

# Newsletter

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

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## Introduction

March 2025

### 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](#)

Dear Colleagues,  
Welcome to the spring edition of our Newsletter. It has been a busy start to the year for us in the NBSCCCI. We were delighted to attend a conference on *Systems to Support our People - Embedding a Trauma Informed Approach*, hosted by the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January.



'Systems to Support our People: Embedding a Trauma Informed Approach' which was opened by Junior ministers Aisling Reilly and Pam Cameron, had regional, national and international speakers and was attended by over 150 cross sector delegates.

We were heartened with the strong support across the Church for our recent events on Resilience and Supervision in Leadership, New Church Authority training and DLP and Deputy DLP training. Thank you to all who attended for your interest and engagement. Further, on in this newsletter you will find our upcoming training events. As ever if there is training you would like us to source please let us know.

I hope that at this time of the year many of you will have been involved in or completed your Church Authority annual self-audit. This is a great opportunity to look at your child safeguarding procedures and structures to ensure they keep children within our Church safe and that they are in line with the requirements of the Church policy. As you will see from the coming pages, it is important that you write to us in the NBSCCCI to advise us your audit has been completed for 2024 on or before the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2025.

Plans for our biannual conference are well underway and further on in this Newsletter you will find the details of location and dates. Please mark in your diary and consider attending as we hope it will be a great collaborative learning experience for all of us.

By the time this Newsletter reaches you, we will all have taken part in the annual day of prayer for those who have suffered abuse. This day is marked each year on the Friday following Ash Wednesday and this year that day fell on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March. We recognise the tragedy of abuse daily but on this day each year we set aside time to humbly pray for healing, reconciliation and the rebuilding of trust.

Please also take some time to read about the work of the Truth Recovery Independent Panel: *Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses, and their related pathways and practices.*

*Aida Sada*



## Changes to Church Authorities

The NBSCCCI 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](mailto:admin@safeguarding.ie).

Our website provides links to Designated Liaison Person's within each diocese along with contact details for additional help and support. If you notice any errors in any of this information please contact us so that we can make the appropriate amendments.

## A Safe and Welcoming Church; Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church In Ireland, 2024

Over the next three months, we will reach the first anniversary of the release of the revised Church policy on child safeguarding. By now, all publications where you had referenced the 2016 policy must be updated to reflect the 2024 policy "A Safe and Welcoming Church Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024".

It is very important that all posters displayed in your locations contain only the details of the 2024 policy statement.

Within the Republic of Ireland, and where ministry with children is underway, the Child Safeguarding Statement should be in the new 2024 template and prominently displayed on your websites.

Your Church Authority should ensure to forward a signed copy of the commitment to the new policy to ourselves in the NBSCCCI if they have not already done so.

### MOU AND DEEDS

The Introduction of the new revised "A Safe and Welcoming Church Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024" last year necessitated altering the existing Memorandum of Understanding's (MOU's) and Data Processing Deeds. The MOU and Deeds set out how we in the NBSCCCI will process and ensure the security of any DATA we hold.

We have forwarded a copy of the MOU's and Deeds to each Church Authority. Please complete these and return them to us at the below email address if you have not already done so.

[admin@safeguarding.ie](mailto:admin@safeguarding.ie)

## NBSCCCI Reviews of Safeguarding Practice.

The NBSCCCI have not yet began the process of review under the 2024 policy "A Safe and Welcoming Church Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024". In our final review under the 2016 policy and in agreement with the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd we have published our review of their safeguarding practices on the NBSCCCI's website, all reviews can be seen at

<https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications/national-board-publications>.

# Practice Focus –Nurturing a Culture of Safeguarding

## S6.G Guidance on Visiting Clergy, Religious, Lay Ecclesial Ministers, Seminarians and Visits to Shrines

### Procedures for visiting clergy within Ireland

All clergy incardinated into the diocese or religious order will have been Garda/AccessNI vetted as part of safe recruitment (Guidance S1.A).

Visiting clergy should follow best practice and contact the local parish priest/superior of a religious house before undertaking ministry in that ecclesiastical jurisdiction. If this ministry is considered to be regulated activity, then the guidance regarding the vetting process must be undertaken and a letter of good standing received (1.1C Template 2) from the ordinary of the cleric. However, should the cleric be present for one event in a parish or diocese, such as a funeral, baptism or wedding, he should sign the register in the sacristy to declare his presence on a particular time and date. Furthermore, should the cleric not be incardinated in the ecclesiastical jurisdiction that he visits, he must provide his Celebret for inspection by the parish priest or duly delegated person, and this should be noted beside the visitor's signature in the register.

