Good morning everyone, just before I begin I would like to thank the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland for inviting me to speak to you today. Firstly I would like to give you some of my background. I have been working with the Probation Service for 32 years both in prisons and in the community.

During the past 27 years I have been working with Sex Offenders and Life Sentence Prisoners supervising and delivering programmes for these types of offenders again in both settings. On retirement I was approached by my Church Authority to take on the role of Designated Liaison Person which I gladly accepted.

My experiences of the criminal justice system have been mainly dealing with people at a time in their lives when they can be at their worst and best; angry and repentant; wanting revenge, seeking forgiveness. Once involved with police courts and prisons the person can become embroiled in numerous systems and demands creating anxiety and frustration for offender and victim alike. The Criminal Justice System throws up a variety of issues and concerns and despite ambitious aims which they state: (**Slide**)... they can also be seen as  **complex institutions** with **many components, costly, inconsistent service, such as sentencing differences.** However despite the criticisms levelled at it, it is left to continue to work at balancing the rights and the expectations of our society with the rights of victims and offenders.

In relation to the management supervision and support of offenders the Justice system has the means to bring to bear resources and power. Despite the economic climate some statutory groups are able to tap into financial resources when necessary; importantly they can rely on the legal legislation to enforce their powers in relation to non-compliant offenders; also the offender will be aware of the possible serious consequences in relation to any non compliance with the authorities exercising their legal powers.

Finally they also have the resources to place trained and skilled staff into the monitoring of offenders and seem to have a smoother pathway in securing suitable accommodation. I briefly mention the role of statutory agencies not only as in a comparison in some ways to the demands and responsibilities of the Church but also as in some cases there may be a requirement of joint working with the statutory authorities.

These responsibilities were clearly highlighted by Pope Francis on his visit to Philadelphia last October when he said (slide)

“I **pledge the zealous vigilance of the Church to protect children and promise accountability for all**”. He went on to reinforce this commitment by stating (slide)

“**the guilty shall be punished and crimes of abuse be combated with an effective prevention programme in the Church** **and society**”

In relation to this the Catholic Church in Ireland has strived to ensure that children and young people are safe within it and the commitment made by Pope Francis permeates through to dioceses and parishes recognising and acting on child abuse.

Additionally the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland’s completion and launch of the Church’s revised Standards have established an opportunity to build on and deliver “best practice” in the protection of children thereby also following on the words of Pope Francis.

With conference this year focusing on **Key Developments in Child Safeguarding within the Catholic Church in Ireland** the important area of the Management of Respondents is one in which there have been considerable developments and detailed guidance.

However before going into the detail of this and the relevant management issues I believe it is worthwhile firstly to examine just who are we referring to here when we mention the “Respondent” and what are his/her circumstances? We can be dealing with a priest, a brother, a sister who where in a position of power and trust commanding a special relationship, respect and standing in their community. This position and status adds additional complexities when we are addressing the abusive behaviour of the respondents.

The term “sex offender” covers a wide range of individuals each involved in different offences and each of them presenting different risk levels**.(SLIDE)-**

Respondents are at different stages in their journey – from the point of being notified of an allegation when they are correctly perceived as innocent until proven guilty – up to the final finding of guilt or innocence. At each stage the respondent needs support and supervision to ensure that children are safe.

The respondent - be it priest/ brother/sister will have different attitudes to the offences or allegations set against them. Also what is his/her legal status? He/she may have been convicted and serving a community sentence or on a licence. This may entail working with other agencies with statutory powers that are involved with him/her. Similarly if he/she has been charged with offences and on bail awaiting court then contact with the relevant authorities could be part of the involvement.

If after going through the courts he/she has been found not guilty of the charges there may be continuing credible concerns as to the risk that they may present. He/she may also be going through a canonical process and awaiting the outcome of this. These are all areas that may need to be considered in the early stages of contact.

With regard to those initial stages the period following assessment of the allegations, preparation is made for the first contact meeting. This involves the respondent, their advisor or friend, the Church Authority and DLP and it can be a formidable and demanding one for all involved. The emotions involved at that time are mixed and many and can include anger shock, shame, sadness, disappointment and denial. In dealing with the allegations, the Church Authority will have ensured that they have been assessed as credible before giving consideration to boundary limitations and restrictions.

An example from practice in relation to the commencement of this process is one in which the Church Authority, having appraised all the information in relation to the allegation, then give the upmost consideration on the following:

**What to do with the respondent, why they should be doing it and when?** As with all cases advice and guidance were sought from the authorities to ensure the safety of children and that there was no interference with any investigation. In addition to this the Church Authority ensured the well being and support for the complainant in addition to the support for the respondent. The seriousness of any allegation and level of risk merits the intensity of the intervention and in this case it was assessed as the risk being minimal and the restrictions placed on the respondent by the Church Authority would be set at a lower level of intervention.

