



Review of Child Safeguarding Practice
in the Order of Canons Regular of Prémontré
[Norbertines]
undertaken by

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

Date: October 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 Episcopal Conference, the Conference of Religious of Ireland and the Irish Missionary Union, to undertake a comprehensive review of child safeguarding practice within and across all the Church authorities on the island of Ireland. The purpose of the review 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 Church authority is to be reviewed through an examination of case records and through interviews with key personnel involved both within and external to a diocese or other authority.

This report contains the findings of the *Review of Child Safeguarding Practice in the Order of Canons Regular of Prémontré [Norbertines]* undertaken by the NBSCCCI in line with the request made to it by the Sponsoring Bodies. It is based upon the case material made available to the reviewers by the local Prior, along with interviews with selected key personnel who have a child safeguarding role within the Canonry. The NBSCCCI has been informed by the Prior that all relevant documentation for these cases was passed to the reviewers.

The findings of the review have been shared with a reference group in redacted form before being submitted to the Prelate Administrator (Major Superior), along with any recommendations arising from the findings.

Introduction

The Order of the Canons Regular of Prémontré, also known as the Premonstratensians, the Norbertines and, in Britain and Ireland, as the White Canons (from the colour of their habit), are a Roman Catholic religious Order of the Canons Regular founded by Saint Norbert in 1120 at Prémontré near Laon, France. Premonstratensians are designated by the acronym O.Praem following their name.

Saint Norbert was very influenced by the Cistercian ideals as to aspects of the manner of life and the government of his Order. In Norbertine terms the Order is understood as a union of independent houses, called Canonries. A Canonry is voluntary association to which individuals bind themselves by the profession of vows to live according to gospel values. Each Abbey is a “stand-alone” or independent monastery. The term Order within the Norbertines simply refers to the fraternal union of all of the independent Canonries of the Order.

Each Canonry has a Major Superior, either an Abbot or Prior, and together with his Council, he has governance accountability for the members of the Canonry. The Abbot General has governance over the Major Superiors. The General Chapter is the highest authority in the Order.

As Canons Regular, the Premonstratensians were largely involved in teaching and the exercising of pastoral ministry, and frequently serve in parishes close to their monasteries. Liturgical prayer and the celebration of the Eucharist were to be the sustaining dynamics of the community. In 1126 the order received Papal approbation and by the fourteenth century there were 1,300 Abbeys for men and 400 for women throughout Western Europe. Similar to the experience of most religious congregations at the time, the Norbertines were almost eradicated during the French Revolution, but they experienced a revival in the nineteenth century. In 2005, there were estimated to be over forty Norbertine abbeys in the world, spread across every continent.

The Norbertines in Ireland

In 1924 the Norbertines founded Holy Trinity Priory, Kilnacrott, County Cavan, at the invitation of the Bishop of the Diocese of Kilmore. Initially Kilnacrott was a dependent house on the Canonry of Tongerlo, Belgium; and in 1954 it became an Abbey and was granted autonomy.

The Norbertines operated a secondary school, called St. Norbert's College, at Kilnacrott, and indeed one of the priest members of the congregation, now laicized, was convicted of abusing an adolescent boy who was a student there. In addition to this specific direct ministry with children and young people, the members of the Order were very much part of community life and facilitated activities for children, such as choirs and altar serving.

The first Abbot was appointed in 1954 until his death in 1968. He was succeeded by the second Abbot who resigned in 1994, and the third Major Superior, a Prior, died suddenly in 2013 when a Prelate Administrator was appointed. That priest is still in role and currently has a Prior and a Council to assist him

There has been no application for religious formation in the Norbertine Canonry in Ireland since 1993, and an Abbot has not been elected in the past twenty years. The Norbertines ministered in Kilnacrott Abbey until its sale in 2012, when they established a residence in a small house nearby, which they named Holy Trinity House, in the grounds of which they built a small independent Oratory, Our Lady of Knock Oratory.

There are currently nine members of the Canonry in Ireland (eight priests and one Brother), with an average age of 77 years. The Prelate Administrator currently resides in the United States, while the local Prior lives in Belfast in Northern Ireland. Two members of the Canonry live at Holy Trinity House on a full time basis, and the other members live in individual accommodations in various parts of Ireland.

The review of the child safeguarding practice of the Irish Norbertine Canonry took place at Holy Trinity House, County Cavan on the 26th May 2016 and at the Dublin offices of the Order's solicitors on the 30th May 2016. Further follow up work by email and telephone was conducted at the report writing stage of the review process.

The reviewers met with the Prior, with the named Designated Safeguarding Officer – a priest of the Order - and with the lay secretary at Holy Trinity House on the 26th May 2016. The lead reviewer had a telephone conversation with the named Designated Liaison Person – a lay man - on this day also. The lead reviewer spoke by telephone with the Prelate Administrator on the 12th July 2016 from his residence in the United States. The review was conducted against the *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland (2009)*. It is important to note that these Standards have now been replaced by *Safeguarding Children 2016, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland*.

The Norbertine Canonry in Ireland has a significant history of poor child safeguarding practice. It is notorious for its mismanagement of the now deceased member, Brendan Smyth O.Praem (8 June 1927 – 22 August 1997) who abused a large number of children from the 1960s (and possibly even earlier) until his arrest and incarceration in 1990s.