### Procedures to be followed by visiting clergy from outside Ireland wishing to minister on a short-term basis

When clergy from outside Ireland visit with the intention of being involved in short-term ministry, evidence should be provided that confirms they are priests in good standing and that they are fit for ministry.

Clergy who come from parts of the world where police vetting arrangements are not in existence may seek to minister in Ireland. As a consequence, the statutory route is not always available as a means of confirming that there is no adverse information known about them that would prevent them from carrying out ministry in Ireland.

- Prior to visiting Ireland, where there is an intention to engage in public ministry, all visiting priests must write seeking permission of the Church authority, giving details about the duration of the visit, the type of ministry and the location of ministry being considered. The contact details of the Church authority of the visiting priest must be provided in advance;
- Upon receipt of a request from visiting clergy to carry out ministry, the Church authority must acknowledge the same, and then make a request in writing to the visitor (S6.G Template 1) for a Celebret or confirmation of good standing (S6.G Template 3), signed by their Church authority;
- The visiting priest must be asked to complete a declaration of good standing form (S6.G Template 2);
- A vetting check must be carried out through the Garda National Vetting Bureau/AccessNI (Guidance S1.B);
- If the Church authority is satisfied that there are no concerns about the visiting religious, permission should be given in writing to the visitor, outlining the specified ministry, including its duration and location (S6.G Template 4);
- A copy of this permission (S6.G Template 4) should be forwarded to the parish priest or local superior of the visitor, and also to the parish priest or local superior of the location of the ministry outlined in the letter;
- A copy of the permission (S6.G Template 4) should be stored in the offices of the Church authority, in line with confidentiality and storage of information (**Appendix B**).

To review the full guidance on this topic which includes

- Procedures to be followed by visiting clergy from outside Ireland wishing to minister at a one-off event
- Procedures for visiting persons in any form of consecrated life within and outside Ireland
- Procedures for seminarians and pastoral students undertaking pastoral placements as part of their formation.

Please see the guidance at <https://www.safeguarding.ie/visiting-priests-religious>

# Director of Safeguarding - NBSCCCI Job Advertisement

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) wishes to appoint a Director of Safeguarding.

## Background

The NBSCCCI assists in the development of best practice policies, procedures and practice in child safeguarding and offers advice in this area to all Church authorities, both dioceses and religious organisations. In addition, it provides relevant and extensive training in matters concerned with child safeguarding.

## Scope of the Role/Key duties and responsibilities

Reporting to the CEO, the key duties and responsibilities of the role of Director of Safeguarding include:

- Offer case management advice based on best practice, in line with civil and canon law requirements and Church policy and guidance, to Church Authorities and Safeguarding personnel.
- With the CEO and Director of Training and Support, assist in the design, implementation and evaluation of standards, policy and guidance for all aspects of safeguarding children in the Catholic Church in Ireland.
- With the Director of Training and Support, assist with implementing new guidance through the provision of training and support to Church personnel.
- Be responsible for the development of a suitable methodology for reviews of safeguarding practice in Church bodies, which will include casework assessments and evaluation of practice against the Church's standards.

- Collate and analyse information in relation to allegations and the implementation of safeguarding policies across the Church for the NBSCCCI's annual report.
- Provide support to designated personnel in member Church bodies in the delivery of high quality safeguarding children practice.
- Work with other members of the team to develop and maintain the necessary attitudes, skills and knowledge across the Catholic Church in Ireland to keep children safe.
- Assist the CEO in working with State agencies to ensure that Church policy and guidance is in line with national legislation and requirements.
- Develop evaluation tools and report annually to the Board of Directors of the NBSCCCI on practice issues to ensure improvements and advancement of the Church's safeguarding policies and practice.

The successful candidate will be located in the current offices of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland, New House, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.

To apply, please submit your CV and Cover Letter (maximum one page) outlining how your motivation, experience and skills fit the role for the attention of the CEO of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church and e-mail to [admin@safeguarding.ie](mailto:admin@safeguarding.ie).

Closing date for receipt of applications: 4.00 pm on Friday 4 April 2025.

## What does “Trauma Informed” mean?

Across Northern Ireland the SBNI (Safeguarding Board of Northern Ireland) have been working to support the development of Trauma Informed systems across the sectors of Health, Social Care, Education, Justice & Community and Voluntary member agencies.

This ongoing work has been part of their strategic plan since 2022 and will continue through 2025 and into 2026. The work is being taken forward by their Trauma Informed practice committee (TIP)

A trauma informed approach is a way of increasing the understanding of trauma and its impact through supporting the development of skills and knowledge throughout the workforce.

On the SBNI website you will find a plethora of resources that highlight the benefits of being trauma informed.

