

Newsletter

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

March 2022

National Office Staff

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

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ALERT BOX

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

Revision of safeguarding children policy [p.3](#)

Work relating to developing an adult safeguarding template policy for the Catholic Church in Ireland [p.3](#)

Introduction

We begin this Newsletter by saying a fond farewell to our former Chair John Morgan. John stepped down as Chair at the end of December 2021 and has been replaced by Mr. Justice Garrett Sheehan.

We want to take a moment to reflect upon the amazing contribution John has made to the National Board and to safeguarding children in the Catholic Church in Ireland. John was one of the first Directors, appointed in 2006 and before that he participated in a number of working groups with the Irish Episcopal Conference (IEC) to plan and support safeguarding ministry. He took over the role as Chair in 2009 and committed himself fully to ensuring that the work of the National Board was based on the values of the Gospel, fairness and excellence. John always went above and beyond the call of duty and immersed himself in all aspects of the governance and operation of the National Board. John was and still is a strong advocate for children, but he is also a strong advocate for the Church which he holds dear. John will remain as a Board Director until June 2022.

The National Board and Office staff found John a true friend and support and while we will miss his wisdom and calm approach we wish him all the best in his next chapter, as we know only too well that John will not retire from Church ministry.

We welcome Mr. Justice Garrett Sheehan as a clear thinker and someone who has sound experience and foundations in all aspects of ensuring the Church is a safe place for children.

2022 has started with some hope that we can return to ministry, work and safeguarding. We are hopeful that the planned National Safeguarding Conference will go ahead in May 2022.

This Newsletter will provide information on:

- Changes to the National Board
- National Office working arrangements
- Reviews of Safeguarding Practice
- The Revision of Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016
- Development of a template Adult Safeguarding Policy and associated resources
- Training and Support
- National Conference 2022
- Review of the National Case Management Committee (NCMC)
- GAP papers
- International Support
- Annual Self Audits
- Changes in the CDF and in the Code of Canon Law
- Practice Issue – Safer use of digital media

Changes to the National Board

A new Director has been appointed effective from 23rd March 2022. Gillian McGrath from Clonoe in County Tyrone has significant experience at senior management level in safeguarding within education in Northern Ireland. We look forward to the positive contribution Gillian will bring to the work of the National Board.

National Office Working Arrangements

Following easing of restrictions staff are moving back to work in the office in New House, St Patricks College, Maynooth.

Reviews of Safeguarding Practice

A significant number of dioceses have now invited the National Board to conduct a review of safeguarding practice. To date we have completed ten (10) diocesan reviews, with four (4) in process and three (3) Religious Order reviews and two (2) in process.

If you are interested in requesting a Review by the National Board please write to Teresa Devlin at the National Office, at teresa.devlin@safeguarding.ie.

The Revision of Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016

Thank you to all who have participated in Listening Meetings and who have volunteered to assist in further engagement with children and their parents/carers; complainants of abuse; respondents and other interested parties.

A steering group has been established to:

- Plan the project;
- Support the work;
- Facilitate communication with constituent groups;
- Provide feedback;
- Assist in organising consultation groups;
- Monitor progress;
- Produce and revise drafts of the policy and standards.

Given that members engage with other internal Church personnel, it is hoped that they will represent the steering group work with their colleagues, provide updates to their relevant disciplinary groups, provide responses and critiques back to the National Board and act as a champion for the revision of the policy and its implementation.

It is our hope to seek the views of as many people as possible and more information on this will be available as the work develops. For further information, please contact imeldaashe@safeguarding.ie.

Development of a Template Adult Safeguarding Policy and Associated Resources

The National Board has agreed to work with Church personnel to develop a best practice template safeguarding policy for vulnerable people. This work will involve consultation within and outside the Church. We thank those of you who have offered to support this important initiative and, as for the review of the 2016 children's policy, we have established a steering group with similar aims.

If you wish to volunteer your services please contact acunningham@safeguarding.ie.

We recognise the complexities associated in ministering with vulnerable people and will ensure that our consultation takes account of the range of views expressed within the Church, from external experts and is in line with canon law, civil legislation and guidance and criminal legislation.

