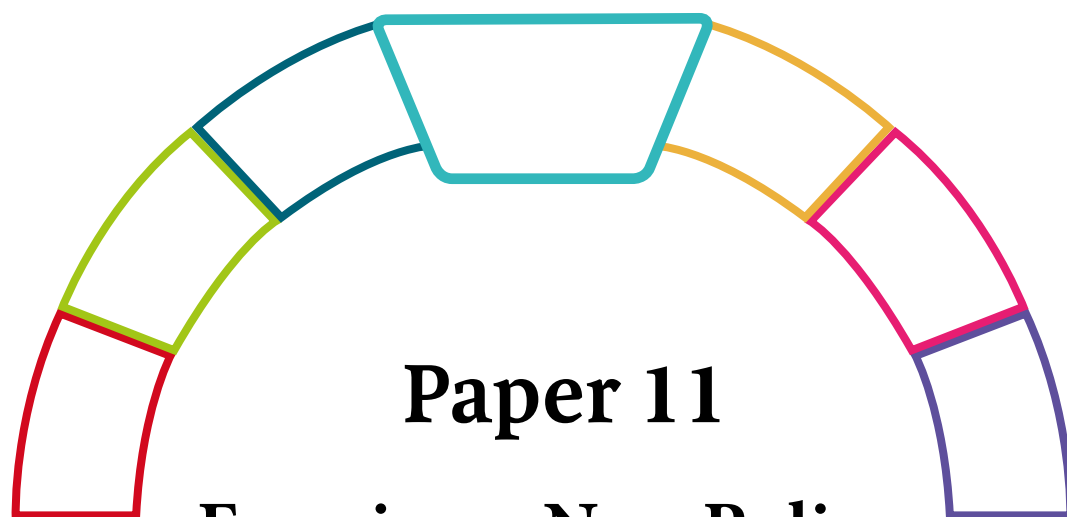


# **GAP**

## **Guidance, Advice and Practice**



### **Paper 11**

## **Framing a New Policy for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland**

**May 2023**



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



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

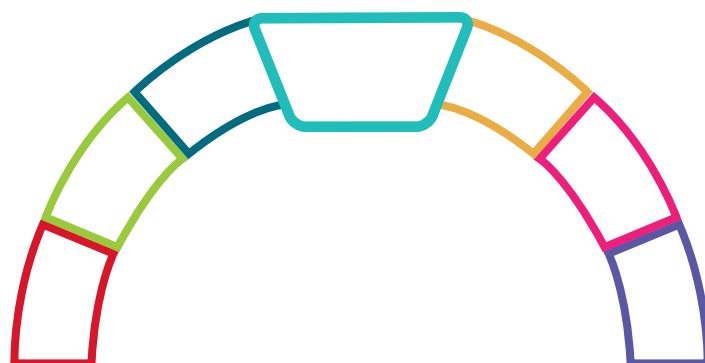
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## About the GAP Papers



The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (National Board) was established to provide advice, services and assistance in furtherance of the development of the safeguarding of children within the Roman Catholic Church on the island of Ireland. The National Board also monitors compliance with legislation, policy and best practice and reports on these activities annually, as comprehensively set out in the Memorandum of Association of the Company, Coimirce.

Article 4 (iii) of the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Company requires the National Board to: report and provide, upon request from the Constituents or any Constituent, support, advisory and training services to such Constituents or Constituent on policies and practices relating to safeguarding of children.

The National Board already provides comprehensive Guidance to support the implementation of *Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*. These series of Guidance, Advice and Practice (GAP) papers further complements the detailed Guidance on topics of current interest to constituents.

The bridge logo above encapsulates the aim of these GAP papers, each brick represents one of the seven safeguarding standards; the keystone signifies the importance of quality assuring compliance with the standards, which is the responsibility of the Church authority. A major part of quality assurance is becoming aware of new challenges or gaps to safeguarding as they emerge. This series of papers aims to provide the reader with information on guidance, advice and practice, which will assist in developing best practice in safeguarding children, identifying where there are risks and how to minimise these risks. To do this, these papers draw on the experiences of the National Board, research and information already available to the reader from other sources.

The GAP papers are not intended to be read as definitive positions on the chosen topic. The National Board does not claim to have inserted all available research and knowledge; nor do we claim to be masters of best practice offering indisputable views. Each of these papers will focus on a particular gap in terms of safeguarding children, and each paper will provide guidance advice and practice to help overcome these gaps, building the reader's knowledge on the subject and in informing practice, which will be underpinned by the seven safeguarding standards.

Specifically, this paper has been written to gather research and information as background for the review of the Catholic Church Child Safeguarding Policy.

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## Background to the Review of Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016

The National Board has a responsibility to advise the Catholic Church in Ireland on child safeguarding policy and practice. Since its foundation, the National Board has developed two iterations of a child safeguarding policy, the most recent in 2016. Since that time, there have been significant changes in canon law, some changes in civil law, and much increased awareness about effective practice in the area of child safeguarding, particularly within a faith-based setting. In January 2022, the National Board determined that a further review of policy was now necessary, and a process of reading, research, and consultation began.

In this GAP paper, we have attempted to draw out some lessons from research, from an examination of international policies and practices and from changes in civil and canon law to inform the revision of Church policy here in Ireland. Only a small selection can be made from each category for comment. The more extensive Bibliography contained in the appendices provides interested readers with material for further personal research.

While the concentration in the research reported on in this paper relates mainly to child sexual abuse, we acknowledge that the Church must be concerned about all forms of abuse; and indeed all of the policy frameworks to date have been specific in stating that all abuse of children is unacceptable.

The reader should be aware that the layout of this document in relation to the sequencing of sections does not indicate any order or hierarchy of importance. It has been decided, for instance, to place most of the treatment of the history of clerical child sexual abuse in a dedicated appendix, not because it is considered less important, but simply because the amount of detail involved could unbalance the paper.

## 1. Historical Context in the Catholic Church in Ireland

In 2018, Pope Francis wrote to the People of God, stating in the opening paragraph:

*'Looking back to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient. Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated.'*

Looking back, a sad history has unfolded across many countries, where the abuse of children and the subsequent cover-up leaves us ashamed and embarrassed at our failure to recognize and uphold the Gospel values and the rights of children in ministry.

In Ireland, our history is still unfolding and each new disclosure by a child or adult adds more context to how children were treated by adults. Appendix 2 sets out a timeline of major events and enquiries that have shaped the history of abuse of children in the Church. What is evident is that the prevailing culture was one of control and power. Children were not viewed as rights holders, and State and Church failed to engage with children to promote their safety.

Key points from History – what lessons?

Consistent approach that ensures that:

- The law is followed.
- Victims are listened to.
- Decisive action is taken.
- Victim-centred rather than institutional defence.
- Need to create a culture of safety and promotion of children's right.

<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis (2018) Letter of His Holiness to the People of God. Available at [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2018/documents/papa-francesco\\_20180820\\_lettera-popolo-didio.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2018/documents/papa-francesco_20180820_lettera-popolo-didio.html) (Accessed 1st March 2023).

## **2. Framing a new policy for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland**

### **2 (a) Child Safeguarding Policy Development in the Catholic Church in Ireland, with reference to the need for the review and revision of Safeguarding Children 2016**

The Church in Ireland has had procedures in place since 1996 to protect children and to manage allegations of child abuse, when the Framework for a Church Response document was published. Our Children, Our Church: Child Protection Policies and Procedures for the Catholic Church in Ireland was published in December 2005. A core recommendation of Our Children, Our Church was the establishment of a National Board for Safeguarding Children and a National Office to implement the National Board's decisions and policies. The National Board then produced in 2008 (adopted in 2009) a policy framework and set of standards for application across the Church, Safeguarding Children, Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland. This policy was adopted - and often adapted - by individual Church bodies, which generally produced their own supporting documentation.

Following Reviews of compliance by Church bodies with the 2008 Standards, conducted by the National Board between 2011 and 2016, it was accepted that a one-Church policy was required. The National Board conducted very extensive consultation with Church bodies and other relevant organisations, after which it published Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016. This was accepted as the policy and standards for the entire Church on the island of Ireland – the female and male religious and the twenty-six dioceses.

The context within which the Church ministers is constantly changing, with developments in civil and canon law, new insights from research, and improvements in practice. Therefore it is important to ensure that any child safeguarding policy and supporting guidance should be revised and updated, a process in which the National Board is now fully engaged.

### **2 (b) Legislative and Regulatory Contexts in the Jurisdictions of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland: Developments since the last revision of the policy**


As already noted, safeguarding policy must be framed within the legislative context of the countries in which we minister. Both jurisdictions within which the Catholic Church in Ireland operates have their own legislation, regulations, and practice guidance for the protection and welfare of children. It is essential that all activities and ministries of the Church comply with those that are relevant to the respective jurisdiction.

Child safeguarding is concerned with harm to children including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.

In Northern Ireland, the policy framework for the protection of children can be found in Co-operating to Safeguard Children (2017), which suggests:

'Safeguarding is more than child protection. Safeguarding begins with promotion and preventative activity, which enables children and young people to grow up safely and securely in circumstances where their development and wellbeing is not adversely affected. It includes support to families and early intervention to meet the needs of children and continues through to child protection. Child protection refers specifically to the activity that is undertaken to protect individual children or young people who are suffering, or are likely to suffer significant harm.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Department of Health Northern Ireland (2017) Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland - Version 2.0. Belfast: Department of Health.



In a document produced by Tusla in the Republic of Ireland in 2019, Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice, child safeguarding is described as:

*'...ensuring safe practice and appropriate responses by workers and volunteers to concerns about the safety or welfare of children, including online concerns, should these arise. Child safeguarding is about protecting the child from harm, promoting their welfare and in doing so creating an environment, which enables children and young people to grow, develop and achieve their full potential.'*<sup>3</sup>

A full list of relevant legislation is available in the appendices, but listed here are those pieces of legislation that have been passed in both jurisdictions since the publication of Safeguarding Children 2016 (various Health, Education, Adoption, Family Law, Ombudsman, and other legislation that affects children has not been included).

## Republic of Ireland

### Legislation

- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts, 2012 – 2016.
- Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016.
- Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017.
- Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017.
- Domestic Violence Act 2018.
- Data Protection Act 2018.
- Children First Act 2015 – [Revised - Updated to 28 June 2019].
- Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Act 2019.
- Child and Family Agency (Amendment) Act 2021.
- Criminal Justice (Smuggling of Persons) Act 2021.
- Child Care (Amendment) Act 2022.

Whilst all of this legislation is relevant, reference must be made, in particular, to the Children First Act 2015, Child Care (Amendment) Act 2022, and National Vetting Bureau Acts 2013-2016.

## Policy

In addition to the legislation listed, there are other important documents issued by statutory agencies in the Republic of Ireland about which Church safeguarding services need to be aware, and should implement. These include, Children First - National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017; the HIQA National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2012; and Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, the National Children's Policy 2014 – 2020.

## Northern Ireland<sup>4</sup>

### Legislation and regulation

- Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.
- Neglect Policy and Procedures 2016.
- Protocol for Joint Investigation by Social Workers and Police Officers of Alleged and Suspected Cases of Child Abuse – Northern Ireland 2016.
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2017
- Revised Regional Core Child Protection Policies and Procedures for Northern Ireland (Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland) 2018.
- Working Arrangements for the Welfare and Safeguarding of Unaccompanied and Separated Children and Young People 2018.
- Working Arrangements for the Welfare and Safeguarding of Child Victims and Potential Child Victims of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery 2018
- The General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

3 Tusla (2019) Child Safeguarding - A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice - 2nd Edition. Available at [https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Tusla\\_-\\_Child\\_Safeguarding\\_-\\_A\\_Guide\\_for\\_Policy,\\_Procedure\\_and\\_Practice.pdf](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Tusla_-_Child_Safeguarding_-_A_Guide_for_Policy,_Procedure_and_Practice.pdf) (Accessed 1st March 2023).

