

## **Overview Report – 6<sup>th</sup> Tranche of Reviews & 1<sup>st</sup> Tranche of Reviews into Small Female Congregations**

Overview of the Safeguarding Practice from 6<sup>th</sup> Tranche of Reviews conducted in the Religious Congregations of: The Union of Presentation Sisters, Vincentian Fathers, Redemptorists, Sisters of St Louis, Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, The Pallottines, St Joseph's Missionary Society (Mill Hill) and The Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers); and from the 1<sup>st</sup> Tranche of small Female Congregations of : Notre Dame des Missions; Medical Missionaries of Mary; Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa; Faithful Companions of Jesus; Missionary Sisters of St Columban; Adoration Sisters; Ursulines of Jesus; Sisters of Charity of Jesus of Mary; Sisters of Marie Reparatrice; and the Daughters of the Heart of Mary.

October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2014

In May 2014, the fieldwork began into reviews of safeguarding practice of 5 male religious congregations and 13 female religious congregations. The 5 male religious and 3 of the female Religious were assessed against the Catholic Church's 7 Safeguarding Standards. The remaining 10 female religious, due to their limited ministry with children, aging profile and absence of allegations relating to sexual abuse of children were assessed against a different framework, proportionate to the degree of ministry they hold. The Terms of Reference for both sets of reviews are appended to the individual reports.

The purpose of the full reviews is to ensure compliance against the Church's safeguarding Standards, approved and adopted in 2009, with particular reference to the management of safeguarding allegations. Where there were allegations of sexual abuse, all cases files were examined; in addition, at the request of the Church Authority allegations of other forms of abuse, physical and emotional were also examined. The Terms of Reference are clear in stating that in terms of allegations that the concentration is on current risk, in other words the reviewers read files relating to living Priests/Brothers/Sisters. Where the reviewers referenced Priests, or Brothers or Sisters who were deceased, it is because the review of those cases merited comment in terms of future safeguarding practice.

Of note in these tranches of Reviews are the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, who underwent a full review assessed against the 7 Standards. While this Congregation has not had any allegations of abuse, they ran mother and baby homes which are currently the subject of a State review in the Republic of Ireland. It was deemed appropriate by the NBSCCCI therefore, in spite of their limited ministry and absence of any allegation, that a full review was required. It should however be noted that the NBSCCCI review did not review the actual mother and baby homes as they closed during 1960s, and therefore application of the 7 Standards cannot be assessed retrospectively.

Also included are reviews of the policy and procedures documents and other supporting written evidence maintained by the Congregations including notifications to the civil

authorities, advice offered on case management issues and contact with survivors of abuse. In all cases contact was also made by the reviewers with the civil authority agencies to ensure that notifications had been made and for their critique of the relationship between the Congregation/Society and the statutory body in working together in the interests of safeguarding children.

All reports have been checked for factual accuracy, have been reviewed by NBSCCCI lawyer and have been scrutinized by an independent Reference Group, made up of Dr Helen Buckley, TCD; Mr. Paul Harrison, HSE and Mr. John Toner, independent consultant and chair of Safeguarding Trust Boards in Northern Ireland. This process ensures that all comments contained in the report are based on evidence and represents a fair assessment of the fieldwork findings. In other words it is in place to ensure the NBSCCCI conducts the reviews properly.

As with all other reviews, the process was initiated through the signing of a data processing deed which allowed the exchange of information with the NBSCCCI. The review process involved fieldwork conducted by reviewers employed by NBSCCCI and this fieldwork took place over a 1/2/3 day period, as required, between May 2014 and September 2014.

The Reviews involved a time period from 1st January 1975 to the period of the Review.

**Key Findings of the Reviews** – This can be divided into two parts – a) findings from the full reviews which were assessed against the 7 standards and b) the shorter reviews of female religious where there is limited or no ministry with children and no allegations of sexual abuse in Ireland.

In relation to a) the following themes emerged:

- There have been 121 allegations made against 54 Priests, Brothers or Sisters.
- There have been 2 criminal convictions.
- Previous timeframes for reporting to the civil authorities in relation to allegations against priests/brothers/sisters up until 2009 is variable; this has improved considerably since the introduction of the “Safeguarding Children, Standards and Guidance”.
- A number of the priests were in ministry abroad and allegations were made from both children in Ireland and in the missionary countries, in which they ministered. Practice in terms of managing those situations varied, but increasingly is dealt with by returning the accused priest to Ireland and being placed under restrictions in houses in Ireland. Where allegations have been made abroad it is rare for the complainant to pursue any action in relation to criminal or civil investigations. In these instances the Church inquiries are critical in establishing if there is a semblance of truth to the allegation and in the management of risk.

- Management plans relating to accused Priests and Brothers and Sisters have improved significantly over time, though there is still room for improvement, in terms of clarity of roles, review of restrictions, and sharing of information.
- Support for complainants continues to be inconsistent. Contact in many instances was not made directly by the Congregation and the opportunity for pastoral support was missed. This however is an improving picture and the reviewers highlighted instances of compassionate meaningful responses to survivors.
- Adherence to other aspects of the 7 Standards was less well developed in many Congregations. Many have limited ministry with children in Ireland today therefore the applicability of all criteria was limited. Recommendations for improvement where relevant has been made.

Order/Congregation	Numbers of Priests/Brothers	Numbers of allegations (sexual, physical and emotional)	Numbers convicted
Mill Hill Fathers	8	13	0
Pallottines	9	21	0
Redemptorists	13	24	0
Missionaries of Africa	2	10	2
Vincentians	13	42	0
Presentation Sisters	2	2	0
Sisters of St Louis	4	5	0
FCJ	2	2	0
Notre Dames des Missions	1	2	0
Total	54	121	2

In terms of b) the following issues emerged:

- Very aging profile and limited ministry through their congregation with children
- Where ministry with children is in place, the policy and procedures of the relevant Diocese/service provided was followed.
- Strong sense of commitment to working positively with the National Board, in spite of their limited ministries.

A series of recommendations have been made within each report and there is an expectation that these will be developed into plans of action. NBSCCCI will request an update on progress of implementation of recommendations in 9 months.

Finally it is important that complainants come forward if there are still unreported allegations of abuse; NBSCCCI encourages reporting to the Diocese/Religious Order and to the civil authorities.

NBSCCCI also would encourage anyone who has suffered abuse to contact *Towards Healing*, Counselling and Support Service for survivors of Clerical and Religious Congregations abuse, which is totally independent although funded by the Catholic Church.

Contact details are:

*Towards Healing* - Click to visit the website : [www.towardshealing.ie](http://www.towardshealing.ie)

Free phone 1800303416 (Republic of Ireland) Free phone 0800 0963315 (Northern Ireland)



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

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