

Newsletter

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

March 2021

ALERT BOX

This part of the Newsletter is designed to draw the attention of Church authorities to important developments outlined below:

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National Office Staff

Click on any of the links below to send an email directly to any member of staff

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Welcome to the National Board's first newsletter of 2021. We wish you good health for the year, knowing that many of you are still facing challenges with Covid-19. Together we have lost family, friends and colleagues to this virus and we want to pay tribute to the many clerics, religious and lay people who have died during 2020.

In spite of the pandemic, and its impact we have had to forge ahead with this important safeguarding ministry. While children and young people are absent from Church buildings, they are certainly not absent from our thoughts and prayers. We look forward to engaging again with children safely through online ministry and when time allows, we will welcome them back safely in liturgies, sacraments and Church youth ministry. The National Board encourages all who minister in the Church to consider proactive involvement with children through safe on-line activities today and into the future, as we believe the future will provide an opportunity for a "blended approach" to teaching the Word of the Gospel to children.

In the National Board we look forward to 2021 with hope and ambition; we are excited to have started our conversation on a "Theology of Safeguarding" with videos from experts presenting on a different aspect each month from January until our National Conference in October 2021.

This Newsletter will give details of presenters and topics they have/will address in the videos, which we hope will lead us into a wider discussion when we meet for our National Conference in October 2021.

In February 2021 Fr Martin Whelan, a canon lawyer and priest of Galway Diocese was appointed as a Director of the National Board. Fr Whelan joins a Board of experienced and committed Directors who guide the work of safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Ireland. We warmly welcome Fr Whelan, knowing already that he will bring knowledge and enthusiasm to complement the work of the other Directors.

We also welcome back to the team, Ann Cunningham who has returned from a period of parental leave. Ann, like all National Office staff will be working 4 days per week, remotely. Until travel restrictions are lifted, please do not send in correspondence by post to us in Maynooth as we only occasionally are able to access the office.

Detailed in this Newsletter is information on Data Protection and Destruction; Review of NCMC; GAP papers; Training; Guidance updates; Resources to support good safeguarding practice, including digital media.

Data Protection and Data Destruction

- Allegation data from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020:

Following publication of the 2019 Annual Report, letters have been sent to all Church authorities in Ireland where we hold allegation data for this reporting period. We have now received responses from some Church authorities, giving consent to the National Board to destroy the data; and other Church authorities wishing to collect the data from Maynooth.

- Data Collection – Two Church Bodies up to March 31st, 2020:

The National Board has received allegations from one Church body about a respondent in another Church body. In line with the National Board's data protection procedures, this data will be returned to the Church body who notified us as they control the data. We have already written to all relevant Church authorities to encourage collection of this data. If you have not received a letter and would like to find out if there is data which you need to collect, please contact acunningham@safeguarding.ie or imeldaashe@safeguarding.ie.

Collection of all data, which is in Maynooth, can only be organised once Government restrictions on travel have been lifted. When the opportunity allows, can you please contact imeldaashe@safeguarding.ie to arrange a time that is mutually convenient to pick up the data.

As a Church authority, if you wish to delegate someone from your Church body to collect the data, please advise Imelda Ashe, in an e-mail, providing details of who will collect along with your consent.

Review of the National Case Management Committee (NCMC)

The NCMC, which is a subcommittee of the National Board, has been operational since 2011 (then called National Case Management Reference Group). An external review of operations took place in 2013 and this was followed by a Review of Consistency in 2017. It has been agreed with the National Board and NCMC that a third review is now appropriate. The aims of the Review are:

Purpose of Review:

1. To ensure the Terms of Reference are still appropriate or require amendment.
2. To assess whether the NCMC, as currently constituted and operating, provides a valuable service in offering advice to Church authorities related to case management.
3. To make recommendations for change if appropriate.