The NBSCCCI's reviews focus on current child safeguarding practice; however, it is not possible to assess the current practice without reference to the period when Brendan Smyth was in ministry, for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Canonry is still receiving complaints relating to Brendan Smyth; and how these are managed is relevant to current practice. Secondly, there are members of the Canonry who had responsibility for Brendan Smyth who are still alive. Thirdly, given the history, it is critical that the NBSCCCI assesses whether lessons have been learned.

The CEO and one of the reviewers from the NBSCCCI met with the Chair and Members of the Historical Institutional Inquiry, not to discuss the Norbertines, but to agree that the NBSCCCI's review would not interfere with the statutory Inquiry and to give a

commitment not to report on the NBSCCCI's review until following publication of the HIA report in 2017.

This report is based on the findings of the review process as outlined above.

On September 20th, 2016 the NBSCCI received information from the Norbertine Prior that the last public Mass would be held at Holy Trinity House on the following Sunday, September 25th, 2016 and as of that date all public ministry by the Norbertine Canonry on the island of Ireland will cease. Given that this information was received post fieldwork for this review, the NBSCCCI has requested a meeting with the Prior and Prelate Administrator to address outstanding child safeguarding issues.

STANDARDS

This section provides the findings of the review. The template employed to present the findings are the seven standards, set down and described in the Church guidance, *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland*. This guidance was launched in February 2009 and was endorsed and adopted by all the Church authorities that minister on the island of Ireland, including the Norbertines. The seven Standards are:

Standard 1 A written policy on keeping children safe

Standard 2 Procedures – how to respond to allegations and suspicions in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

Standard 3 Preventing harm to children:

- recruitment and vetting
- running safe activities for children
- codes of behaviour

Standard 4 Training and education

Standard 5 Communicating the Church’s safeguarding message:

- to children
- to parents and adults
- to other organisations

Standard 6 Access to advice and support

Standard 7 Implementing and monitoring the Standards

Each Standard contains a list of criteria, which are indicators that help decide whether this Standard has been met. The criteria give details of the steps that a Church organisation - diocese or religious order - needs to take to meet the Standard and ways of providing evidence that the Standard has been met.

Standard 1

A written policy on keeping children safe

Each child should be cherished and affirmed as a gift from God with an inherent right to dignity of life and bodily integrity, which shall be respected, nurtured and protected by all.

Compliance with Standard 1 is only fully achieved when a congregation meets the requirements of all nine criteria against which the standard is measured.

Criteria

Number	Criterion	Met fully or Met partially or Not met
1.1	The Church organisation has a child protection policy that is written in a clear and easily understandable way.	Partially met
1.2	The policy is approved and signed by the relevant leadership body of the Church organisation (e.g. the Bishop of the diocese or provincial of a religious congregation).	Not met
1.3	The policy states that all Church personnel are required to comply with it.	Not met
1.4	The policy is reviewed at regular intervals no more than three years apart and is adapted whenever there are significant changes in the organisation or legislation.	Not met
1.5	The policy addresses child protection in the different aspects of Church work e.g. within a church building, community work, pilgrimages, trips and holidays.	Not met
1.6	The policy states how those individuals who pose a risk to children are managed.	Not met
1.7	The policy clearly describes the Church's understanding and definitions of abuse.	Partially met
1.8	The policy states that all current child protection concerns must be fully reported to the civil authorities without delay.	Partially met
1.9	The policy should be created at diocese or congregational level. If a separate policy document at parish or other level is necessary this should be consistent with the diocesan or congregational policy and approved by the relevant diocesan or congregational authority before distribution.	Not met

The reviewers were furnished with a policy handbook during the fieldwork visit to Holy Trinity House, dated 2010 and entitled *Safeguarding Children in the Norbertine Abbey of Kilnacrott*. On the first page of this document it is stated that this policy and procedure document is adopted by the Irish Norbertine Canonry “as its particular application” of the *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland*. This handbook was compiled by the former Prior, who died unexpectedly in 2013, and it relates solely to the protection of children while on Abbey grounds. It includes the policy statement:

We believe that all children should be cherished and affirmed as a gift from God, and that they have a fundamental right to be respected, nurtured and cared for and protected, and that we have a sacred obligation to ensure that they are given those rights when they are on Abbey premises, and that every possible measure has been taken to protect them from suffering abuse.

This means that all decisions and actions taken in response to allegations or suspicions of child abuse, the child’s welfare must always be paramount, and this overrides all other considerations.

The policy handbook details definitions of child abuse, code of behaviour for adults, and procedures and steps for responding to allegations or suspicions of child abuse. In relation to Criterion 1.6, there is mention that “measures” will be taken to prevent the respondent having contact with children. However, there is no procedural description on the monitoring, management and support of an individual who may pose a risk to children. Given the number of allegations against Norbertine priests, the reviewers anticipated a more detailed and considered level of documentation in this area.