However the proceedings following disclosure of abuse by a respondent can result in a more serious route and eventually resulting in a court process requiring participation from all involved. With regard to this, another case example is one in which the allegations were such that prosecution was sought by the authorities. Throughout that period leading up to the Court proceedings a seamless communication system was required between the Church Authority DLP, respondent, complainant, Civil Authorities and legal representatives. An additional concern was that the respondent did not see himself/herself as presenting any risk and this increased the demands on the monitoring of his/her behaviour. This in turn also required the Church Authority to ensure the combination of restrictions on the respondent was appropriate to the risk he/she presented while awaiting court proceedings.

The period involved from the initial complaint being reported until it finally reaches the court can be quite a protracted period of time and this presented as an anxious and worrying time for everyone involved but especially the complainant and respondent. The faithful of this parish and the diocese also found this a stressful time from the period when the respondent was “stepped aside” through to the details from the Court being relayed in the public arena.

In this case the eventual process required evidence to be given in court by the complainant, the respondent, other witnesses and the DLP. I believe it is important to highlight this particular case as it indicates how the requirements of the role of DLP can develop into the legal process and it also emphasises the importance of maintaining proper records as they may prove very necessary and valuable in the future. **RISK ASSESSMENT**

In relation to assessment and in particular the assessment of risk, as mentioned earlier this is an area which we are considering from the beginning, assessing the degree of risk posed by the respondent. So what is our objective in carrying out a risk assessment?

**“Slide”** “the aim of assessment is to gather sufficient information to determine the presence of risk” - that is appraising the sources of information, gathering information that is relevant and enabling safe judgements to be made. Included within assessment is the important area of protective factors, a feature that may assist in lowering the risk of reoffending such as self – control acceptance of boundaries and supervision; otherwise factors that could be enabling to the respondent in desisting from further sexual offending.

The area of Risk Assessment is one which should permeate throughout contact with the respondent. Risk assessment tools and resources have been evolving for some time and are likely continuing to do so as it remains a highly important part of the work. We should always seek to try to have the correct balance between care, assessment and management - (influencing areas such as levels of intervention). The Risk Assessment framework presented in the NBSCCI’s Standard guidance is a helpful document which is not only useful in the initial stages but will also be of assistance when any future additional professional assessment is required. The importance of the assessment of risk is crucial in relation to determining a well informed management plan which will require the regular revisiting and reviewing of the restrictions involved. However our understanding of the information gained from the assessment tools used is essential as **Hart in 2011** states (**slide**). On completion, a detailed risk assessment is presented to the Church Authority to assist in determining the risk presented by the respondent by remaining in his/her present position and consideration of any non-judgemental suspension of ministry and any other restrictions or interventions necessary.

**THE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

As indicated previously, the risk assessment will inform the Management plan with the overall aim being to reduce the likelihood and the impact of harm to children by developing protective factors. (**Slide**)This aim is achieved through interventions restricting the opportunity to offend and monitoring for acute factors such as triggers, situations which may indicate that an offence may occur. An individualised and proportionate approach is adopted summarising the risk and the protective factors with the intensity of the interventions matched to that level of risk.

The Management of Respondents can pose some challenges particularly in relation to his/her response to the allegations and intervention or restrictions directed by the Church Authority. With regard to limited compliance we can look at what can be considered to encourage him/her to comply with monitoring and if necessary participate in relevant programmes? What incentive might there be for the respondent to look at managing his/her own behaviour? This is something we will examine later on, however regular reviewing of the management plan is important to note any changes and action any individual and situational changes that may take place.

**Monitoring**

We are able to achieve this through the monitoring of the respondent. It is important to remember howthe assessed risk shapes the supervision of the respondent and monitoring. In referring back to the risk assessment, the form of monitoring that can be helpful, relates to observation; for instance are there any noticeable changes; does his/her behaviour seem different in any way; does he/she seem more anxious; is he/she abusing alcohol; other areas such as talking to him/her, gauging his/her attitude to the allegations; Is he/she taking any responsibility, has this increased/decreased…. views in relation to the complainant have they improved/deteriorated…. what are his/her views with regard to the Church Authorities. In addition to this what protective factors have been observed, strengths such as increased awareness of risk situations? acceptance of responsibility…. If necessary willingness to participate in relevant programmes.

