

Newsletter

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

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Introduction

JUNE 2024

National Office Staff

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

Chief
Executive
Officer

[Aidan Gordon](#)

Director of
Training and
Support

[Lyn McDermott](#)

Administrators

[Imelda Ashe](#)

[Ann Cunningham](#)

The seasons are constantly changing and as summer arrives, lifting our mood and encouraging us to relax in those rays of sunshine, here in the National Office it has been a time of new beginnings but also some sad farewells.

Aidan Gordon became Chief Executive Officer here in the National Office in April 2024. A great deal of you will know Aidan from his many years of social work in both the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland and for his last 9 years as Director of Safeguarding in the Archdiocese of Armagh.



Many of you have met Aidan during the last two months as we travelled around the country introducing the Church's revised safeguarding policy *A Safe and Welcoming Church –Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2024*. His commitment and enthusiasm along with his many years of experience will be a huge benefit to the Church and the National Board as we continue our collective work to keep the Catholic Church a safe place for children.

With change, inevitably, there is often sadness and ours is that we say farewell to a great CEO and leader who steered the National Board for the last 10 years – Teresa Devlin. She has provided guidance, support, advice to countless of you over her years with the National Board, steering us all through sometimes difficult times in her constant drive to make the Church a safe place for all. We will miss her energy, her dedication, her direction and her humour but we know she continues the good work of safeguarding children through her Pontifical Commission role.



Teresa is presented with flowers to mark her retirement by Bishop Alan McGuckian at the Induction session for the new Policy held recently in Down and Connor

In spite of the changes, the work continues and we are confident in the knowledge that the revised safeguarding policy, *A Safe and Welcoming Church – Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2024* will take us further on our collective journey to nurture a culture of safeguarding in all of our work. Rest assured we in the National Office are always available for any concerns or queries you have; feel free to drop in, call or email.

A Safe and Welcoming Church – Child Safeguarding Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2024.

In March, April and May we began a process of visiting each region (or metropolitan area) throughout the country to introduce many of you to the new Church policy on child safeguarding.



We wanted to make a point of thanking all who came out to meet us at these events. The welcome we received from those of you who travelled from all across the country to our meeting points in Donegal, Carlow, Mayo, Galway, Tipperary, Armagh, Belfast, Cork, Kildare and Dublin inspired us and your support was and is much appreciated.



As you would have heard us point out at the events, we are available to answer any questions or concerns now that the publication of the policy occurred.

On the 11th of June 2024 we moved over formally to A Safe and Welcoming Church –Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2024. Can we ask that you ensure that every member of your Diocese/Congregation is aware of this move and knows to find the new policy on the National Board website at this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/policy/doc>

The policy reminds us that

- Safeguarding is core to the Mission of the Church.
- Consistent with Gospel values, those who minister will do so with dignity and integrity, honouring their calling to ensure that children are welcomed, cherished and protected, following the example set by Jesus.



The guidance supporting the implementation of the new policy has been reviewed and is now refreshed on the website. Here in the National Board the guidance has always remained a focus for us, our commitment has been to maintain each piece as a live document, updated regularly in line with changing legislation and best practice.

Take a moment to review the guidance here [view-all-the-guidance](#) and for this quarter we are putting a spotlight on Appendix D which provides useful contact numbers [Appendix%20D.pdf](#)

Principles guiding practice

The policy sets out the principles that guide our three standards. Those three standards are interwoven in all that we do to safeguard. A focus for all our work going forward is to continue to nurture the culture of safeguarding. Keeping children safe from harm is an imperative but more than that, the Church will promote the wellbeing of children through their participation in the ministry of the Church. The Church will create and maintain environments that uphold children's rights and that create nurturing, caring conditions where children will flourish in faith and love. Through fostering a culture of care, children feel safe and looked after, and in turn, they look out for each other

Ministry with Children
Based on Scripture

Ministry with Children
based on National Law,
Canon Law and
Government
Regulation

Ministry with Children
based on the
Constitution of Ireland,
Children's Rights and
International Treaties

Caring for
Complainants

Providing a Fair and
Just Process for
Respondents

Acknowledging the
Safeguarding Journey
of the Church

We are all
responsible for
Safeguarding

Lets continue
the journey

Child Safeguarding policy statement

As part of the adoption of the policy *A Safe and Welcoming Church –Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2024*, the policy statement displayed in all of your public spaces changed to the new policy statement as outlined below. We have already been in touch with you to provide the new template. If you require a copy, please contact the National Office.