4 It is difficult to ascertain how much of the legislation passed in the Westminster Parliament has been implemented in Northern Ireland. The Belfast Agreement was given legal force through the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and the Northern Ireland Assembly was created, which regional legislative body has passed a large amount of legislation and statutory orders. Whether all Acts passed during the period 1921 through 1998 in Westminster have application in Northern Ireland is a matter for a legal researcher to determine, and the website <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/> may be of assistance with that task. It is hoped however that the most significant relevant legislation applying to Northern Ireland is contained in the list provided.



- Guidance on Information Sharing for Child Protection Purposes 2021.
- Achieving Best Evidence Guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, the use of special measures, and the provision of pre-trial therapy 2022.
- Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

Whilst all of this legislation is relevant, reference must be paid, in particular to Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2017; Revised Regional Core Child Protection Policies and Procedures for Northern Ireland (Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland) 2018.

## Policy

In Northern Ireland, the Children and Young People's Strategy 2020 -2030 sets the context for service developments.

Northern Ireland has a cooperative structure for agencies that have responsibility for various elements of public protection. This is PPANI, an acronym for the public protection arrangements in Northern Ireland, which were introduced in October 2008 to make more effective the work the police, probation and others do to manage the risks posed by certain sexual and violent offenders when they are released from prison into the community.<sup>5</sup>

## Comparisons

From a study of the legislation and other statutory regulation, standards and guidance, it is possible to identify and extract guiding principles with which the Catholic Church on the island of Ireland needs to comply.

## Key points from legislation and policy

- Must consider everything within the context of the best interests of children and young people.
- The best interests of the child provide the context for policy and practice.
- The safety of children is all our responsibility.
- Children have a right to be listened to, heard, and taken seriously. Taking account of their age and understanding, they should be consulted and involved in all matters and decisions that may affect their lives.
- The importance of prevention.
- Appropriate structures to support prevention and protection.

## 2 (c) Church Context, including developments in canon law and in the Holy See

While the Catholic Church must operate in compliance with Children's Rights, national legislation and statutory guidance in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland, it must also operate within the Code of Canon Law.

'Canon law is the body of laws and regulations made by or adopted by ecclesiastical authority, for the government of the Christian organization and its members.'<sup>6</sup> It is essentially the law of the Church. It took centuries to codify canon law in a manner that allowed it to be a genuinely Church-wide legal system.


Pope Francis' election in March 2013 marked an increase in the pace of developments in canon law. At the beginning of his second year in office, he instituted the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors,<sup>7</sup> the Statutes for which were issued in April 2015.

<sup>5</sup> More information is available at <https://www.publicprotectionni.com/>.

<sup>6</sup> Catholic Online (2022). Definition of Canon Law. Available at <https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=2487> (Accessed 1st March 2023).

<sup>7</sup> Pope Francis (2014) Chirograph of his Holiness Pope Francis for the Institution of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. Available at [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2014/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140322\\_chirografo-pontificia-commissione-tutela-minori.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140322_chirografo-pontificia-commissione-tutela-minori.html) (Accessed 1st March 2023).





In November 2014, Pope Francis revised and amended the *Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela* (SST) [of 30 April 2001, amended on 21 May 2010] by decree. The revision enabled the creation of a Board of Cardinals and Bishops within the CDF to deal with appeals in relation to *delicta graviora* on which previously the Pope had to adjudicate.

As a Loving Mother is the title of Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter, issued *motu proprio* in June 2016.<sup>8</sup> This letter was concerned with the protection of minors and vulnerable persons within the Church, and particularly set out a procedure whereby bishops and other Church authorities could be removed from office, for negligence. (Article 1 § 1; Can 368 CIC and can. 313 CCEO)<sup>9</sup>

In August 2018, Pope Francis wrote a Letter to the People of God, in which he accepted that the Church had been responsible for grave injustices and harms to victims and committing himself, and the Church to remedy this appalling situation.

*'If one member suffers, all suffer together with it (1 Cor. 12:26).* These words of Saint Paul forcefully echo in my heart as I acknowledge once more the suffering endured by many minors due to sexual abuse, the abuse of power and the abuse of conscience perpetrated by a significant number of clerics and consecrated persons. Crimes that inflict deep wounds of pain and powerlessness, primarily among the victims, but also in their family members and in the larger community of believers and nonbelievers alike. Looking back to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient. Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated. The pain of the victims and their families is also our pain, and so it is urgent that we once more reaffirm our commitment to ensure the protection of minors and of vulnerable adults'.<sup>10</sup>

In this letter, Pope Francis named spiritual corruption and clericalism as contributors to clerical sexual abuse. He was emphatic in relation to the latter in stating that, 'To say no to abuse is to say an emphatic no to all forms of clericalism'. He stressed that all members of the Church have a responsibility 'Without the active participation of all the Church's members, everything being done to uproot the culture of abuse in our communities will not be successful in generating the necessary dynamics for sound and realistic change'.

In February 2019, Pope Francis convened a four-day special summit in Rome, the Meeting on the Protection of Minors in the Church. This event had been carefully prepared for, and it was attended by representatives of all national Churches from around the world. The proceedings of this major event can be read about and presentations viewed on the website for the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences (PBC) meeting at <http://www.pbc2019.org>

This meeting gave impetus to further developments that Pope Francis subsequently initiated. The first of these was another *motu proprio* Apostolic Letter, *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* (VELM) 'You are the light of the world', a very significant development of canon law.

In February 2020, the National Board published a GAP paper (6) entitled *Shedding Light on Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, which contains details and an analysis of the 19 Articles contained in the papal document. A number of principles underpinning VELM have been identified:

- Paramountcy of the welfare of children and vulnerable people.
- Care and Spiritual Healing.
- Protection for those reporting abuse
- Accountability.
- Due Process.

8 Pope Francis (2016) *As a Loving Mother*. Available at [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco\\_lettera-ap\\_20160604\\_come-una-madre-amorevole.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_lettera-ap_20160604_come-una-madre-amorevole.html) (Accessed 1st March 2023).

9 Pope Francis (2016) *As a Loving Mother*. Available at [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco\\_lettera-ap\\_20160604\\_come-una-madre-amorevole.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_lettera-ap_20160604_come-una-madre-amorevole.html) (Accessed 1st March 2023).

10 Pope Francis (2018) Letter of His Holiness to the People of God. Available at [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2018/documents/papa-francesco\\_20180820\\_lettera-popolo-didio.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2018/documents/papa-francesco_20180820_lettera-popolo-didio.html) (Accessed 1st March 2023).

The changes that have been brought about by the promulgation of VELM include:

- A wider applicability of the provisions of canon law, to include non-ordained religious, as well as bishops and other Ordinaries.
- Clarification around existing delicts, and the inclusion of new offences.
- Accountability for bishops and their equivalents.
- Protection for persons reporting.
- Care and support for complainants.
- Respect for civil laws.
- Data protection, sharing and confidentiality.
- Creating and maintaining safe Church environments.

On June 1, 2021, the Vatican published a revised Book VI of the Code of Canon Law<sup>11</sup> on penal sanctions in the Church. This is now accessible in the complete Table of Contents of the Code of Canon Law on the Vatican website.<sup>12</sup>

In February 2022, Pope Francis issued *motu proprio* an Apostolic Letter, *Fidem Servare*<sup>13</sup> to modify the internal structure of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, separating the Doctrinal Section from the Disciplinary Section, while elevating its status to that of The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.<sup>14</sup> Finally, in June 2022, in order to provide members of the Church with a portable guidebook on the current situation regarding canon law, in June 2022, the new Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) published a *Vademecum*, *On Certain Points of Procedure in Treating Cases of Sexual Abuse of Minors Committed by Clerics*.<sup>15</sup>

Key points from Canon law and Church initiatives:

- Importance of guidelines to prevent abuse.
- Clarity on crimes/delicts in canon law.
- Importance of investigating allegations.
- Accountability.

## 2 (d) Children's Rights and International Instruments

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989,<sup>16</sup> is an international treaty agreed by 'State Parties' who have promised to protect children's rights. A State party is usually described as the Government of a country. Within the Irish Church context, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland (as part of the UK) and the Holy See have signed and ratified the UNCRC. Which means that they have made a binding moral and legal agreement to uphold and implement the 42 rights contained in the Convention.

The specific obligations of State parties to protect children from abuse, including sexual abuse, neglect, emotional harm, physical abuse and sexual exploitation are cited in articles 19, 32-38 of the Convention, as well as in some optional protocols.<sup>17</sup>

In order for an assessment to be made as to how a country is upholding the rights of children, State parties are required to report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child at regular intervals. The Committee in turn, issues recommendations as to how the State party can improve (these are called Concluding Observations).<sup>18</sup>

11 Holy See Press Office (2021) New Book VI of the Code of Canon Law. Available at <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2021/06/01/210601b.html> (Accessed 1st March 2023).

12 Holy See (2023) Code of Canon Law. Available at [https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic\\_index\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic_index_en.html) (Accessed 27th March 2023).

13 Pope Francis (2022) *Fidem Servare*. Available at [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/20220211-motu-proprio-fidem-servare.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/20220211-motu-proprio-fidem-servare.html) (Accessed 1st March 2023).


14 Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (2023) Historical Notes. Available at [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_pro\\_14071997\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_pro_14071997_en.html) (Accessed 1st March 2023).

15 Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (2022) *Vademecum on Certain Points of Procedure in Treating Cases of Sexual Abuse of Minors Committed by Clerics*. Available at [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/ddf/rc\\_ddf\\_doc\\_20220605\\_vademecum-casi-abuso-2\\_o\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/ddf/rc_ddf_doc_20220605_vademecum-casi-abuso-2_o_en.html) (Accessed 1st March 2023).

16 For text of the convention follow this link <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>.

17 The Optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography (OPSC) and on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC). Both optional protocols were adopted by the UN General Assembly Resolution of 25 May 2000 (A/RES/54/263) and entered into force respectively on 18 January 2002 and 12 February 2002 and currently ratified by 175 States (OPSC) and 167 States (OPAC).

18 All relevant State reports, along with the concluding observations of the Committee, can be sourced at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/ireland>, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/united-kingdom-great-britain-and-northern-ireland>, and <https://www.ohchr.org/en/country/holy-see>



UNICEF, an agency of the United Nations, suggested in 2008 that the correct approach to child protection seeks to ensure that children are protected in a manner that is holistic and is fully consistent with their rights. This is well described in Bruning and Doek's article on the characteristics of an effective child protection system.<sup>19</sup>

In order to have a fully functional child protection system, UNICEF is of the view that six crucial elements need to be in place:

- A robust legal and regulatory framework, as well as specific policies related to child protection.
- Effective governance structures, including coordination across government departments, between levels of decentralization and between formal and informal actors.
- A continuum of services (spanning prevention and response).
- Minimum standards and oversight (information, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms).
- Human, financial, and infrastructure resources.
- Social participation, including respect for children's own views and an aware and supportive public.

Each of the three independent states involved, the Republic of Ireland, the UK (including NI) and the Holy See have a responsibility to implement the UNCRC. Putting these six elements in place would assist these States with implementation.

Contextualising these six elements in the child safeguarding system of the Catholic Church could be helpful to examine gaps or areas for development.

