

# Newsletter

Latest News from the National Office  
for Safeguarding Children in the  
Catholic Church in Ireland

## ALERT BOX

This part of the Newsletter is designed to draw the attention of Church authorities to important developments outlined below:

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June 2021

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Click on any of the links below to send an email directly to any member of staff

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## Introduction

As we enter the Summer season, we hope that the worst of Covid 19 is behind us and that the next few months will bring life and opportunity to everyone.

The National Board held its Annual General Meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> June and will publish our Annual Report in the coming days. That report presents an overview of the busy year that was 2020. It is important that we take the opportunity to thank everyone who works across the Church to safeguard children, those who care and support those who have been harmed in the Church and those who provide management and care to clerics and religious accused of child abuse. We also want to thank the Directors of the National Board and National Case Management Committee who offer their services and expertise freely to the important ministry of safeguarding children. We say a fond farewell and thank you to two Directors – Father Paul Murphy Ofm(Cap) and Sister Evelyn Greene (Holy Faith) - who retired after loyal service to the National Board. We will miss their wit, knowledge and positive contributions, and wish them both well in the next chapter of their lives. We also welcome a new Director Phil O Laoide, who is a former solicitor, and whilst retired from the legal profession, currently sits on interview boards for the Public Appointments Commission and the Legal Aid Board.

This Newsletter will provide information on:

- National Board Annual Report 2020
- Revision of Code of Canon Law
- The proposed revision of Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016
- Reviews of Safeguarding practice
- Training
- Changes to National Board Guidance
- Theology Videos and National Conference
- Review of National Case Management Committee
- Requirements on New Congregations
- HIQA Draft National Standards
- Child Safeguarding Statements (ROI only)
- PSNI and Garda Siochana links

# Annual Report 2020

The National Board has produced its Annual Report for 2020. The report will be released on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June and will be accessible at <https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications>. The report sets out the work of the National Board over the pandemic which surprisingly saw a huge increase in activity – in terms of accessing advice and training. The period under review also noted an increase in allegations of child abuse.

## Revision of Book VI- Code of Canon Law

On 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021, Pope Francis with the Apostolic Constitution “Pascite Gregem Dei,” reformed Book VI of the Code of Canon Law, continuing a revision begun by Benedict XVI in 2007, and applying penal sanctions to more criminal offences.

The Apostolic Constitution “Pascite Gregem Dei” is dated 23 May 2021, the Solemnity of Pentecost, and enters into force on 8 December 2021.

Pope Francis said

“...charity requires that Pastors have recourse to the penal system as often as necessary, keeping in mind the three aims which make it necessary in the ecclesial community, namely, **the restoration of the demands of justice, the amendment of the offender, and the reparation of scandals.**” He notes that Book VI has also been improved “from a technical point of view, especially with regard to fundamental aspects of criminal law, such as the right of defence, the statute of limitations for criminal action, and a more precise determination of penalties, offering objective criteria in identifying the most appropriate sanction to be applied in a concrete case” and reducing an authority’s discretion, in order to favour ecclesial unity in the application of penalties, “especially for offences that cause greater damage and scandal in the community.”

Pope Francis writes that they aim to “reduce the number of cases in which the imposition of a penalty was left to the discretion of authorities.” The failure of bishops to take decisive action—even when the existing provisions of canon law gave them authority to discipline guilty clerics—compounded the severity of the sex-abuse crisis.

In relation to child safeguarding, the National Board understands that the new code:

- Creates a specific article on sexual abuse committed by priests against minors or vulnerable persons, with a 20-year statute of limitations period. Among the crimes listed in the revised Book VI are the sexual abuse of vulnerable adults and the “grooming” of minors. These crimes are explicitly defined, in an obvious effort to eliminate uncertainties about when the Church’s criminal law should be invoked.
- Has a better determination of the norms: setting out clearly the cases in which the penal system is to be applied and how offences are to be punished. Benchmarks are now also set to guide the action of the Ordinary while respecting the necessary margins for evaluating specific circumstances.
- Allows for a bishop to be removed from office if he is guilty of “culpable negligence” in his handling of abuse complaints.



