

Newsletter

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



May 2020

National Office Staff

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

Chief
Executive
Officer

[Teresa Devlin](#)

Director of
Training and
Support

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Advice and
Support

[Sister Colette Stevenson](#)

Introduction

We introduce this Newsletter by acknowledging the difficult and challenging times we are all living and working in. We are aware that a number of you have been impacted by Covid-19 and that many have suffered loss of loved ones. The National Board is mourning the loss of one of our Directors – Fr. Ed Grimes Cssp, who sadly passed away on April 15th following contraction of Covid-19.

We know that the impacts of this health pandemic - mental, emotional and physical - may last for a long time. This is a time to care for each other, to safeguard our families, our communities, our children, vulnerable people and our key workers. The National Board is conscious that many children may be suffering in silence behind closed doors. Abuse of children has not gone away, and the reality of abuse for some children is increased during this period where they are largely invisible. We know well that most children are abused by people they know, family members, relatives, neighbours and other trusted adults. It is therefore important that Church ministry considers the wellbeing of children at what is probably a frightening time for them.

This Newsletter provides some guidance about how to engage with children electronically, in ways which upholds their dignity and rights. It also provides resources and contacts if you are worried about a child; and resources for children who may be feeling anxious at this time.

The health crisis has had an impact on the National Office staff's ability to work. You will note that training and Reviews have been postponed. We are developing on-line training materials, and we have successfully obtained Microsoft Teams as a platform to use which we believe provides us with the security necessary to continue with as much of our work as possible. In the absence of face to face contact, we are taking the opportunity to engage in significant data protection work, including data destruction, and the review of materials, contacts and other data for retention under the National Board's data protection procedures.

Staff are currently working less than a normal week, remotely, but they are still contactable. This arrangement is being kept under review, pending advice from the Governments in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland about travel, social distancing and the health and well-being of staff. Should you wish to contact any of us you can find all our email addresses here www.safeguarding.ie. This Newsletter also flags events that have had to be cancelled in the coming weeks and months.

Fr. Ed Grimes C.S.Sp

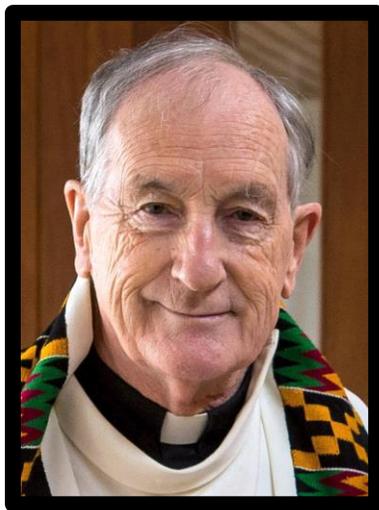
Fr. Ed was ordained in 1967 as a priest member of the then Holy Ghost Missionaries. His ministry took him from teaching in Kimmage in 1969 where he taught for 5 years, to The Gambia; and he spent most of the next two decades in West Africa. He later remarked that on arriving in 1974 there had been “no native Gambian priest and [only] a handful of native sisters’ but that within some 3 decades there were ‘15 native priests and as many sisters’. He was a pastor in Bwiam, a mission of c. 1,000 square km., from 1974 to 1980, and was founding director of the Gambia Pastoral Institute in 1976. He was Secretary General of the Freetown-based Episcopal Conference of West Africa through the 1980s, and Director of the Pontifical Missionary Society (PMS) for The Gambia, Liberia and Sierra Leone for over a decade. He also held the Banjul-based role of Director of Caritas Development for some time.

Fr. Ed studied Canon Law at the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. (1991-1994). For many years he was an active member of the Canon Law Society of America. He lectured in Canon Law in the KMI and was also Canonical Advisor to the Spiritan (Congregation of the Holy Spirit) Province.

Fr. Ed was appointed a Director of the National Board for Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Ireland in 2011, and he remained in role until his death on 15th April, 2020: He participated in the March Board meeting. Shortly thereafter he contracted Covid-19 and passed away from the illness.

