

## **National Board for Safeguarding Children Annual Report 2017 Published**

**(7/06/2018)**

The National Board for the Safeguarding of Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) published its annual report today. It details the work done by the Board and its National Office during the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

During 2017/18, 135 notifications of allegations, suspicions and concerns were received by the National Board from Church authorities. All these new allegations refer to events which allegedly took place between 1940 and 2000, except one more recent incident which occurred in 2002. Of these allegations, 104 related to child sexual abuse. This is a significant increase over the previous year, when the number of new allegations relating to child sexual abuse amounted to 72.

“The falling trend reported on for the previous three years has been reversed for both the number of new allegations and the number of respondents,” said Teresa Devlin, CEO, NBSCCCI. “To be clear, with one exception, most of the alleged abusive behaviour occurred before 2000, in line with previous reports and should not be taken to indicate that the church is currently becoming a less safe place for children. However the fact that allegations continue to be reported and that there is an increase in the number of reports is an important sign that there are still complainants who require a pastoral response and that any complacency is misplaced.”

“We believe that the upturn in reporting of abuse is linked to the media reporting of high profile abuse cases. Often simply seeing and hearing people talk about what they went through gives victims the strength and resolve to report what was done to them. And the fact that they come forward is to be lauded as it allows them to access the support they need and organisations like ours to better understand the mistakes made and how to rectify them.”

The need for ongoing vigilance was reflected in other activity undertaken during the year. NBSCCCI co-hosted a conference with the National Organisation for the Treatment of Abusers (NOTA) on Child Dignity in the Digital World. This conference followed on from an international congress hosted by the Gregorian University in Rome, which resulted in the Declaration of Rome and a call to action for world leaders and technology companies, amongst others, to safeguard children online.

“While digital media can have a positive influence on children’s lives, it also presents risks that need to be managed,” said Teresa Devlin. “Within the Church context, it is critical that all opportunities are taken to safeguard children from abuse and exploitation online.”

Following these two conferences, the National Board produced its first Guidance, Advice and Practice (GAP) paper, entitled Child Safeguarding and Digital Media. This paper is available on the National Board’s website as the first in a series of GAP papers to be published during 2018.

**ENDS**

**For further information please contact:**

**Ger Kenny 087 2488393**