# Training and Support

Since the last newsletter the following training events have been facilitated

- Training on the Vademecum on Certain Points of Procedure in Treating Cases of Sexual Abuse of Minors Committed by Clerics- Following the publication of the Vademecum the National Board have developed this training to provide information and advice on the contents of the Vademecum and the changes to policy and guidance. This training has been facilitated three times (18<sup>th</sup> March, 30<sup>th</sup> March and 21<sup>st</sup> of April) to accommodate the large number of those that wished to attend.
- Training for Advisors - This training was facilitated on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April.
- Ecclesiastical Provincial Area Meeting- the final of the EA meetings for the Dublin area was facilitated on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April.
- Ministering with Children Online - We have been continuing to facilitate this training for those who are seeking to engage in ministry with children using digital media. One diocese and one religious order have now taken part in the training since the last Newsletter.
- Safeguarding Committee Training – Since the last Newsletter this programme for safeguarding committees has been facilitated in 3 religious orders.
- Training for Local Safeguarding Representatives- One diocese approached the National Board to assist with training new local safeguarding representatives. This training would usually be facilitated locally by registered trainers, but because of restrictions this has not been possible.
- Head to Heart Child Safeguarding in Formation – The safeguarding programme continues for seminarians in St Patrick's College Maynooth, Pontifical Irish College Rome, Redemptoris Mater seminary Dundalk, and two Irish seminarians currently registered in the Venerable English College in Rome. The final module for this academic year was facilitated on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April and focused on boundaries.
- Training on implementing safeguarding best practice internationally - An Irish religious order approached the National Board to assist with providing governance training to their religious ministry in India. This was facilitated over two three-hour online sessions in April.

## Forthcoming Training

The following training events are now available to book online:

- 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021- Session with Superintendent Barry Walsh (National Protective Services Bureau). The National Board will host a short session with Superintendent Barry Walsh (National Protective Services Bureau). The purpose of this session is to introduce Superintendent Walsh to you and to enable you to clarify any matters relating to reporting allegations to the Gardai. For more information and to book your place please follow this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/events/session-with-superintendent-barry-walsh-national-protective-services-bureau>.
- 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 2021- Public Communications and Responding in a Crisis- Following recent practice by a religious order in Ireland of publicly naming a deceased respondent to encourage victims to come forward, the National Board is facilitating 3 separate training events to discuss the implications and processes involved. This is a three-hour event which aims to cover the following:
  - Discussing the issue of communicating publicly about a respondent in the Church
  - Discussing the process of how this can be done
  - Discussing the support needs of Church personnel, before, during and after the process.Two dates for this training are now fully booked. A third date on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September has now been added to accommodate those who wish to attend. To book your place please follow this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/events/public-communications-and-responding-in-a-crisis-third-date>

# Theology of Safeguarding and National Conference

Five Theology videos have now been posted on the National Board's website. The next video prepared by Dr Jessie Rogers is available on the Board's website. You can view this by following this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/national-conference-2021> and scrolling to June 2021.

The response has been very positive from both within Ireland and abroad. The aim of the videos is to stimulate discussion about the theological basis of safeguarding practice. The National Board will conclude the series in October 2021 when we hope to publish a compendium of all presentations.

The National Board has undertaken a risk assessment and as a consequence has decided to defer the National Conference until May 2022. We will provide further details closer to the date.

## Guidance Updates

Since the last newsletter there have been some changes to the National Board guidance these include:

- New guidance on child safeguarding and the internal forum
- Revised hazard assessment guidance

A detailed list of all the changes to the guidance is available here

<https://www.safeguarding.ie/guidance>.

## Requirements on New Congregations

Any Congregation starting ministry with children in Ireland should contact the National Board for guidance to ensure all child safeguarding matters are addressed. In order to access the support services of the National Board, Congregations must be members of AMRI.

## Revision of Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016

Since the introduction of Safeguarding Children 2016 there have been significant changes to civil, criminal and canon law (revision of book V1), which render the current policy out of date. The National Board has decided to engage in a consultation exercise across the Church and with external bodies to determine what should form the basis of a good child safeguarding policy into the future. We will produce, as a first step, a detailed background paper setting out the legislative and practice imperatives to this revision; this will be followed by a series of meetings, discussions, workshops and questionnaires. The aim is to listen to practitioners, complainants of abuse, respondents, children and their carers so that we can compile child safeguarding policy and procedures which are fit for purpose.