Fundamentally, the criteria in this standard are not met or are only partially met because the 2010 handbook policy is not a current document and relates specifically to the grounds of Kilnacrott Abbey, which is no longer the residence of the Norbertine Canonry in Ireland. This policy document has not been updated or adapted for application to Holy Trinity House, or every three years as required under the 2009 *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland*. The Child

Safeguarding Designated Officer named in the document was not aware of his role since the move to Holy Trinity House and details of the current Prior have not been included in it.

Each independent House should have its own child safeguarding policy and procedures. In the case of the Norbertines, the NBSCCCI undertook to support their development of an appropriate child safeguarding policy and discussions were held with a former Prior in 2012, and after his death, with the Prelate Administrator in 2013. The former Prior did make some attempts to draft a policy but following his unexpected death it would appear that responsibility for updating the policy and inducting members and staff on it did not pass to anyone, which was a careless oversight.

It is fair to reflect that members who work in dioceses across Ireland are required to follow the child safeguarding policy and procedures of the dioceses in which they minister.

The Norbertines in Co. Cavan are within the Diocese of Kilmore, and the reviewers asked whether they were guided by the diocesan child safeguarding policy and procedures. The Prior informed the reviewers that the relationship between the Order and the diocese is not good and that the Norbertines are excluded from diocesan training. There is no evidence that they are signed up to diocesan policies.

In the absence of a current up to date Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, which is understood by the members of the Order, it is not possible for the Norbertines to meet any of the criteria that are based on having such a written document in place.

During the period of fieldwork, *Safeguarding Children 2016* was introduced; The Prior has now signed to commit the Norbertines in Ireland to following this policy and safeguarding standards. However, the assessment below is based on the 2010 document.

Standard 2

Management of allegations

Children have a right to be listened to and heard: Church organisations must respond effectively and ensure any allegations and suspicions of abuse are reported both within the Church and to civil authorities.

Compliance with Standard 2 is only fully achieved when a congregation meets the requirements of all seven criteria against which the standard is measured.

Criteria

Number	Criterion	Met fully or Met partially or Not met
2.1	There are clear child protection procedures in all Church organisations that provide step-by-step guidance on what action to take if there are allegations or suspicions of abuse of a child (historic or current).	Not met
2.2	The child protection procedures are consistent with legislation on child welfare civil guidance for child protection and written in a clear, easily understandable way.	Not met
2.3	There is a designated officer or officer(s) with a clearly defined role and responsibilities for safeguarding children at diocesan or congregational level.	Partially met
2.4	There is a process for recording incidents, allegations and suspicions and referrals. These will be stored securely, so that confidential information is protected and complies with relevant legislation.	Not met
2.5	There is a process for dealing with complaints made by adults and children about unacceptable behaviour towards children, with clear timescales for resolving the complaint.	Not met
2.6	There is guidance on confidentiality and information-sharing which makes clear that the protection of the child is the most important consideration. The Seal of Confession is absolute.	Not met
2.7	The procedures include contact details for local child protection services e.g. (Republic of Ireland) the local Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána; (Northern Ireland) the local health and social services trust and the PSNI.	Not met

Table 1

**Incidence of safeguarding allegations received within the Norbertine Canonry
against priests and brothers, from 1st January 1975 up to time of review**

1	Number of Congregational priests and brothers against whom allegations have been made since the 1 st January 1975 up to the date of the review.	4
2	Total number of allegations received by the Congregation since 1 st January, 1975.	Not known
3	Number of allegations reported to An Garda Síochána/PSNI involving priests and brothers since 1 st January 1975.	Not known
4	Number of allegations reported to the TUSLA/ HSE/HSC (or the Health Boards which preceded the setting up of the HSE,) involving priests and brothers of the Congregation since 1 st January 1975.	Not known
5	Number of priests and brothers (still members of the Congregation) against whom an allegation was made and who were living at the date of the review.	2
6	Number of priests and brothers against whom an allegation was made and who are deceased.	1
7	Number of priests and brothers against whom an allegation has been made and who are in ministry.	0
8	Number of priests and brothers against whom an allegation was made and who are 'Out of Ministry', but are still members of the Congregation	1
9	Number of priests and brothers against whom an allegation was made and who are retired	1
10	Number of priests and brothers against whom an allegation was made and who have left the Congregation	1
11	Number of priests and brothers of the Congregation who have been convicted of having committed an offence or offences against a child or young person since the 1 st January 1975	2

As previously outlined in this report, the policy document for the Norbertine Canonry in Ireland is dated 2010 and relates to safeguarding children in Kilnacrott Abbey, which is no longer under the care and control of the canonry. This document does not meet the requirements of Criteria 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6 or 2.7; and it does not provide a robust procedure on any aspect of this standard, including reporting allegations, recording incidents, and dealing with complaints. The out of date policy document does not provide a thorough guidance on the management of allegations which is contemporary and consistent with current legislation and guidelines. Case recording responsibilities do not seem to be allocated to anyone, although the Prior keeps some case records in a filing cabinet in an upstairs room. The bulk of the case management files are held by the Canonry's solicitors in their Dublin office, and the Canonry records are lodged in the archives of the Abbey at Tongerlo in Belgium.

