



THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR  
**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN**  
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

**Review of Child Safeguarding Practice  
in the religious congregation of**

## **The Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus**

**undertaken by**

**The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the  
Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI)**

**January 2016.**

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## **Background**

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) was asked by the Sponsoring Bodies, namely the Irish Episcopal Conference, the Conference of Religious of Ireland and the Irish Missionary Union, to undertake a comprehensive review of safeguarding practice within and across all the Church authorities on the island of Ireland.

The NBSCCCI is aware that some religious congregations have ministries that involve direct contact with children while others do not. In religious congregations that have direct involvement with children, reviews of child safeguarding have been undertaken by measuring their practice compliance against all seven Church standards. Where a religious congregation no longer has, or never had ministry involving children and has not received any allegation of sexual abuse, the NBSCCCI reviews are conducted using a shorter procedure. The size, age and activity profiles of religious congregations can vary significantly and the NBSCCCI accepts that it is rational that the form of review be tailored to the profile of each Church authority, where the ministry with children is limited or non-existent. The procedure for assessment of safeguarding practice with such congregations is set out in the contents page of this report. The NBSCCCI welcomes that in order to have full openness, transparency and accountability, religious congregations that do not have ministry with children have made requests to have their safeguarding practice examined and commented upon.

The purpose of this review remains the same and it is to confirm that current child safeguarding practice complies with the standards set down within the guidance issued by the Sponsoring Bodies in February 2009 *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland* and that all known allegations and concerns had been appropriately dealt with. To achieve this task, safeguarding practice in each of these Church authorities is reviewed through an examination of policy and procedures, and through interviews with key personnel involved both within and external to the religious congregation.

This report contains the findings of the *Review of Child Safeguarding Practice in the religious congregation of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus* undertaken by the NBSCCCI in line with the request made to it by the Sponsoring Bodies.

The findings of the review have been shared with a reference group before being submitted to Sr. Patricia Lynch along with any recommendations arising from the findings. The review is not based on a review of case material as during the relevant time period there were no allegations made against members of the congregation that were within the Terms of Reference. There also were no allegations in respect of other forms of abuse within the time period, in respect of deceased and living members of the congregation. The review therefore is primarily based on policies and procedures made available plus interviews with key personnel involved in the safeguarding process within the congregation, particularly in the services run by the congregation.

## **Introduction**

The Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is a Roman Catholic religious institute that was founded in Madrid, in Spain in 1877 by two sisters Raphaela Maria Porrás and Maria Dolores Porrás y Ayllón. In 1886, the Institute received decree of approbation from the Vatican and the Institute was named The Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus with Raphaela as their Head. Raphaela was adamant that the Institute would have Ignatian spirituality and the sisters felt the same. She wanted the Congregation to be Universal like the Church and told the Sisters that, their hearts must be as big as the whole world. She believed that you couldn't bring Christ to others unless you spent regular periods in Contemplation of Christ in the Eucharist. For that reason in all the communities there is Daily Eucharistic Adoration, The amount of time depending on the size of the community and the ministries being carried out by them. Raphaela resigned in 1893. And spent the next thirty two years in prayer and contemplation in the Congregation's house in Rome. She died in 1925, was beatified in 1952 and canonised in 1977 by Pope Paul VI. She is known as Saint Raphaela Mary of the Sacred Heart. She had an incredible gift for always seeing the good in others even when she had been deeply hurt by them.

The Congregation quickly spread through Spain and in 1910 the Sisters opened their first house in London and in the years that followed had several communities in different parts the England. In 1957 The Sisters came to Dublin where they opened a Retreat house and Commercial College in Finglas Dublin 11 and a youth centre. In 1967 a second community was opened in Dal Riada, Avoca Avenue Blackrock. This was a house of studies for their young Sisters and a residence for college students. During the summer the young Sisters ran summer courses for children from Spain and France who came to learn English. In 1971 the house in Blackrock was closed as the Archbishop of Dublin had requested that the Sisters would take charge of what is now known as St. Raphaela's primary and secondary school. The house of studies and the students' residence were transferred to this campus. In 1994 the house in Finglas was closed and most of the community moved to Stillorgan. Worldwide the Institute has 113 communities in 24 countries in 4 continents.

## **Role Profile (past and present role with children):**

As outlined in the introduction, the focus of Congregation's ministry in Ireland has been education and retreats including school retreats. While resident in Finglas Dublin 11, the Sisters ran a retreat centre, a commercial college and youth centre. The retreat house and the youth centre were still in operation until they left in 1994. During their time in Avoca Avenue, Blackrock the Congregation ran a residence for college students and summer courses for Spanish and French children wanting to learn English.

