



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

Annual Report 2020



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CONTENTS



Statement from the Chairperson.	5
Report of the Chief Executive Officer	7
Corporate Governance	10
Data Protection	11
Allegations Notified to the National Office between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021.	13
Initiatives Undertaken and General Advice Provided by the National Office in Response to Specific Requests from Church Authorities: 1 April 2020–31 March 2021	16
Training and Related Support	24
Operational Plan and Objectives.	33
The Board and Other Corporate Information	35

STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIRPERSON



The story of the Board's activities in the year to 31 March 2021 has been intimately bound up with the effects of the global coronavirus pandemic. I find Pope Francis' description of Covid-19 as humanity's 'Noah moment' provides a deeply inspirational reflection. Society's myth of self-sufficiency is truly exposed and an Ark awaits to carry us to a new tomorrow – if we can find our way to that Ark by the ties that unite us all. The period reviewed by this Annual Report was a challenging one in terms of discerning the contours and shape of the new reality the National Board would need to work within. It is within that context that a strategic review is being undertaken within the Church in Ireland. This is very welcome by the Board and I will comment further on this later.

In reading this report, I hope that you will form a deeper sense of the value of our prized asset – our National Office staff. The directors are most grateful to them for their singular and unique dedication to the Church's ministry in safeguarding our young people. The changed circumstances and environment in which our ministry needed to be carried out throughout the last year, including those of necessary reduced working hours on reduced salaries, has been truly exemplary. We thank them for their willing adaptability and the responses they developed in the face of new and increased needs. Examples are clearly visible throughout this report. I cite just two. In the early pages of the section of the report dealing with 'Initiatives Undertaken and General Advice Provided by the National Office' it will be observed that there was an increase of 51 per cent in the occasion, volume and extent of requests for advice sought from us. The section of the report on 'Training and Related Support' provides extensive coverage of what was achieved in the period across the various levels of support service we provide – a notable feature

of which has been in the area of online ministry with children.

In the constitutional role assigned to us by our Sponsoring Bodies, ours is a moral authority. Insofar as we have any power and influence, it is the power of service – the service we offer to all our constituent members throughout the dioceses and religious congregations and to all members of the Church throughout Ireland. We need to continually nurture this power of service.

The Board and National Office

The directors met on ten occasions in the year reviewed. In all instances these were 'virtual' meetings. Additionally, there was one joint meeting between the directors and the members of the company, held on the 8 June last, which was also the date of our Annual General Meeting – both of these meetings were also held virtually.

With the exception of Fr Martin Whelan, appointed on the 17 February last, all of the directors served throughout the year. Mr Michael Ringrose, Ms Maire Kennedy and Mr Jim O'Higgins, who retired by rotation, were unanimously re-elected at the Annual General Meeting.

I wish to thank each of the directors for their outstanding commitment and their support for the work of the Board throughout this period, a period when a greater level of involvement in the undertaking of our tasks was required. The National Office team, led with the highest dedication by Ms Teresa Devlin, our Chief Executive, has provided both the Board and the Irish Church with a peerless level of commitment, ability and quality in the provision of the services the National Board was created to provide across the whole spectrum of the safeguarding of the young within Church

STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

environments and activities. To Teresa and her small team the most sincere thanks of the Board is due.

Outlook

Last December our Sponsoring Bodies confirmed to the Board their intention to proceed early this year with a strategic review of all aspects of safeguarding and outreach to survivors of abuse in the Catholic Church in Ireland. The review will address the issue of vulnerable persons in addition to minors. The process leading to the appointment of the reviewers is on course with the hope that its outcome, with recommendations, will be available by year-end. As already mentioned, the Board welcomes and supports this undertaking. It is very timely in the context of the reality we are experiencing.

The likelihood is that the outcome of this review process will influence future operational planning,

objective setting and, perhaps, the responsibilities and obligations of the National Board. It is hoped that the opportunity will be grasped to fully evaluate the resources, both in terms of personnel and finance needed, to address the new horizons which reality will present to further the culture of care surrounding safeguarding ministry and its outreach in building up the Church throughout Ireland. We must not put at risk any dilution in the strength and extent of our service within the community of the Church.



John B. Morgan
Chairperson
24 April 2021

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



It is almost a cliché now, but we all know that 2020 was an extraordinary year. The impact of Covid-19 on lives, relationships and work has been enormous. We have been reminded how precious life is and how much we owe to each other to keep us healthy and mentally well. So too in the National Board, we have been prompted to be mindful of the fragile nature of our own health and relationships, and that of those we work with and who serve the ministry of child safeguarding in the Church. In the immediate panic of the onslaught of Covid-19, we decamped to our homes, uncertain of when we might meet to pick up where we left off with our plans, training, advice and support. As the days rolled into weeks and then months – and now a full year later – we have become very skilled at remote working.

However, we have lost a great deal; we have lost colleagues and friends in the Church who succumbed to the virus; we have lost an ability to meet in person, to soak up the atmosphere of meetings and conversations; and we have lost opportunities to engage with children. By being adaptable, we have adjusted to new ways of doing things, embracing technology and opportunities to develop new and creative ways of working and recognising that a blended approach (in person and through electronic communications) will be our future modus operandi.

As we in the National Office review our work in the year April 2020 to the end of March 2021, we are proud that we have managed to increase our outputs in spite of the difficulties of remote working on reduced hours. This could not have been achieved without the support of the National Board's Chairperson, the directors and the committed staff of the National Office. It would be wrong not to acknowledge the staff and the members of the National Case Management Committee (NCMC) who have demonstrated great commitment, both personally and financially, to keep the services

going. As for many remote workers across the country, there have been significant challenges, including dealing with the emotional impacts of remote and isolating working and managing caring responsibilities to small children or dependent relatives, whilst maintaining a very high output of work on behalf of the National Board. Long term it would be difficult to maintain the current level of outputs on reduced hours and salaries and therefore adjustments in terms of expectations of staff workload and availability will need to be made in 2021.

This was a significant year in terms of corporate responsibilities. Guidance from the Charities Regulator required the development or adoption of new or revised procedures, including data protection procedures, the Charities Governance Code, risk register and financial and HR procedures. In spite of being a very small company, the National Board must be assiduous in maintaining 'best practice' through its compliance with all relevant governance regulations and procedures. We also appointed new statutory auditors during 2020, and have undergone a very thorough financial audit. The Statutory Auditor's Report and Accounts will be available after the 2021 Annual General Meeting.

We also developed a new annual Operational Plan, a first three-year Communications Plan and an annual Training Plan. The outworking of each of those plans is now underway and more details will be provided within the body of this report.

Day-to-day activity, particularly in relation to offering advice and providing training, reached new increased levels. This report will track the monthly demands for both these services and provide information on the types of advice and training offered. It seems somewhat paradoxical that the demand for advice and training increased,

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

given that, for the most part, Church buildings were closed and ministry with children was very limited.

The National Board has no role in the actual delivery of ministry to children. However, this last year has provided a real opportunity for Church bodies to consider engaging in online ministry with children and young people, using safe electronic platforms. We are acutely aware that children are much more technologically ‘savvy’ than adults, and increasingly children communicate more confidently online. Therefore, wanting to support those Church personnel who took the opportunity to communicate with children online, we developed our ‘Online Ministry with Children’ training programme. The goal of this training is to ensure that Church bodies are aware of all the necessary safeguards to be put in place, as well as how to assess and manage the additional risks of using this form of communication. The demand for it has been very solid, from both dioceses and religious congregations.

Unfortunately, our programme of safeguarding reviews has not proceeded as planned. The inability of reviewers to travel and examine case management files has meant that only those reviews which were already in progress when Covid-19 became an issue could be completed and full reports given to the relevant commissioning Church authorities. Two reviews were conducted and reported on during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. The National Board has indicated its willingness to proceed with child safeguarding reviews in 2021, which examine compliance with Standards 1, 5, 6 and 7, which can be reviewed using electronic communication. Reviews of case management – Standards 2, 3 and 4 – will have to wait until the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions when reviewers will be able to safely undertake site visits to read confidential, sensitive case management records.

In relation to reviewing case management, it was noteworthy that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) produced guidance in July 2020 in the form of the *Vademecum* (or *aide-mémoire*) on *Certain Points of Procedure in Treating Cases of Sexual Abuse of Minors Committed by Clerics*. The National

Board critiqued this document to ensure that its own guidance is in line with the requirements of the Holy See. The *Vademecum* document did not introduce any new developments in canon law – that had been done through the Apostolic Letter *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* of May 2019 – but it made clear for an international audience the steps that should be taken when an allegation of sexual abuse is made against a cleric. National Board guidance was already well developed in this area, setting out requirements in relation to reporting to statutory authorities, conducting canonical inquiries, providing a compassionate response to complainants and respondents and managing risk regarding anyone against whom an allegation had been made. To support their understanding of the *Vademecum*, the National Board offered training to the NCMC and to appropriate Church personnel.