The reviewers met with the (former) Child Safeguarding Officer, as designated and named in the policy handbook, and in the Child Safeguarding Statement visible in the hallway of Holy Trinity House and in the lobby of the Oratory. This priest appeared to have a vague recollection of his appointment to this role by the previous Prior, but when asked about his duties and responsibilities he had no understanding of these. A layman has been identified as the current Designated Liaison Person (DLP), and this same individual was named as Child Safeguarding Representative in the policy handbook. From discussion with the DLP it is clear that he occupies a support role that began in 1991 when there were apparently specific needs in relation to structures and behaviour in Kilnacrott Abbey. However, the Canonry did not develop clear guidance or a role definition for him. The DLP was unclear about how to manage complaints and allegations, or how to respond pastorally to a complainant.

The Prior informed the reviewers that another lay person, a woman, has been asked to function as Deputy Designated Liaison Person and is in the process of taking up this role. It was anticipated that when this role is properly established, the two lay people will engage in DLP-specific training.

In relation to Criterion 2.4, the files at Holy Trinity House were structured around three individual respondent priests. The files stored at the congregation's solicitor's office relate almost entirely to the one priest member of the Norbertines who was convicted of child sexual abuse. This second group of files were produced by and remain the property of the Norbertines and so have not been re-constructed by the solicitors in any particular rational order.

The reviewers are unable to clearly state that they have had access to and examined all allegations in relation to sexual abuse against Norbertine priests. There is a lack of clear recording in relation to all aspects of allegations; and therefore it is not possible to state with any confidence that all allegations have been reported to An Garda Síochána/PSNI or Social Services in the appropriate jurisdiction.

The files at Holy Trinity House lacked a consistent structure, clear narrative accounts and details in relation to the allegations that were made, the complainants, and the response of the Canonry. Information in relation to the individual priest respondents, such as date of birth, education history and religious career were present in these files. The archive with information from Kilnacrott Abbey is reported to be held in Tongerlo Abbey in Belgium.

From the files made available to the reviewers, there are four Norbertine priests about whom there have been at least 103 child safeguarding concerns or allegations. Of these four, one priest is deceased and one has been laicised; and both these men served prison sentences, one of them for charges in relation to twenty named victims. The reviewers are unfortunately unable to clearly state that they have had access to and examined all allegations in relation to sexual abuse against these Norbertine priests, and the Prior did not know a great deal about what case information was on file in locations other than Holy Trinity House.

The reviewers are aware that TUSLA audited the Canonry in 2013, and that they have as recently as January 2016 requested that certain child safeguarding issues be addressed by the Norbertines.

There is no information on the files to evidence any consistent and direct notification by the Norbertines of child protection allegations to An Garda Síochána.

In order to ascertain the quality of the Norbertines' case management of the four priests about whom child safeguarding concerns and allegations have been made, the reviewers read all of the files that were made available to them, and a summary of their findings is presented here.

Priest A: Following a complaint in the 1990s by an adult woman, Fr. A. admitted to the sexual abuse of thirteen children, both in Ireland and abroad. Fr. A. was immediately removed from all "pastoral ministry" and a private risk assessment was carried out. It is unclear from the file as to the Canonry's communication with the statutory authorities at this time. Father A. attended for private psychiatric assessment in 1997; and a further risk assessment was concluded in 1999. There is evidence to suggest that a "behavioural agreement" was signed by Fr. A. at this time, and again in 2010 and 2011. Fr. A. subsequently served a prison sentence and was laicised. The Canonry sought advice from the NBSCCCI's Case Management Reference Group in 2011 as to how to manage Fr. A. There is no evidence on the file of any attempts to identify the victims, or to offer them any pastoral response.

Priest B: This priest is infamous in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland and internationally. A full module of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry in Northern Ireland was devoted to examining the abuse career of this man.

The file materials in relation to Fr. B. are held at the Dublin office of the Norbertine's solicitors and they contain information in relation to allegations of abuse in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and abroad. The files are loosely structured around geographical areas and financial claims. There is evidence on file to suggest that two of the Abbots at Kilnacrott were aware of concerns in relation to Fr. B. and used a strategy

of moving him regularly. They appear to have believed that by doing so they would ensure that he could not form attachments to people. In 1975 there was a “limited canonical enquiry” initiated by the local bishop in order to withdraw Fr. B.’s faculties. In 1979, the Abbot’s Council Minutes detail a decision to allow Priest B. to travel abroad to minister as a priest, but not to provide details of his history to the Church authority to whom he was being sent so that he could start from a position of “trust” in his new ministry. In 1985 Fr. B. was reinstated with limited faculties by the local bishop.

There is information on the file detailing that Fr. B. first had psychiatric / psychological treatment for concerns in relation to his contact with children, in 1968. Further consultations with specialist services for both assessment and treatment took place in 1973, 1992/3 and 1994.

In 1989 the then Abbott outlined in a letter that he had directly received complaints in relation to Fr. B’s conduct with children and was requested by the responsible Cardinal and Bishop to take appropriate steps to deal with Fr. B. The reviewer cannot establish from the file materials if there was any communication of these concerns to the statutory authorities at this time, or indeed any contact with them. An assessment report dated 1994 from a psychiatric treatment facility is on file. The psychiatrist concludes that Fr. B. is “a fixated, ego-syntonic paedophile as described in the DSM 111 R (302.20)”. In 1995 the Abbott wrote to Fr. B. and outlined that canonical proceedings were being initiated in relation to him. Fr. B. is deceased, having died in 1997.

