

## **National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland**

### **Annual Report 2018**

### **Slight Rise in Allegations Reported**

**18 June 2019**

There was a slight increase in the number of allegations notified to the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) during 2018/19 over the figure for the previous year. The increase was from 135 in 2017/18 to 143 in 2018/19, which is a rise of approximately 6%. However, there was an overall decrease in allegations related to the sexual abuse of children, from 108 in the previous year to 88 in the year being reported on, a decrease of 18.5%. These figures are contained in the NBSCCCI's annual report published today. It details the work done by the NBSCCCI and its National Office during the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

“In line with best practice as set out by the Central Statistics Office this data must be described as ‘under reservation’,” said Teresa Devlin, CEO, NBSCCCI. “Due either to the Church authority not having complete information, or to them not fully completing the notification form, there are gaps in the data being reported in this section. Further, the implementation of the Data Protection Acts 2018 has affected the quality and amount of information that Church authorities notify to the National Office. Notifications that do not identify the person against whom an allegation has been made result in the National Office being unable to establish whether this person has previously been notified. The absence of this key identifying information inevitably weakens the allegations database and introduces the risk of double counting. This is an issue we continue to explore with the authorities north and south of the border.”

During 2018 the NBSCCCI produced a Guidance, Advice and Practice (GAP) paper focusing on the care of complainants. Specifically it focused on responding pastorally to complainants, and was developed from experience of case management practice in Ireland and internationally, reading and research, and through listening to those who have shared their experiences of being harmed in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

“This is an area that will be concentrated on in the coming months and years,” said Devlin. “Now that the Church here is responding appropriately from a legal point of view our next major challenge will be to constantly improve how the Church assists those who have made allegations, particularly in terms of dealing with the impact on their lives.”

“The second phase of our practice reviews of Church bodies will commence within the next few months,” said John Morgan, Chairman, NBSCCCI. “Our goal here will be to ensure that the Church continues to be as safe a place for children as possible and so will focus on current safeguarding procedures. Alongside the reviews we will also roll out an updated training strategy informed by the results of the previous reviews, the recent pilot reviews and best international practice.”

During the year the NBSCCCI was consulted by the Church authorities in Chile and Scotland to share their experience and assist them with putting in place or improving their child safeguarding standards and the structures to support them.

**ENDS**

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