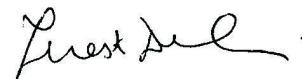
Other significant international reports which are of relevance to the work of the National Board during 2020 included: (a) a report commissioned by Pope Francis on the Holy See’s institutional knowledge and decision-making related to former Cardinal Theodore Edgar McCarrick (1930 to 2017) prepared by the Secretariat of State of the Holy See, Vatican City State (dated 10 November 2020); and (b) the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse’s (IICSA) investigation report on the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales. The National Board critiqued both reports to identify lessons that could be learned for application in the context of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Both these critiques, which we have called briefing papers, can be viewed on the National Board’s website here: <https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications>.

In 2020, we had to abandon our plans to run a National Conference on ‘The Theology of Safeguarding’. It is our current hope that we will host this conference in some acceptable and meaningful manner later in 2021, or early in 2022. Our aim is to start a conversation across the Church in Ireland on why the safeguarding ministry is central and essential to what we do as a Church. To inform this conversation, we have invited a number of theologians, spiritual directors, ethicists and experts in safeguarding to share their thinking in short video

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

presentations, which we are posting monthly on the National Board's website. This initiative began in January 2021, with Father Hans Zollner SJ, from the Child Protection Centre at the Gregorian University in Rome speaking about 'What areas would a comprehensive theology of safeguarding need to address; and how can Church safeguarding personnel contribute to its development?'. In February 2021, Sr Dr Nuala Kenny, Sister of Charity, paediatrician and theologian, addressed the topic, 'How can the Catholic Church with integrity minister healing to those it has abused?'. And in March, Sr Dr Ethna Regan, Holy Faith Sister, academic and theologian, addressed the question, 'How can a theology of safeguarding encompass human rights, including children's rights?'. This series of video presentations will run until September 2021, with six other speakers sharing their responses to questions posed to them, which all together are designed to lead us into our shared discussions at the National Conference planned for later in 2021/2022.

In conclusion, the last year has been somewhat of a whirlwind, generating ill-health, physical challenges and sadness, while also creating opportunities. The National Board has kept a focus on child safeguarding in spite of the unexpected demands. We proceed with hope, and a determination that this important ministry will remain central in the Catholic Church in Ireland, offering our continued commitment to supporting best practice in child safeguarding.



TERESA DEVLIN
Chief Executive Officer
24 April 2021

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE



As part of the activities of the National Board, in the period under review, some governance procedures were amended, including the following:

- Code of Corporate Governance
- Governance Compliance Record
- Operational Plan
- Risk Register
- HR procedures ensuring supervision and appraisal of staff
- Internal financial procedures
- Complaints procedure

As a charity the National Board complies with charities regulations, and during 2020 a review was undertaken of the Compliance Record within the Code of Corporate Governance. In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, risk assessment and management of risk was considered quarterly at Board meetings. The focus of concern related to the Board's ability to deliver on the objectives set out in the Operational Plan, in light of the significant reduction in financial resources available and the consequent reduction in staff hours.

A review of the Operational Plan was conducted in January 2021 and considered how successful the National Board has been in achieving the stated objectives. A report on the review can be found at: https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate_Publications/Operational%20%20plan%202020.pdf.

Under normal circumstances, the National Board meets in person ten times per year. In 2020/21 all meetings moved online. The AGM of the Company took place on 8 June 2020, followed by an online joint meeting of the directors and members. In addition, liaison meetings between representatives of the Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI), the Irish Episcopal Conference and the National Board took place in November 2020 and in March 2021. All the meetings highlighted the continuing need to support the National Board's work in undertaking its safeguarding ministry within the Church. There was an acknowledgement of additional pressure on National Board staff due to the reduction in available working hours, which was accentuated by an increase in demand for services.



The National Board has developed very detailed data protection procedures in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Acts in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland in 2018. The remit of the National Board is on an all-island basis, therefore the directors need to ensure compliance with legislation in both jurisdictions. Generally, the legislation is the same as both are based on an EU directive; however guidance issued by the Data Commission in the Republic of Ireland and by the Information Commissioner in Northern Ireland differs. In line with the legislation the National Board appointed a data protection officer (DPO) whose role it is to ensure that all its activities are in keeping with legislation. The Board received reports, which highlighted DPO initiatives, and discussed data protection issues in May 2020, September 2020, October 2020, and again in February 2021.

Reports and Advice Issued by the Data Protection Officer

The DPO is responsible for the development of data protection procedures and practices of the National Board. In the reporting period, in addition to formal reports to the National Board, the DPO provided the following additional support:

- Conducting a data protection impact assessment (DPIA) on appropriate video conferencing software.
- Keeping staff aware of best practice initiatives following publication of advice from the Data Commissioner and Information Commissioner. This includes a review of the National Board's systems following public advice on data breaches.
- Use of video conferencing software for the NCMC.
- Use of video conferencing software for meetings of the National Board.

- Advice on proposed amendments to the review methodology in undertaking reviews of Church bodies.

Given the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the National Board has undergone a huge transition to deliver services online that would traditionally have been delivered face to face. This transition required a complete review of the National Board's data protection procedures, with particular reference to the security of sharing data online, and ensuring that the National Board's use of digital media was safe for all users.

The National Board now has in place a data protection policy which includes a data flow – this charts how information is received and the processes involved in storing, retaining and/or destroying the data; procedure on retention, storage and destruction of records; procedures on data sharing with associated data processing deeds; a privacy statement for the website; use of cookies; procedures for electronic meetings; procedures for data subject access; data breach procedure; employee data protection statement; and a procedure for conducting a data protection impact assessment.

While the National Board acts as a data controller for the work it produces, it acts as a data processor when information is shared with the National Board by another party. Legal advice has been sought and a significant portion of time has been dedicated to ensuring compliance with legislative requirements, to ensure that the correct safeguards are in place, which support information sharing with the National Board. As a processor of data, the National Board undertook a review of all notifications data held and returned it to the data controller as there was no longer a reason for the National Board to retain the data.

DATA PROTECTION

Sharing Information with the National Board

There are five services offered by the National Board that may involve sharing data. These are:

1. Monitoring reporting of allegations of child abuse in compliance with criminal and civil legislation.
2. Giving advice on case-management issues by National Office staff.
3. Advice giving by the NCMC.
4. Arranging reviews of safeguarding practice by National Board.
5. Offering assistance with case-file management.

Service number 1 above relates to: ensuring compliance with civil law reporting obligations, criminal law notifications required if someone has knowledge of a crime, and Catholic Church obligations around the notification of allegations and the management of risk. As the National Board does not have any statutory powers or statutory responsibilities, the sharing of allegation information must be done on a voluntary basis by the Church authority. In order to avoid a data breach, the Church authority, as the data controller, has to be careful what information is shared with the National Board. Personal, identifying information must be removed. Clearly this makes the role of monitoring very challenging, and the National Board has made attempts to seek statutory powers under Section 56(1) of the *Child and Family Agency Act 2013* to enable full exchange of information. This request was deemed inappropriate by Tusla, and the request was turned down. In data protection terms, therefore, the information that is shared with the National Office is minimal and includes only dates of when the allegation was made known to the Church authority; the date of the alleged abuse; the date when the report was made to the statutory authorities; the status of the respondent; and the safeguarding action taken to ensure risk to

children was minimised. As will be noted under the section on allegations in this report, this limited information does not allow the National Board to cross reference data, and confidence in statistics is diminished due to possible double reporting. It may well be that all avenues open to the National Board, currently, in legal terms, to remedy this have now been effectively exhausted.

In relation to services numbered 2, 3, 4 and 5, the National Board acts as a data processor and it has put in place a memorandum of understanding and data processing deeds specific to each service. In these situations, the data controller (Church authority) makes a request for the service from the National Board and signs a data processing deed which specifies the rationale for sharing information with the National Board. It is the data controller who determines the legal basis for the information exchange. The memorandum governing each of these services sets out the parameters of the particular service. Throughout the service relationship, the Church authority controls the data, and the National Board maintains appropriate records only as evidence of its advice and of the product of its work.

Data Destruction

In line with the National Board's data protection procedures, all allegation data shared with the National Board by Church bodies from January 2008 to 31 March 2019 has now been returned to the relevant Church authorities and removed from all electronic and hard copy record-keeping systems within the National Office. Outstanding, to be collected when travel restrictions are lifted, is data provided to the National Board by a bishop or religious leader relating to allegations about a cleric or religious from a Church body other than their own.