In 1971 the Congregation took over the running of St. Philomena's Primary school and Marillac Secondary school, Upper Kilmacud Road, Stillorgan from the Daughters of Charity. They also transferred the students' residence to this campus. The convent chapel was opened to the public for daily mass and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Eventually the Sisters changed the name of both schools to St. Raphaela's and now the whole campus has that name. Initially, the Sisters were teaching in both schools with the principals also being one of the Sisters. The student residence was also run by one of the Sisters. Some years later the residence was taken over by the Emerald Cultural Institute who still run it and rent that building from the Sisters. The teaching sisters in this community have now retired,

both schools are run by a lay principal who have regular contact with the community. There are two Sisters on the Board of Management of the secondary school, the Local Superior being one of them and one member on the primary school and that is the Local Superior. Both schools retain the Congregation's patronage and ethos. Both schools work with the guidance from the Department of Education and has its own child protection policy and procedures which are updated on annual basis and child protection is always an item on the Agenda at every Board Meeting in compliance with the regulations.

The campus houses an After School club which is an independent business. The Local Superior has been responsible for ensuring that there is a child safeguarding policy in place and a process for the Garda vetting of staff. In addition, various local clubs and organisations hire the facilities of the campus. Before these groups are allowed on the campus the Local Superior requires that they have a child safeguarding policy and adequate insurance, in line with the NBSCCCI's guidance.

In the Congregation's chapel, there is Mass for the community at 7.45am each morning. Some children from the primary school attend this service and act as altar servers. Any priest who celebrates Mass has to have a letter of good standing and have their information processed at Archbishop's House in Dublin. No child is allowed in the sacristy on their own and the door is always kept open. One of the Sisters helps organize the children and a teacher later accompanies them to school.

Within the secondary school one Sister assists the language teacher to source families to accommodate Spanish students over the summer period. This Sister is in charge of finding families and she works in close contact with the teacher in charge of the students, while in school. All the families who receive children have ben Garda vetted.

### **Profile of Members:**

There are presently nine members of the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart living in Ireland. All Sisters live in the convent on the site of St. Raphaela's school and take part in community life. Currently one Sister is on an extended break from the community to care for a relative. The age profile of the Congregation is as follows:

- 4 Sisters are over 80 years of age.
- 2 Sisters are aged between 70 and 80 years
- 2 Sisters are aged between 60 and 70 years.
- 1 sister is aged between 50 and 60 years.

### **Policy and Procedures Document:**

The Congregation of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus have a child protection policy statement which is binding on all member of the Congregation, priests (resident or not), volunteers and staff members. It outlines the categories of abuse, and the behavior and code of conduct expected by all members. It is signed by the Provincial Superior, Designated Liaison Person and Deputy Designated Liaison Person and dated 15/12/2015.

The reviewer has also had sight of the child protection policies of St. Raphaela's primary and secondary school which are comprehensive in content and in line with guidance from the department of education.

### **Structures:**

The Congregation is divided into Provinces and decisions are centralised with the Superior General in Rome. The Superior General has a team of four consultors and is responsible for the appointment of the Provincial Leader. In 2014 Ireland became part of a Province including Portugal, France, and England. Each community has a Local Superior and the Provincial Superior is in charge of the four countries. In Ireland, because of the limited number of members in the community the Local Superior is also the assigned Designated Liaison Person. To assist her in all matters relating the child safeguarding she has appointed a Deputy Designated Liaison person.

**Management of Allegations and liaison with the statutory authorities:**

There have not been any allegations of abuse against any member of the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Ireland, and as such there has been no contact in relation to these matters between the Congregation and the civil authorities, An Garda Siochana or TUSLA. Consequently there was no case management material examined during the course of this review.

**Conclusion:**

The Congregation of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus has played a role in education and school retreats in Ireland. Since 1971 they have had care and control of a primary and secondary school on St. Raphaela's campus in Stillorgan, County Dublin. The Sisters continue to be trustees of the schools, playing an active role on the campus, and the local Leader is present on both Boards of Management.

The Congregation has a focused child protection policy statement of their own and also adheres to the standards of the education department within their schools. There have been no allegations of abuse against any member of the Congregation. The reviewer concludes that there are no concerns about the child safeguarding practice within the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart.

## **Review of Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Ireland**

### **Terms of Reference (which should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Notes)**

#### **Small Religious Congregations**

##### **Introduction**

In order for the National Board to be able to state that all Church Authorities on the island of Ireland have been evaluated in respect of their child safeguarding policies and practices, both historical and current, then some form of appropriate assessment has to be conducted of every one of these. It is rational however that the form of assessment is tailored to the profile of each Church Authority, and that needless expenditure of resources and unnecessary interference in the life of religious orders and communities that have no children-specific ministry would be avoided.

This Review seeks to examine the current arrangements for safeguarding children across small Religious Congregations /Orders, and Missionary Societies in Ireland who have limited or no direct contact with children as part of the Congregations ministry.