<https://www.safeguardingni.org/resources>

In the NBSCCCI we consider ourselves fortunate to have been invited to attend some of their workshops on trauma informed practices.

The SBNI conference, "Systems to Support our People," brought together 158 dedicated professionals and experts to emphasize the importance of integrating trauma informed services across all relevant organisations in Northern Ireland. Through the conference we were reminded of the ripple effect of trauma through not just the individual but also families, communities, and society.

Real life experiences celebrating the positive experience of embedding trauma informed practices in organisations were shared which showed not only the practical benefits to those using services but also to the personnel working/ volunteering in services.

The NBSCCCI is committed to supporting the Church to realise the benefits of being trauma informed so please stay tuned to any training developments in this area by keeping an eye on our events page [National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland - Events](#)

## Ending Violence against Women and Girls Conference – It’s In Your Hands

Armagh City, Banbridge, and Craigavon Borough Council have advised us that they are hosting a free conference as part of their ongoing campaign to end violence against women and girls. This event aims to bring together experts, advocates, and local organisations to raise awareness and drive meaningful action in the fight against violence towards women and girls.

Violence against women and girls is a very serious challenge in our society. It is a problem that is hidden in plain sight and every day we see how it is affecting the lives of women and girls, wherever they learn, live, and work.

To find out more and book your place for this free event on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March please go to

<https://evawgconference2025.eventbrite.co.uk>



## Upcoming Training Events

**15/05/2025 in Maynooth: 10:00 – 13:00 DATA Protection-** in order to support Church Authorities to build or review Data Protection and Retention policies in line with up to date legislation and best practice we have sourced a training that looks at building or reviewing your policies. Laura Fannin will deliver the training. Laura is a partner in the Commercial & Business team at Hayes Solicitors.

The training day focuses on understanding

- DATA sharing and retention principles with specific emphasis on the Church
- To provide information on complying with best practice in the sharing, storage and protection of data and sensitive data.
- To emphasis best practice in the destruction of data, including policies on period of retention for particular classes of information.
- Consequences of noncompliance with data protection
- Data access rights

This day is for Church authorities, DLPs, leaders and those involved in the creation, review and updating of DATA protection policies and procedures.

## Head to Heart - Child Safeguarding for formation Of Permanent Deacons

On a cool spring evening a couple of weeks ago we saw the final module of a three-year piece of work on child safeguarding with the Permanent Diaconate delivered. Ten topics, including children's rights, impacts of abuse, boundaries in safeguarding and spiritual healing, to name but a few, were presented in three modules to all twenty-seven Deacons across the last three years of their formation.

The aim of this Head to Heart program is to equip the Deacons with the necessary knowledge and skills to respond to any child safeguarding challenges they may face in their ministry as well as enabling them to uphold best safeguarding practice in the Catholic Church in Ireland. We are delighted to be a part of the learning through formation and look forward to continuing and building on this valuable program. In the words of one participant:

*"The most important lesson I have learned is how essential it is for us to give this subject the time it deserves, because behind all the words and slides, there are real people who have lived through, or are still living through, the devastating effects of abuse."*

## Training Returns

Training returns are now required for the last twelve months. The NBSCCCI report on training across the country through our Annual report with the reporting period from 1<sup>st</sup> of April to the 31<sup>st</sup> of March each year. The 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 NBSCCCI website.

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

Trainers can log their training by:

- Using the trainers' login button on [www.safeguarding.ie](http://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](mailto:acunningham@safeguarding.ie)

## Annual Self Audit

In the last Newsletter we reminded all that the self-audit provides an opportunity for a Church authority to review what is working well and what needs to improve in child safeguarding within the Church body. For those who have ministry with children or are managing cases the annual self-audits for 2024 should be completed by the 31<sup>st</sup> of March. You are required to inform ourselves in the NBSCCCI of its completion by the end of March 2025. This is an important process as we comment on the numbers of self-audits completed each year in our annual report.

Those Church Bodies who were previously exempt and who have been notified of a complaint against a deceased member by An Garda Síochána or Tusla remain exempt, as they are not currently managing cases. Managing Cases in this context refers to managing a current case in respect of a respondent who is alive.

If you have received confirmation from the NBSCCCI that you are exempt from the self-audit process and you believe this is still the case there is no need to send in a report to the NBSCCCI. If you are unsure, please contact [imeldaashe@safeguarding.ie](mailto:imeldaashe@safeguarding.ie) to check whether a self-audit for your Church body is required.