The Catholic Church in Ireland has been successful in establishing a clear one Church Policy for Child safeguarding and in putting in place governance arrangements, through identified role holders in the safeguarding structures, annual self-audits and external audits by the National Board. The existing Church policy identifies that standards of practice relating to both prevention and responding to allegations must be upheld. The policy also sets out requirements around communication and quality assuring compliance with the standards. An assessment of the Irish Church's efforts against UNICEF's elements would show congruence. However to ensure continued good practice, it is critical that the review of the policy, which is currently underway enables the voices of children, complainants and respondents is undertaken. The listening meetings which are influencing the debate are summarized in section 2 (f) below.

In order to make children's rights a reality, a child's active participation in Church life is essential.<sup>20</sup>

The Covid-19 pandemic for a time prevented ministry with children and young people from continuing to grow and develop across the Church. The continuing absence of children and young people from Church life could have long-term consequences for the Church. The Synthesis of the Consultation in Ireland for the Diocesan Stage of the Universal Synod 2021 – 2023 has the following caution:

Many young people do wish to engage with Church, yet deficiencies in current pastoral practice have resulted in a marked disconnect between them and the Church. The question of how the Church might accompany them has emerged as an urgent one.<sup>21</sup>

However, there is a real opportunity, for those in leadership in the Church to demonstrate, through words and actions that the Church is a safe, welcoming place for children.

<sup>19</sup> Bruning, M.R and Doek, J.E. (2021) Characteristics of an effective child protection system in the european and international contexts. International Journal on Child Maltreatment 4, pp. 231–256.

<sup>20</sup> For more information see National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (2020) GAP Paper 8: Children's Rights, Child Safeguarding and the Catholic Church in Ireland. Available at [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP\\_Papers/GAP%20Paper%208%20-%20Children's%20Rights,%20Child%20Safeguarding%20and%20the%20Catholic%20Church.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP_Papers/GAP%20Paper%208%20-%20Children's%20Rights,%20Child%20Safeguarding%20and%20the%20Catholic%20Church.pdf) (Accessed 27th March 2023).

<sup>21</sup> Irish Catholic Bishops Conference (2022) Synthesis 2021-2022. Available at (<https://synod.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/National-Synthesis-17-50-Fri-12th-August-.pdf>) (Accessed 21st March 2023) p. 16.

Children have told the National Board (in the course of ‘listening’ meetings as part of the consultation process for this review) that their current priorities do not really relate to safeguarding, but rather to a concern and care for each other and for their mental health. Children, within consultations held with the National Board have demonstrated limited understanding of safeguarding, which they learn about in school. However, their own physical and sexual safety does not appear to feature in their thinking, but emotional wellbeing and bullying do.

This leads us to consider two matters – are children well enough informed about child safeguarding; and are adults more worried because of past failures than children are, about today’s practices? It was comforting to note that children are aware of who they can talk to if they are worried or concerned.

We know that in the past children have been silenced as part of the abuse experienced in the Church. Victims have told the National Board that the abuser would prevent the child from sharing any information, through words and actions. Children were discredited and adult victims have shared their views that they too have not been believed. We have learned that whilst children are not responsible for their own protection, they are important participants who need to have a voice and be active contributors to the safeguarding agenda.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child refers in a number of places to the need to act in a child’s best interests (Article 3) and to include them in decisions which affect their lives (Article 12) as well as the need to protect children from all forms of abuse (Articles 19, 32, 34 and 35).

Professor Laura Lundy (Queens University Belfast and University College Cork) has articulated the requirement of Article 12 of the UNCRC in the form of a model, with four factors needed to implement Article 12 fully.

These are:

Space, to allow children the safe environment to put forward their views;

Voice, to give children the appropriate information to allow even the most vulnerable to contribute;

Audience, to take their views seriously; and

Influence, to make sure the view is acted upon and that children are given feedback on how their voice has been considered.

Understanding Article 12 in this way truly reflects the preamble of the UNCRC as it clearly links this article with others in the Convention, to reflect the indivisibility and inalienability of rights.



The Lundy Model of Participation as included in Ireland’s National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020 (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015).

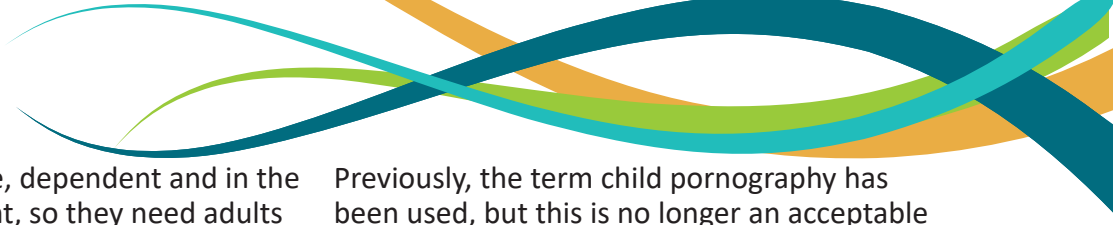
In summary, Children’s Rights are well established for a number of decades and have been espoused by Ireland, the UK, Northern Ireland, and the Holy See. Children are rights holders, while adults need to be both rights defenders<sup>22</sup> and duty bearers:

*‘Central to the idea of human rights is establishing and sustaining the relationship between the rights-holder (who has the right) and the duty-bearer (who has the obligation to fulfil the right). A duty-bearer is the person(s) or institution(s), which have obligations and responsibilities in relation to the realization of a right...’<sup>23</sup>*

22 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2023) Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-human-rights-defenders/declaration-human-rights-defenders> (Accessed 1st February 2023).

23 Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (2023) Duty Bearers. Available at <https://inee.org/eie-glossary/duty-bearers> (Accessed 23rd March 2023).





Children are vulnerable, dependent and in the process of development, so they need adults to act as their advocates. All of the adults, lay, clerical and religious, need to be collaborators with and assist children and young people to be fully, and safely, part of the Catholic Church.

**Key points from Children's Rights perspective:**

- Revised policy and ensuing practice should embody the UNCRC principles.
- Need to develop partnerships to promote children's rights.

## **2 (e ) Research on Child Safeguarding Policy and Practice**

The abuse of children involves an adult using their power and authority to manipulate and harm a child. We have ample evidence of Church environments in which vulnerable children were controlled, and physically, emotionally and sexually abused by adults in a position of power. These children were lost and alone, without any voice, and with no advocates to protect them from their abusers. The adults who should have been caring, supporting and educating them instead caused them incalculable harm.<sup>24</sup>

In dealing with allegations of abuse where the victim is now an adult, but the abuse occurred when they were a child, the National Board notes that most relate to sexual abuse, with fewer referrals now being made concerning physical and emotional abuse, even where long-standing and deep emotional impacts remain current issues for those who have been victimised. However, change is the norm, and in our ever-expanding digital world, we need to be mindful of the risks to children who can become victims of online child sexual abuse. So far, evidence of such abuse within the Catholic Church in Ireland is not available, but it would naïve to assume that adults within the Church are not accessing online abusive images of children.

Previously, the term child pornography has been used, but this is no longer an acceptable or accurate term, as it can appear to give some legitimacy to what is in fact child sexual abuse.

In their 2015 work, *Conceptualising the prevention of child sexual abuse*, Final report, Quadara et al. set out some of the factors that need to be borne in mind in planning to safeguard children. Perpetrators expend significant effort in identifying and building a connection with a potential victim, and use a range of grooming strategies to do so, such as:

- identifying the most vulnerable child, such as those who are picked on by their siblings, are struggling at school, or are lonely (Craven, Brown, & Gilchrist, 2007);
- identifying vulnerable or receptive families, such as a single mother with primary care for her children (Leberg, 1997; van Dam, 2006);
- isolating the child from other children or their guardian; for example, by sending other siblings to bed early, or encouraging the child's mother to take up activities outside the home;
- conferring a special status on the child, such as by making them feel more adult or worldly (Herman, 1992);
- gradually desensitising the child to sexual touch (Smallbone & Wortley, 2001); and
- becoming indispensable to significant adults in the child's life; for example, by offering to look after the child or children, or doing tasks that parents and teachers have little time for, which puts them in a position of trust (Craven et al., 2007).<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> The Ferns Report, October 2005; Report by Commission of Investigation into Catholic Diocese of Cloyne, March 2006; The Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, May 2009; Commission of Investigation Report into the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin, July 2009; Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry N.I. Report, January 2017

<sup>25</sup> Quadara, A., Nagy, V., Higgins, D. & Siegel, N. (2015). *Conceptualising the prevention of child sexual abuse: Final report* (Research Report No. 33). Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

In the course of a review of over 300 academic publications, serious case reviews, statutory guidance, and inquiry reports, researchers from London Metropolitan University commissioned by the Independent Inquiry into Sexual Abuse (IICSA)<sup>26</sup> looked at how the abuse of children has been perceived. They identified three 'dominant discourses or clusters of ideas – which they labelled Deflection, Denial and Disbelief, and two 'counter discourses', which they named Power, and Belief. Although lengthy, it is useful to quote in full how the report explains the meaning and effect of each of these five identified ways of looking at child sexual abuse.

- Discourses of deflection: These discourses serve to either deflect responsibility for child sexual abuse from perpetrators or deflect responsibility from institutions. Discourses, which deflect responsibility from perpetrators are characterised by minimising perpetrators' actions and distancing attitudes to abuse; blaming mothers; and 'othering' perpetrators in some way. Discourses that deflect responsibility from institutions are characterised by similar themes of minimising either an institution's space to intervene or the sexual abuse itself.
- Discourses of denial: These discourses serve to deny either the harm caused by child sexual abuse or the extent of the abuse. Denying that child sexual abuse is harmful positions it as consensual or minimises its harmful impacts. Denial of extent of harm shares a common thread that abuse has been exaggerated or fabricated.
- Discourses of disbelief: These are discourses that refuse outright to accept that child sexual abuse has occurred. There were fewer of these discourses compared to the other two but tendencies to disbelieve allegations of child sexual abuse remained a constant thread throughout the period under review. Counter discourses were expressed by those at the margins of social and political


power and challenge dominant views. These could be split into two overarching categories, drawn together by how they prioritise the voices of victims and survivors:

- Discourses of power: These discourses challenged dominant understandings and explanations of child sexual abuse by exploring the role of power and status in sexual abuse.
- Discourses of belief: These discourses started from the position of belief in the existence of child sexual abuse and the harm it could cause to victims and survivors. They attempted to create a climate of support and recognition for those who had experienced child sexual abuse by allowing space to speak for those who had been marginalised or silenced.

Cahill and Wilkinson<sup>27</sup> set out a list of observations and learnings '...gained from the 16 international reports from Belgium, Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands, the UK and the USA, as well as information from other parts of the world'. The Catholic episcopal response in the various countries across the world has been remarkably uniform. The bishops worked strenuously to keep the problem of clerical child sexual abuse in-house in order to protect the Church's reputation and its financial assets, hoping that the problem would eventually go away. The problem was further exacerbated by an almost incomprehensible refusal to see that it was a systemic issue, not a collection of individual failures. There was also a similarity in response in relation to the lack of concern and care for the victims. Another similarity in the response was the well-documented failure to regard child sex abuse as a crime (as well as a sin) and to refer matters to the police. This failure was driven by the need to protect the reputation of the Church and avoid scandal.

<sup>26</sup> Lovett, J. Coy, M. and Kelly L. (2018) Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit London Metropolitan University. Deflection, denial and disbelief: social and political discourses about child sexual abuse and their influence on institutional responses. A rapid evidence assessment. London: London Metropolitan University.