On page 18 of the policy you will find a copy of the commitment by the Church Authority, this should be signed and a copy returned to us at admin@safeguarding.ie

The Gospel teaches the importance of ensuring that the Catholic Church community is a warm, welcoming and safe place for children.

Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. (Mark 10:14-15)

Children are gifts from God, to be cherished and recognised for the joyful contribution they make as valued members of the Church.

Our challenge is to follow the example of Jesus in cherishing them. Safeguarding is key to this important task and should be seen, not as a burden, but as an opportunity to embrace and encourage children's ministry, following the example of Jesus Christ.

This Church body pledges to safeguard children and young people from harm and to support them in their development as valued and integral members of the Catholic Church in Ireland. The Church's ministry will be inclusive and will uphold their rights.

Consistent with Gospel values, and with civil and criminal law, those who minister will do so with dignity and integrity, honouring their calling to ensure that children and young people are welcomed, cherished and protected, following the example set by Jesus.

This Safeguarding Children Policy will be honoured and complied with by all ordained clerics, by vowed female and male religious, and by all lay staff and volunteers in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

Template Child Safeguarding Statement (ROI only)

Child Safeguarding statement and Tusla

In March 2024 we began working on the template Child Safeguarding statement.

We created a new template ensuring that we referenced the new criteria as outlined within the new revised policy (2024).

In April 2024 we began a process of engagement with the Tusla Compliance Unit to ensure the statement met the requirements of legislation as set out in Children First Act 2015

<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/36/enacted/en/html>

We are very pleased to state that Tusla provided some guidance, which we incorporated in the final template and in June 2024 Tusla approved the template statement, which can be viewed at [Tusla approved-child-safeguarding- sample-statement](#)

All Church Bodies who have ministry with children in the Republic of Ireland are required to publish their Child Safeguarding Statement in line with the Children First (2015) Act.

National Board Reviews of Safeguarding Practice

During February, March and April of 2024 the final reviews of safeguarding practice under the 2016 Child Safeguarding policy were completed.

The Church bodies in which reviews have been completed and reports issued since March 2024 are:

- The De La Salle Brothers of Ireland.
- Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers)
- Irish Province of the Order of Carmelites

Reports of all these Reviews can be read at:

[National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland - National Board Publications](#)

Trainers Corner

Training returns are an important part of monitoring our practice and ensuring we are actively keeping up to date with our safeguarding responsibilities. Completing training returns should be done following each training session; this will make it easier for yourselves as trainers to keep track of where and whom you trained along with eliminating a bigger task at the year-end. Registering training is very simple and can be completed in a matter of minutes on the National Board website.

One key point though for sessions where two trainers delivered in partnership is to agree which one of you will record the training on the site. One trainer can then complete on both your behalves.

Trainers can log their training by:

- Using the trainers' login button on www.safeguarding.ie given to each trainer as part of their registration.
- Following log in, click the 'log a training event online' button on the top right hand side of the screen.
- Filling in the relevant details and then submit.
- The event will automatically be added to the database.

Please can you complete this process for every training event facilitated.

Submitting online is a much more efficient way of submitting returns. If you need any help with login or have forgotten your user name and password please contact acunningham@safeguarding.ie

Training meet up

We will soon be in contact with all trainers throughout both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland with a view to arranging meet ups in September of this year. We want to take some time to appreciate the hard work that you all do while also canvassing your thoughts on what we need to prioritize for our training strategy over 2024/2025.

Train the Trainer

In early June we sent out a communication to Church Authorities asking for expressions of interest in a proposed Train the trainer programme to run for 6 Saturdays in October/ November of this year location TBC depending on numbers.