ALLEGATIONS NOTIFIED TO THE NATIONAL OFFICE BETWEEN 1 APRIL 2020 AND 31 MARCH 2021



The National Board constantly seeks to deliver on its assigned task of monitoring Church bodies' compliance with legislation, policy and best practice in their child safeguarding activities. However, as reported on in previous Annual Reports, the quality of information shared by Church bodies with the National Board has been negatively and significantly affected by the way in which the GDPR requirements of the EU are being interpreted.

When a diocese or religious order notifies the National Board of an allegation against a cleric

or non-ordained religious, no name or other identifying information is provided. This means that there is no way for the National Board to establish whether there is more than one allegation against any particular notified individual, or whether a complainant has alleged that more than one person has abused them. Because of the severe limitations that exist in analysing and interpreting such information, what is presented here is simply the raw data that the National Board has received in the twelve months being reported on.

Month	Diocese by number reported	Religious by number reported	Type of abuse reported by number	Male respondents by number	Female respondents by number	Location of respondents by number
April 2020	1	1	Sexual x 2	2	0	Deceased x 2
May 2020	4	0	Sexual x 3 Unknown x 1	4	0	Deceased x 4
June 2020	4	5	Sexual x 7 Emotional x 2	7	2	Deceased x 5 Out of ministry x 2 Retired x 1 In care x 1
July 2020	4	1	Sexual x 4 Unknown x 1	5	0	Deceased x 3 Retired x 1 Laicised x 1
August 2020	3	1	Sexual x 4	4	0	Deceased x 1 In ministry x 1 Out of ministry x 1 In prison x 1

ALLEGATIONS NOTIFIED TO THE NATIONAL OFFICE BETWEEN 1 APRIL 2020 AND 31 MARCH 2021

Sept 2020	2	5	Sexual x 4 Unknown x 3	7	0	Deceased x 1 Laicised x 1 Left order x 1 Out of ministry x 1 Retired x 1 In prison x 1 Person unidentified x 1
October 2020	4	0	Sexual x 3 Unknown x 1	4	0	Deceased x 2 Retired x 1 In ministry x 1
Nov 2020	2	32	Sexual x 25 Physical x 4 Boundary x 1 Unknown x 4	34	0	Deceased x 19 Left order x 5 Retired x 3 In prison x 3 In care x 1 Person unidentified x 3
Dec 2020	7	13	Sexual x 13 Unknown x 7	20	0	Deceased x 8 Laicised x 4 Retired x 2 Out of ministry x 3 Person unidentified x 3
January 2021	5	6	Sexual x 7 Physical x 3 Unknown x 1	10	1	Deceased x 7 Out of ministry x 2 Left order x 1 Person unidentified x 1
February 2021	3	6	Sexual x 7 Physical x 1 Unknown x 1	8	1	Deceased x 1 Laicised x 3 In prison x 2 Out of ministry x 1 Person unidentified x 2
March 2021	3	22	Sexual x 19 Physical x 3 Emotional x 1 Unknown x 2	24	1	Deceased x 15 In ministry x 3 Retired x 1 Left order x 1 In prison x 2 Person unidentified x 3
Total	42	92		129	5	

ALLEGATIONS NOTIFIED TO THE NATIONAL OFFICE BETWEEN 1 APRIL 2020 AND 31 MARCH 2021

A Church body does not always receive enough information when an allegation is reported to them to identify the alleged abuser, or to indicate what type of abuse was allegedly perpetrated. Some children were abused in more than one way, but to avoid double counting, only one form of abuse is listed in this table for each case notified to the National Board in the reporting year.

The total number of allegations notified to the National Board during the period under review amounts to 134 (42 relating to diocesan priests; 92 relating to members of religious orders). This demonstrates an increase in the number of allegations (116) reported to the National Board in the previous year. It is appreciated that the value of this information is extremely limited and additionally, it cannot be determined how historic the abuse allegations are.

INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN AND GENERAL ADVICE PROVIDED BY THE NATIONAL OFFICE IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC REQUESTS FROM CHURCH AUTHORITIES: 1 APRIL 2020–31 MARCH 2021



Given the extraordinary year that was 2020, it is really important to highlight the significant increase in demand for advice and support requested from the National Board. In line with difficult decisions made across the Church, the financial resources available to the National Office for the year decreased by over 40 per cent in real terms, which led to staff salaries being reduced by 20 per cent. Staff continued their work under new emotional and financial pressure, and they made themselves available in response to an increasing demand for services while increasing their outputs. This is a very creditable performance. It is not entirely clear why there was such an increase in demand; but it may have been because safeguarding personnel in some dioceses and religious orders were placed on leave. Whatever the reason, the National Board is thankful to the commitment shown by staff in the National Office who responded so generously to the need for additional supports within the Church.

The data below provides overall information on the numbers and types of requests for advice, indicating monthly trends. The National Board categorises advice to the standards set out in the 2016 *Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland*. National Board guidance, which is regularly updated, is generally sufficient to assist Church personnel with problems that arise regarding Standards 1 (Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments), Standard 5 (Training and Support), Standard 6 (Communication), and Standard 7 (Quality Assurance). It is however the case management standards, 2 (Reporting and Responding to Allegations), 3 (Care of the Complainant), and 4 (Management of the Respondent) that are more complex and require more sensitive consideration and consultation. Advice relating to case management can be offered by a member of the National Office staff, or by the NCMC (see details below).

Where there are frequent requests for advice of a similar nature, the National Board takes the opportunity to review its guidance, and it updates

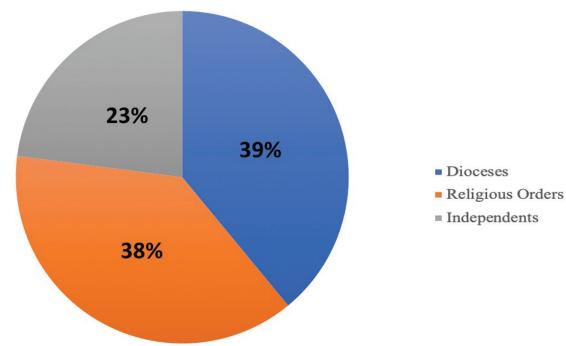
or drafts new guidance to meet the general need identified. The National Board guidance is now very extensive – running to 471 pages; however, this should be seen as a resource directory, to be accessed when necessary, and it remains in electronic form on the National Board's website to allow for ease of amendment, as required by changes in legislation, improvements in practice, etc.

The table below compares the figures for advice requested in the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, with those in the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021:

2020/21	Overall 392	Dioceses 153	Religious Orders 149	Independents 90
2019/20	Overall 260	Dioceses 177	Religious Orders 54	Independents 29
		(68%)	(21%)	(11%)

The advice figure for this year is broken down by Church body type in the chart below:

Figure 1: Advice Breakdown by Church Body



The overall increase from 260 advice requests in 2019/20 to 392 in 2020/21 represents an increase of 51 per cent, with an interesting escalation of demand from 'independents'. Independents can be complainants, statutory personnel, international safeguarding personnel or members of the public. Most often advice to independents relates to procedural or guidance matters. In itself this is important to note, particularly in relation to requests from other countries where people are aware of the

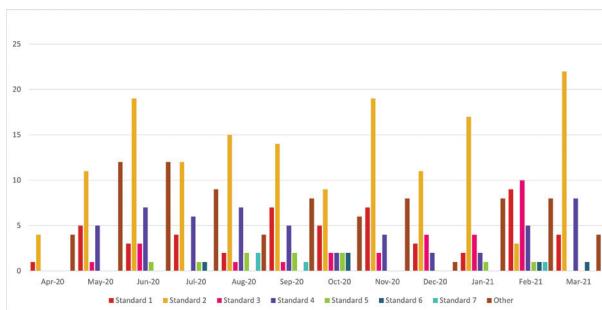
INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN AND GENERAL ADVICE PROVIDED BY THE NATIONAL OFFICE IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC REQUESTS FROM CHURCH AUTHORITIES: 1 APRIL 2020–31 MARCH 2021

developments in child safeguarding in Ireland and want to adopt guidance for application to their particular situation. Last year advice was offered to safeguarding personnel in dioceses and religious orders in Scotland, England, Australia, New Zealand, USA, South Korea, and India. Religious orders ministering in Ireland that also minister abroad have approached the National Board seeking help with the development of international policies and training. While the National Board's remit is for support to the Catholic Church in Ireland, the National Board has tried to respond positively to these initiatives, as there are many Irish missionaries ministering abroad who want to bring best practice standards into their work.