Fr. Ed brought a gentle, yet reassuring approach to the work of the Board, speaking wisely, and only when necessary. He was supportive of the child safeguarding ministry, and understood the need for a just and balanced approach to those accused of abuse. Board Directors, National Office staff and the Catholic Church are indebted to Fr. Ed for his significant contribution to this important ministry.

In Unity!



Reviews of Child Safeguarding Practice

The second phase of Reviews of child safeguarding practice was well under way before the health crisis. All fieldwork is currently postponed but will restart as soon as Government guidance allows. Reviews of five Church bodies are either completed or are still in process, and a further five are in planning.

If you are unclear whether your Church body meets the threshold for Review, please contact teresa.devlin@safeguarding.ie.

The National Board has employed independent reviewers to conduct fieldwork in Church bodies where there is ministry with children and/or where there are allegations of abuse since the last review. If you are interested in applying to become a reviewer with the National Board please contact teresa.devlin@safeguarding.ie with your C.V.

Guidance on the Review Methodology is available on the National Board's website at this link <https://bit.ly/34t2OMh>

If you would like to invite the National Board to review your child safeguarding practice, please send a letter of invitation to Teresa Devlin so that a suitable timetable can be developed for 2020.

Governance

The National Board has revised a number of important governance procedures including:

- Code of Corporate Governance
- Governance compliance record
- Operational plan
- Risk register
- HR procedures ensuring supervision and appraisal of staff
- Internal financial procedures
- Complaints procedure

Clerics and Religious Ministering in External Organisations

Indicator 1.10 of *Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland* is a mandatory indicator for all Church bodies. This indicator requires that all clerics or religious who are ministering with children in any organisation outside of their Church body must do so in a way that is safe for children and for them. Each Church authority must be assured that everywhere a member of their Church body is ministering with children, safeguards are in place which include a child safeguarding policy and effective procedures.

The National Board Guidance on this can be found at <https://www.safeguarding.ie/roles2?task=document.viewdoc&id=272>. The National Board has produced a template, for completion by the external organisation and the member undertaking the ministry. This template form 1.10A which is available at the link above, once completed should be held on record by the Church authority.

It is important to remember that while the use of form 1.10A is guidance only, following the indicator is mandatory. In the absence of this form an alternative effective procedure must be in place to meet this indicator.

Training and Support

As noted in the introduction to the Newsletter, all training has now been postponed. We will continue to follow Government guidance in relation to social distancing, and as soon as we are able, we will update you on proposed dates for training.

In the meantime, we have been exploring ways to deliver some of the planned training online. This has included assessing different software packages for the delivery of training including conducting Data Privacy Impact Assessments and piloting some programmes online.

The Director of Training and Support will contact trainers who were unable to attend the update day on the new Training Manual, with the aim of organising cluster sessions online. This will provide an opportunity for trainers to access the new manual and to use this time to become familiar with its contents. Two pilot sessions have been planned; and based on a review of these pilots, the approach and facilitation will be refined before further events are scheduled.

Data Destruction

During the lockdown period, staff from the National Office have continued work on the process of reviewing all records in line with National Board Data Protection Policy. Currently, this involves 3 strands of work:

- Destruction of allegations data - all allegations data from 2008- 2019 that has been returned to each Church body is being destroyed, both electronic and hard copy versions.
- Destruction of allegations data 2019-2020 – following production of the National Board’s Annual Report (2019/2020), all Church authorities who submitted allegation data (within this time period) have been contacted and advised that this data will now be destroyed, unless they wish to view it.
- Review of Contact information - the process of contacting all Church personnel on the National Board’s database to verify the accuracy of their data is now underway, in line with our Data Protection Policy.

If you wish to access further information on any data protection matter relating to the National Board, please contact Niall Moore, DPO on dpo@safeguarding.ie

National Board’s Biennial Conference

Unfortunately, due to the health crisis, the National Board has taken the decision to postpone the National Conference until October 2021.