The reviewers were unable to establish from the file the total number of allegations against Fr. B. There are 81 complainants named in the files that are kept at the solicitors’ office in Dublin.

The reviewers did not see any written evidence of how complainants have been responded to pastorally. The local Prior has informed the NBSCCCI that both he and his predecessor have had one-to-one meetings with several victims of Fr. B.

Priest C: Information was received by the Canonry from An Garda Síochána in 1998 detailing that seven children had made allegations in relation to Fr. C. There is a letter on the file from An Garda Síochána in the same year stating that the Director of Public Prosecutions had decided that there would be no prosecution of Fr. C, due to lack of credible evidence.

This is a very incoherent and non-specific file that includes among other things, planning permission for a garage and motor tax information. It is unclear if there were any restrictions or a safety plan put in place following the notification by An Garda Síochána of this initial concern.

In 2013, an adult woman raised a concern about a recent incident of sexually inappropriate behaviour towards her by Fr. C. An independent Risk Assessment was commissioned by the current Prelate Administrator in 2013; and the written report of this assessment includes very clear recommendations about Fr. C.'s contact with children and with adult women. In 2013, Fr. C.'s faculties to minister were withdrawn, first by the Prelate Administrator and then by the local bishop. However, it is clear from entries in the case management file that there continued to be concerns about his non-compliance with restrictions. These concerns were further detailed in letters to the Canonry from TUSLA in 2016; and NBSCCCI also wrote to TUSLA in May 2016. TUSLA have confirmed that they are aware of the risks and are monitoring the situation.

As a direct result of his concerns, the current Bishop of Kilmore met with the Prelate Administrator, and as a consequence a decision was taken to cease all public ministries at Holy Trinity House.

The reviewers have been informed that Fr. C has been asked to sign a management plan restricting his ministry and forbidding him any access to children. The reviewers were also advised that the Prior has met TUSLA regarding this priest, but there are no records on file regarding this.

Priest D: A concern in relation to Fr. D. appears to have been received around 2010 and relates to a period of time he had spent abroad. An independent assessment of this concern concludes that it was “not possible to come to a substantive finding that the abuse happened”.

There is potentially a further concern that was received by the Canonry via email, but the reviewers were unable to identify any further information or grounding connected to this matter. There is no recorded information to suggest that any further follow up or consultation was conducted with Fr. D. by his superior in relation to these concerns. Fr. D, who is very elderly, does not live within the structure of Holy Trinity House, although he continues to attend Canonry functions, such as Chapter meetings and Jubilee celebrations, and he is visited by his superior.

In summary, the reviewers are not satisfied that allegations of child safeguarding have been adequately addressed, either in the past or at present. There is an absence of records to demonstrate what action has been taken in terms of reporting to the civil authorities, to offering pastoral support, or to managing risk. There is a serious lack of clarity by the role holders about their responsibilities.

Overall, the management of Norbertine priests about whom there have been very serious concerns has been very poor. In fact, it would not be unfair to label it as careless.

Recommendation 1

The Prelate Administrator of the Norbertines ensures that discussions with Tusla in Co. Cavan are held regularly to identify whether any child protection concerns arise from the continued residence of members of the Canonry in Holy Trinity House. In the event of any such concerns being identified, he should work with Tusla to fully address these.

Standard 3

Preventing Harm to Children

This standard requires that all procedures and practices relating to creating a safe environment for children be in place and effectively implemented. These include having safe recruitment and vetting practices in place, having clear codes of behaviour for adults who work with children and by operating safe activities for children.

Compliance with Standard 3 is only fully achieved when a congregation meets the requirements of all twelve criteria against which the standard is measured. These criteria are grouped into three areas, safe recruitment and vetting, codes of behaviour and operating safe activities for children.

Criteria – safe recruitment and vetting

The Following criteria have limited current applicability given that the Canonry has ceased providing public ministry

Number	Criterion	Met fully or Met partially or Not met
3.1	There are policies and procedures for recruiting Church personnel and assessing their suitability to work with children.	Not met
3.2	The safe recruitment and vetting policy is in line with best practice guidance.	Not met
3.3	All those who have the opportunity for regular contact with children, or who are in positions of trust, complete a form declaring any previous court convictions and undergo other checks as required by legislation and guidance and this information is then properly assessed and recorded.	Not met

Criteria – Codes of behaviour

Number	Criterion	Met fully or Met partially or Not met
3.4	The Church organisation provides guidance on appropriate/ expected standards of behaviour of, adults towards children.	Not met
3.5	There is guidance on expected and acceptable behaviour of children towards other children (anti-bullying policy).	Not met
3.6	There are clear ways in which Church personnel can raise allegations and suspicions about unacceptable behaviour towards children by other Church personnel or volunteers (‘whistle-blowing’), confidentially if necessary.	Not met
3.7	There are processes for dealing with children’s unacceptable behaviour that do not involve physical punishment or any other form of degrading or humiliating treatment.	Not met
3.8	Guidance to staff and children makes it clear that discriminatory behaviour or language in relation to any of the following is not acceptable: race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality or political views.	Not met
3.9	Policies include guidelines on the personal/ intimate care of children with disabilities, including appropriate and inappropriate touch.	Not met