Types of Advice Offered

Figure 2 below represents the advice offered from 1 April 2020 until 31 March 2021, by month and by category. Advice not categorised under a specific Standard is denoted in the category 'Other':

Figure 2: Advice Categories by Month



There are seven safeguarding standards and these are generally grouped into those that apply to prevention (child safeguarding):

- Standard 1 – Creating and Maintaining of Safe Environments
- Standard 5 – Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe
- Standard 6 – Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

and those that apply to reporting and responding (case management):

- Standard 2 – Procedures for Responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations
- Standard 3 - Care and Support for the Complainant
- Standard 4 – Care and Management of the Respondent

Standard 7 – Quality Assuring Compliance with the Standards – applies across the board.

For ease of reading, this section is broken down under these headings.

CHILD SAFEGUARDING – STANDARDS 1, 5 AND 6

Standard 1 – Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments

The National Board has a rich store of guidance documents relating to creating and maintaining safe environments; in fact, the guidance produced under this standard is the largest set of guidance material produced by the National Board. The National Board's aim is to standardise practice so that personnel in each Church body understand all aspects of preventing abuse and keeping children safe. During 2020, as the pandemic restricted ministry with children, a number of Church bodies chose to move some of their ministries online; and it was in the area of creating safe online environments that advice was therefore sought. In addition to offering advice to individual Church personnel, the National Board decided to develop new guidance, with associated training, to ensure that those availing of this new opportunity to minister to children had considered all the risks involved and how to mitigate these to keep children safe.

The National Board received 52 requests for advice in the year where the written guidance already in place was not sufficient to respond to the specific queries that emerged during the year.

Standard 5 – Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe

The inability during 2020/21 to provide in-person safeguarding training at local level caused concern

INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN AND GENERAL ADVICE PROVIDED BY THE NATIONAL OFFICE IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC REQUESTS FROM CHURCH AUTHORITIES: 1 APRIL 2020–31 MARCH 2021

amongst some trainers. Whilst recognising that ministry with children was limited – if it happened at all – Church trainers were keen to keep up the momentum of delivering training so that those engaged in ministry with children would maintain their interest in ensuring that children would be cared for in safe environments, whether in-person and online. On the ten occasions that advice was sought, the requests indicated an interest in developing an online training programme, and in ensuring that anyone who was new in their role was able to access training. For its part, the National Board developed a specific online programme and new guidance on ministering with children safely online, as described above. The National Board believes that a ‘blended approach’ to ministry with children – some in-person, some online – will continue long into the future, and it is therefore critical that Church personnel develop knowledge and skills in dealing with online risks.

Standard 6 – Communicating the Church’s Safeguarding Message

The National Board takes seriously its responsibilities to communicate its work through regular briefings, newsletters, training and other meetings, including annual meetings within each ecclesiastical provincial area. These events provide an opportunity to update constituents on the activities of the National Board and on wider research and development on safeguarding children. In spite of limited ministry with children in the Church, the National Board had important messages to share and therefore produced five newsletters during the period under review, to highlight matters including: safe use of digital media; Covid-19 resources to help children’s mental health; risk assessments as required for *Children First* child safeguarding statements; the Northern Ireland Information Commissioner’s Children’s Code and guidance on managing allegations in line with the Holy See’s *Vademecum*.

In terms of the Church communicating its child safeguarding message, it is not a surprise that there was very limited activity during 2020/21. However, the National Board still considers that this standard is a core part of keeping children safe. In line with this, the National Board produced a Guidance, Advice and Practice (GAP) paper entitled *Communicating the Church’s Safeguarding Message* in January 2020,

which can be accessed at: <https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications>.

The National Board also produced a *Communications Strategy*, which can be found at: <https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate%20Publications/Communications%20Strategy.pdf>.

Of the four occasions when advice was sought under Standard 6, National Board staff sought to influence best practice in relation to publicly communicating information about child safeguarding. This was in response to public interest following reports of inquiries or investigations that had been produced in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, England and USA.

CASE MANAGEMENT – STANDARDS 2, 3 AND 4

Standard 2 – Procedures for Responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations

156 requests for advice under Standard 2 were made out of a total of 392 requests across the other standards.

It is clear that the advice most often sought relates to reporting and responding to allegations of abuse. While some Church personnel sought advice on whether a particular matter met the threshold for reporting, there is now a very good understanding of and adherence to both the Church and the statutory obligations to report all allegations, concerns, suspicions and knowledge of abuse. The advice sought therefore did not usually relate to reporting, but to responding. The allegations section of this Annual Report presents monthly figures. As is now the pattern, there is often an increase in reporting following the publication of inquiry reports. For many complainants, memories of abuse which have been buried for a number of years resurface, and they find the confidence to disclose. Given the length of time between abuse and disclosure, which can often exceed twenty years, responding can be complex. Following reporting to the statutory authorities, responding may require careful consideration of a number of intricate factors, including the willingness of a complainant to come forward to a representative of the Church and to make a report to the statutory agencies; the

INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN AND GENERAL ADVICE PROVIDED BY THE NATIONAL OFFICE IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC REQUESTS FROM CHURCH AUTHORITIES: 1 APRIL 2020–31 MARCH 2021

status of the respondent (in ministry, out of ministry, a former member, laicised or deceased); and how the allegation has come to the attention of the Church body – this is often through legal correspondence. It is most often at this point that a Church leader seeks advice around conducting a preliminary canonical investigation, considering risk assessment, deciding on whether restrictions on ministry are required, and sharing information with another Church body or with a relevant third party. The National Board cannot offer legal advice on data protection, but to assist Church personnel in this area it has provided guidance on information sharing and on conducting data protection impact assessments (DPIAs). Using these, it is the responsibility of the relevant Church authority to ensure that there is a legal basis for sharing information relating to an allegation, as it involves personal sensitive data.

Standard 3 – Care and Support for the Complainant
Twenty-eight requests for advice were sought in relation to this standard. All related to Standard 3.1, which states that: ‘The Church authority offers appropriate pastoral care to complainants, which recognises their unique needs. This should include an offer from the Church authority to meet the complainant in person.’

Anyone who has been abused as a child has a range of needs, including being believed; being offered pastoral support; and being offered counselling and compensation, including financial compensation for the harm caused to them. There is no single way of responding, and therefore the correct response is the one that both involves the complainant and meets their particular assessed and established needs. The National Board has advised that better practice in caring for complainants needs to take place within the Catholic Church in Ireland. It is an unfortunate reality that many who have been harmed in the Church as children continue to be dissatisfied with the responses that they receive as adults. It is interesting to note recommendations from international inquiry reports (e.g. IICSA in England and Wales) which suggest that more needs to be done to truly support and care for those abused by Church personnel.

Standard 4 – Care and Management of the Respondent

It is of note that during 2020/21 a significant number of new allegations were made against clerics and religious, in keeping with patterns observed in previous years. On each occasion, the Church authority must consult with the statutory authorities before informing the cleric or religious (respondent) that an allegation has been received against him/her. At times, due to delays in receiving a response from the statutory bodies, a bishop or provincial has to try and manage risk while not being able to inform the respondent of the allegation. This requires individual Church leaders to try and balance the rights of an individual respondent with the rights of children to safety, while also being concerned with the sensitivity of a criminal investigation. Many Church leaders turned to the National Board in these situations in order to check their understanding and balancing of the risks involved.

The advice of the National Board was sought on 53 occasions in relation to Standard 4 in the year being reported on. In addition to when and how to inform the respondent, advice was sought on how to conduct a preliminary investigation under canon law, how to develop a safety plan and how to assess and manage risk.

National Case Management Committee (NCMC)
Advice on the management of cases can be offered by a member of National Office or by the National Board’s sub-committee, the National Case Management Committee (NCMC). As with all National Board work during 2020/21, the work of the NCMC moved online. In order to safeguard the sensitive data that can be shared at a case management committee meeting, a data protection impact assessment (DPIA) and a security assessment was conducted on the video conferencing platforms Microsoft Teams and Zoom to ensure that the safest platform is being used for the sharing of data, while ensuring anonymity and the right to privacy.

The NCMC has operated as a committee of the National Board since 2011 (originally called the

INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN AND GENERAL ADVICE PROVIDED BY THE NATIONAL OFFICE IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC REQUESTS FROM CHURCH AUTHORITIES: 1 APRIL 2020–31 MARCH 2021

National Case Management Reference Group [NCMRG]). It was independently reviewed in March 2013, and again, through an internal process, in 2017. Following each review, changes were made to the committee's operating procedures and its membership was enhanced. Each committee member has signed a three-year contract.

In January 2021, it was decided that a further review was now warranted to assess whether the NCMC is still 'fit for purpose' or whether changes are needed in its remit, its operational procedures, the skill set of its members or in the advice provided. Terms of reference were set and agreed, and the first phase is currently under way. The review will seek the views of the committee members, of the Church authorities that participate by presenting cases to it and of Church bodies that have not signed up to present cases. It is anticipated that a report of the review findings will be available for publication in June 2021.