The training course is only for those who you would wish to become registered trainers for three years with the NBSCCCI and any delegate must be nominated by the Church Body. For further information or to express an interest please email acunningham@safeguarding.ie

Pilot projects

As part of listening to your needs and responding to trends, we are working on a pilot project very kindly lead by Susan Gordon in Down and Conor to trial risk assessment training at a local level. We know that recording the assessment and management of risk can appear complicated but by identifying, responding and communicating our management of potential harm we can ensure that our ultimate goal is met which is the successful fun activity achieved.



Changes to Church Authorities

The National Board provides regular advice to Church authorities, and organises an induction for new Church leaders annually. When a Church leader changes, it is important that you inform us and provide us with the contact details of the new Church leader by emailing admin@safeguarding.ie.

Annual Report 2023/2024

All of the work of the National Board is driven by a desire to improve practice, to learn from the mistakes of the past and move on, always with effective safeguarding practices and measures within the Church. Our Annual Report reflects the work completed each year to further our collective work and this year our Annual Report for the period 1st of April 2023 – 31st March 2024 was published following our AGM on the 11th of June. Read the report at this link [2023/2024 Annual report](#)

The report reflects the topics such as the development of our database and the measures taken to protect/destroy data we receive along with a review of objectives agreed by the Board or Directors and completed in 2023/24.

The report outlines that in 23/24 we received notification of 252 allegations, which is an increase of one from the previous year. Whilst the majority of allegations relate to 1960s, 70s and 80s, we note four (4) allegations related to the year 2000 or later.

In the reporting year 1st of April 2023 to 31st of March 2024, 5,093 people were trained by National Board registered trainers. This represents a decrease on last year's training figure of 7,219. The National Board is committed to supporting the delivery of local training and will continue to focus on providing support to Church authorities. In 2023/24, 1,075 individuals attended the full day training sessions on child safeguarding while the refresher session has continued to prove popular with 1,014 individuals attending across 75 sessions delivered. The delivery of information trainings within local parishes and in religious communities continues to be a focus with 2,379 individuals attending these sessions in the last twelve months.



Practice Issue

In this quarter, we focus on Trauma informed practices. Trauma informed care involves recognising the widespread impact of trauma on the Individual. Trauma can affect the Individuals physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing. Trauma informed practices aim to increase the Individual's safety, resilience and control within their lives by focusing on patient empowerment, choice, collaboration, safety and trustworthiness.

A recent report commissioned by the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland, with funding from the cross-Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC) has reviewed the progress of embedding trauma informed practice within services in the North of Ireland. The report whose lead researcher and author is Dr Suzanne Mooney from the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work at Queen's University was completed through Queens University and has recently been published.

The report findings recommend governmental commitment through a trauma informed strategy for Northern Ireland. Read an executive summary of the report here [summary-we-are-journey-implementing-trauma-informed-approaches-northern-ireland](#) or for a full copy of the report <https://www.safeguardingni.org/trauma-informed-approaches/latest-research>

Resources

As you may have spotted in the revised policy all three of the standards, (1) Leadership, Governance and Accountability, (2) Nurturing a Culture of Safeguarding and (3) Responding Pastorally, and Reporting according to civil and Canon law all advocate for support in the form of regular supervision for those in both leadership and all roles related to child safeguarding.

Support and supervision encourages resilience and allows us a safe space to plan for self-care, build our self-development so that we can better support those we need to through our ministry.

SLIconnect is an education ministry offering free online resources in the form of webinars, access to articles and also a web section on tips to renew and reflect on healthy ministry. <https://www.sliconnect.org/resources/>

Contact Details

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Much achieved, More to do



A final word for this edition of our newsletter from Teresa pictured here with Bishop Denis Nulty Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin.

"I have also been heartened when engaging with priests, religious and lay personnel as they pick up the broken pieces after allegations are made. Our collective work has been, and continues to be, to promote a better culture of safeguarding and ensure that those abused are listened to and responded to with care and compassion"