minimal information on the safeguarding workload experienced and carried by the Church in the preceding year. The timely reporting of information with regard to new referrals enables us to meet this responsibility given to us by the Members.

National Advisory Group

In response to the disparate performance of Advisory Panels across the Church, the National Board is undertaking a project for a period of a year. It proposes to run an Advisory Group to offer guidance on cases that come to the attention of a selected number of dioceses and religious congregations. The purpose is to standardise the provision of high quality advice and to ensure that the decision making in these cases have the benefit of the best support. The project will be monitored and reported on to the Members at the end of the year.

Training update

In recognition of the importance of the role of the designated officer/delegate, the National Board intends to run an introductory training course for anyone who may have been recently appointed to the role or who may feel that they would like a refresher programme for their responsibilities. We intend to provide this twice a year at least and the content will cover all the main duties of the role.

The training manual to supplement the adoption of the Safeguarding Children: Standards across the Church is well advanced. The content has been piloted and consulted on over the course of the last two years. It will now be submitted to a graphic designer prior to printing. We anticipate that the finished product will be available by September, when trainers registered with the National Office will be inducted in the delivery of the new materials.

The National Board Directors

The Board is chaired by John Morgan and two new directors have just been appointed. They are Monsignor Eamon Martin and Fr. Edward Grimes. Both are very experienced and competent people who will be able to offer a great deal to the work of the Board. The Board meets monthly, with the exception of August.

www.safeguarding.ie

The Website of the National Board is the main channel through which information can disseminated to the Church. We try to keep the content of the site updated to reflect the full work of the Board. If you have any suggestions with regard to information areas that you would like to see included I would be delighted to hear from you.



Chief Executive Officer