As the NCMC has been fully operational for ten years, it is considered useful to explore whether any

patterns can be observed. The table below indicates how many cases relating to individual clerics and non-ordained members of religious orders have been presented by their Church authorities to the NCMC for advice. To avoid any confusion, cases relating to some individuals were presented on more than one occasion; for instance, certain actions may have been advised to be taken at the first presentation before a full consideration of the case could be completed. Such actions might include conducting a preliminary canonical investigation, corresponding with a statutory agency or requesting a complainant to make contact. Indeed, at some meetings of the committee, only returned cases were discussed. The reader is reminded that the reporting year being commented on in this report runs from 1 April to 31 March, rather than as calendar years. For completeness, however, the first three months of the calendar year 2012 are presented separately here. Numbers presented in brackets indicate that the named respondent was deceased when the case was presented to the committee for advice. The second table presents full reporting year figures.

Month and year	First presentation diocesan priest	First presentation religious order member	Review of diocesan priest	Review of religious order member	Total cases discussed
Jan 2012	(1)	0	0	0	1
Feb 2012	2	2 + (1)	0	0	5
Mar 2012	4	3	2	0	9
Total	7	6	2	0	15

INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN AND GENERAL ADVICE PROVIDED BY THE NATIONAL OFFICE IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC REQUESTS FROM CHURCH AUTHORITIES: 1 APRIL 2020–31 MARCH 2021

All Cases Presented to the NCMC per Reporting Year: 2012–2021

Year 1 April to 31 March inclusive	First presentation of diocesan priest	First presentation of religious order member	Review of diocesan priest	Review of religious order member	Total cases discussed
2012/2013	17	28 + (2)	0	5	52
2013/2014	10	18	4	7	39
2014/2015	10	11	5	11	37
2015/2016	9	12	9	5	35
2016/2017	4	4 + (2)	5	6	21
2017/2018	4	12	7	6	29
2018/2019	9	3	3	5	20
2019/2020	4	4	4	2	14
2020/2021	6	0	4	1	11
Total	73	96	41	48	258

It is clear that the first four full years (from April 2012) were very busy, with 163 (63 per cent) of the total of 258 cases presented to the committee being examined during that period, whether as new cases or cases for review. This is understandable, as there was a backlog of cases, in many of which progress had been slow and where the relevant Church authorities wanted to bring matters to a satisfactory conclusion.

Apart from a slight spike in 2017/18 in the number of new cases presented, there has since been a significant fall off, with the number of new cases in 2019/20 and 2020/21 being in single figures. In January 2017, Sir Anthony Hart published the final

report of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry in Northern Ireland; and in March of the same year it was confirmed that a large number of children's remains were buried beside the site of the Tuam Mother and Baby Home. Pope Francis visited Ireland in August 2018, and child sexual abuse became the focus of his statements and homilies during the two days that he was here. The National Board has noted that high profile events such as these, where there is concentrated attention on historical mistreatment within the Catholic Church in Ireland, lead to an increase in reports of alleged abuse to Church authorities.

INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN AND GENERAL ADVICE PROVIDED BY THE NATIONAL OFFICE IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC REQUESTS FROM CHURCH AUTHORITIES: 1 APRIL 2020–31 MARCH 2021

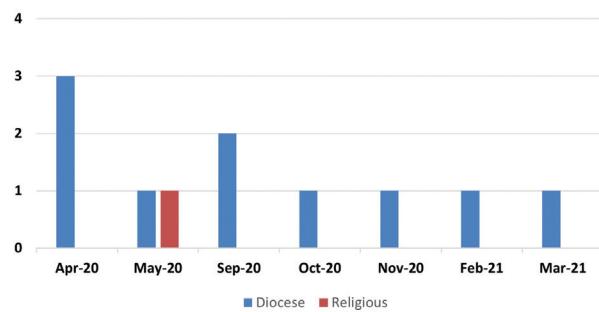
The National Board is concerned with the obvious decline in referrals to the NCMC from religious orders since the end of 2019/20. This may well be linked to reservations as a result of legal advice received by AMRI concerning GDPR which varies somewhat from that of the National Board regarding the sharing of personal information.

As the planned review of NCMC is now underway, specific questions will seek to address this particular issue and will form part of the overall assessment of NCMC functioning with dioceses and religious orders.

The committee members are: Mr Justice Iarfhlaith O'Neill (retired judge of the High Court); Mr Sean Moriarty (formerly of the Probation Service); Ms Anne Confrey (retired lawyer); Fr Michael Mullaney (canon lawyer); Sr Helen O'Riordan (support for complainants); Mr Phil Mortell (former HSE social worker); Sr Colette Stevenson PVBM (Board Director of Coimirce); Fr Brendan O'Rourke CSsR (psychotherapist); Mr Peter Kieran, Director of Safeguarding, National Board (former HSE social worker); and Ms Teresa Devlin (minute taker), CEO, National Board.

There were 11 case presentations to the NCMC for advices during the year (2020/21), as displayed in Figure 3.

Figure 3: NMC Cases Presented by Church Body



The NCMC met eight times this year (two meetings in May 2020). It is interesting to note that almost all cases discussed (ten out of eleven) related to diocesan priests against whom an allegation was made, with only one request for this service from a religious order which requested that the case of a priest member be reviewed.

Standard 7 – Quality Assuring Compliance with the Standards

The importance of evaluating whether Church bodies are acting in compliance with the Church's safeguarding standards cannot be underestimated. The Church has two ways of evaluating practice under Standard 7. Firstly, through annual self-audits, i.e. a review of safeguarding practice in parishes and religious communities as well as a review of case management by the designated liaison person (DLP); and secondly, by inviting the National Board to undertake an external review. During 2021 plans to assess compliance against the standards fell short due to the closure of Church buildings, with a consequent reduction in Church ministry, and national restrictions on travel and contact with others due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, there was still an interest displayed by Church leaders in ensuring that their practice met the required standards. The National Board had decided against requiring a Church body to conduct its annual self-audit and inform the National Board of having done so, but some Church leaders decided to do so anyway, which is commendable. In total, the National Board was notified of 12 partial or full self-audits, seven coming from religious congregations and five from dioceses. Self-audit requires that each parish or congregation examines its own practice in quite an amount of detail, using pro-forma questionnaires sent out to parish priests, or in the case of religious, to local leadership. The data generated informs child safeguarding planning for the following year.

INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN AND GENERAL ADVICE PROVIDED BY THE NATIONAL OFFICE IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC REQUESTS FROM CHURCH AUTHORITIES: 1 APRIL 2020–31 MARCH 2021

Reviews of Safeguarding Practice

As with all activities, the health crisis had a major impact on the National Board's ability to conduct safeguarding reviews. The review methodology requires contact with children, carers and all those involved in safeguarding in a diocese or religious congregation, and social distancing and travel restrictions prevented this key part of the review. In addition, case files could not be examined in situ – this personal sensitive data needed to be read on site. The National Board only managed to

complete and deliver two review reports to Church authorities during the period covered by this Annual Report. These related to safeguarding practice in the Diocese of Meath and the Presentation Sisters South West Province. Plans are now in place for conducting reviews of child safeguarding (Standards 1, 5, 6 and 7) in three Church bodies in the second quarter of 2021. Case management reviews will have to wait until such a time when the reviewers can safely travel and examine records on site.

TRAINING AND RELATED SUPPORT



This section will report on work undertaken on the objectives of the *Training and Support Strategy (2019–2022)*, available at: https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Training_Resources/Training%20and%20Support%20Strategy%202019-2022.pdf.

The objectives are:

1. Building competence and skills at local level.
2. Training and supporting trainers.
3. Supporting individual Church bodies.
4. Facilitating national training events.
5. Facilitating national formation programme.
6. Supporting child safeguarding internationally.
7. Developing policy, guidance and resources.
8. Supporting best practice.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this year has brought about significant changes in the way training and support was delivered. Reduced financial resources available from the sponsoring bodies have meant that staff hours were reduced by 20 per cent. In effect, staff for the entire period under review have been working four days a week. This along with travel restrictions and an inability to meet people in person has meant that all training moved online. Despite this, there was a significant increase in the number of training events offered by the National Board. This year 60 training events were facilitated by National Office staff, in comparison to the previous year which saw 27 events facilitated – an increase of 122 per cent.