Training and Support

Since the last Newsletter in December we have concentrated in organising Listening Meetings on the revision of *Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016* and on developing a vulnerable adult template policy and associated support materials for ministry with vulnerable adults. As we move forward with these two initiatives we will not be able to deliver the full range of training as in previous years.

Training dates already scheduled for 2022 are available to book on the National Board's website here- <https://www.safeguarding.ie/news-events/events>.

A meeting will take place with Bernard Gloster, CEO of Tusla on 22nd March 2022 at 10am. Thank you to those who have sent in questions; these have been forwarded to Mr Gloster.

In person training will resume during 2022. If you have particular training needs please contact niall.moore@safeguarding.ie

Train the Trainers course will be delivered over 6 days in the Glenroyal Hotel, Maynooth, Co. Kildare and structured as follows:

- 02/04/2022 and 03/04/2022 (both days starting at 10:00 and finishing at 16:30)- context, group work skills and facilitation skills.
- 22/04/2022, 23/04/2022 and 24/04/2022 (each day starting at 10:00 and finishing at 16:00)- delivering the safeguarding children programme.
- 21/05/2022 (9:30 until 16:00)-assessment of each trainer by a tutor from the National Board and their peers. The criteria for assessment which will be used during this session can be accessed when booking your place via the website.
- Additional Date- Final assessment of the trainer by a tutor registered with the National Board at a date a time that suits the trainer. The criteria for assessment which will be used during the community assessment can be accessed when booking your place via the website.
- **Each applicant must attend all days to complete the course.**

Price for this course excludes accommodation and is priced at 1250 euro per person.

To book your place:

1. You must be appointed and approved to take part in this course by the Church authority of your Church body.
2. Book your place online by following this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/events/train-the-trainers-2022> .
3. Each applicant must print out and complete registration form (this includes a section to be completed by their Church Authority).

This course is for anyone wishing to become registered as trainers for three years with the National Board.

REMINDER

Please remember when booking an event via our website to keep an eye out for the automated system email - this is your invoice. The person you nominate to pay for an event will also receive this email. Note this email maybe in your junk folder depending on your security settings. Note emails that go into junk folders in some cases automatically delete after one week.

National Conference 2022

We are delighted to confirm that the National Conference will take place on evening of 11th May and all day 12th May in Monaghan. The Conference will begin at 5pm with Mass celebrated by Bishop Larry Duffy in St Macartan's Cathedral in Monaghan, followed by keynote speech and dinner at 7pm in the Hillgrove Hotel.

The full conference programme will be available once speakers have confirmed. The theme of the conference is *Safeguarding in the context of theology*

To book your place follow this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/events/national-safeguarding-conference-2022>.

Review of National Case Management Committee (NCCMC)

The third review of the NCCMC has now been completed and the committee have considered all of the returned questionnaires. Thank you to all who have offered very valuable feedback. Recommendations for change have been made as follows:

1. Revisions to be made to the Case Submission Form, to ensure that the committee has sufficient information to guide it (subject to agreement on information sharing and data protection).
2. On a case by case basis and where relevant, the Church authority will be invited to include other documents with their submissions, such as:
 - Assessment Reports
 - Written submission from respondent
 - CDF correspondence

Appropriate permissions should be sought for sharing these reports.

3. Internal operations of the committee to be adjusted to ensure that presenters are put at their ease, can share information without difficulty, and can receive a clear verbal and written advisory response.
4. Member's contract to be renewed on a three-year basis, with the option of renewal for a further three years.
5. Committee membership to be reviewed annually to allow members to retire, and new members to be recruited in line with skills needs of the committee
6. Committee to receive training and updates on current safeguarding challenges at least annually.
7. Video conferencing will continue to be an option for NCCMC meetings, to be decided on a case by case basis.

The review report can be accessed on the National Board website by following this link

https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate_Publications/NCCMC_-_FINAL_REPORT_3_February_2022.pdf.

Guidance and Practice Papers

International Support

The National Board has produced two GAP papers which set out research and practice on topical issues. The latest in the series relates to **adult safeguarding** and be accessed by following this link

https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP_Papers/GAP%20Paper%2010-%20Adult%20Safeguarding%20Current%20Context%20in%20the%20Catholic%20Church%20in%20Ireland.pdf .