<sup>27</sup> Cahill, D and Wilkinson P. (August 2017) Child Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church: An Interpretive Review of the Literature and Public Inquiry Reports Centre for Global Research School of Global. Melbourne: Urban and Social Studies RMIT University.



The National Board has produced a dedicated GAP paper about adult victims of clerical child sexual abuse - Paper 2, Compassionate Response to Complainants<sup>28</sup> – and readers are referred to this for a fuller exploration of the issues that arise for them. The Bibliography at the end of this paper contains links to relevant reference materials, and to victims' representative groups and support services.

In relation to policy for child safeguarding, the National Board GAP Paper 5, Enabling a Child Safe Church, contains further relevant research-based information and sets out the principles that should underpin a robust Church child safeguarding policy.<sup>29</sup>

In January 2021, the Mental Health Commission (MHC) and the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), both of which operate in the ROI only, produced a joint document, Evidence review to inform the development of Draft Overarching National Standards for the Care and Support of Children Using Health and Social Care Services.<sup>30</sup> Towards the end of this very detailed 250-page document, the following findings are presented:

Consistent with the findings from the international review are the key findings from the evidence synthesis of national and international literature. The findings from the evidence synthesis are documented under the four interlinked principles that will underpin all National Standards developed by HIQA.

These themes are:

- a human rights-based approach
- safety and wellbeing
- accountability
- responsiveness.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, in a very wide-ranging article, Bruning and Doek<sup>32</sup> of the Child Law Department of

Leiden University in the Netherlands review the characteristics of an effective child protection system in both the European and international contexts. As well as closely examining the implementation of the UNCRC by state parties, they also look at the impact of European institutions, such as the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe (CoE), and of case law from the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). Their recommendations include that these institutions need to acknowledge the difficulties that agencies have with sharing information, and in finding a 'balance between the right of the child to effective protection and her/his right and that of her/his family to privacy'.<sup>33</sup> They also state that:

*'The challenge for the further development of an integrated child protection system is the explicit and clear inclusion of vulnerable children (too often not getting adequate attention), such as children with disabilities, belonging to ethnic minorities or indigenous people, and unaccompanied and separated asylum-seeking children.'*<sup>34</sup>

They add that, 'The development and implementation of an integrated and effective child protection system are also a matter of human rights of children and their parents'.<sup>35</sup>

#### Key points from Research

- Recognise that abuse includes abuse of power.
- Importance of listening to complainants.
- Accept responsibility and take action.

28 National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (2018) GAP Paper 2 Ensuring a Compassionate Response to Complainants. Available at [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP\\_Papers/GAP%20Paper%202%20Compassionate%20Response%20to%20Complainants.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP_Papers/GAP%20Paper%202%20Compassionate%20Response%20to%20Complainants.pdf) (Accessed 27th March 2023).

29 National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (2020) Enabling a Child Safe Church. Available at [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP\\_Papers/GAP%20Paper%205-%20Enabling%20a%20Child%20Safe%20Church.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP_Papers/GAP%20Paper%205-%20Enabling%20a%20Child%20Safe%20Church.pdf) (Accessed 27th March 2023).

30 Health Information and Quality Authority and Mental Health Commission (2021) Evidence Review to Inform the Development of Draft Overarching National Standards for the Care and Support of Children Using Health and Social Care Services. Available at [https://www.hiqa.ie/sites/default/files/2021-01/Final\\_-Evidence-review-to-inform-the-development-of-Overarching-Children.pdf](https://www.hiqa.ie/sites/default/files/2021-01/Final_-Evidence-review-to-inform-the-development-of-Overarching-Children.pdf) (Accessed 27th March 2023).

31 Health Information and Quality Authority and Mental Health Commission (2021) Evidence Review to Inform the Development of Draft Overarching National Standards for the Care and Support of Children Using Health and Social Care Services. Available at [https://www.hiqa.ie/sites/default/files/2021-01/Final\\_-Evidence-review-to-inform-the-development-of-Overarching-Children.pdf](https://www.hiqa.ie/sites/default/files/2021-01/Final_-Evidence-review-to-inform-the-development-of-Overarching-Children.pdf) (Accessed 27th March 2023).p. 216 and 217,

32 Bruning, M.R and Doek, J.E. (2021) Characteristics of an effective child protection system in the european and international contexts. International Journal on Child Maltreatment 4, pp. 231–256.

33 Bruning, M.R and Doek, J.E. (2021) Characteristics of an effective child protection system in the european and international contexts. International Journal on Child Maltreatment 4, pp. 231–256.

34 Bruning, M.R and Doek, J.E. (2021) Characteristics of an effective child protection system in the european and international contexts. International Journal on Child Maltreatment 4, pp. 231–256.

35 Bruning, M.R and Doek, J.E. (2021) Characteristics of an effective child protection system in the european and international contexts. International Journal on Child Maltreatment 4, pp. 231–256.



## **2 (f) Listening meetings undertaken by the National Board**

A key component of reviewing the Church's policy is receiving the views of those to whom the policy is directed – children, young people and their parents; complainants of abuse and their families; respondents of abuse and their families (including religious families); and the many who work to uphold good safeguarding practice in the Church. It was important therefore that the extensive consultation that the National Board staff engaged in to hear the views of these important stakeholders is reflected in this paper.

The process that we engaged in was to conduct children's meetings either directly or with the support of diocesan and male and female religious personnel; engage with parents in a similar way. In planning these meetings, we sought the consent of the parent and child and outlined in a letter our intention around providing children with an opportunity to share their views of safeguarding in the Church. We also met with the leaders of the children's activities, who have been trained and supported through diocesan or male and female religious to create a safe environment for children.

The following listening meetings took place:

### **Children, young people and parents /carers:**

- A meeting with children attending a religious run summer camp in Northern Ireland.
- Two meetings with children and young people and their parents in Dublin Archdiocese.
- Meetings with children and young people in Meath Diocese.
- Meeting with young leaders who run a summer camp facilitated by the Society of African Missions and the Irish province of the Dominican Order.

### **Complainants of abuse:**

- 12 meetings with female and male victims of child sexual abuse.

### **Respondents:**

- 2 meetings with respondent priests.
- 1 meeting with the family of an accused priest.

### **Church personnel**

- 4 ecclesiastical provincial area meetings.
- 1 meeting with female religious.
- 4 listening meetings with Church personnel.
- 2 deanery meetings.

### **External consultations**

- DCYA ROI.
- Department of Health NI.
- The Executive office Northern Ireland.
- Ombudsman for Children.
- One in Four.
- Samaritans.
- The Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Abuse Northern Ireland.
- Tusla.
- Mecpath.
- Independent Consultant/experts on child abuse.



## **Combined responses from children and parents**

Children are generally aware of what abuse is, and what processes are in place to keep them safe. Children know who to go to if they are worried. They recognise the need for codes of behaviour, sign in and sign out registers but see consent forms as a paper exercise – mainly due to the lack of explanation about their purpose. More generally, they understand about supervision ratios and highlighted risks to children on trips away from home, particularly in relation to sleeping arrangements.

However, in other discussions children and young people do not see safeguarding as their issue, but one for the group leaders. They also stated that safeguarding is not a standalone issue but a part of everyday life. For them matters relating to peer to peer bullying and mental ill health formed a greater part of their lives.

Parents were well informed of Church safe guarding procedures.

## **Responses from the youth leaders and member of a religious order who organise children's ministries**

Young leaders were very well informed about safeguarding. Those who engaged in the Listening meetings, were part of camps as children themselves, within the Church and wanted to give back what they gained as part of a faith based process. These young leaders went beyond expectations in giving up their summers, many years after participating themselves in faith based camps. In discussion they are acutely aware of safeguarding, not just because they have been trained but because they believe in the rights of children. They see safeguarding as integral and not an added extra to their ministry. They recognise and uphold children's rights by valuing and respecting children. It was obvious that the culture which has been developed is one of honesty, openness, safety and fun.

## **Responses from those harmed as children - complainants**

Through existing contacts, the National Board reached out to a number of complainants and met in person or over zoom women and men who had been abused as children in the Church. Their testimonies were powerful. The National Board asked the diocese or religious order to provide support before and after the meetings. The National Board wrote to the complainant before the meeting setting out its aim and limits of confidentiality. After the meetings, the National Board wrote acknowledging and thanking the complainants for their involvement. Some complainants asked the National Board to intervene with the relevant Church authority, which we did.

In relation to the abuse itself, complainants stated that the impact of abuse perpetuates through life and for years. The impact is physical, sexual, emotional, mental and spiritual. Many have turned away from the Church. Many stated that the abuser manipulated the child through – befriending family; offering gifts, making the child feel special. Others reflected on how they were both physically and sexually abused. Almost all reflected that the abuser made themselves untouchable. All stated that through a variety of means and threats the abuser silenced them, well into their adulthood. They felt shame, guilt, pain, hurt and disempowered by the abuser.

In terms of the Church's response, most of the experiences were very negative. Both male and female victims stated that they were responded to by a defensive Church who made them go through a legal, antagonistic route to get recognition and compensation for the harm caused by the abuser and for the inaction or cover-up by the Church. Many victims expressed their total lack of trust in the Church, and expressed shock at how dispassionate Church leaders are. For many of the victims, the impact on their health and well-being meant they were unable to work. They would have liked the Church to recognise that significant consequence and respond appropriately with care and financial compensation. This also applies to some victims' needs for counselling and support at

trigger points throughout their lives. Victims felt the Church lacked an understanding about the long term impacts and the consequent needs for counselling throughout their lives. Many stated they pay for counselling themselves for abuse caused by a priest or male or female religious who was ministering on behalf of the Church, when the Church should accept that responsibility of providing counselling and therapy.

In addition to concerns about poor communication and an inability to actively engage with the victim during and after disclosure, many victims said they should be involved in helping the Church find long-term solutions. Some victims expressed a desire to have a seat at strategic tables when safeguarding was being addressed.

### **Responses from those accused and their families**

Unfortunately, in spite of best efforts with representative bodies, few accused of abuse were willing or available to engage in the listening exercise. It would be wrong to speculate the reasons for non-engagement. Those that did participate, had been returned to ministry and they shared the following:

*'There is a need to ensure that any allegations are dealt with fairly. Currently there is a sense that there are no procedures, or that those procedures are influenced by individual personalities, instead of being part of a standardised approach.'*

In addition, the major concerns experienced by respondents related largely to communication, or lack of it. Included in this is a question about the need for a public statement with some querying whether that implied guilt.

Poor communication with the respondent immediately after the allegation between the Church Authority and the respondent led to feeling of despair, anger, hurt and animosity.

This included any information about reasons for delay. Delay in civil and canon law proceedings were unfair and unjust. Respondents felt that information was not shared about the process and they were not given regular updates- even when nothing was happening.

Restoration to ministry was challenging. Members of one family of a convicted respondent engaged and talked about the importance of openness with family, to support the management of risk.

### **A series of meetings with Church personnel, statutory colleagues, government officials and NGO partners revealed the following key points:**

Overall, the majority of those who work in safeguarding within the Church felt that the processes and practices have improved significantly over the past ten years. Many appreciated the clarity of policy and guidance as well as the training available to assist them with their safeguarding ministry.

Church personnel told us that in response to requests from and input by complainants, some Church authorities have now developed restorative, mediation and redress processes. These have been facilitated by external church personnel in conjunction with safeguarding and church leadership. These Church personnel stated that it is important to acknowledge that every complainant may have a different request with regard to what justice might be for them. That there is healing process, which should include a process of listening/hearing their story, so that some form of reconciliation may take place.