Adapting to the delivery of training online has meant changes in terms of preparation of materials and delivery of the programme. For interactive training programmes to be successful, they could only be delivered online to smaller audiences, often resulting in the same programme being delivered more frequently than in person. To illustrate this change of working, one particular programme relating to online ministry with children was facilitated 16 times in the reporting period. In

terms of working hours this equates to 96 hours of staff time to facilitate one programme. Before the pandemic this programme would have been facilitated over two national events equating to 20 hours of staff time. Online training was developed in response to the situation, but, while there are some benefits to online training, in-person training is much more productive in terms of engagement and positive learning outcomes. It is the National Board's hope that face-to-face training can resume when the lifting of Government restrictions allow.

1. Building Competence and Skills at Local Level

A key component of the Training and Support Strategy is for the National Board to assist in enabling local Church personnel to develop knowledge and skills to implement the policy and standards outlined in *Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*. The National Board has a strong belief that face-to-face training is the best approach to building capacity in safeguarding personnel. The following events were facilitated online during the reporting cycle:

Safeguarding Committee Training

The Safeguarding Committee is an important component of the safeguarding structure and exists to support the Church authority to ensure that the child safeguarding requirements of Standards 1, 5, 6 and 7 (Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments; Training and Support; and Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message) are implemented locally within each Church body.

During 2020/21, committees varied in their activities as Church closures had an impact on ministry with children. In spite of the Covid-19 restrictions, the National Board provided training to four religious order safeguarding committees and one diocesan safeguarding committee. It is encouraging to note

TRAINING AND RELATED SUPPORT

that since the introduction of this safeguarding committee training in 2013, the programme has been delivered 74 times across the Church.

Online Ministry with Children

The Covid-19 pandemic has had huge impacts across the globe, not least of which relates to the services and ministry the Church can offer when face-to-face contact is not possible. With many dioceses and religious orders keen to explore how they could engage safely with children online, the National Board developed bespoke training to examine a range of issues associated with ministry with children online. This three-hour programme covers issues such as risk identification, assessment and mitigation; governance and oversight of online training; and data protection implications. In this reporting cycle the training was delivered sixteen times across eleven dioceses and two religious orders (one diocese and one order requested the training multiple times). In total, 125 key safeguarding personnel were involved, including bishops, provincials, designated liaison people, data protection officers and youth ministry workers.

Included within the resources provided as part of this programme is a bespoke training session designed by the National Board for Church bodies to deliver with their local youth ministry personnel. The National Board do not require that training returns are provided for this programme, but two of the trainers whose Church bodies have attended the Online Ministry training, have reported that they have delivered this bespoke programme nine times, resulting in 117 local youth ministry workers receiving training on managing risk to children online. It is hoped that in the future this training will continue to be rolled at local level to ensure best practice continues to be embedded.

2. Training and Supporting Trainers

The National Board's 'Train the Trainers' course is a detailed programme that is run over six days. On completion, course participants are assessed by National Board tutors and those who are successful are approved to deliver Church-specific child safeguarding training to Church personnel.

There are currently 100 trainers registered with the National Board.

Local Safeguarding Awareness Training Delivered in the Reporting Period

National Board registered trainers are supported by a network of tutors and by the Director of Training and Support who meets them regularly. Together they ensure that the training being provided meets best standards. In consultation with the trainers, the materials contained in the Training Manual were redesigned in February 2020 and localised child safeguarding training is now structured into five separate sessions:

- Full day training (5 hours)
- Refresher session (3 hours)
- Mandated person session (1.5 hours)
- Training for young leaders (3 hours)
- Information session (3 hours)

To prepare trainers for the delivery of the new manual, a training day was facilitated on 7 March 2020, with over half of registered trainers attending this course. A second date was planned for April 2021, but as Government restrictions began in March 2020 this date had to be cancelled. As an alternative, all trainers were clustered into groups to attend online training with the Director of Training and Support. In total, 15 cluster training sessions (two hours in length) were provided throughout the year, all registered trainers attended the course and are ready to deliver the new Training Manual.

The National Board supports the view that face-to-face training is the best approach, as this allows participants to ask specific questions, to benefit from group work, and to develop relationships and have positive interaction with their peers. This approach has been validated by evaluations from participants and trainers alike; indeed, it was this feedback from trainers and participants that led to the Training Manual being redesigned to allow more space for interaction and questions amongst participants in receipt of training.

TRAINING AND RELATED SUPPORT

When Government restrictions were introduced to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic, all face-to-face training stopped. A decision was made by the National Office and communicated to trainers to extend the registration period of each trainer and to remove the requirements that trainers must facilitate a set number of sessions within the year and submit training returns. As restrictions continued throughout the year, in January of 2021, the National Board communicated directly with trainers to encourage them to facilitate information sessions online using video conferencing software. The pandemic has meant that the trainers have had to adjust to new ways of working and, while some trainers were already skilled in this area and embraced the chance to deliver online, the vast majority felt they did not have the technological and other skills to deliver training online; so it was accepted that some annual training events would be deferred until face-to-face training could resume.

As a result of removing the compulsory requirement of submitting training returns as outlined above, at the time of writing this report only 15 of the trainers were able to facilitate training throughout the year under review. The 15 trainers delivered the Basic Awareness training (as outlined above) to 520 local Church personnel. The breakdown of these sessions is outlined below:

Full Day Session	Refresher Session	Mandated Person Session	Training for Young Leaders	Information Session
11	25	0	3	8

Of these 47 sessions, 32 were delivered online and 15 delivered face to face (when restrictions allowed). Although this data is limited in comparison to other years, it shows a great commitment by trainers to continue to embed the work of safeguarding at local level in spite of very challenging circumstances.

One of the changes to the Training Manual was the creation of a new type of session called the 'refresher session'. This session is for those who have already attended a full day session. The previous guidance provided by the National Board outlined that after three years, all those who attended a full day session

were required to attend again. At the request of trainers and participants, a new, more focused refresher session has been created and the guidance amended so that those who have attended a full day now are required to attend a refresher session. This approach has been welcomed by participants and trainers and accounts for 53 per cent of the total training sessions delivered.

The National Board would like to acknowledge the work of all those who are registered as trainers in coping with the very difficult circumstance the pandemic has brought.

3. Supporting Individual Church Bodies

Staff from the National Office facilitated two bespoke training and support sessions to a diocese and a religious order. These sessions covered training for local safeguarding representatives on their role and training local safeguarding councils.

4. Facilitating National Training Events

Annually, the National Board facilitates national training courses for those who hold specific safeguarding roles in the Church to support the development of knowledge and skills, encourage debate and reflection and to share best practice. The National Board tries to keep abreast of national and international developments and to share these at national training events. During 2020/21 the following national events were organised online for specific safeguarding role holders:

15 July 2020, 21 July 2020 and 23 July 2020 – Self-audit Training for Category 3 Church Bodies (three separate sessions)

This training was for those religious who have no ministry with children and are not managing child protection cases, to help them understand the purpose of annual self-audits, and to provide practical advice on how to successfully complete them.

12 August 2020, 20 October 2020, 18 February 2021 and 22 March 2021 – Training for New DLPs (four separate sessions)

This training was designed for people who have recently taken on the role of Designated Liaison

TRAINING AND RELATED SUPPORT

Person (DLP) or deputy DLP, and covered the following areas:

- Clarifying the role of DLP.
- Hearing safeguarding concerns and record keeping.
- Communication and supervision.
- Producing an annual internal report on cases for the Church authority.

19 October 2020 and 24 November 2020 – Training for Support People (two separate sessions)

This training was designed for new and existing support people and focused on the practicalities of this role, including record keeping, working with complainants, and understanding the boundaries of the role as distinct from others in the safeguarding structure.

20 January 2021 – Training for New Church Authorities

This training was organised specifically for Church leaders to induct them into their strategic role in relation to child safeguarding. The day covered a range of topics relating to safeguarding including:

- The strategic role of the Church authority in relation to safeguarding.
- Pastoral ministry and safeguarding.
- The importance of governance.

11 March 2021 – Training for Support People and Advisors

This training was designed for new and existing support people and advisors and focused on the practicalities of these roles, including record keeping, working with complainants, and understanding the boundaries of the role as distinct from others in the safeguarding structure.

18 March 2021, 30 March 2021 – Training on the *Vademecum* as Issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) (two separate sessions)

Following the publication of the *Vademecum on Certain Points of Procedure in Treating Cases of Sexual*

Abuse of Minors Committed by Clerics in July 2020, the National Board have developed this training to provide information and advice on the following:

- The contents of the *Vademecum* and the implications for the Catholic Church in Ireland.
- Changes to practice and guidance following the release of the *Vademecum*.