The second GAP paper relates to **Leadership and Child Safeguarding** and can be accessed by following this link

https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP_Papers/GAP%20Paper%209-%20Leadership%20and%20Child%20Safeguarding.pdf.

The National Board has been asked to support three initiatives overseas:

- Safeguarding Licentiate Programme – 28th February and 1st March 2022
- Training with Religious Congregation in Phillipines
- International Safeguarding Conference – Rome – 20th – 22nd June, 2022.

Annual Self-Audits

Thank you to everyone who has confirmed that the annual self-audit has been complete for 2021. All Dioceses are required to undertake a self-audit. If you are unclear as to whether your Congregation should undertake a self-audit please contact teresa.devlin@safeguarding.ie.

All outstanding self-audits should be complete by end of March 2022.

The self-audit is a mechanism by which the Church authority reviews all safeguarding and case management work for the preceding year. It is a matter for the Church authority to determine how to undertake the self-audit but guidance is available at <https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Standards/Standard%207.pdf> .

Please note that all Church authorities are required to notify the National Board of the status of the annual self-audit by end March 2022. Self-audits are undertaken by safeguarding committees and DLPs and are a mechanism for Church authority to satisfy themselves that all appropriate standards are being met within their Church body.

Training Returns

It is that time of the year again when we are beginning our preparation for the Annual Report. To assist us with this work, could all trainers please complete the training returns form as soon as possible and send it through to niall.moore@safeguarding.ie for all training delivered between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022. It would be really helpful on your training form if you could note the following:

- The date of the session;
- The type of session (full day, information session, young persons session, refresher session or mandated person session);
- Whether the session was delivered face to face or online;
- The number of people that attended.

If you haven't been able to deliver training this year due to the pandemic or for other reasons please send me Niall an email and we can mark this off on our database.

Changes in the CDF and in the Code of Canon Law

Pope Francis has recently made a number of changes in arrangements in the Vatican, which are of interest to those responsible for child safeguarding in the Church in Ireland. On February 11th, 2022, he issued a short Apostolic Letter *Motu Proprio* entitled *Fidem Servare* (To serve faithfully) in which he announced modifications in the internal structure of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), available at www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/20220211-motu-proprio-fidem-servare.html.

Essentially, Pope Francis has divided the CDF into two sections, the Doctrinal Section and the Disciplinary Section, ‘...each coordinated by a Secretary who assists the Prefect in the specific area of his competence, with the collaboration of the Under-Secretary and the respective Heads of Office’. The letter describes the functions of each section as follows:

‘The Doctrinal Section, through the Doctrinal Office, deals with matters pertaining to the promotion and protection of the doctrine of faith and morals’; while ‘The Disciplinary Section, through the Disciplinary Office, deals with offences reserved to the Congregation and dealt with by it through the jurisdiction of the Supreme Apostolic Tribunal established there. Its task is to prepare and elaborate the procedures provided for by canonical norms so that the Congregation, in its various instances (Prefect, Secretary, Promoter of Justice, Congress, Ordinary Session, College for the examination of appeals in matters of *delicta graviora*), may promote a correct administration of justice’.

It is too early to make any statement about the effects of these changes; but the disciplinary element of the CDF is being boosted from being an Office to being a Section; and this may mean that it will attract its own separate budget and may be able to recruit additional staff.

On the same day, Pope Francis issued a second Apostolic Letter *Motu Proprio*, entitled *Competentias quasdam decernere* (Deciding on or assigning certain competences), with which some norms of the Code of Canon Law and the Code of Canons of the Oriental Churches are changed. The result is a decentralising of some decision making to the local Ordinary. The full text is available at www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/20220211-motu-proprio-assegnare-alcune-competenze.html. At first reading it appears that the main impact of these changes will be on members leaving Religious Orders, under Canons 686 §1; 688 §2; 699 §2; and 700. Equivalent canons of the Eastern Churches are also amended in this letter.

Practice Issue – Safer Internet Ministry

International Safer Internet Day was held on February 8th 2022 – see www.saferinternetday.org/ and www.saferinternetday.org/in-your-country/ireland. This awareness-raising day has been held for the last 19 years and is now a fixture every February. While the event is over for 2022, these websites still have resource material and guidance that can be consulted and downloaded.