It would also scrutinize practice within all known cases to ensure that they have been responded to appropriately.

The review's methodology is an adaptation of the methodology developed for all Dioceses and large religious congregations and missionary societies, where the ministry involves regular contact with children.

The proposed Review would consider the following:-

- (a) Former role with children
- (b) Allegations of child abuse against members and how these have been responded to
- (c) Existing relationships with statutory authorities such as the HSE, Gardai in the Republic and the HSCT or PSNI in Northern Ireland.
- (d) Policies in place and being applied for safeguarding children
- (e) Roles and responsibilities and where they exist the operation of Advisory Panels, and Safeguarding Committees

The objective of the Review would be to confirm if there have been any allegations and how known allegations have been responded to; in addition the review seeks to confirm what the current arrangements for safeguarding children are. In particular, emphasis will be placed on establishing how policies and practice matches up to the standards set down in the Safeguarding Children Guidance published by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church launched in February 2009. Priority, at all times, will be given to how policy and practice can be improved and strengthened. If policies and/or practices are identified that are concerning, inadequate, or dangerous, they will be addressed through the provision of guidance and support, and through the reporting of these situations to the appropriate statutory authorities, if this has not already happened. Similarly, those that are good examples will be highlighted with a view to them being adopted comprehensively across all parts of the Church. All cases that relate to alleged or known offenders that are alive will be read and included in the Review. In cases where the alleged or known offender

is deceased, these will be sampled in an attempt to gather learning from them that will be used to inform the framing of recommendations.

### **Guidance Documents**

The Review will be guided by the following:-

- (a) Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance;
- (b) Children First Guidance in ROI; and Regional Child Protection Guidelines in Northern Ireland;
- (c) Legislation that exists in each jurisdiction which contributes to safeguarding children and young people.

The Review will be undertaken by the National Board for Safeguarding Children through their National Office and led by the Chief Executive Officer.

The Review process will be overseen by a **Reference Group** to whom the CEO will report on a regular basis. The membership of this **Reference Group** has been drawn from each of the statutory child protection agencies in both jurisdictions, along with eminent individuals in the field from academia. The current Reference Group consists of : Dr Helen Buckley (TCD); Mr Paul Harrison (Tusla), and John Toner (SBNI).

It is important to confirm that the value of the Review is dependent upon full and complete access to all relevant documentation and information relating to the abuse of children known to the individual Church authorities. The Review will proceed on the basis that willingness exists on the part of each of the subjects of the Review to provide full access to the fieldwork team, subject, where relevant, to the terms of the Data Processing Deed agreed between the Sponsoring Bodies and entered into between the parties hereto.



## **Step Guide to the Review Process**

### **Step 1.**

A letter of invitation to review is sent by the Provincial/Regional Superior or other person responsible for the Congregation/ Order or Missionary Society (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Ordinary’).

### **Step 2.**

The CEO will forward a survey to the provincial which will identify:

- Current number of members
- Past role with children
- Current role with children
- Total number of allegations received up to 2014
- Number of living members against whom there are allegations

### **Step 3.**

For any Order where there have been allegations a full review will proceed, as per step 4 - 23. For those Orders where there have been no known allegations a desk top examination of policies and procedures will take place followed by a site visit to interview all relevant personnel within the safeguarding structure. For these orders **step 5 and 13-23** will apply.

### **Step 4.**

The CEO and Ordinary will confirm the dates for the fieldwork for the Review, and names of the fieldwork team.

### **Step 5.**

The Church Authority will be asked to make available all of the case files and related documentation in respect of any safeguarding concerns that have been identified within the diocese. The Church Authority will make available a room with wireless internet access for the reviewers to conduct their review of files, so that any records made by the reviewers can be directly typed and stored onto a secure server which is only accessed by the reviewers. In the absence of internet access the reviewers will type their notes onto a secure encrypted usb stick for later uploading onto the secure server.

### **Step 6.**

The Church Authority will be requested to sign the revised Data Processing Deed prior to the arrival of the team.

### **Step 7.**

The Church Authority will arrange a schedule of interviews with all who hold safeguarding roles within its functional area. The designated person and the Church Authority will be available to the reviewers throughout the period of fieldwork.

**Step 8.**

The fieldwork team when they arrive on site will firstly confirm that they have a suitable place to work in and that all the required documentation has been provided to them for their Review. In the event that the fieldwork team forms the opinion that the Church Authority has not provided access to all such documents, the Board shall give notice in writing to the Church Authority of the opinion of the fieldwork team and such notice shall specify the reasons for same. Thereupon, the Church Authority shall respond in detail to the Notice. Each party shall use its best endeavours to resolve any differences of opinion which shall arise and, in the event that resolution is not arrived at, the parties will attempt to resolve the dispute by recourse to the services of a mediator agreed between them or nominated for the purpose at the request of any of them without prejudice to the Board's entitlement to terminate the Review. In the event that resolution has not been arrived at following mediation, either party shall be at liberty to terminate forthwith the Review.