5. Facilitating National Formation Programme

Head to Heart – Child Safeguarding in Formation

The National Board has been working with four seminaries (St Patrick's College, Maynooth; the Pontifical Irish College, Rome; Redemptoris Mater, Dundalk; and the Venerable English College, Rome (for two Irish seminarians currently studying there) to develop and deliver a national child safeguarding formation programme. The course is called 'Head to Heart: Child Safeguarding in Formation'. The aim of this programme is to provide participants with a deeper understanding of the core elements of child safeguarding, which the National Board believe will assist in the development of priests who are more aware of and more responsive to safeguarding matters. The training is designed to be reflective and to facilitate open dialogue about difficult historical and current challenges of ministry with children. In this reporting cycle an induction session as well as the three modules were delivered online, as follows:

Spiritual Healing – This module was designed to allow seminarians to understand the impacts of abuse on a complainant's faith and that of their family.

Children's Rights – This module considered the history of children's rights and their place within the theology of the Church, alongside the practical implication of these rights in child safeguarding within the Church.

Personal Challenges when Dealing with Abuse

– This module sought to offer seminarians the opportunity to explore the impact that dealing with abuse has on themselves and their ministry,

TRAINING AND RELATED SUPPORT

providing opportunities to explore support structures for themselves.

A fourth module on Boundaries will be delivered on the 16 April 2021.

This academic year the National Board has been working with the Dean of the Faculty of Theology and Head of Affiliated Programmes in St Patricks College, Maynooth, to explore options for accrediting the Head to Heart course as an independent qualification. It is expected that the accreditation process will be finalised in the near future, and students who complete the course will be eligible for a special purpose award from St Patrick's College, Maynooth.

Work is also underway to explore the options for facilitating a version of the Head to Heart programme for permanent deacons. Consultations have taken place with representatives of the diaconate programme to develop a proposal for consideration by the Irish Bishops' Conference to extend Head to Heart and include it as part of the diaconate formation process. Work will continue on this in the coming year.

Further steps have been taken this year to explore the options for facilitating safeguarding training as part of ongoing formation for clerics and religious. Work in this area will continue throughout 2021 and 2022.

Other Formation Initiatives

Staff from the National Board delivered training to students of the formation programme in Loreto House, Dublin. The students there are either ordained or vowed religious from countries across the world who attend Loreto House as part of their ongoing formation. The input by the National Board focuses on sharing the lessons learned from the child safeguarding journey of the Church in Ireland to influence practice internationally.

As in previous years, staff from the National Board delivered training to pastoral theology students in St

Patrick's College, Maynooth, on elements of practice in their pastoral placement. This session included focusing on boundaries, reporting procedures and the safeguarding links with effective pastoral ministry. The students were asked to complete a short reflective exercise as part of this.

6. Supporting Child Safeguarding Internationally

In the period under review the staff from the National Board have engaged with two religious orders from Ireland with ministries abroad to assist them with developing policy and training to implement best practice from Ireland in other jurisdictions.

One of these orders has requested that the National Board delivers training to their leaders in various provinces internationally, focusing on leadership, governance and policy development. This training is due to take place in April 2021. The National Board also offered advice to safeguarding personnel in dioceses and religious orders in Scotland, England, Australia, New Zealand, USA, South Korea and India.

7. Developing Policy, Guidance and Resources

To support the implementation of *Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*, the National Board produced extensive web-based practice guidance. This is based on research of international best practice within statutory child protection services, and Catholic Church child safeguarding initiatives, as well as on experiences in the Catholic Church in Ireland. The guidance is an optional resource to be used as appropriate when a concerning matter arises. By its nature, it is open to review and revision following changes to legislation, regulation, canon law, developments in best practice and experience. This year the guidance has been updated 22 times.

The majority of this year's changes have been written as a consequent of the publication of the *Vademecum on Certain Points of Procedure in Treating Cases of Sexual Abuse of Minors Committed by Clerics*. Written for an international audience, this guide

TRAINING AND RELATED SUPPORT

sets out for the first time in one document the steps required following receipt of an allegation of sexual abuse against a cleric. While the National Board already had detailed guidance in place, a review of the *Vademecum* resulted in changes to parts of that guidance. In addition, the following changes to the guidance were published in this reporting cycle:

- Clarifying requirement to report to CDF on receipt of allegations against clerics in relation to sexual abuse, throughout various pieces of guidance.
- Updated whistleblowing guidance.
- Updated guidance on allegations relating to Irish clerics abroad in accordance with the *Criminal Law (Extraterritorial Jurisdiction) Act 2019*.

- New guidance on the penal process following the publication of the *Vademecum*.

8. Supporting best practice

During the reporting year, staff from the National Office met with a range of lay apostolates, agencies of the Irish Bishops' Conference, Government officials, non-governmental organisations, international bodies and representatives of international bishops' conferences to share best practice. The purpose of the exchanges was to learn from each other about what improvements could be made, individually and collectively, in relation to child safeguarding in the Church to support best practice. The following is a listing of these meetings and their purpose:

Organisation	Purpose of Meeting
Pontifical Irish College	Head to Heart planning
Church of Ireland	Developing work in relation to boundaries and child safeguarding
Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Belfast	Update on work
Net Ministries	Policy advice
Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Network	Policy advice
Australian Catholic University	Sharing best practice in relation to reviews
Conference of Religious Scotland Safeguarding Commission	Sharing experiences of operational management of the National Board

TRAINING AND RELATED SUPPORT

Catholic Professional Standards Ltd, Australia	Sharing practice advice
Capuchins, South Korea	Safeguarding advice
Garda National Protective Services Bureau	Relationship building
Mercy International	Assisting with policy development
Presentation Sisters International	Assisting with international policy development
President of the National Council of the Chilean Church for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Accompaniment of Victims	Sharing experiences of work of National Board
MSC International	Safeguarding advice
Zoom	Meeting to discuss data protection by Zoom
Venerable English College Formators	Developing Head to Heart formation training
Focolare	Advice on lay apostolates
Gardai Protective Services Bureau	Update on work
Allianz Insurance Video Meeting	Annual review of safeguarding
Representatives from Tusla	Update on work
HQA	Safeguarding policy discussion
St Patricks College, Maynooth – Head of Affiliated Programmes	Development of Head to Heart accreditation process
Leonard Consultancy	Northern Ireland clerical abuse inquiry
AMRI Chief Executive	Update on work
Access NI	Discussion on vetting

TRAINING AND RELATED SUPPORT

Church of Ireland Child Safeguarding Compliance Working Group	Presentation to working group on the developments of the safeguarding standards
Towards Healing	Advice on reporting allegations
Compliance Unit, Tusla	Safeguarding policy
Thirtyone:eight (NGO)	Theology of safeguarding
Safeguarding Office of Archdiocese of Glasgow	Advising on policy in Ireland on the role of the priest advisor

Development of Guidance Advice and Practice (GAP) Papers

In 2018 the National Board decided to produce detailed research papers which provided advice and practical guidance to Church personnel on important safeguarding initiatives and issues. The first paper considered how to keep children safe in the digital world, and a total of eight GAP papers have now been published on the National Board's website. In the period under review, the National Board produced two such GAP papers:

Information Sharing to Safeguard Children, October 2020

(Accessible at https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP_Papers/GAP%20Paper%207-%20Information%20Sharing%20to%20Safeguard%20Children.pdf.)

This GAP paper seeks to bring clarity to the complexities of data sharing. The General Data Protection Regulations – as enshrined in domestic legislation in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (2018) – have made very clear the need to respect an individual's right to privacy, whilst still ensuring that information is shared that is needed to safeguarded children. The paper addresses children's rights, constitutional rights to privacy, and privacy impact assessment.

Children's Rights, Child Safeguarding and the Catholic Church in Ireland, December 2020

(Accessible at https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP_Papers/GAP%20Paper%208-%20Children's%20Rights,%20Child%20Safeguarding%20and%20the%20Catholic%20Church.pdf.)

This GAP paper begins by exploring the definition of children's rights, and the role of the Holy See in the realisation of these rights. Consideration is then given to specific rights mentioned within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as they apply to safeguarding children in the Catholic Church in Ireland. Finally, the paper examines what constitutes a children's rights approach and the contribution that Church child safeguarding personnel can make towards upholding rights in practice.

Development of Briefing Papers

In addition to the other initiatives established to support best practice in 2021 the National Board developed briefing papers with the aim of providing information contained in detailed research papers, journal articles and inquiry reports relevant to safeguarding that are condensed into a short digest format for ease of reference. In essence, these papers are the National Board's critique and assessments of key points and lessons that can be learned from externally written reports.

TRAINING AND RELATED SUPPORT

The National Board published two briefing papers in this reporting cycle:

- An examination of the Holy See's institutional knowledge and decision-making related to former Cardinal McCarrick (accessible at https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Briefing_papers/Briefing%20paper%201.pdf).
- The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) in England and Wales published its report on the Catholic Church (accessible at https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Briefing_papers/Briefing%20paper%202.pdf).