## 'Unreconciled' a Play written by Jay Sefton & Mark Basquill:

### Performed by Jay Sefton

Unreconciled is the true story of an adolescent actor cast as Jesus in a school play directed by a parish priest. The story chronicles a survivor's journey as he confronts his past, navigates a victims' reparations programme set up by the Catholic Church, and discovers the courage to use his voice. Through the 80-minute piece described as poignant and at times humorous the writers and actors explore family, place and the meaning of reconciliation. Jay has advised us that they will be performing in Belfast October 17, 18, and 19 for the opening weekend of the Belfast International Arts Festival but keep an eye on their website here for any planned dates across the country <https://www.unreconciledtheplay.com/>

# Truth Recovery Independent Panel: Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses, and their related pathways and practices.

The Truth Recovery Independent Panel, appointed by the Executive Office, is carrying out an independent investigation into Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses and their pathways and practices, including the adoption and care systems, as well as private nursing homes and the cross-border movement of children. The Panel's report and findings will help inform the future statutory Public Inquiry.

The Panel would like to hear from:

- Anyone who spent time in any of these institutions or who has been directly impacted by them (such as children now adult adoptees whose mothers were in these institutions).
- Anyone who worked or volunteered in the institutions,
- Members of the religious orders or the clergy who may have been involved in the running of the institutions or advised parishioners about the institutions or had knowledge of how they operated.
- Anyone who lived in close proximity to the institutions and can share any information, knowledge or memories about their practices.

We are keen to gather as many accounts as possible. We have an experienced testimony team, and excellent support is available at all stages. You can choose where you wish to give testimony – this can be at your home, at our offices in Belfast or any location where you feel comfortable. If you prefer, you can provide your testimony online or in written form. The process is confidential, and your privacy and consent are central to everything we do.

Testimony is vital to the process of understanding how institutions operated, what it was like for what it was like for those who passed through them, and the impact on lives since.

Lived experiences of those who spent time in the institutions and those who worked or volunteered in them, hold the key to what really happened and we are keen to ensure a range of voices are heard. We also face challenges with archival records which are incomplete and in the case of some private nursing homes (where some unmarried women were sent to give birth), do not exist at all. We rely on testimonies to help us to build as complete and wide ranging a picture as possible.

If you would like to give testimony or if you are unsure if your experience or knowledge is useful to the Panel, please contact the Testimony Team by Thursday 1 May 2025. We know some people may feel their experience is not important or relevant but please contact the team as all experiences, no matter how small, will help.

The Testimony Team can be contacted at:

Phone: 028 9052 0263

Email: [testimony@independentpanel.org.uk](mailto:testimony@independentpanel.org.uk)

Or

By writing to:

Truth Recovery Independent Panel

4th Floor

Equality House

7-9 Shaftesbury Square

BT2 7DB

Further information about the work of the Truth Recovery Independent Panel and a full list of the institutions we are investigating can be found at:

[www.independentpanel.truthrecoveryni.co.uk](http://www.independentpanel.truthrecoveryni.co.uk)



## NBSCCCI's Biannual Conference

We are delighted to confirm that NBSCCCI's child safeguarding conference for 2025 will take place in the Sheraton Hotel, Athlone, Co. Westmeath across the 3rd, 4th and 5th of September. The event will commence at 2pm on Wednesday the 3rd with an opening address moving into an afternoon of presentations before Mass in St. Peter & Pauls Church, Forthill House, the Batteries, Athlone (a four minute walk from the hotel) The first day will close with dinner at 7pm.

A full day's conference will take place the following day, **Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> of September with an informal dinner in the evening.**

The conference will conclude following lunch on **Friday 5<sup>th</sup> of September**

The theme of the Conference is *"Towards a restorative and transitional justice model of engaging with victims and survivors in the Catholic Church in Ireland"*

Further details of the Conference (Agenda, Key Note Speakers, fees to attend) along with details of how to book your place to attend, will be sent to you in due course.

In the meantime, on your behalf, we have reserved an allocation of bedrooms for the nights of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of September:

- 135 Euro for a single room B/B per night

These rooms are available for you to book *on a first come – first served basis.*

If you wish to book/pay for a room and to avail of the special rates above, please contact the Sheraton Hotel directly and state you are attending the Conference. There is also a range of Bed and Breakfasts close by and the hotel can give you details of these. The National Board is not in a position to reserve any rooms on your behalf.

[Sheraton Athlone Hotel - 4-Star Stay Near River Shannon With Spa](#)

Tel: +353 90-6451000 E-mail: [info@sheratonathlonehotel.com](mailto:info@sheratonathlonehotel.com)

Address: Gleeson Street, Athlone, Co. Westmeath,

### **Contact Details**

**National Office for**

**Safeguarding**

**Children:**

**New House,**

**St Patrick's College**

**Maynooth, Co.**

**Kildare**

**T: 01 505 3124**

**[admin@safeguarding.ie](mailto:admin@safeguarding.ie)**