

Overview Report

Overview of Safeguarding Practice Arising from Four Child Safeguarding Reviews.

The final four Child Safeguarding Reviews, assessed against the Church's 2009 *Safeguarding Children Standards* were conducted in 2015/6, but publication of the resulting Review Reports was deferred due to the statutory Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry (HIA) taking place in Northern Ireland. The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) agreed not to release the four reports back to the religious orders in question until the HIA had reported.

The four Church Bodies are:

- Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (De La Salle Brothers)
- Order of Canons Regular of Prémontré (Norbertines)
- Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
- Sisters of Nazareth (Irish Region)

Information about the four Orders is already in the public domain through the publication of the HIA Report in January 2017. The Review Reports produced by the NBSCCCI do not seek to replicate or reference the information or findings contained within the HIA Report. They are instead assessments of practice at the time of each review against the Church's Child Safeguarding Standards.

Three of the four reports highlight concerns relating to weak or, on occasion, poor practice which require urgent corrective action. In the three Church bodies that those reports cover - the De La Salle Brothers, Norbertines and Nazareth Sisters - the records relied on were not well maintained, making the work of the reviewers difficult.

However, all four Church bodies, have now adopted the revised *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*; and three have signed a memorandum of understanding with the NBSCCCI, which commits them to complying with the Church's policy and standards; while the fourth, Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, is in process of doing so.

The Terms of Reference for each review is attached to each congregation's review report, and can also be consulted in the links posted separately in addition to this post.

Key Findings of the Reviews

- The two congregation that amalgamated to create Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd were previously involved in the operation of 'Magdalene Laundries', but the new congregation no longer runs services for children in Ireland. Some Sisters do still minister with children in parishes, or are engaged with other organizations that work with children. The Our Lady of Charity of The Good Shepherd congregation has demonstrated a commitment to developing their child safeguarding policy and practice. Their compliance with the Church's 2009 safeguarding standards was, on the whole, good. The congregation is in the process of signing a memorandum of understanding with the NBSCCCI committing them to compliance with *Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*.
- The Norbertines and the Nazareth Sisters have, as Church bodies, effectively ceased ministry with children. Some of their members continue to have public ministry, but in all cases this ministry is attached to a diocese where they fall under the safeguarding policies and procedures of that Church body.
- There are common themes across the De La Salle Brothers, the Norbertines and the Nazareth Sisters, all of which at one time had significant ministry with children, either through institutional care, adoption, education or parish ministry:
 - The case management records were poor or non-existent.
 - Responses to allegations of abuse were driven by legal advisors and lacked any pastoral approach.
 - There were delays in reporting allegations to the statutory agencies – police and child protection - and in some cases reports were not made.
 - There were opportunities missed to safeguard children particularly in the case of Brendan Smyth – this is already well documented in other public reports – as evidenced in the documentation read by the NBSCCCI's reviewers.
 - Where ministry with children was still active during the period of review, there was an absence of any commitment to understanding or adopting good child safeguarding practice (Norbertines).

- Through their participation in the review process, two of the Orders have engaged fully with the NBSCCCI; have put in place good structures; and have fully embraced *Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016* (Nazareth Sisters and De La Salle Brothers).

Allegations: Table 1

Order/ Congregation	Numbers of Priests / Brothers / Sisters	Numbers of allegations, suspicions and concerns (sexual, physical and emotional)	Numbers convicted
De La Salle	76	213 (all forms of abuse)	3
Norbertines	4	Not Known (sexual abuse)	2
Good Shepherd	5	5 (physical and emotional)	0
Nazareth Sisters	61	294 (physical and emotional abuse)	0
Total	146	512	5

The figures highlighted in the table above are not a summary of all allegations, as that number is unknown to the congregations, or is not available from the material provided by them to the NBSCCCI. The records in three of the four Orders (De La Salle Brothers, Nazareth Sisters and Norbertines) were incomplete, and therefore did not contain full information regarding complaints received, either directly by them, through their legal representatives, or through the statutory authorities.

A large number of the allegations related to three of the four Orders (Nazareth Sisters, De La Salle Brothers and Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd) pertain to physical and emotional abuse within an institutional setting.

In two of the four Orders (De La Salle Brothers and Norbertines) the majority of allegations related to sexual abuse, even if another type of abuse was also alleged.

Conclusion

The final four reviews cannot be categorized by a common commitment to following the child safeguarding standards at the time of the review. At one time, all four congregations had significant ministry with children, through institutional care, the provision of education, or parish ministry. Their histories are well documented in the HIA Report. For three of the four orders, (the De La Salle Brothers, the Norbertines and the Nazareth Sisters) their performance in the recent past does not demonstrate any real change from their historical behaviour, in terms of ensuring good safeguarding practice or putting in place effective pastoral responses to complainants who have made allegations of abuse.

However, in the last year, two of these Orders, (De La Salle Brothers and Nazareth Sisters) have engaged more fully with the NBSCCCI to develop improved safeguarding structures; and they have participated in significant training to assist with improving their practices, including responding to survivors of abuse. The third congregation (Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd) has recently put forward a member of staff to become a Trainer within their congregation, which demonstrates a willingness to create a better understanding of child safeguarding among their communities.

The NBSCCCI will work with all four congregations to improve practice and to support them in implementing the recommendations made during their reviews.

Message from NBSCCCI

It is important that complainants come forward if they have allegations of abuse that are still unreported. The NBSCCCI encourages reporting to the relevant diocese or religious order, and also to the statutory authorities – police and child protection.

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 of, 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