Criteria – Operating safe activities for children

Number	Criterion	Met fully or Met partially or Not met
3.10	There is guidance on assessing all possible risks when working with children – especially in activities that involve time spent away from home.	Not met
3.11	When operating projects/ activities children are adequately supervised and protected at all times.	Not met

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3.12	Guidelines exist for appropriate use of information technology (such as mobile phones, email, digital cameras, websites, the Internet) to make sure that children are not put in danger and exposed to abuse and exploitation.	Not met
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It is acknowledged that the Norbertine Canonry in Ireland has very limited involvement with children, other than with those attending liturgies with their parents at the Oratory at Holy Trinity House, and that due to this, the criteria by which compliance with Standard 3 is measured have limited relevance. That said, it is expected that any Church body on the island of Ireland, and especially one that has had such a problem in relation to one particular member who has abused numerous children and young people, should have a comprehensive and up to date Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

There is no information in the 2010 Policy Handbook in relation to the recruitment of staff and volunteers and to how to assess their suitability to work with children.

As previously stated, public Mass is held at the Our Lady of Knock Oratory on the grounds of Holy Trinity House on a daily basis. The Prior estimated that fifteen members of the public attend mass on weekdays and approximately thirty on the weekends, when children may attend with their parents. There are no altar servers assisting at Mass in the Oratory. The Prior drew to the reviewers' attention that there are glass doors in the Oratory and in the sacristy.

The other occasional gathering of people at Holy Trinity House is a support group called *The Friends of St. Norbert* that raises funds for the Canonry, members of which are all over 18 years of age. The Prior was vague about how often they meet in the house and about their role and function within the Norbertines.

None of the priests or staff members at Holy Trinity House are Garda vetted. There does not appear to be any knowledge of the importance of this, or a system in place for its implementation. There are a small number of local women employed by the

congregation who undertake administration and secretarial, and cooking and housekeeping duties.

The Canonry does not have a whistle blowing policy, nor does the policy document provide guidance on contact with children, or on a complaints procedure.

It is acknowledged that a number of Norbertine priests minister in Diocese across Ireland. There is an expectation that while ministering in another Church Body that they follow the policy and procedures of that Church Body. The Reviewers were advised that they follow this expectation, though there is no written record to this effect.

Standard 4

Training and Education

All Church personnel should be offered training in child protection to maintain high standards and good practice.

Criteria

Number	Criterion	Met fully or Met partially or Not met
4.1	All Church personnel who work with children are inducted into the Church’s policy and procedures on child protection when they begin working within Church organisations.	Not met
4.2	Identified Church personnel are provided with appropriate training for keeping children safe with regular opportunities to update their skills and knowledge.	Partially met
4.3	Training is provided to those with additional responsibilities such as recruiting and selecting staff, dealing with complaints, disciplinary processes, managing risk, acting as designated person.	Partially met
4.4	Training programmes are approved by National Board for Safeguarding Children and updated in line with current legislation, guidance and best practice.	Not met

The Prior informed the reviewers that all members have availed of training in child safeguarding as presented by the NBSCCCI. There was however no recorded evidence of who attended what type of training.

Additional specific training, such as for DLPs, has recently been developed and provided by the NBSCCCI. However, without clearly defined expectations, role clarity and a strong commitment to Child Safeguarding within the Canonry, attendance at training alone cannot generate competency in these roles.

Recommendation 2

The Prelate Administrator of the Norbertines ensures that any member of the Canonry on the island of Ireland who is in any form of ministry, in a diocese or institution, is aware of, trained in and is compliant with the relevant Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures that apply to that location.

Standard 5

Communicating the Church’s Safeguarding Message

This standard requires that the Church’s safeguarding policies and procedures be successfully communicated to Church personnel and parishioners (including children). This can be achieved through the prominent display of the Church policy, making children aware of their right to speak out and knowing who to speak to, having the Designated Person’s contact details clearly visible, ensuring Church personnel have access to contact details for child protection services, having good working relationships with statutory child protection agencies and developing a communication plan which reflects the Church’s commitment to transparency.

The Following criteria have limited current applicability given that the Canonry has ceased providing public ministry

Criteria

Number	Criterion	Met fully or Met partially or Not met
5.1	The child protection policy is openly displayed and available to everyone.	Not met
5.2	Children are made aware of their right to be safe from abuse and who to speak to if they have concerns.	Not met
5.3	Everyone in Church organisations knows who the designated person is and how to contact them.	Not met
5.4	Church personnel are provided with contact details of local child protection services, such as Health and Social Care Trusts / Health Service Executive, PSNI, An Garda Síochána, telephone helplines and the designated person.	Not met
5.5	Church organisations establish links with statutory child protection agencies to develop good working relationships in order to keep children safe.	Not met
5.6	Church organisations at diocesan and religious order level have an established communications policy which reflects a commitment to transparency and openness.	Not met

As already stated in this report, the Child Safeguarding policy made available to the reviewers is not current and relates to safeguarding on the grounds of Kilnacrott Abbey where the Canonry no longer reside. A Child Safeguarding Statement was visible in the hallway of Holy Trinity House and in the adjoining Oratory. This statement is out of date and does not provide details or contact information for the current child safeguarding delegates. The reviewers noted confusion in the Canonry about who is currently responsible for child safeguarding matters and how concerns or allegations should be responded to. It appears that the former Prior held most of the knowledge and commitment to child safeguarding within the Canonry, and following his death in 2013 the responsibility has not been taken up by any individual or group.