With regard to contact with the respondent and the frequency of visits this will be determined by the level of risk posed by the respondent and other factors including the involvement of other agencies. In past experience this has been on a weekly basis at the commencement of contact eventually progressing to a monthly or bi monthly basis.

With regard to monitoring, like many aspects of the work in this area consideration has to be given to balancing the rights of the respondent against the priority of ensuring the safety and protection of the child with priority being given to the protection of the child.

**Motivational Approach**

The impact of such a change in the life of the respondent can result in feelings of helplessness isolation, fear, anger and also impact on relationships. These and more are, of course, also mirrored in the life of the victim and while recognising the limitations of our role, there are benefits in forming a positive alliance with the respondent.

These can be attempting to engage him/her in the reality of managing possible risks, to assist him/her in moving on from a difficult place and enabling him/her to consider focusing on self change and desistance.

With regard to assisting in accessing information and other support systems, this of course is a role for the Advisor allocated to the respondent; quite often however I have found that in contacts with respondents, advice and guidance were often requested and given. Within the management process, the areas of support and encouragement can be beneficial in motivating the respondent in addressing relevant areas of his/her behaviour.

In relation to a motivational approach in this area, I was presenting a workshop in Athens with representatives from other European countries which was focused on the management and resettlement of offenders. The Greek criminal justice presentation partly focused on motivating offenders; I would like to show you this short video clip which gives a different slant to a motivational approach (Video)

I guess from that we can see, that at times, we can push and pressurize, we can get angry and frustrated, however by working together we can perhaps open the door to a more positive responsive reaction beneficial to all.

**ACCOMMODATION**

We have looked at a number of areas within the management of the respondent; an equally important matter is that of accommodation. The sensitivities which surround this area in relation to those who have abused have been well highlighted in the past. The area of accommodation is an essential component in the monitoring and management of the respondent and once more it is important to ensure that the intervention is directed to reflect the degree of risk the individual presents.

So in relation to the respondent, we are firstly measuring what is the position and concerns in relation to him/her; that is similar to what I mentioned previously, is he/she on licence, waiting trial or there are viable concerns regarding his/her risky behaviour.

Where he/she lives and how he/she lives are crucial links in the monitoring of the respondent be it in a diocese or in a religious community. There are a number of considerations to be made in attempting to secure suitable accommodation including risk, the area and the environment; is it near to the victim; is it near child friendly areas. Would the accommodation put him/her in conflict with others for example the local residents? With regard to a respondent residing with a religious community, what impact might this have on the other members of his community in areas of trust and acceptance as they perhaps find themselves in a role of monitoring the respondent? Despite this the respondent continuing to reside within his/her community would be regarded as a positive measure enabling an environment of protection and prevention and support.

While it is important to highlight the benefits of stable accommodation in areas such as monitoring and minimising risk, it can also be an encouraging factor for the respondent to participate in behaviour programmes in addition to consideration of him/her taking further responsibility and management of his/her behaviour. These are all areas we have to consider in balancing the benefits of suitable accommodation.

**Summary**

I stated at the beginning, the resources available to the statutory authorities are many, however, despite this, they and society continue to struggle to deal with monitoring sex offenders.

It is within this environment that the Church Authorities face the demands of overseeing an effective prevention programme within the Catholic Church. In addition to dealing with the many challenges presented by respondents including the management of risk, the balance of protecting children against the rights of the respondent, there are other pressing requirements including the demands on those appointed to ensure assessments monitoring and support are delivered in a professional and fair manner.

In addressing these and other challenges we require a holistic approach appraising the allegations that have been deemed “credible” and reaching the threshold for reporting and ensuring that this has encompassed a fair and just process.

We have looked at the benefits of a detailed assessment of risk enabling the Church Authority to make informed decisions in relating to the priest, brother or sister who have abused. In addition this is also an important link in that it will inform a management plan which is both justifiable and defensible and aids and evaluates the interventions.

We have looked at the value of the ongoing measurement of progress through the monitoring and supervision of the respondent and reacting to any new development including opportunities for change.

However the role of management of the respondent is not just confined to this, it also encompasses support for him/her and this in no way lessens the responsibilities in other areas. Throughout the management process, reflection on progress is regular and adjustment of restrictions and contact made by the Church Authority as and when required.

Within the best practice of management an individual approach to each respondent is necessary focused on the specific needs and strengths of the individual; finally and most importantly in addition to this our focus will also be that:

“**Throughout our involvement in this work the voice of the complainant should never be lost in our task in the management and supervision of the respondent”.**

**And**

**“It is also our aim to ensure the human dignity of the respondent remains throughout the necessary area of monitoring and supervision”.**

Thank you