Church personnel suggested the need for ongoing awareness raising training in conjunction with victims and victim advocacy services. In addition consideration must also be given to support respondents in order to prevent harm; to support the families of those accused, their religious family and their communities.

Those in safeguarding ministry made suggestions around reducing bureaucracy and the heavy burden on a diminishing number of available clerics and religious. Many felt overloaded by the responsibilities of picking up the pieces of broken lives after abuse by clerics, brothers and sisters.

Overall though there was a growing sense of complacency and fatigue. Many Church personnel are now in their seventies and older, and felt they did not have the capacity or energy to engage with children.

In terms of statutory and NGO colleagues the emphasis was ensuring adherence to civil legislation, ensuring good risk assessment and going the extra mile to care for those who have been harmed in the Church. There was recognition of the strides made by the Church in Ireland, but with a cautious note not to become complacent and continue to promote best practice in safeguarding.

### Key points from Research and listening meetings

- The abuse crisis is current and cannot be assigned to the history books.
- Continuous learning will improve practice.
- Need for openness with all parties.
- The Church should continue to collaborate with all (children, victims, respondents, statutory and voluntary partners) to listen, learn and improve practice.
- Guidelines for effective practice from various sources can inform policy and practice.

## 2 (g) Exploring a Theology of Safeguarding Children

In its 2022 booklet, *Exploring a Theology of Safeguarding Children*,<sup>36</sup> the National Board has brought together the transcripts of nine videos produced by theologians and scripture scholars on various aspects of such a theology. In one of these, Dr Jessie Rogers, Dean of Theology at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth comments on three episodes from the New Testament Gospel of Mark:

*'The stories of Jesus and the children in the gospels present a beautiful image of openness and inclusion. But they also point to something very fundamental about what it means to be a community in whom the risen Christ dwells.'*<sup>37</sup>

Three events involving children are chronicled in Mark 8 – 10. Jesus and his followers are making their way to Jerusalem, but it becomes clear that misunderstanding has arisen about the values that Jesus has been promoting. The disciples have been arguing about which of them was the greatest. As he often did, Jesus illustrated his teaching:

*'He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all'. Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'* (Mark 9: 33-37).

Rogers draws out the lesson that, 'We are open to Christ in our midst to the extent that we are open to receiving and welcoming children'.<sup>38</sup>

The next reference to children made by Jesus in this section of Mark's Gospel is a strong warning:

*'If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea'.* (Mark 9: 42).

Rogers warns that one outcome of the Church's initiatives to keep children safe can paradoxically be a fear of engagement with children and their exclusion from the life of the Church. She argues her point convincingly:

*'A community that closes its heart against children is closing its heart against Christ. Children in our midst are not the danger. They are the litmus test for the quality of our communities. If they are not safe, our communities are diseased and no one is safe within them. When children are safe, our communities are healthy.'*<sup>39</sup>

The third part of this triad of statements of Jesus about children is made when he becomes angry at the disciple's attempts to block their access to him:

*'People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the*

<sup>36</sup> National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (2022) *Exploring a Theology of Safeguarding Children*. Available at [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate\\_Publications/Theology%20of%20Safeguarding%20Transcripts.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate_Publications/Theology%20of%20Safeguarding%20Transcripts.pdf) (Accessed 27th April 2023).

<sup>37</sup> National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (2022) *Exploring a Theology of Safeguarding Children*. Available at [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate\\_Publications/Theology%20of%20Safeguarding%20Transcripts.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate_Publications/Theology%20of%20Safeguarding%20Transcripts.pdf) (Accessed 27th April 2023).

<sup>38</sup> National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (2022) *Exploring a Theology of Safeguarding Children*. Available at [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate\\_Publications/Theology%20of%20Safeguarding%20Transcripts.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate_Publications/Theology%20of%20Safeguarding%20Transcripts.pdf) (Accessed 27th April 2023).

<sup>39</sup> National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (2022) *Exploring a Theology of Safeguarding Children*. Available at [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate\\_Publications/Theology%20of%20Safeguarding%20Transcripts.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate_Publications/Theology%20of%20Safeguarding%20Transcripts.pdf) (Accessed 27th April 2023).



*disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, Let the children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it. And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them and blessed them.'* (Mark 10: 13-16).

Rogers interprets the meaning of Jesus' words for us in saying:

*'Scholars like to discuss what it means to receive the kingdom like a little child – what attributes do we need? In fact, the best way to cultivate those characteristics is to be in the presence of children and let their way of being rub off on us. Being with children reminds us of how to be childlike. In welcoming children, we welcome the childlikeness within us that is open to entering the kingdom.'*<sup>40</sup>

It is not that Jesus spoke often and at length about children, but he made it very clear how he thought about them, and how important their place is in the Church.

Justin Humphreys, another video contributor to the National Board's series, thoroughly explored the scriptures, and he made the following discovery:

*'Woven throughout Christian Scripture the Holy Trinity commends to God's people a trinity of God's special concern: widows, orphans and strangers. There are more direct and indirect references to helping these vulnerable groups than there are to tithing, communion and baptism. In fact, there are over two thousand references to matters of justice and injustice in the Bible, of which the principles of safeguarding are included.'*<sup>41</sup>

In the Old Testament, there is a somewhat different attitude expressed towards children by the various writers involved.

There are however themes that can be identified and highlighted, which is what Dr Marcia Bunge did in her video, as set out in the transcript of her address. Dr Bunge explains that there are '...six insightful and central perspectives on children and our obligations to them'<sup>42</sup> presented throughout the Old Testament. These are:

1. Children are a gift from God, signs of God's blessing, and a source of joy;
2. Children are 'whole and complete human beings who are made in the image of God';
3. Children are voiceless and vulnerable, and are 'often victims of injustice';
4. Children are 'developing beings who need instruction and guidance';
5. Children are 'active and imaginative social agents with growing moral capacities and responsibilities who, like adults, sometimes miss the mark...'
6. Children are 'often models of faith for adults, spirit-filled and endowed with unique strengths, gifts and talents to contribute to the common good, now and in the future'.

Dr Bunge's thesis is that all of these conceptions of children need to be borne in mind and factored into the Church's inclusive ministry. She contends that:

*'A strong, biblically based theology of childhood holds all six perspectives in tension rather than isolation and provides a rich view of children and adult-child relationships. However, if we neglect any of the six biblical themes and focus on one or two alone, then our conceptions of children become narrow and distorted, and we risk treating children in inadequate and harmful ways.'*<sup>43</sup>

It is tempting to discuss all nine of the contributions to the National Board's booklet; but it is more logical to recommend that this GAP paper be read in conjunction with that booklet so that all of the scriptural and theological principles and values that underpin child safeguarding can be examined in their wider context.

<sup>40</sup> National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (2022) Exploring a Theology of Safeguarding Children. Available at [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate\\_Publications/Theology%20of%20Safeguarding%20Transcripts.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate_Publications/Theology%20of%20Safeguarding%20Transcripts.pdf) (Accessed 27th April 2023).

<sup>41</sup> National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (2022) Exploring a Theology of Safeguarding Children. Available at [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate\\_Publications/Theology%20of%20Safeguarding%20Transcripts.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate_Publications/Theology%20of%20Safeguarding%20Transcripts.pdf) (Accessed 27th April 2023).

<sup>42</sup> National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (2022) Exploring a Theology of Safeguarding Children. Available at [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate\\_Publications/Theology%20of%20Safeguarding%20Transcripts.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate_Publications/Theology%20of%20Safeguarding%20Transcripts.pdf) (Accessed 27th April 2023).

<sup>43</sup> National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (2022) Exploring a Theology of Safeguarding Children. Available at [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate\\_Publications/Theology%20of%20Safeguarding%20Transcripts.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate_Publications/Theology%20of%20Safeguarding%20Transcripts.pdf) (Accessed 27th April 2023).

### Key Points from Theology

- Children are to be cherished and should be active participants in safeguarding ministry.
- We should have an openness to welcoming children.
- Children being safe – indicative of community health.
- Scriptural references to helping vulnerable people, the Church is a field hospital.

### 3. Safeguarding Policies and Standards in other Anglophone National Churches and Jurisdictions

As revelations of abuse have emerged, country by country, there has been an impetus to put in place robust policies and procedures to ensure that children are protected from harm and victims are offered care and support. Pope Francis has made safeguarding children and vulnerable adults a core part of his ministry, and he has initiated a number of changes and brought greater clarification around canon law processes and accountability of decision makers, as described in section 2 (c ) above. At the forefront of policy formation have been those Churches in English-speaking countries where clerical child sexual abuse scandals first emerged.

The UK, Australia and New Zealand have followed quite similar paths in developing revised policies and procedures, while rather different approaches have been followed in the USA and Canada.

In the case of the UK, the policies for England and Wales, and for Scotland,<sup>44</sup> were revised in 2021,<sup>45</sup> while in Australia and in New Zealand the revision dates from 2019.

These revised policies and practice guidelines are based on the recommendations of external reviews and investigations, legislation and statutory guidance, as well as on canon law provisions.

In England and Wales, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA),<sup>46</sup> and the Independent Review of Safeguarding Report (Elliot 2020)<sup>47</sup> offered recommendations, which have been adopted. Relevant legislation and statutory guidance includes Working Together to Safeguard children: Statutory Framework (2018);<sup>48</sup> and Working Together to Safeguard People (2022)<sup>49</sup>

In **Scotland**, the safeguarding policy introduced in 2018 following the report of the McLellan Commission for a period of three years, *ad experimentum* was then reviewed over a nine- month period. This review took account of experience, outcomes of audits, and instructions from the Holy See. Legislation and guidance includes Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, amending the 1995 Act,<sup>50</sup> and National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021).<sup>51</sup>

In **Australia**, the recommendations of the report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2017)<sup>52</sup> were accepted and incorporated into the Australian Church policy.

An overview of relevant legislation is covered in a resource sheet published in 2018, by the Australian Institute of Family Studies of the

44 Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (2023) National Safeguarding Policies for the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Available at <https://www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/national-safeguarding-standards/national-safeguarding-policy/> (Accessed 27th April 2023).

45 The Bishops Conference of Scotland (2023) In God's Image (Version 2). Available at <https://www.bcos.org.uk/InGodsImageV2> (Accessed 27th April 2023).

46 Independent Inquiry Child Sexual Abuse (2020) The Roman Catholic Church Investigation Report. Available at <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/reports-recommendations/publications/investigation/roman-catholic-church.html> (Accessed 27th April 2023).

47 Elliott, I. (2020) Independent Review of Safeguarding Structures and Arrangements in the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Available at <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/11/Independent-Review-Safeguarding-Report-2020.pdf> (Accessed 27th April 2023).

48 HM Government (2018) Working Together to Safeguard Children - A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Available [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/942454/Working\\_together\\_to\\_safeguard\\_children\\_inter\\_agency\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942454/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_inter_agency_guidance.pdf) (Accessed 27th April 2023).

49 Welsh Government (January 2022) Working Together to Safeguard People: Code of Safeguarding Practice. Available at [https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-01/working-together-to-safeguard-people--code-of-safeguarding-practice\\_o.pdf](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-01/working-together-to-safeguard-people--code-of-safeguarding-practice_o.pdf) (Accessed 27th April 2023).

50 Children and Young People (Scotland) Act. Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/8/contents> (Accessed 27th April 2023).

51 Scottish Government (2021) National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland. Available at <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2021/09/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021/documents/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021/govscot%3Adocument/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021.pdf> (Accessed 27th April 2023).