Consultation will take place across the Church to obtain the views of those Church authorities who participate in NCMC as well as those who have not joined the Committee. Fieldwork will start in March 2021 and it is hoped that a report will be publicly available by June 2021. In order to help make this Review as successful and helpful as possible, the National Board encourages all Church bodies to fully participate in the planned consultation.



Training and Support

Since the last newsletter the following training events have been facilitated

- **Ministering with Children online** - We have been continuing to facilitate this training for those who are seeking to engage in ministry with children using digital media. Two further dioceses and a religious order have now taken part in the training since January 2021.
- **Armagh Ecclesiastical Provincial Area Meeting**- this meeting was facilitated using Zoom and was attended by safeguarding personnel from the Armagh ecclesiastical provincial area. It is hoped that two further meetings will take place, for safeguarding personnel in the Dublin metropolitan area and for AMRI members who have not yet attended this update meeting.
- **Training for New Church Authorities** - Our annual programme for new Church authorities was facilitated on the 20th of January and attended by religious and diocesan Church leaders appointed in the last year.
- **Safeguarding Committee Training** – This programme for safeguarding committee members was facilitated once so far this year, on the 9th of February.
- **Head to Heart Child Safeguarding in Formation** – The safeguarding programme continues for seminarians in St Patrick's College Maynooth, Pontifical Irish College Rome, Redemptoris Mater seminary Dundalk, and two Irish seminarians currently registered in the Venerable English College in Rome. The modules facilitated focused on children's rights and personal challenges when dealing with abuse. A final module for this year will be facilitated in April and will focus on boundaries.
- **Training for new DLPs**- Training was facilitated on the 25th of February for new DLPs and Deputy DLPs focusing on their role and the responsibilities associated with managing cases and reporting abuse.

All forthcoming training events can be found on the website of the National Board here

<https://www.safeguarding.ie/index.php/what-we-do/advice-on-effective-practice/training>

Upcoming Training

The amount of training currently being delivered by the National Board has increased significantly because of the functionality of using online video platforms such as Zoom to deliver training. This month the following training will be delivered:

- 5th March- Head to Heart Module on Personal Challenges when dealing with abuse- this training is part of an ongoing programme for seminarians of St Patrick's College, Maynooth; the Pontifical Irish College, Rome; the Venerable English College, Rome (for two Irish seminarians studying there) and Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Armagh Archdiocese.
- 10th March- Training for Support People
- 11th March- Training for Advisors
- 18th March- Training on the Vademecum- This training is for Church authorities of dioceses or religious orders who have clerics as members.
- 22nd March- Training for new DLPs.
- 30th March- Training on the Vademecum- this is an additional date to accommodate those unable to attend on the 18th of March. To book follow this link

<https://www.safeguarding.ie/events/training-on-the-vademecum-second-date>

The majority of the training above is being facilitated at the request of various Church bodies. If you would like to join relevant training above or if there is training you would like the National Board to facilitate please contact niall.moore@safeguarding.ie.

Theology of Safeguarding

We are delighted to have started our conversation on a “Theology of Safeguarding”. Two of nine videos are now available to view on the National Board’s website at <https://www.safeguarding.ie/national-conference-2021> Fr Hans Zollner and Sr Nuala Kenny have drawn us into this important discussion through their presentations on “ What a comprehensive theology of safeguarding needs to address” and “The Challenges for the Catholic Church as a wounded Healer”. The next video presentation will be delivered by Ethna Regan who will address “How a theology of safeguarding can encompass human rights including children’s rights”. In April Fr Paddy Boyle will address the theology of safeguarding in practice.

Each video will be available around 18th of each month.

Website Refresher

One of our objectives for 2020 was to undertake a review and change the National Board’s website. Time and costs prevented us from proceeding. We have now engaged a web designer and hope to develop the website as soon as possible.