# Review of National Case Management Committee

In 2011, the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (National Board) established the National Case Management Reference Group (NCMRG) to which Church authorities who chose to do so could refer cases for advice and guidance.

The NCMRG met to advise on the first case in January 2012; and since that time, a total of 78 diocesan priests and 103 religious, male and female, have had their cases considered by the national group, now named National Case Management Committee (NCMC). In total, the NCMC has held 279 case discussions, as approximately a third of cases have been returned to the NCMC for review.

As part of its commitment to quality assurance, the National Board is conducting a review of the operation of the NCMC, and has sent out a questionnaire to all dioceses and to those religious congregations that may be engaged in the management of one or more cases. One version of the questionnaire has been sent to all Church authorities who have current membership of the NCMC, and a different one has been sent to Church authorities who do not have current membership.

In order for this review to be as relevant and useful as possible, the National Board will be extremely grateful for the cooperation of all Ordinaries or their DLPs in completing and sending back the questionnaire as quickly as they can.

## HQIA Draft National Standards

HIQA is developing Draft National Standards for Children's Social Services that will cover all welfare and protection services for children. These standards set out what outcomes a child should expect and what a service needs to do to achieve these outcomes. They provide a common language to describe what high-quality, safe and consistent children's social services look like.

Having one set of national standards for all welfare and protection services for children will ensure that the interests of the child are put first, and will promote a consistent and child-centred approach to service delivery. The standards also aim to ensure that, no matter how children come into contact with children's social services, that there is a consistent response and that children do not experience any gaps in their care and support.

The draft national standards are underpinned by four principles, which can be used by all services caring for and supporting children who are at risk or are in the care of the State. These four principles are:

- a human rights-based approach
- safety and wellbeing
- responsiveness
- accountability.

For further information and to respond to the Consultation follow this link

<https://www.hiqa.ie/sites/default/files/2021-03/Draft-National-Standards-for-Childrens-Social-Services.pdf>

## PSNI Links

DCI Scott Thompson is the contact person within the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the inter-faith sector in Northern Ireland for discussion or seeking views on cases. His contact details are:

[scott.thompson@psni.police.uk](mailto:scott.thompson@psni.police.uk) (18488) 07825254026

Referrals to the PSNI are still made through the Central Referral Unit using the email address

[zcru@psni.pnn.police.uk](mailto:zcru@psni.pnn.police.uk).

Margaret Burke, DLP for Down and Connor diocese sits on the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) interfaith subgroup, as a representative of Down and Connor Diocese. Margaret has agreed that she will share any information of relevance through this Newsletter.

## Garda Siochana

The Garda National Protection Services Bureau, sexual crime management unit have a new email - which is: [GNPSB\\_SCMU@garda.ie](mailto:GNPSB_SCMU@garda.ie)

The Superintendent Barry Walsh has agreed to attend an event hosted by the National Board to discuss areas of common interest in safeguarding children.

### Reviews of Safeguarding Practice

**The National Board has restarted Child Safeguarding Reviews. Much of the Review can be conducted through video conferencing, to limit the actual time spent on site, reviewing papers and case files. A Review is conducted at the request of the Church Authority, who determines what they want to be reviewed. A Review can be separated into two parts – child safeguarding (manageable in full through video meetings) and case management (requires on-site access to files).**

**To invite the National Board to conduct a Review of Child safeguarding can you please contact [teresa.devlin@safeguarding.ie](mailto:teresa.devlin@safeguarding.ie) with a letter of invitation.**

## Reviewers Required

The National Board wishes to refresh its panel of Reviewers to conduct Reviews on its behalf of dioceses and Religious Orders against the 2016 Safeguarding Children Standards. If you know of anybody who:

- Is a trained professional in some area of direct work with children;
- Has a working understanding of child safeguarding and child protection;
- Has an understanding of and sensitivity towards the Catholic Church in Ireland;
- Has a good personal manner;
- Can gather, analyse and present information efficiently and effectively;
- Can write clearly and well;
- Wants to work on a part-time, sessional basis;
- Holds no role, paid or voluntary, in a diocese or Religious Order

then can you please suggest that they make direct enquiries of Teresa Devlin, CEO ([teresa.devlin@safeguarding.ie](mailto:teresa.devlin@safeguarding.ie)) or Peter Kieran, Director of Safeguarding ([peter.kieran@safeguarding.ie](mailto:peter.kieran@safeguarding.ie)) of the National Board, from whom they will receive information about the position of reviewer and the recruitment procedure for this.