In place of the Conference, we hope to host a seminar (online or in person depending on Government guidance) on *Exploring the Theology of Safeguarding*. More details will follow when arrangements for this seminar are finalised.

Guidance Updates

There have been no recent updates to the Guidance since the last newsletter.



Practice Issues- Safety Online

Our inability to meet and engage face to face during this health crisis has meant that we are utilising electronic communication more and more; and similar to you, the National Board is looking at ways to develop our services online. We applaud the efforts that you are making to continue some ministry, including ministry with children and sacramental preparation online. It is important however to be mindful of the risks and challenges this presents, both for children and for us. We have identified below some tips and good practice ideas which will help mitigate those risks.

Whichever software you decide to use it is important to consider carefully the safeguarding issues that need to be addressed, in the same way you would do if you were engaging with children in this ministry in person instead of virtually. Some helpful principles to follow include:

- Consider the appropriateness of the ministry you are conducting - is it in line with the ethos and safeguarding message of the Church?
- At all times show respect to and uphold the dignity of children
- Do not engage in activities or language or behaviour that are inappropriate or abusive
- Only involve children in online promotion of religion with their full consent, and that of their parents/carers; and then only in ways that promotes the well-being of children
- Follow your Church body's code of conduct
- Be careful which room you use to facilitate the activity – it is not advisable to film religious promotional materials in bedrooms or bathrooms.

Dr Maureen Griffin, B.A. M.A. Ph.D., Forensic Psychologist and Director of MGMS Training Limited has written a piece of guidance for the Diocese of Killaloe on online communication, which both Dr Griffin and the diocese are happy to share. It is important to state that the information supplied in this document is intended as a guide, it does not replace the importance of parental involvement and supervision of their child's online activities. Links to external sites are provided as a convenience and for informational purposes only. They do not constitute an endorsement or an approval by MGMS Training Limited, of any of the products, services or opinions of the corporation/organisation/individual. MGMS Training Limited bears no responsibility for the accuracy, legality or content of the external site or for that of subsequent links. Links correct at time of publication 25/04/2020.

The Coronavirus Pandemic restrictions have undoubtedly resulted in increased usage of online platforms to stay in touch. While there are amazing benefits to these platforms for educational, professional and personal use, some aspects need to be considered when communicating with youth.

This guide should be read in conjunction with your current Church body's Social Media Policy and Communicating with Minors Guidelines.



Instagram: Age rating 13+ (Digital Age of Consent in Ireland is 16 years and Northern Ireland is 13 years)

Instagram's Privacy Settings and Information contains instructions on how to control a number of aspects on your account, including filtering out comments you do not want to appear on your posts on Instagram; turning off comments for Instagram posts; and removing Instagram images from Google search. These privacy settings can be accessed in their Help Centre under 'Managing My Account'. Link <https://help.instagram.com/196883487377501>

If you are encouraging youth to use this platform, it would be advisable to remind them of the privacy setting Instagram offers and make sure they know how to block (detailed instructions in their Help Centre under Privacy and Safety Centre - Link <https://help.instagram.com/426700567389543>) and how to report issues (detailed instructions in their Help Centre under Privacy and Safety Centre. Link <https://help.instagram.com/372161259539444>).

WhatsApp: Age rating 16+ (Digital Age of Consent in Ireland and Northern Ireland is 13 years)

WhatsApp Privacy settings enable you to control your visibility when using WhatsApp, who can add you to a group chat, who can see your profile picture and whether or not contacts can see if you have read their messages/or when you were last online. You can also block contacts and report issues. Link to WhatsApp Privacy Settings <https://www.whatsapp.com/privacy>

A big issue on any online platform is the spreading of misinformation. You may have already come across a number of 'warning messages' which are circulating on WhatsApp. If a message has been forwarded on to more than 5 people, a double arrow icon will be present ➡️. WhatsApp have now introduced new stricter limits on forwarding messages.