**Step 9.**

On arrival, the fieldwork team should be supplied with a single case file index that lists all the cases that have been created within the diocese. These may be divided into two groups. The first group will contain all allegations that relate to living alleged or known perpetrators. The second will contain any that are deceased.

**Step 10.**

Depending on the volume involved a decision should be made as to whether all or a random sample of the "deceased group" should be reviewed. Care should be taken to include all prominent cases in the sample.

**Step 11.**

Each case file will be reviewed by each fieldworker independently in the first instance. They will create a written summary with chronological information of the case. In certain cases a second reader may be required, this will be discussed and agreed between the fieldworkers.

**Step 12.**

Following the reading of the case and the creation of a summary, the fieldworkers will analyse and assess the actions taken in the case. They will assess compliance with agreed Church policy that was extant at that time. They will also indicate whether any current risk exists in respect of the information contained within the file and advise the church Authority of necessary safeguarding action to reduce the risk.

**Step 13.**

When all the case files have been read, the fieldwork team will then examine and review any procedures or protocols that exist within the diocese to confirm that they are in compliance with the *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance* document issued by the NBSCCCI in February of 2009.

**Step 14.**

To complete the Review, the fieldwork team will then seek to speak to those directly involved in the safeguarding structure in the diocese. This should include the Advisory Panel, a sample of parish safeguarding representatives, the designated person, the safeguarding committee, victim support and advisors and the Bishop/Provincial. The purpose of these interviews is to form a view of the competence and effectiveness of the safeguarding structure that exists within the Church Authority.

**Step 15.**

The fieldwork team will also seek to speak to representatives of the key statutory agencies to provide them with an opportunity to express their views on the quality of the working relationships that exist between them and the Church Authority.

**Step 16.**

A verbal feedback session on initial key findings will be given to the Church Authority.

**Step 17.**

Upon completion of the field work, the team may request to take materials – other than casework records to review off-site; this alongside all materials gathered by the reviewers, including written notes on cases and meetings, will be analysed and will form the basis of the draft assessment review report.

**Step 18.**

The draft will be forwarded to the Church Authority for factual accuracy checking.

**Step 19.**

Alongside all other reports under review, the report will be presented in draft to the Reference Group for their critique and comment. If further work is required at the direction of the Reference group the CEO will ensure this work is completed and advise the Church Authority accordingly.

**Step 20.**

The report will be legally proofed by NBSCCCI lawyer.

**Step 21.**

The report will be forwarded to the National Board for approval

**Step 22**

A final draft report will then be submitted to the Church Authority. The expectation would be that the Report will be published by the Church Authority at an agreed time in the future.

**Step 23.**

All case material written, including summaries, as part of the review, which are for the reviewers use only, will be stored on a secure server.

## **Guide for Reviewers**

In terms of small (female religious orders) reference should be made to the following:

1. Has the Order provided alternative care to children in an orphanage, industrial school or children's residential home, but no longer is engaged in running such services;
2. Has the order provided education to children, in both or either boarding schools and day schools, but no longer does so ;
3. Has the order provided medical and/or nursing services to children, but no longer does so;
4. Has the order provided any other services to children, in community services centres, youth clubs etc., and no longer does so;
5. Does the order currently provide any sort of service to children and families that brings them into regular contact with children;
6. Has the order never provided any service to children (e.g. contemplative orders).

In relation to category 1 above;

1. The reviewers will establish whether any service they provided is included in the list of children's residential services produced by the Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB);
2. If this is the case, reference should be made to this.
3. If complaints have been referred to the Redress Board or Ryan Commission, this review cannot access these records and that will be stated in the report.
4. If the order has received complaints which have not been processed through Redress or Ryan these cases will be thoroughly examined as detailed above.

## **Review of Policy and Procedures**

1. It is recognised that not all Orders will have any ministry with children and therefore their policies and procedures should reflect the work that they do with children.
2. If the Order only works through other organisations, example in Diocesan work or in schools, they are required to follow the policies of those organisations.
3. If there are gaps in the policy document an assessment should be made as to whether the ministry engaged in requires full compliance with all criteria attached to the seven standards
4. Where it is clear that the criteria do not apply a reference should be made at the beginning of the review report that the Order's ministry is not directly with children and therefore adherence to particular criteria do not apply.
5. In the Order is a contemplative Order, there is no expectation that they will have detailed policies and procedures, but reference should be made to their ministry and that they have no contact with children.
6. In all cases, contact will be made with the civil authorities to identify if they have any child safeguarding concerns in relation to the order.