Ecclesiastical Provincial Area Meetings

During the year, three ecclesiastical provincial area meetings were facilitated for the provinces of Cashel, Tuam and Armagh with a fourth meeting

scheduled to take place for those in the Dublin ecclesiastical province in April 2021. The purpose of these meetings was for staff from the National Office to meet with bishops, provincials, superiors and safeguarding personnel from Church bodies to discuss developments in child safeguarding. Topics for discussion included:

- Current workload and projects underway by the National Board.
- Updates and revision of guidance and requirements following the CDF *Vademecum*.
- Training plans for remainder of 2020 and 2021.
- Risk assessments.
- Reviews of child safeguarding practice.
- *Children First* child safeguarding statements.
- Changes to criminal law and changes of Garda personnel.

OPERATIONAL PLAN AND OBJECTIVES



The National Board Operational Plan can be found at https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate_Publications/Operational%20%20plan%202020.pdf.

Specific objectives for 2020/21 were:

Objective	Achievement
Redevelop website to ensure better accessibility and ease of access to information.	This did not proceed as planned due to financial cuts.
Develop a communications plan for the National Board.	Communications plan was approved by the National Board and can be found at https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate_Publications/Communications%20Strategy.pdf .
Conduct and report to the National Board on reviews of safeguarding practice, and giving comment on reviews and compliance with Standards in the National Board's Annual Report	Two safeguarding reviews were undertaken during the period; the restrictions due to the health crisis limited travel and opportunity for further reviews.
Produce two GAP papers on relevant safeguarding issued: Information Sharing and Children's Rights.	Both papers can be accessed at https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications . In addition, two briefing papers were produced on international safeguarding inquiries: IICSA and Mcarrick reports.

OPERATIONAL PLAN AND OBJECTIVES

Specific objectives for 2021/22:

1. Undertake a review of safeguarding policy and guidance; report by December 2021.
2. Redevelop website to ensure better accessibility and ease of access to information.
3. Conduct a review of the NCMC.
4. Resume and continue National Board reviews of safeguarding practice, inviting dioceses and congregations to publish their reports and giving comment on reviews and compliance with Standards in the National Board's Annual Report.
5. Produce two GAP papers on relevant safeguarding issues.
6. Commission and publish six further videos on theology of safeguarding.
7. Organise a national conference.

THE BOARD AND OTHER CORPORATE INFORMATION



John Morgan, Chairperson, has had a career in business, primarily as a corporate lawyer. He served as chairperson of the Bishops' Committee on Child Protection from 2002–06. Prior to that, he had been a member of the committees established by the bishops dealing with child protection beginning with the first formal Bishops' Committee on Child Abuse, which was set up in 1999. He joined the Board in 2006, and was appointed Chairperson in 2009.

Dr Keith Holmes is a consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist. He was formerly lead clinician and chairperson of the Medical Board in Lucena Clinic, Dublin, and former chair of the Faculty of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry within the College of Psychiatry of Ireland. He joined the Board in 2009.

Marie Kennedy has a background in social work and has extensive experience in child protection and welfare with a post-graduate diploma in child protection and an MSc in Health Services Management. Through a range of important assignments, Marie provides significant and extensive experience in all aspects of childcare management. She joined the Board in 2008.

Michael Ringrose is formerly chief executive of PWD (People with Disabilities in Ireland), the national representative organisation for all people with disabilities, their parents, carers, families and advocates. Prior to that, he served as a chief superintendent with An Garda Síochána. He joined the Board in 2006.

Fr Paul Murphy OFM Cap. has wide experience in his own order in child safeguarding, both as a member of its leadership team and as designated liaison person. He served on the child safeguarding desk in CORI for eight years, during which time

he was the company secretary for Faoiseamh Ltd, (Towards Healing) the victims' support service. He also participated in the working group which drew up *Our Children, Our Church*. Paul has qualified as a trainer of trainers in child safeguarding; he also researched the monitoring and rehabilitation of sexual offenders in religious communities for a MA with the University of the West of England in Bristol. He joined the Board in 2013.

Jim O'Higgins is a practising solicitor and accredited mediator. He was founder member and co-designer of the state Family Mediation Service. He served as honorary secretary and board member of Cheeverstown, a service for the intellectually challenged. He chaired the advisory panel on child abuse for the Ferns Diocese for eight years. He is a former chairperson of the Peter McVerry Trust and on the boards of two national schools in a disadvantaged area in Dublin's North City. He joined the Board in 2013.

Sr Colette Stevenson PBVM is a Presentation Sister. She has been involved in child protection work within the Church since 1995, when she became director of the CORI child protection office. Previously she worked as a teacher and later in retreat work. She is a qualified marriage and family therapist. She recently retired from the National Office as director of professional standards. She joined the Board in 2013.

Sr Nuala O'Gorman is a Sister of Mercy of the southern province of the congregation and a retired secondary school teacher. She has served as principal of the school, chairperson of the board of management and was a member of the provincial team in the province. She was a member of the steering group in the Diocese of Cloyne when child safeguarding policies were being established and served as a member of the child safeguarding

THE BOARD AND OTHER CORPORATE INFORMATION

committee in that diocese for a number of years, drafting policies with same. She is currently one of the victim support persons for the diocese. She joined the Board in October 2017.

Sr Evelyn Greene is a Holy Faith Sister, with a background in education. She has been involved in various ways in the area of child safeguarding at congregational, diocesan and national levels for several years. At present she is designated trainer for child safeguarding. She joined the Board in October 2017.

Fr Martin Whelan is a priest of the Galway Diocese and a canon lawyer. He was ordained in 2009, and has served as the Galway diocesan secretary since 2010. In addition to his administrative duties within the diocese, Fr Martin is curate at Galway Cathedral and chaplain to St Mary's College. Fr Martin has also served as a canon lawyer with the Galway Regional Marriage Tribunal.

Members of National Case Management Committee

Iarfhlaith O'Neill, Chair – retired High Court judge.

Teresa Devlin – National Board CEO, secretary to NCMC.

Sr Helen O'Riordan – Loreto Sister, Ferns Diocese, with experience in the area of pastoral support for victims.

Fr Michael Mullaney – Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly, canon lawyer.

Peter Kieran – Former HSE senior childcare manager, experience from Waterford & Lismore's panel in risk assessment and management.

Phil Mortell – Former HSE senior childcare manager and designated person for Redemptorist congregation.

Sean Moriarty – former probation officer, ROI.

Sr Colette Stevenson PVBM – Experience of working with respondents.

Ann Confrey – civil lawyer, formerly worked with Mason Hayes and Curran.

Fr Brendan O'Rourke CSsR – therapist with respondents.

Management of National Office

Teresa Devlin, Chief Executive Officer, has been in role as CEO since January 2014; prior to that she was the Director of Safeguarding with the National Board. Teresa is a qualified social worker and has an advanced diploma in child protection; she has extensive experience in child protection management and family support, both at the levels of senior management and in the specific areas of risk assessment and care planning.

Niall Moore, Director of Training and Support, has a degree in Law and Master's in Criminology which he completed whilst working in the office of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY). He has experience facilitating professionals, coordinating teams and working directly with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Alongside his full-time role of director of training and support, he has recently completed his doctorate at Queens University in Belfast, examining the role of the Holy See as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Appointed 1 February 2013.

Peter Kieran, Part-time Director of Safeguarding

– Policy and Case Management Advice: Peter is a professionally qualified social worker and has a Master's qualification in counselling. He worked in child protection with the SEHB/HSE South from 1974, and became the regional specialist in children and family services in 2004. He worked in that role until his retirement in December 2010. He has conducted a number of reviews for the National Board since 2011 and is now working on research and policy development. He also teaches on the Master's in Therapeutic Child Care at Carlow College.

Imelda Ashe: Company Secretary and Administrator.

Ann Cunningham: Administrator.

Training Tutors: Fr Paddy Boyle, Sr Helen O'Riordan, Sr Anne Lyng, Eleanor Kelly, Aoife Walsh, Avril Halley, Maureen Walsh and Kevin Duffy – supporting the Director of Training and Support in the delivery of the Training and Support Strategy.

Other Corporate Information

The Members of the Board comprise the directors of Coimirce, a company limited by guarantee without a share capital (Co. Number 465899). The Members of Coimirce comprise nominees of each of the Episcopal Conference of Irish Bishops and the Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI). The Episcopal Conference of Irish Bishops and AMRI are described as the 'Sponsoring Bodies' of the National Board in this report.

The registered office and address of Coimirce is New House, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.

Website: www.safeguarding.ie



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