52 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2017) Final Report Recommendations. Available at [https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/final\\_report\\_-\\_recommendations.pdf](https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/final_report_-_recommendations.pdf) (Accessed 27th April 2023).

Australian Government, entitled Australian child protection legislation,<sup>53</sup> while national principles and standards are contained in the 2018 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.<sup>54</sup>

The **New Zealand** policy forms part of the national strategy outlined in The Children's Action Plan,<sup>55</sup> which started in 2012, underpinned by the (Vulnerable) Children Act 2014.<sup>56</sup>

Each country can be described as having a 'One Church' strategy, with all Catholic entities expected to follow the policy and practice to effect cultural change and improved practice. Each has an agency charged with supporting this aim.

Requirements enshrined in legislation, guidance and practice are reflected throughout national policies, which are supported by standards and practice guidance. The number of standards varies but, in effect, they cover the same or equivalent areas.

Each policy emphasises that the standards are interrelated and interdependent, and promote cultural and behavioural change and accountability.

National Churches choose to order their standards differently, while indicating that there is no order of preference intended. For example, the Catholic Church in England and Wales starts with Leadership, while the Church in Scotland starts with Safe Environments. In Australia, they begin with Embedding a Culture of Safety through Effective Leadership and Governance. The New Zealand standards start with Communicating the Safeguarding Message.

All of the national Church standards described above include Formation and Training; Audit / Monitoring; Responding and Reporting; and Care and Management of Victims and of Respondents.

Each has a structure that contains a version of a statement of the standard, followed by indicators or criteria to meet it, and suggestions on evidence to show compliance.

The North American documents differ considerably in style from those of the UK, Australia and New Zealand. They focus much more on issues related to historic child abuse, in particular.

In the Catholic Church in the **United States**, the relevant document is the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. This is in its third iteration, having been revised in June 2018. Its title is Promise to Protect, Pledge to Heal.<sup>57</sup> It consists of a series of practical and pastoral steps, committed to by US bishops:

With additional reforms, building upon the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, and in union with Pope Francis's Motu Proprio, the American Catholic Church stands united against the scourge of sexual abuse.<sup>58</sup>

The Charter is presented as a series of commitments, each followed by a number of articles with a series of practical and pastoral step, committed to by US Bishops.

A helpful outline is Building on Our Commitment to Accountability (displayed on the next page),<sup>59</sup> which summarises the content, commitment and timeline.

53 Australian Institute of Family Studies (2022) Australian Child Protection Legislation. Available at <https://aifs.gov.au/resources/resource-sheets/australian-child-protection-legislation> (Accessed 27th April 2023).

54 Australian Human Rights Commission (2018) National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. Available at [https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/National\\_Principles\\_for\\_Child\\_Safe\\_Organisations2019.pdf](https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/National_Principles_for_Child_Safe_Organisations2019.pdf) (Accessed 27th April 2023).

55 New Zealand Government (2012) The Children's Action Plan. Available at <https://img.scoop.co.nz/media/pdfs/1210/whitepaperforvulnerable-childrenchildrensactionplansummaries.pdf> (Accessed 27th April 2023).

56 Children's Act 2014. Available at <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2014/0040/latest/DLM5501621.html> (Accessed 27th April 2023).

57 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2018) Promise to Protect- Pledge to Heal. Available at <https://www.usccb.org/resources/Charter-for-the-Protection-of-Children-and-Young-People-2018-final%281%29.pdf> (accessed 27th April 2023).

58 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2020) Our Mission. Available at <https://www.usccb.org/topics/catholic-safeguards> (Accessed 27th April 2023).

59 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (2020) Our Commitment to Accountability. Available at [https://www.usccb.org/resources/building-on-commitment-to-accountability\\_o.pdf](https://www.usccb.org/resources/building-on-commitment-to-accountability_o.pdf) (Accessed 27th April 2023).



# BUILDING ON OUR COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY

"Be diligent in these matters, be absorbed in them, so that your progress may be evident to everyone."  
(1 Tim 4:15)



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There are four (4) Core Components to the Charter, and under each of these, there are seventeen (17) Articles.

1. To promote healing and reconciliation with victims/survivors of sexual abuse of minors
2. To guarantee an effective response to allegations of sexual abuse of minors
3. To ensure the accountability of our procedures
4. To protect the faithful in the future

This is quite a complex approach, and it is not a One-Church policy, but rather a template for individual archdioceses and dioceses to use in developing their own.

There is an Annual Report on the Implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, the latest available version being the 2021 report, produced in May 2022. This was prepared by the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection for the National Review Board and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and it is a comprehensive 85-page document. The USCCB has commissioned a private company to conduct annual audits of compliance.

A research survey<sup>60</sup> of the written child protection policies of the 32 archdioceses in the USA was quite critical of the quality of these. This study examined the 32 U.S. archdioceses' written policies on child protection and maintaining a safe environment. It does not evaluate informal policies and practices that have not been reduced to writing. Because the review is of written material only, it may not provide a complete picture of how each individual archdiocese handles issues related to child protection and sexual abuse. In addition, written policies that are in place may not be followed.<sup>61</sup>

Using a tool developed from a list of unique components selected from the better policies of all 32 archdioceses, policies were compared across archdioceses. On a group level, current policies were found to be inadequate. The average score for all 32 archdioceses was 100.9 out of 250 possible points or 40%. The range was 61 to 137 (SD 20.4). The report concluded, inter alia, that there is a need for more effective procedures that require greater transparency and accountability of the Church to its members and the public it serves. The article points to parameters for consideration in developing such standards.

The Conference of Catholic Bishops in **Canada** (CCCB) published Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse - A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation, and Transformation in 2018.<sup>62</sup>

The document is based on experience, research and canonical directives, following consultation with and input from a broad spectrum of contributors. It brings the CCCB's existing guidelines (From Pain to Hope, 1992; Orientations, 2007) up to date with the latest laws in Canada and the most recent norms of the Holy See.

60 Child USA (2020) White Paper- Survey and Analysis of the Written Child Protection Policies of the 32 U.S. Roman Catholic Archdioceses. Available at [https://childusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Archdiocesan\\_Policies\\_WhitePaper\\_10-1-20s.pdf](https://childusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Archdiocesan_Policies_WhitePaper_10-1-20s.pdf) (Accessed 27th April 2023).

61 This White Paper was conceived, drafted, and sponsored by CHILD USA. This is a non-profit think tank that conducts evidence based social science research and legal analysis to improve laws and policies dealing with child abuse and neglect.

62 Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (2018) Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse. Available at [https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Protecting\\_Minors\\_2018.pdf](https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Protecting_Minors_2018.pdf) (Accessed 27th April 2023).

The document has three parts:

1. Reflection on experience and effects of abuse (lessons learned; healing; signposts)
2. Guidelines for effective response to issues of abuse.
3. Resources for the protection of minors.

The document focuses on minors and vulnerable adults, whom Canada's bishops wish to protect from sexual violence. The document seeks not only to provide guidance for diocesan/eparchial protocols and policies as well as those for male and female religious, but also to stimulate a cultural transformation in attitudes about sexual abuse.

This document is set out somewhat differently from the other national Church documents examined here, in that the structure is a series of Lessons Learned, followed by Recommendations. These have been tabulated for the purposes of this paper. However, due to the length and detail of the 69 Recommendations and Action Points, only the Lessons Learned are reproduced here.

**Lesson one:** The need for a pastoral encounter with victims of clergy sexual abuse

**Lesson two:** The need to understand sexual abuse properly

**Lesson three:** The need to respond more effectively to allegations

**Lesson four:** Dealing with offenders

**Lesson five:** The need for better safeguarding practices and training

**Lesson six:** The effects on clergy, members of Institutes, and laity: coping with shame

**Lesson seven:** The need for better initial and ongoing formation

**Lesson eight:** Learning about the legal process

**Lesson nine:** A call to greater authenticity

The guidelines cover:

Scope and applicability; Definition of terms; Canonical provisions; Basic elements for applying the canonical provisions; Approval and promulgation of the protocol; Update of the protocol.

Each section is followed by a commentary to assist bishops and equivalent in applying the guidelines in their policies for safeguarding minors and a protocol on handling allegations.

Having 69 Recommendations and Action Points will involve a very significant amount of development and quality assurance work for the Canadian Catholic Church.<sup>63</sup>

#### Key Points from International Comparators

- Similarities in structures and focus across a number of countries.
- Influence of external reviews/ investigations.
- Move in some countries to separate support and audit agencies from Church control.
- Aligning Church policy and practice with both civil and canon law requirements.

<sup>63</sup> Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (2018) Introduction to Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation, and Transformation. Available at [https://youtu.be/71\\_KUyo3NkE](https://youtu.be/71_KUyo3NkE) (Accessed 27th April 2023).

## Conclusions

At the beginning of this paper, we set out that the National Board is seeking to revise the Child Safeguarding Policy to reflect changes in legislation, canon law and practice experience. Those working across the Church have expressed concerns about the level of bureaucracy associated with safeguarding practice, which has become time consuming and may deflect from good practice. The National Board believes that standards and guidelines are important, as are the practices of prompt reporting and good record keeping. That said, having learned from the experience of 12 years working to improve safeguarding children practice, and in an attempt to move the Church's policy forward, the National Board suggests that there are three key core principles, which should underpin Child safeguarding:

**Governance and leadership** - embedding a culture of safeguarding through leadership, training, support, communication and audit.

**Promotion of good safeguarding**— ensuring that all measures are put in place to create a safe environment for children and to prevent abuse.

**Protection** - ensuring prompt reporting of allegations to civil and canonical authorities , guaranteeing support for those who have been harmed and their families , putting in place a fair inquiry and risk management when allegations are made.

Under each principle, practice should demonstrate the centrality of the best interests of children in Church ministries.

## Common themes

It is important to reflect the significant improvements that have taken place in Ireland in child safeguarding over the past 25 years. Unlike any other country, the Church in Ireland has been successful in achieving a One-Church approach, involving female and male religious, diocesan clergy, and lay personnel. The Church has been successful in adopting robust standards, which are regularly reviewed. The system of safeguarding annual self-audits and reviews by the National Board are a sign of commitment to constant review and improvement.

The National Board has engaged in consultation over the last year (2022/23) with personnel who work in safeguarding in the Church, with children and their carers, with victims of abuse, and with respondents, highlight where improvements need to be made.

## Strong Leadership

Whilst we are all leaders in the Church, to some extent, there are individuals who have additional responsibility to 'care for the flock'. Pope Francis has talked about pastors needing to live like shepherds with the smell of the sheep. We interpret this as leaders needing to get close to safeguarding; to encouraging and supporting safe ministry with children; to meeting and caring for all the wounded who were once or may still be part of the Church - in particular, victims of abuse and their families, confreres of those who have abused, parish and congregational communities.

- Leadership needs to show through words and action the priority that needs to be placed on promoting good safe ministry, where children's rights are upheld.
- Leadership means enabling the voices of children and their families, enabling the voices of all who have been harmed in the Church.
- Leadership means putting in place trained and supported personnel to deliver on the safeguarding standards
- Leadership means clearly communicating the safeguarding message and being visible when things go wrong.
- Leadership means commending good practice
- Leadership means embedding a culture of safeguarding, through openness and transparency, taking difficult decisions.



## **Promotion of good safeguarding (Prevention)**

Good safeguarding has a number of elements. In terms of creating and maintaining safe environments, we need to have safe people who are appropriately trained and supported in their roles, safe activities and safe spaces. There are tried and tested ways of ensuring that these are in place, through careful recruitment and vetting, which assesses and identifies risk; through codes of behaviour; through the active participation of all children; and through risk assessments, and constant evaluation and review.