Briefing Papers

The National Board has produced Briefing Papers on *Lessons from the McCarrick Report* and *Lessons from the IICSA Report*. These papers will shortly be available on the National Board’s website at this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications>

Guidance Updates

There has been no further update to the guidance since the last newsletter. Work is currently underway with the Bishops, representatives of the CDF and canon lawyers to finalise guidance on responding to allegations against Bishops and their equivalents and dealing with allegations of actions or omissions. Once completed, these will form part of the guidance of Standard 2 on the National Board’s website here <https://www.safeguarding.ie/guidance>.

Information Commissioner’s Office-Children’s Code (Church bodies ministering in NI)

The Children’s Code (or Age Appropriate Design Code to give its formal title) is a data protection code of practice for online services, such as apps, online games, and web and social media sites, likely to be accessed by children.

It came into force on 2 September 2020 with a 12 month transition period to give organisations time to prepare.

The Children’s Code sets out 15 standards organisations must meet to ensure that children’s data is protected online. You can find out more about the code and how to prepare for it on the Information Commissioners information hub at <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/childrens-code-hub/>.



Resources to Support Good Safeguarding Practice

While the Catholic Church on the island of Ireland is an ecclesiastical body governed by canon law, it is comprised of a large number of independent elements, including dioceses and religious orders. When councils, charities and other Catholic bodies are added, there is a very wide network of Catholic organisations and agencies that operate within what is sometimes loosely referred to as the community and voluntary sector, or the NGO sector.

In the Republic of Ireland, The Wheel is an organisation that describes itself as

...Ireland's national association of community and voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises. We are a registered charity in Ireland and are unique in our role as a 'one-stop-shop' for anything related to the charity and non-profit sector. [<https://www.wheel.ie/about-us>]

The Wheel is not a faith-based organisation, but it is a values driven one with values that are consistent with those embraced by the Catholic Church, including creating a fair and just Ireland; transparency, accountability and high standards of practice and governance; diversity; putting people and communities first; regulation that enhances public trust; collaborative working and active participation; the right to be heard and respected; the sense of solidarity that comes from people acting together; and a society where there is harmony and balance with nature.

People and agencies working in the community and voluntary sector can join The Wheel, and details of how to do so are available on its website at www.wheel.ie/membership. The Wheel also provides free availability of its e-newsletter to anyone who registers to receive this, and this allows you to decide whether this is an organisation that is relevant to your work - see www.wheel.ie/newsletters.

In the current pandemic, The Wheel has also developed a resource hub of information and guidance on operating safely; this is accessible at www.wheel.ie/covid-19-info-hub

Legislation

On April 29th, 2019, the then Minister for Justice in the Republic of Ireland signed the order that commenced the operation of the Criminal Law (Extraterritorial Jurisdiction) Act 2019. The passing of the law enabled Ireland to ratify the Istanbul Convention, *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*.

Under this legislation, individuals who commit particular offences abroad will be liable to be prosecuted under Irish law. These include offences under the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997 and the Criminal Law (Rape) (Amendment) Act 1990, as well as murder and manslaughter. The legislation is restricted to a variety of crimes against women, and females under the age of 18 years. While the Convention is primarily concerned with tackling violence against women, the legislation applies to offences committed by both men and women outside Ireland, where that offence is also an offence in the Convention State in which it took place.

The Act can only be used if the country in which the alleged crime was committed is also a signatory of the Istanbul Convention. This Convention is limited to use in countries on the continent of Europe, and so would not be of assistance in relation to alleged crimes committed in Africa, North and South America and Asia.

The Act can be accessed at www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2019/act/6/enacted/en/print.html

Communications

In January 2020, the National Board produced its fourth GAP paper entitled *Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message*; and in December 2020, the Communications Strategy of the National Board was approved. The specific goals for 2021 in that Strategy are to:

1. To establish a methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of our communications; and
2. To develop Briefing Notes on research and on developments.