If encouraging youth to use WhatsApp, remind them to secure their privacy settings and check out WhatsApp's advice on helping to "prevent the spread of rumours and fake news" Link <https://faq.whatsapp.com/26000216>

TikTok. Age rating 13+ (Digital Age of Consent in Ireland is 16 years and in Northern Ireland is 13 years)

TikTok's Safety Tools enable you to make an account private, control who can send you messages, control who can comment on your videos, delete comments, block and report issues etc. Link to TikTok's Safety Centre <https://www.tiktok.com/safety/tools>

To help parents understand what TikTok is about and the associated risks, Common Sense Media have put together a Parent's Guide. If you are encouraging youth to access this platform, it would be advisable to encourage both youth and parents to access TikTok's Safety Centre and check out Common Sense Media's Guide Link <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/parents-ultimate-guide-to-tiktok>

General Advice

- The digital age of consent in Ireland is 16 years. For those under-16 years who wish to use any online service or platform which collects and/or processes their personal information, parental permission is required. Hence, WhatsApp's minimum age increased from 13+ to 16+. For more information see Data Protection Act 2018 <https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/act/2018/7/eng/enacted/a0718.pdf> and <https://www.dataprotection.ie/>
- Regardless of the platform being used before sharing content or forwarding on a message to a group or other contacts, STOP and ask yourself
 - "Why am I sharing this?"
 - "Does this content fit within the guidelines for which this group was created?"
 - "How could this content be interpreted by others?"
 - "Does this content reflect the ethos of our organisation?"

For messages that have been forwarded on to you, before re-sharing STOP, check the source and ensure the content is accurate. Ask the above questions.



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



Contact Details

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Co. Kildare

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F : 00 353 (01) 5053026

- Be mindful of requesting youth to join group video chats or share video content from their home. Some youth may feel uncomfortable sharing their home environment. Other family members, personal information etc. may also be visible. Certain platforms enable users to use generic backgrounds when sharing video content. Encourage youth to choose this option where possible and/or provide alternative means of connecting for youth who are uncomfortable with group video chats or sharing video content.
- Remind youth to activate Two-Step Verification/Two-Factor Authentication for all accounts (where available). This is an extra layer of security for their account, requiring a code in addition to a password to access their account. Remember to print off the back up codes when setting this up.
 1. Two Step Verification WhatsApp <https://faq.whatsapp.com/26000021>
 2. Two Factor Authentication Instagram <https://help.instagram.com/566810106808145>
 3. Two Factor Authentication Snapchat <https://support.snapchat.com/en-US/article/enable-login-verification>
- Update all apps as required to benefit from the latest security and privacy options.
- Digital wellbeing features are also available for many popular Apps, allowing users to control how much time they spend on that App, see their daily activity, turn off notifications and set reminders to take a break. Encourage youth to look after their mental health online by accessing the platforms wellbeing features (where available)
 1. Digital Wellbeing TikTok <https://www.tiktok.com/safety/resources/digital-wellbeing?lang=en>
 2. Instagram Wellbeing <https://wellbeing.instagram.com/digital%20>
 3. Snapchat Here for You Tool, which shows resources from expert localised partners when you search for certain topics related to mental health, anxiety, stress etc. <https://support.snapchat.com/en-US/news/safety-first-news>

Checklist

1. Are the platforms I am encouraging youth to use Age Appropriate?
2. For those under 16 years, have I asked youth to discuss the platform/s with parents and seek parental permission?
3. For those under 16 years, have I provided parents with updated information guides on the platform's we are using with youth, so they can understand the associated benefits and risks? Common Sense Media <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/> and National Online Safety UK <https://nationalonlinesafety.com/guides> offer up-to-date guides and advice regarding current popular Apps.
4. Have I informed youth of the privacy settings of the platforms I am encouraging them to use?
5. Have I set clear guidelines on what is acceptable / unacceptable to share on the platforms we are using?
6. Am I connecting youth through a platform who would not have been in contact previously (e.g. the creation of a group where all members now have access to contact details of all other members)? If so, have I gained consent for their personal information to be shared in this way?