There is evidence on the files of the HSE audit in 2013. Recommendations from that audit were re-communicated to the Canonry as recently as January 2016, but the reviewers saw no evidence to suggest that the Norbertines have acted upon these recommendations.

Standard 6

Access to Advice and Support

Those who have suffered child abuse should receive a compassionate and just response and should be offered appropriate pastoral care to rebuild their lives.

Those who have harmed others should be helped to face up to the reality of abuse, as well as being assisted in healing.

Criteria

Number	Criterion	Met fully or Met partially or Not met
6.1	Church personnel with special responsibilities for keeping children safe have access to specialist advice, support and information on child protection.	Not met
6.2	Contacts are established at a national and/ or local level with the relevant child protection/ welfare agencies and helplines that can provide information, support and assistance to children and Church personnel.	Not met
6.3	There is guidance on how to respond to and support a child who is suspected to have been abused whether that abuse is by someone within the Church or in the community, including family members or peers.	Not met
6.4	Information is provided to those who have experienced abuse on how to seek support.	Not met
6.5	Appropriate support is provided to those who have perpetrated abuse to help them to face up to the reality of abuse as well as to promote healing in a manner which does not compromise children's safety.	Met partially

The 2010 Policy Handbook document provides a definition of a Support Person (for complainants / victims) but does not identify who that person should be or the practical application of the role. There is no information providing clear, practical advice on how to respond to children who are disclosing an incident of abuse. As previously stated,

there is no coherent evidence of a pastoral response to complainants. The Canonry however has contributed to the costs of the *Towards Healing* counselling and support agency for its work with victims who have attended alleging abuse by Norbertine priests.

Given the significant number of concerns and allegations that have been received by the Canonry over a long period of time, and documented evidence of their mismanagement of individual priests, it is inconceivable that there is still no support structure in place. The Norbertines have a moral responsibility to respond to and address the welfare of those adults who were abused as children by members of their Canonry. Throughout the review there has been no acknowledgment or discussion of, or proposed plan to address this issue. However, the age profile of the members of the Irish Canonry and the paucity of financial resources available to them together make it highly unlikely that the Irish Norbertines can now deliver any sort of extensive response system.

The reviewers have evidence that the Norbertines have used the NBSCCCI for information and advice, and Criterion 6.2 might have been partially met because of this. However, the reviewers have seen no convincing evidence that the advice provided by NBSCCCI has been followed and implemented.

There is evidence in two of the case management files of attempts to provide respondent priests with appropriate professional interventions, and so Criterion 6.5 is considered to be partially met.

Recommendation 3

The Prelate Administrator, in conjunction with the Abbot General and his Definitors*, reviews the response to complainants made by the Irish Canonry to date, and develops a Pastoral Care Plan to give direction to a continued and proactive response into the future.

***[The NBSCCCI is aware that the Abbot General has no direct legal responsibility in this regard, as all Canonries are independent. However, what is envisaged is a collegiate or fraternal exercise of cooperation]**

Standard 7

Implementing and Monitoring Standards

Standard 7 outlines the need to develop a plan of action, which monitors the effectiveness of the steps being taken to keep children safe. This is achieved through making a written plan, having the human and financial resources available, monitoring compliance and ensuring all allegations and suspicions are recorded and stored securely.

Criteria

Number	Criterion	Met fully or Met partially or Not met
7.1	There is a written plan showing what steps will be taken to keep children safe, who is responsible for implementing these measures and when these will be completed.	Not met
7.2	The human or financial resources necessary for implementing the plan are made available.	Not met
7.3	Arrangements are in place to monitor compliance with child protection policies and procedures.	Not met
7.4	Processes are in place to ask parishioners (children and parents/ carers) about their views on policies and practices for keeping children safe.	Not met
7.5	All incidents, allegations/ suspicions of abuse are recorded and stored securely.	Met partially

The reviewers accept that the criteria contained in Standard 7 hold little practical application to the contemporary profile and ministry of the Norbertines in Ireland. The reviewers cannot state with any confidence that they found evidence that there was a shared ownership of or insight into the importance of Child Safeguarding in this congregation.

There is no written plan, so Criteria 7.1 and 7.2 cannot be met. Monitoring compliance with child safeguarding policies and procedures is not a responsibility allocated to or exercised by any member, so Criterion 7.3 is not met. Criterion 7.4 is not met, but it is

probably not particularly relevant; although consultation could be conducted with the attendees at liturgies at the Oratory at Holy Trinity House.

In relation to Criterion 7.5 the reviewers were informed that the case management files are stored securely within the grounds of Holy Trinity House. The Prelate Administrator, Prior and Secretary appear to have access to these files. Other files are securely stored with the Canonry's legal representatives in Dublin. However, it is difficult to ascertain who has primary responsibility for the files.