The Irish Safer Internet Centre for the Safer Internet Day can be accessed at www.betterinternetforkids.eu/sic/ireland, and this features *Webwise*, which is the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre, co-funded by the Department of Education and Skills and is co-financed by the European Union’s Connecting Europe Facility – see <https://www.webwise.ie/saferinternetday/>.

It is an unfortunate development of the pandemic lockdown over the last two years that child abuse using digital media has increased greatly and abusers have been extremely active in grooming children through social media and the Internet. Sexual images of children, many of which are generated by children themselves through sexting, have multiplied over the past year, according to a study by the Internet Watch Foundation (www.iwf.org.uk/). In a report published on January 13th, 2022, the IWF stated that:

Last year was the worst year on record for child sexual abuse online as lockdowns saw younger and younger children being targeted “on an industrial scale” by internet groomers. New figures show that, in 2021, the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) took action against 252,000 URLs which it confirmed contained images or videos of children being raped and suffering sexual abuse. In total last year, IWF analysts investigated 361,000 reports, including tip offs from the public, of suspected criminal material. This is more than they dealt with in the entire first 15 years of their existence when, from 1996 to 2011 they assessed 335,558 reports. The IWF is warning parents that internet sex predators are targeting and grooming younger children, with a sharp rise in content showing the abuse of children aged between 7 and 10 years old. Child safety experts say younger children have

been relying more and more on the internet during the pandemic, and that spending longer online may be leaving them more vulnerable to communities of criminals who are looking to find and manipulate children into recording their own sexual abuse on camera. The footage is then shared among other criminals on the open internet – full report available at www.iwf.org.uk/news-media/news/three-fold-increase-of-abuse-imagery-of-7-10-year-olds-as-iwf-detects-more-child-sexual-abuse-material-online-than-ever-before/.

Another international organisation, Internet Matters (internetmatters.org) has produced an overview report, the Children’s Wellbeing in a Digital World Index Report 2022, available at www.internetmatters.org/resources/childrens-wellbeing-in-a-digital-world-index-report-2022/. The index, which has been developed by Dr Diane Levine and team at the University of Leicester, measures the developmental, emotional, physical, and social wellbeing of children who use the Internet regularly. The report identifies both positive and negative impacts on children of various ages, and how these impacts are different between girls and boys.

It also highlights that the majority (80%) of parents surveyed indicated that they wanted and needed specific guidance on use of digital media by their children, as a result of which Internet Matters has developed a list of resources that can be accessed through its website, including:

- My Family's Digital Toolkit
- Social Media Advice Hub
- Online Gaming Advice Hub
- Advice by Age

as well as specific resources for parents and professionals working with vulnerable children:

- Connecting Safely Online
- Inclusive Digital Safety

Finally, the Children's Commissioner in the UK has published a guidance document for parents, *The things I wished my parents had known – Young people's advice on talking to your child about online sexual harassment*, available at www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2021/12/cco_talking_to_your_child_about_online_sexual_harassment_a-guide_for_parents_dec_2021.pdf. This very accessible guide deals with five subjects which children told the Commissioner's Office were important – pornography; sharing nude images; sexualised bullying; editing photos and body images; and peer pressure. A summary of their 'top tips' suggests the following:

1. Start speaking to your children about these issues before you first give them a phone or set up a social media account. This might feel very early, but you can do it in an age-appropriate way. It is better to be proactive than reactive.
Do not wait for the crisis.
2. Keep the conversation going. Adapt to your child so you can support them.
Do not mention it once and think that is enough.
3. Keep it casual, find everyday opportunities to speak about these issues with your child – like when you are walking or driving somewhere.
Do not scare them with 'the big talk'.
4. Focus on your child's emotions first and work out what they may have seen online. By listening to your child and understanding if they accessed harmful content, you can help to support them.
Do not punish them before listening and understanding.
5. Keep curious about the technology your child is using and stay up to date with platforms, apps and trends.
Do not pretend these issues do not exist
6. Set boundaries. Use filtering tools to limit your child's exposure to harmful content. Decide on rules and boundaries with your child, allowing them to input. Explain which monitoring and filtering tools you are using, and why.
Do not leave your child unsupervised online without using monitoring and filter tools. You would not leave them alone in the park or the street, apply the same level of protection online.