### **Protection**

The importance of reporting allegations of abuse to statutory agencies is now understood and accepted, and this must be done promptly, immediately. To enable people to come forward we must have listening ears, receptive to hearing of the pain and hurt caused by abuse.

Responses should genuinely show care and compassion.

Victims and their families must be supported with the provision of a range of services to assist them in dealing with the trauma of their abuse.

Those accused must be given a presumption of innocence and a fair and just process of inquiry.

## **Truth and reconciliation**

Assisting victims to heal requires effort, and for many, healing will take a long time. Victims have told the National Board that they wish to be involved in designing the healing process, which should include a process of hearing the truth so that some form of reconciliation may take place.

There are many victims in the midst of the crisis of child abuse in the Church; those who have been directly abused, and their families; those who know the respondents, including their families; other clerics and religious; and the people of God. God too has been offended. We believe that before we enter the Kingdom of God, we have to own up to our sins. Maybe we could start here by atoning for the sins we have committed against children.



## Appendix 1 Legislation and Regulations in ROI and NI

### Republic of Ireland

- Child Care Act 1991; Child Care (Amendment) Act 2007; Child Care (Amendment) Act 2011; and Child Care (Amendment) Act 2013.
- Domestic Violence Act 1996; and Domestic Violence Act 2018.
- Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997.
- Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003; and Freedom of Information Act 2014.
- Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.
- Data Protection Act, 1988; Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003; and Data Protection Act 2018.
- Child Trafficking and Pornography Act, 1998; and Child Trafficking and Pornography (Amendment) Act 2004.
- Commission To Inquire Into Child Abuse Act, 2000; and Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Amendment) Act 2005.
- Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
- Sex Offenders Act, 2001 .
- Children Act 2001; and Children (Amendment) Act 2021.
- Criminal Justice Act 2006.
- Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008; and Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) (Amendment) Act 2013.
- The Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act, 2012.
- Criminal Justice (Female Genital Mutilation) Act 2012.
- Child and Family Agency Act 2013; and Child and Family Agency (Amendment) Act 2021.
- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts, 2012 – 2016.
- Protected Disclosures Act 2014.
- Children First Act 2015 – [Revised - Updated to 28 June 2019].
- Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015.
- Children (Amendment) Act 2015.
- Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016.
- Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017.
- Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006; Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Act 2007; Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017; and Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Act 2019.
- Criminal Justice (Smuggling of Persons) Act 2021.
- Child Care (Amendment) Act 2022.

## Northern Ireland<sup>64</sup>

- Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967.
- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, supplementary legislation and associated volumes of guidance.
- The Human Rights Act 1998.
- Data Protection Act 1998.
- Criminal Evidence (NI) Order 1999.
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012).
- The Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008.
- Safeguarding Board Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.
- Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland (UNOCINI Guidance) 2011.
- Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.
- Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse Act (Northern Ireland) 2013.
- Victim Charter 2015.
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Cross Implementation Plan 2015 (with annual progress reports).
- Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.
- Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.
- Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.
- The Serious Crime Act 2015.
- Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.
- Neglect Policy and Procedures 2016.
- Protocol for Joint Investigation by Social Workers and Police Officers of Alleged and Suspected Cases of Child Abuse – Northern Ireland 2016.
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2017.
- Revised Regional Core Child Protection Policies and Procedures for Northern Ireland (Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland) 2018.
- Working Arrangements for the Welfare and Safeguarding of Unaccompanied and Separated Children and Young People 2018.
- Working Arrangements for the Welfare and Safeguarding of Child Victims and Potential Child Victims of Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery 2018.
- The General Data Protection Regulation 2018.
- Guidance on Information Sharing for Child Protection Purposes 2021.
- Achieving Best Evidence Guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, the use of special measures, and the provision of pre-trial therapy 2022.
- Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

<sup>64</sup> It is difficult to ascertain how much of the legislation passed in the Westminster Parliament has been implemented in Northern Ireland. The Belfast Agreement was given legal force through the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and the Northern Ireland Assembly was created, which regional legislative body has passed a large amount of legislation and statutory orders. Whether all Acts passed during the period 1921 through 1998 in Westminster have application in Northern Ireland is a matter for a legal researcher to determine, and the website <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/> may be of assistance with that task. It is hoped however that the most significant relevant legislation applying to Northern Ireland is contained in the list provided.




## Appendix 2

### Historical Timeline

The table below is colour coded. A brief history of the response of the Irish Catholic Church to clerical child sexual abuse is highlighted in the green sections, while sequential developments within the worldwide Church are contained in the blue sections.

<b>1984</b> - The Badgley Report, Sexual Offense against Children in Canada, is released in Canada. This was not focused on the Catholic Church.
<b>1989</b> - Mount Cashel case is exposed - Canada's largest sexual abuse scandal and one of the largest in the world, involving the Christian Brothers of Ireland in Canada (CBIC).
<b>1990</b> - Ad hoc Committee comprised of a lawyer, canon lawyer and a psychologist established by the Irish Episcopal Conference to advise the Conference how best to respond to allegations of abuse by priests and religious.
<b>1990</b> - The Archdiocese of St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada, publishes The Report of the Archdiocesan Commission of Enquiry into the Sexual Abuse of Children by Members of the Clergy.
<b>1994</b> March - Irish Catholic Bishops' Advisory Committee on Child Sexual Abuse by Priests and Religious convened. This 13-person committee was chaired by Bishop Laurence Forristal of Ossory Diocese.
<b>1995</b> March - CORI set up a National Child Protection Office in to assist religious congregations to respond to allegations of child sexual abuse against their members.
<b>1996</b> January –The Advisory Committee produced Child Sexual Abuse: Framework for a Church Response [the 'Green Book']
<b>1997</b> – CORI established a counselling service for people abused as children by members of male and female religious, which became known as Faoiseamh. (This free service operated successfully until it was replaced in early 2011 by the Towards Healing counselling service).
<b>1997</b> – A National Resource Group was established, under Chairmanship of Bishop Forristal. Among its Terms of Reference were:  To serve as a resource for the Catholic Church in Ireland in responding to the issue of Child Sexual Abuse by priests and religious;  To facilitate the implementation of the recommendations of the 'Green Book'.  The National Resource Group, throughout 1997, provided training programmes for all personnel appointed by dioceses – delegates, deputy delegates, support persons and priest advisors.
<b>1998</b> - The National Resource Group organised a Consultation Seminar for English speaking Episcopal Committees dealing with Child Sexual Abuse – representatives of the Episcopal Conferences of eleven countries participated (Dundrum, Co Tipperary 18-21 May).



**1999** – March - National Resource Group Seminar for all diocesan delegates – review of experiences in implementing ‘Green Book’ Guidelines – findings report circulated to the bishops.

May - Taoiseach’s speech. (Response to ‘States of Fear’ series of programmes, apology to the victims of child abuse and introduced a package of measures relating to childhood abuse.)

Announcement of proposal to appoint Ms Justice Mary Laffoy to chair the proposed Commission on Child Abuse.

June - Bishops’ Conference approval to establish the Bishops’ Committee on Child Abuse.

October - First formal meeting of the Bishops’ Committee on Child Abuse.

**2000** - February - Publication of Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse Bill, 2000.

March - Submission relating to the Bill made by the Bishops’ Committee on Child Abuse to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Science.

April - Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse Act, 2000 signed into law.

May - Establishment of the Commission (‘The Laffoy Commission’).

June / July - Initial public sittings (two) of the Laffoy Commission.

September - Restructuring a Child Protection Strategy paper prepared by Bishops’ Committee on Child Abuse, endorsed by the National Resource Group, and submitted to the Standing Committee of the Bishops’ Conference.

October - The Minister for Education and Science announced the Government’s decision in principle to establish a Compensation Board to compensate people who, as children, were victims of abuse while in the care of institutions in which they were resident and in respect of which State Bodies had regulatory or supervisory functions.

October - Restructuring a Child Protection Strategy approved in principle at the Bishops’ Conference, with agreement to set aside a special day in November to discuss in detail.

November - Recommendation for the implementation of a co-ordinated approach in relation to Child Protection Strategy agreed. The creation of new Co-ordinating Committee and Secretariat and Terms of Reference approved.

**2001** - February - Announcement of Government proposals for a compensation scheme for survivors of institutional child abuse and for the drafting of the proposed legislation.

March - First (of three) meetings between members of the Bishops' Committee on Child Abuse with officials of the Department of Education and Science to discuss the proposed legislation and terms of operation of the Compensation Board.

Spring meeting of the Bishops' Conference decides on a further special day in April, primarily to consider the proposed Government compensation scheme and all relevant legal issues. To also consider the final proposals in relation to the New Committee and the establishment of a Child Protection Secretariat.

April - Bishops' Conference special day: The proposed Compensation Scheme and all attendant legal issues were discussed, and up-to-date report on the activities of the Laffoy Commission was considered and reviewed.

June - Press release after summer meeting of Bishops' Conference noting:  
The establishment of a new Child Protection Office and the appointment of Paul Bailey as its Director.


The establishment of the Bishops' Committee on Child Protection.

Making public the fact that the Health Services Research Centre of Royal College of Surgeons (RCSI) has been commissioned to conduct a research study on Child Sexual Abuse by clergy and religious.

August - Special day set aside by the Bishops' Conference to discuss the Residential Institutions Redress Bill, 2001.

September - First meeting of the Bishops' Committee on Child Protection, chaired by Bishop Eamon Walsh.

September - submission relating to the Residential Institutions Redress Bill, 2001 made by the Committee on Child Protection to the Minister of Education and Science.



**2002 – March** - First of three child protection delegates' meetings convened by Child Protection Office.

March - The programme 'Suing the Pope' alleging mishandling of complaints of child sexual abuse in the diocese of Ferns, screened on BBC 2 television.

April - Bishop Comiskey resigns as Bishop of Ferns.

Bishop Eamonn Walsh is appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Ferns.

April - Announcement by the Bishops' Conference of a Nationwide Independent Audit into handling of all complaints of CSA by diocesan priests or religious in diocesan appointments as far back as 1940.

Judge Gillian Hussey is appointed as Chairperson of the Bishops' Committee on Child Protection to replace Bishop Eamonn Walsh. An expanded role for the Child Protection Office is also announced.

Residential Institutions Redress Act 2002 signed into law.

April - Extraordinary meeting of the Bishops' Conference to consider the terms of reference of the audit and the possible inclusion of CORI.

May - Extraordinary meeting of the Conference to consider further the methodology and scope of the audit. CORI and the Irish Missionary Union (IMU) invited to join the audit.

June - Terms of Reference for the proposed Catholic Church Commission on Child Sexual Abuse agreed in principle by the Bishops' Conference. Judge Gillian Hussey nominated as Chairperson of the Commission. Judge Hussey accepts the nomination in principle. Mr. John Morgan appointed as Chairman of the Committee on Child Protection to replace Judge Hussey.

Extending the Brief, a paper by Paul Bailey outlining a nationwide church approach to child protection, presented to the Bishops' Conference for their consideration.

June - Terms of Reference of the Commission agreed by CORI and IMU at the CORI AGM in Wexford.

Press Conference by three sponsoring bodies (Episcopal Conference, CORI, and IMU) announcing the Terms of Reference and the appointment of Judge Hussey as Chairperson of the Commission.

September – The Child Protection Office began to review and revise the 1996 Framework document.

October - Announcement by Minister Martin of inquiry into the handling of allegations of CSA in the Diocese of Ferns under the Chairmanship of retired Supreme Court Judge Mr. Justice Frank Murphy

December – Minister Mc Dowell announces plans for the 'preparation of a scheme for a statutory basis for a new mechanism for investigating into matters of significant and urgent public importance'. This scheme to include matters of clerical CSA.