The first goal requires that the National Board engages in:

- Consultation with child safeguarding personnel across the Catholic Church on the island of Ireland;
- Developing a research study using established online survey tool, and
- Commissioning expert advice and information on impact measurement.

The process of consultation will take place in the second half of the year. Church safeguarding personnel are invited to start thinking about how they experience communications (in both directions) with the National Board, and how these might be improved.

The development of Briefing Notes will require the National Office staff to identify the niche between Guidance, GAP papers and Newsletters which this new type of practice information can fill. What is envisaged is that information contained in detailed research papers and journal articles relevant to safeguarding would be condensed into a short digest format for ease of reference.

Reviews of Compliance with Safeguarding Children 2016

The Covid-19 restrictions have had a major impact on the National Board's ability to conduct Reviews of dioceses and religious orders of their compliance with the seven Standards set out in *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016*. As the restrictions appear likely to remain in force, even if reduced in their severity, for most of 2021, it has been decided to try and complete a small number of Reviews to see if an amended review methodology can work sufficiently to make the exercise worthwhile.

There are three Standards that apply to case management, 2, 3 and 4. However, it does not make sense for reviewers to give thought to complainants and respondents if they cannot first read the case management files in which the Church body's response to both is described. Due to the need for case management files to be kept safe and secure, they can only be read by reviewers in situ, and travel constraints and health considerations make this impossible to arrange at present.

Most child safeguarding indicators can be reviewed remotely – these are contained in Standards 1, 5, 6 and 7, with four exceptions – 1.3, 1.4, 5.5 and 6.2. These four Indicators can only be reviewed by being able to view ministry with children and young people, and being able to converse with them, through the use of Zoom or some other appropriate digital technology.

The National Board is in discussions with three Church authorities, two diocesan bishops and one religious provincial leader, to see if it will be possible to conduct a part Review of their Church body's Child Safeguarding practices, including using remote video access to youth ministry activities.

It will be essential for any Church body that wants to invite the National Board to conduct a Review in the coming months to have taken part in the training course, *Training for those ministering with children online* – see www.safeguarding.ie/news/19-joomla/284-training-for-those-ministering-with-children-online



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

Practice Issue- Hazard Assessments

(only applies to Church bodies ministering with children)

Hazard assessment is the word used in the Church's child safeguarding policy, standards and National Board guidance, to describe risk assessment carried out on activities or ministry with children. We use the term hazard to differentiate this process from the risk assessment of respondents.

Indicator 1.8 of the Child Safeguarding Policy states

'The Church body implements effective practice for Church personnel on assessment of hazards when working with children'.

Implementation of this indicator requires that a written risk or hazard assessment is carried out on all ministries with children. To assist with this process a sample hazard assessment template and guidance is available here

<https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Standards/Standard%201.pdf> (page 106-108). We would advise that the risk assessment for a programme which runs for a period of time (e.g. altar serving) is reviewed at least annually, unless new risks occur which have not been anticipated, or if the ministry changes. Otherwise each new ministry should be risk assessed prior to initiation of the programme. There should also be a review once the programme has been completed to ensure that if something happened which had not been foreseen that lessons are learned for future practice.

It is important that these assessments are carried out, that ways of managing all risks are identified and put in place to ensure children and the adults that work with them are safe. This includes on-line ministry as well as face to face ministry. The National Board offers training on engaging safely with children online.

Church bodies in the Republic of Ireland are required by law to have a Tusla Child Safeguarding Statement (follow this link

<https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Standards/Standard%206.pdf> (page 23). This statement requires that each children's ministry is assessed at local level and that safeguards are put in place to minimise risk. We understand that Tusla are currently reviewing Child Safeguarding statements with particular reference to how an organisation conducts local risk assessments. Failure to comply could result in an organisation being placed on a register of non-compliance.

Once the hazard assessment has been completed, it should be stored locally, and all leaders associated with the ministry should be familiar with its contents and the appropriate procedures to have in place to mitigate against the risks identified.

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