

Overview Report

Overview of Safeguarding Practice Arising From Twenty Child Safeguarding Reviews, including 3 male Orders and 17 female Congregations.

The National Board has examined the child safeguarding practice of almost all Religious Congregations and Orders in Ireland. The tranche who are making their reports public today are the second last tranche of reviews under the current methodologies. Amongst this group there are 3 male Religious Orders and 17 female Congregations.

The approach to these reviews, which is now well established, began in July 2015 with the signing of a data protection deed which allowed the National Board access to all data held by the Religious Orders and Congregations. An assessment of their past and present ministry with children was established and this along with evidence of allegations, dictated the type of review methodology that was employed. 7 independent reviewers, who are now experienced in conducting child safeguarding reviews for the Catholic Church in Ireland engaged with the Congregation/Order to undertake fieldwork, examine case files, engage with those in the safeguarding structure and undertake a critique of the policies and procedures.

Those that were assessed against the Church's 7 safeguarding standards included those who have had substantial and current public ministry with children and who have had allegations against their members. These 3 Orders/Congregations are:

1. The Legionaries of Christ
2. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate
3. The Mercy Sisters.

The remaining 17 Orders and Congregations have limited if any ministry with children and/or have not received allegations of child sexual abuse against their members. One Congregation received an allegation of emotional abuse. These are:

1. Benedictine Monks Rostrevor
2. Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart
3. Dominican Nuns of St Catherine of Siena in Drogheda
4. La Sainte Union Sisters
5. Little Sisters of the Assumption
6. Little Sisters of the Poor
7. Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit
8. Our Lady of the Cenacle Sisters
9. Redemptoristines (Order of the Most Holy Redeemer)

10. Religious of Jesus and Mary Sisters
11. Salesian Sisters
12. Sisters of Perpetual Adoration
13. Sisters of Sr. Claire
14. Sisters of St Marie Madeleine Postel
15. Sisters of the Holy Family of Emile Rodat
16. St Joseph of Annecy Sisters
17. Ursulines of the Irish Union Sisters

The Terms of Reference for each type of review is attached to each congregations review report and can be read by following the link below;

<http://www.safeguarding.ie/review-terms-of-reference/>

The purpose of the full reviews is to ensure compliance against the Church's safeguarding standards, approved and adopted in 2009, *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland*, 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, the concentration is on current risk, in other words the reviewers read files relating to living priests/brothers/sisters. There was also a small sample of either former or deceased member's case files examined, because the review of those cases merited comment in terms of future safeguarding practice.

The small group of 3 Religious Orders/Congregations had significant ministry with children, and continues to do so, either through parish ministry, education, counselling or social services. The historical context of all 3 Orders/Congregations has been referenced in the early section of the reports; however, given that the focus of the National Board's reviews is on current risk, their past has not been labored. The history of all three Orders/Congregation can be accessed through public documents. Each Order/Congregation has had significant challenges to address from the past and it is reassuring to the National Board to note the positive strides they have made in ensuring that the environments within which they currently work have good safeguards for children. The management of allegations in all the 3 Orders/Congregations has increasingly and significantly improved, and there is strong evidence of their commitment to reporting allegations to the civil authorities and to managing risk.

For the larger number Congregations, mostly female in nature, their ministry with children is extremely limited. None of them have received allegations of sexual abuse, though there was a concern of emotional abuse reported in one Congregation. The majority of the female Congregations has an aging profile and is decreasing in numbers. A shorter review of their situation including policy, procedures and practice is proportionate to their ministry. Many

of these Congregations have not had contact with the civil authority agencies. The one male Order reviewed under the shorter framework also has limited ministry with children and has not received any allegations against any of its members.

All reports have been checked for factual accuracy, have been reviewed by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland's (NBSCCCI) lawyer and have been scrutinized by an independent Reference Group, made up of Dr. Helen Buckley, TCD, Paul Harrison, TUSLA and John Toner, independent consultant and chair of SBNI Safeguarding Panels 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.

The reviews related to complaints reported from 1st January 1975 to the period of the review.

Key Findings of the Reviews

These can be divided into two parts – a) findings from the full reviews of 3 full reviews against the 7 standards (2 male and 1 female Congregation) and b) the shorter reviews of 16 female religious and 1 male Order where there is limited or no ministry with children and no reported allegations of sexual abuse of minors in Ireland.

In relation to a) - findings over 3 large Order/Congregational reviews - the following emerged:

- In the aggregate there have been 53 allegations made against 44 priests, brothers or sisters.
- In the aggregate there have been no criminal convictions.
- Allegations relate to the period between 1941 and 2009.
- All three Orders/Congregations have had substantial ministry with children previously through parish ministry and Institutional Care and Education.
- All three Orders have current ministry with children.
- The 3 Orders have good liaison with the civil authority agencies who regularly advise on the management of risk.
- Increasing and significant improvements in reporting allegations to the civil authority agencies have been noted, with no outstanding cases requiring reporting action by the Orders/Congregations.
- There has been considerable commitment of resources in all aspects of child safeguarding across these three Orders/Congregations; in prevention and in responding to allegations.

- Case files were well maintained, with good evidence of action taken recorded on file.
- In general good adherence to other aspects of the 7 standards. A good awareness of the need to maintain boundaries while working for other organisations outside the Church.
- The Board is satisfied that child safeguarding is an engrained component of the religious life and child related activities of these Orders/Congregation.

| Order/ Congregation | Numbers of Priests/Brothers | Numbers of allegations, suspicions and concerns (sexual, physical and emotional) | Numbers convicted |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--------------------------|
| Legion of Christ | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| Oblates of Mary Immaculate | 13 | 18 | 0 |
| Mercy Sisters | 17 | 31 | 0 |
| Total | 44 | 53 | 0 |

In terms of b) – smaller reviews - the following issues emerged:

- A large number of female Congregations, who are increasing in age profile, but declining in numbers.
- One male Orders with no allegations and limited ministry with children.
- One female Congregation with an allegation of emotional abuse, which has been appropriately dealt with.
- Members who minister outside these congregations follow the policy and procedures of the diocese/service in which they work.
- There is a strong sense of commitment to working positively with the National Board in spite of the reduced relevance of their ministries from a child safeguarding perspective.

Conclusion

While some of the Orders/Congregations have had significant ministry with children, this is now reduced. A review of current practice shows considerable improvement in responding to allegations and to responding to those who come forward.

The history is well documented elsewhere for the three large Orders/Congregations.

There has been a concerted effort to put in place good standards of practice across all aspects of child safeguarding. There is evidence of very good commitment of the part of the Religious Leaders to ensure prompt reporting to the civil authorities and to working co-operatively with these authorities.

There has been significant time and energy spent on developing policies and procedures which meet the standards set out in “Safeguarding Children, Standards and Guidance for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2009”, with regular reviews to ensure compliance with national legislation and guidance.

Overall the reviews demonstrate practice in line with the Church’s safeguarding standards, with no concerns about the current management of cases.

Message from NBSCCCI

It is important that complainants come forward if there are still unreported allegations of abuse. The National Board 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

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

Monday - Thursday 11am - 8pm

Friday - 11 am - 6 pm

Towards Peace- Spiritual support for survivors of abuse by Catholic Church personnel in Ireland

Mrs Una Allen, Director

Mrs. Colleen Brown, Administration and Development Coordinator

Phone: + 353 (0) 1 5053028

Mobile: + 353 (0) 86 7710533

Monday – Thursday: 10am – 5pm

Email: towardspeace@iecon.ie

Website: www.towardspeace.ie