The Catholic Church Commission on Child Sexual Abuse (Hussey Commission) decided, in light of Minister McDowell's announcement, not to proceed with its review into how Church authorities dealt with allegations of child sexual abuse by clergy and religious.

**2002** - The Boston Globe, reports the cover up of cases of sexual abuse on the part of Cardinal Law and his predecessors. Cases of sexual abuse on the part of certain priests had already received nation-wide attention (for example, the Porter case in 1992).

In **2003**, the Dublin Archdiocese set up its own Child Protection Office, independent of the service that had been launched in 2001 for all dioceses on the island of Ireland.

2003 – February - Bishops’ Conference, CORI, & IMU establish Working Group on Child Protection, with Ms Maureen Lynott


June - ‘Lynott’ Working Group commences work

August - A set of good practice guidelines entitled Working with Children and Young People in the Catholic Church Community in Ireland were developed by the Bishops’ Child Protection Office in collaboration with its Committee on Child Protection. These guidelines were distributed to all dioceses and religious congregations.

December 2003 – RCSI research team published their report, Time to Listen - Confronting Child Sexual Abuse by Catholic Clergy in Ireland. This report was the first occasion internationally in which the Catholic Church had commissioned independent research into clerical child sexual abuse.

**2004** – The Bishops’ Child Protection Office commences its National Training Initiative in St Patrick’s College, Maynooth. 20 participants from nine dioceses start their training as child protection trainers.

**2005** - Marcial Maciel, Founder of the Legionaries of Christ, is judged guilty of the sexual abuse of minors by the CDF.



**2005** – January – The members of the Working Group on Child Protection (formerly the Lynott Group, which disbanded in September 2004) unanimously agree to be associated with the draft new policy and procedures for the protection of children.

February – The Irish Bishops’ Conference launch: Towards Healing, a Lenten pastoral reflection on child sexual abuse. Towards Healing was distributed throughout dioceses and parishes on the island of Ireland. It was also sent to groups representing victims of child sexual abuse.

2005 – October - The Ferns Report was published. The Ferns Inquiry identified more than 100 allegations of such abuse committed between 1962 and 2002 and 21 priest perpetrators. It also detailed the Church response during that time.

December - An updated guidance was issued, under the title Our Children, Our Church - Child Protection Policies and Procedures for the Catholic Church in Ireland, by the Irish Bishops’ Conference (IEC), the Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI) and the Irish Missionary Union (IMU). This document was not widely implemented.

In December 2005, the establishment of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (National Board) was announced, at the launch of Our Children, Our Church, and it held its inaugural meeting in May 2006. It was created by the three Sponsoring Bodies, IEC, CORI and IMU with the intention of developing a coordinated approach to Child Safeguarding across the Catholic Church in Ireland.

First group of child protection trainers (19 graduates) receive their certificates from Archbishop Seán Brady.

**2006** – National Board begins its work.

Garda vetting became available to the Church in Ireland through the Garda central vetting unit

**2009** – February - The National Board launched new and comprehensive guidance, which it published under the title, Safeguarding Children - Standards and guidance document for the Catholic Church in Ireland.

August - The Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (The Ryan Report) was published regarding all forms of abuse that took place in institutions, which provided services to children, mostly under the auspices of the Catholic Church.

November - The Report of the Commission of Investigation into the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin (the Murphy Report), was published.

**2010** - The Canisius College case erupts in Germany and the Episcopal Conference of Germany initiates public debate on the topic of the sexual abuse of minors and renews their Guidelines.

The Archdiocese of Luxembourg initiates a hotline and publishes a report on cases of abuse within the Church in Luxembourg.

The Swiss bishops publicly asked forgiveness for abuses committed.

A stream of complaints from victims of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church in the Netherlands followed the publication of reports by NRC Handelsblad and the Wereldomroep (the Dutch world broadcasting service). Practically all of the cases were barred from action under criminal and civil law by the statute of limitations.

The Conference of Bishops of the Netherlands and the Conference of Dutch Religious initiated an independent inquiry by a commission chaired by former minister and Speaker of the Dutch House of Representatives, Wim Deetman.

The Deetman Commission published an interim report, which called mainly for the reorganisation of Help and Justice. The Conference of Bishops of the Netherlands and the Conference of Dutch Religious decide to delegate implementation of the recommendation to a committee chaired by Mr. Ronald Bandell, a former mayor of Dordrecht.

**2010**, March 19 - Pope Benedict XVI issued a Pastoral Letter to the Catholics of Ireland. In this document, the Pope apologised to Irish victims of clerical child sexual abuse. He also addressed all members of the Irish Church and said:

With this Letter, I wish to exhort all of you, as God's people in Ireland, to reflect on the wounds inflicted on Christ's body, the sometimes-painful remedies needed to bind and heal them, and the need for unity, charity and mutual support in the long-term process of restoration and ecclesial renewal.

In this letter, he also announced his intention to initiate an Apostolic Visitation to Ireland:


Furthermore, having consulted and prayed about the matter, I intend to hold an Apostolic Visitation of certain dioceses in Ireland, as well as seminaries and religious congregations. Arrangements for the Visitation, which is intended to assist the local Church on her path of renewal, will be made in cooperation with the competent offices of the Roman Curia and the Irish Episcopal Conference.

In October 2010, Archbishop Neary, along with his three fellow Irish archbishops, travelled to Rome to meet with the Apostolic Visitors appointed by Pope Benedict XVI to visit their respective archdioceses.

December - Penitential Service in the Cathedral of the Assumption in Tuam.

**2011** - Fr Fernando Karadima is found guilty by the Vatican of the sexual and psychological abuse of minors in Chile





**2011** – February - the Archdiocese of Dublin held a Service of Lament and Repentance for the sexual abuse of children by priests and religious at the Pro-Cathedral.

The Irish Catholic Bishops published their Pastoral Letter, Towards Healing and Renewal, a pastoral response from the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference to mark the first anniversary of the publication of the Pastoral Letter of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI to the Catholics of Ireland. In this document, commitments were made to support the development of responses to victims of abuse.

Towards Healing, a counselling and support service for victims and survivors of abuse was established, taking over from Faoiseamh.

**2012** – March - The full report of the Apostolic Visitation was not made public, but a summary document was issued.

July - Report by the HSE - Audit of Safeguarding Arrangements in the Catholic Church in Ireland - Volume 1 – Dioceses – was published.

**2013** - Towards Peace, a service offering offer spiritual direction and renewal for victims and survivors was established.

**2014** - Pope Francis established the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors.

**2015** - Pope Francis created a Vatican tribunal section to hear cases of bishops who fail to protect children from abusive priests.

Pope Francis accepted the resignation of Bishop Robert Finn of Kansas City-St. Joseph in the United States. Finn had previously been convicted of the failure to report an accusation of child abuse in 2012.

Pope Francis accepted the resignation of Archbishop John Nienstedt and Auxiliary Bishop Lee Anthony Piché of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis in the United States. Prosecutors had charged the Archdiocese for failure to respond to reports of the troubling conduct of a former priest of the Archdiocese.

**2016**, Safeguarding Children, the revised Policy and Standards was adopted by all Church bodies; this revised policy took account of changes in legislation in both jurisdictions and reflected good practice experience from a national and international perspective. The policy and guidance can be viewed at The policy is supported by comprehensive guidance, also found on the National Boards website at [www.safeguarding.ie](http://www.safeguarding.ie)

**2016** – April - The Bishops' Conference of Uruguay released a statement and instituted a hotline to receive complaints regarding the sexual abuse of minors by clergy. Four Uruguayan priests were subsequently suspended for sexual abuse of minors following a Church-led investigation that has uncovered 44 accusations against 40 priests over 70 years.

June - Pope Francis issued motu proprio *As a Loving Mother*, which specifies that, grave causes for removal of a bishop to include a bishop's negligence in exercising his role, especially in relation to cases of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults. (Canon law already provides the possibility of removal for grave causes.)

**2017** - In Australia, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse released its report. The report studied sexual abuse in schools, churches, youth groups, scout troops, orphanages, foster homes, sporting clubs, group homes, charities, and in family homes. This report contains a number of recommendations specifically for the Catholic Church.

**2018** - Pope Francis issued a 'letter to the people of God' regarding the abuse crisis.

The Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report is released.


Pope Francis accepted the resignation of Cardinal McCarrick from the College of Cardinals after the Archdiocese of New York released that its investigation proved that an allegation against the Cardinal regarding the sexual abuse of a minor, which had taken place 47 years earlier, was credible.

Pope Francis dismisses Fernando Karadima (Chile) from the clerical state.

Pope Francis called the Bishops of Chile to Rome to meet with him. This meeting took place from 15-17 May. Pope Francis then wrote a Letter to the People of God in Chile at the end of May. Pope Francis met in Rome on two separate occasions (April and June) with victims of clergy sexual abuse in Chile and He subsequently met in August with a representative of the Chilean Bishops' abuse prevention council and a Bishop to discuss steps being taken there to address the clerical sex abuse crisis. At the end of the meeting, all of the Bishops of Chile submitted their resignations to Pope Francis. In June, Pope Francis accepted the resignations of five (5) of them (including that of Bishop Barros). In October, Pope Francis dismissed from the clerical state two Chilean Bishops because of manifest abuse of minors.

A study commissioned by the German Bishops Conference examined 3,677 cases of abuse allegedly perpetrated by clergy nationwide, German magazine Der Spiegel reported on Wednesday. The universities of Giessen, Heidelberg and Mannheim were involved in the research, which implicated 1,670 priests in sexual abuse spanning from 1946 to 2014.

**2018** - A second round of Reviews of safeguarding practice was initiated by the National Board.



**2019** – February - Pope Francis held an international summit of all episcopal conferences in Rome to address the clergy sexual abuse crisis internationally.

2019 - Pope Francis issued the motu proprio Vos Estis Lux Mundi (You are the light of the world), which revised and clarified norms and procedures for holding bishops and religious superiors accountable for protecting abusers worldwide.

The Belgian Bishops' Conference published a 400-page report on clergy sexual abuse.

The CDF communicated that Theodore McCarrick was found guilty of solicitation in the Sacrament of Confession, and sins against the Sixth Commandment with minors and with adults, with the aggravating factor of the abuse of power and is definitively dismissed from the clerical state.

The Polish Bishops' Conference said the statistical report, which covers the period between 1990 and 2018, found that 382 clergy sexually abused 624 victims, including 198 under the age of 15 and 184 adolescents between the ages of 15 and 18.

**2020** - Reviews by the National Board were suspended because of the Covid-19 health crisis

**2020** - The Holy See issued guidance (Vademecum) on the management of allegations in line with canon and penal norms

Independent Investigation into Child Sexual abuse (IICSA) publishes report, which examined the extent of institutional failings by the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales to protect children from sexual abuse and examines the Church's current safeguarding regime

Report of Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church in France (CIASE).

Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche accused of abusive sexual relationships

**2021** – Revised Book VI of Code of Canon Law was released.

**2021** - National Board Reviews recommenced.

**2022** - Amendments made to the Vademecum to reflect change in status of CDF (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) to DDF (Dicastery of the Doctrine of the Faith)

Report Commissioned by the Focolare Movement in France into Abuses Perpetrated by a Former Member JMM

The report by law firm Westpfahl Spilker Wastl (WSW) examined how abuse cases were dealt with in the archdiocese of Munich and Freising between 1945 and 2019, during part of which time Joseph Ratzinger was Archbishop.