# Resources- The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors- Tutela Minorum

The best way of accessing the huge store of information contained on the website of this Pontifical Commission is by typing <https://www.tutelaminorum.org/> into your search engine; the content will still appear in English.

This website has been upgraded over the past few months and is now much easier to navigate. It also contains a great deal more useful information and links.

When you click on the tab, Mission at the top of the homepage, a brief chronological history of the Commission drops down, under the heading, **Our Safeguarding Journey**. This began in 2013, with the Council of Cardinals advising Pope Francis that such a body was needed by the Church as a matter of priority. It was officially established in 2014, when Pope Francis issued the Chirograph, or foundation document, and Statutes to govern the work of the Commission. The various developments that followed over the next seven years are well displayed and explained, year by year.

The next tab at the top of the homepage is **The Commission**, and this profiles the various members who have served on the Commission since the first group of eight was appointed and convened in 2014.

The real storehouse of relevant and useful information for Irish Church safeguarding personnel is opened by clicking on the tab, **Outreach & Safeguarding**. On the right hand side of this page there is an e-form for applying to join the mailing list for the Commission's Newsletter.

In describing what can be sourced on this page, the following explanation is given:

This Knowledge Base is a resource “hub” for safeguarding initiatives and information collected from various Bishops' Conferences, dioceses, conferences of religious and private institutions around the world. The information provided here within is by no means prescriptive; its function is only to provide examples of “best practices” for Child Safeguarding so as to serve as a point of reference for both different pastoral agents at a parish, diocesan or national level and any individual seeking similar Safeguarding information.

There is a search bar that can be used to access particular documents. Under this are the five individual document stores – Outreach; Safeguarding; Norms and Procedures; Assessing Safeguarding; and Education and Formation. Finally, there is a Frequently Asked Questions section at the bottom of the page.

Under Education and Formation, the user can access Webinars, Publications, and Education and Training Programmes. The videos of the papers presented at the April 2021 three day Harvard Global Interfaith Symposium, *Faith and Flourishing: Strategies for Preventing and Healing Childhood Sexual Abuse*, are all available on this section of the website.

In summary, this website provides a reference library in which canon law, policy and practice developments and information can be easily accessed; it is well worth an initial half hour of exploration, and once its riches are discovered, the user will undoubtedly return again and again.





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



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# Practice Issue- Risk Assessments

## (only applies to Church bodies ministering with children)

Standard 1 in Safeguarding Children 2016 is about creating and maintaining safe environments; and indicator 1.8 states that 'The Church body implements effective practice for Church personnel on assessment of hazards when working with children'. This means that every activity involving children and facilitated by Church personnel must have a written child safeguarding risk assessment also known as a hazard assessment. The National Board's Guidance on Standard 1 devotes three pages to undertaking such assessments.

The need for risk assessments has come into sharper focus in the Republic of Ireland as Tusla continues its work in assessing compliance with the *Children First Act 2015* through the use of the Tusla child safeguarding statement. The template child safeguarding statement produced by the National Board which Tusla have agreed is compliant with Children First includes the following statement:

'Local activity with children is risk assessed in each location in which the activity takes place as part of Indicator 1.8 of Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016. For full details of localised risks and the procedures in place to manage these please refer to the hazard assessments stored at [INSERT DETAIL]'

Whether ministry with children is online, or face to face, risk assessments must be carried out. To assist with this task the National Board has recently revised its guidance on risk assessments which is available here:

<https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Standards/Standard%201.pdf>. In addition, the National Board has engaged with one diocese and one religious order, who has ministry with children, to pilot this draft template of the guidance. Our hope is to revise the guidance, if required following an evaluation of the pilot, so that the final tool is compliant with Children First 2015, user friendly and as effective as possible.

If you have any questions or would like to suggest changes to the guidance yourself, please contact [niall.moore@safeguarding.ie](mailto:niall.moore@safeguarding.ie).





THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR  
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