Conclusions

There are still child safeguarding matters to be addressed by the Canonry in terms of reporting and responding to allegations and offering support to complainants.

The reviewers are disappointed to report that overall, there has not been any realisation of the importance of Child Safeguarding in the Norbertine Canonry in Ireland.

From what the NBSCCCI has been told by the Prior of Holy Trinity House, the Norbertine Canonry has now ceased all public ministries in the Diocese of Kilmore.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Prelate Administrator of the Norbertines ensures that discussions with Tusla in Co. Cavan are held regularly to identify whether any child protection concerns arise from the continued residence of members of the Canonry in Holy Trinity House. In the event of any such concerns being identified, he should work with Tusla to fully address these.

Recommendation 2

The Prelate Administrator of the Norbertines ensures that any member of the Canonry on the island of Ireland who is in any form of ministry, in a diocese or institution, is aware of, trained in and is compliant with the relevant Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures that apply to that location.

Recommendation 3

The Prelate Administrator, in conjunction with the Abbot General and his Definitors*, reviews the response to complainants made by the Irish Canonry to date, and develops a Pastoral Care Plan to give direction to a continued and proactive response into the future.

***[The NBSCCCI is aware that the Abbot General has no direct legal responsibility in this regard, as all Canonries are independent. However, what is envisaged is a collegiate or fraternal exercise of cooperation]**

Review of Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Ireland

Terms of Reference

(which should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Notes)

1. To ascertain the full extent of all complaints or allegations, knowledge, suspicions or concerns of child sexual abuse, made to the Diocese by individuals or by the Civil Authorities in the period 1st January 1975 to 1st June 2010, against Catholic clergy and/or religious still living and who are ministering/or who once ministered under the aegis of the Diocese and examine/review and report on the nature of the response on the part of the Diocese.

2. If deemed relevant, select a random sample of complaints or allegations, knowledge, suspicions or concerns of child sexual abuse, made to the Diocese by individuals or by the Civil Authorities in the period 1st January 1975 to 1st June 2010, against Catholic clergy and/or religious now deceased and who ministered under the aegis of the Diocese and examine/review and report on the nature of the response on the part of the Diocese.

3. To ascertain all of the cases during the relevant period in which the Diocese:
 - knew of child sexual abuse involving Catholic clergy and/or religious still living and including those clergy and/or religious visiting, studying and/or retired;
 - had strong and clear suspicion of child sexual abuse; or
 - had reasonable concern;and examine/review and report on the nature of the response on the part of the Diocese.

4. To consider and report on the following matters:
 - Child safeguarding policies and guidance materials currently in use in the Diocese and an evaluation of their application;
 - Communication by the Diocese with the Civil Authorities;
 - Current risks and their management.

Accompanying Notes

Note 1 **Definition of Child Sexual Abuse:**

The definition of child sexual abuse is in accordance with the definition adopted by the Ferns Report (and the Commission of Investigation Report into the Catholic ArchDiocese of Dublin). The following is the relevant extract from the Ferns Report:

“While definitions of child sexual abuse vary according to context, probably the most useful definition and broadest for the purposes of this Report was that which was adopted by the Law Reform Commission in 1990¹ and later developed in Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Health and Children, 1999) which state that ‘child sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or that of others’. Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child;
- intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- masturbation in the presence of the child or the involvement of the child in an act of masturbation;
- sexual intercourse with the child whether oral, vaginal or anal;
- sexual exploitation of a child which includes inciting, encouraging, propositioning, requiring or permitting a child to solicit for, or to engage in prostitution or other sexual acts. Sexual exploitation also occurs when a child is involved in exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, video tape, or other media) or the manipulation for those purposes of the image by computer or other means. It may also include showing sexually explicit material to children which is often a feature of the ‘grooming’ process by perpetrators of abuse.

¹ This definition was originally proposed by the Western Australia Task Force on Child Sexual Abuse, 1987 and is adopted by the Law Reform Commission (1990) *Report on Child Sexual Abuse*, p. 8.

Note 2 Definition of Allegation:

The term allegation is defined as an accusation or complaint where there are reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, or is being sexually abused, or is at risk of sexual abuse, including retrospective disclosure by adults. It includes allegations that did not necessarily result in a criminal or canonical investigation, or a civil action, and allegations that are unsubstantiated but which are plausible. (NB: Erroneous information does not necessarily make an allegation implausible, for example, a priest arrived in a parish in the Diocese a year after the alleged abuse, but other information supplied appears credible and the alleged victim may have mistaken the date).

Note 3 False Allegations:

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland wishes to examine any cases of false allegation so as to review the management of the complaint by the Diocese.

Note 4 Random sample:

The random sample (if applicable) must be taken from complaints or allegations, knowledge, suspicions or concerns of child sexual abuse made against all deceased Catholic clergy/religious covering the entire of the relevant period being 1st January 1975 to 1st June 2010 and must be selected randomly in the presence of an independent observer.

Note 5 Civil Authorities:

Civil Authorities are defined in the Republic of Ireland as the Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána and in Northern Ireland as the Health and Social Care Trust and the Police Service of Northern Ireland.