



Diocese of Elphin

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN NEWSLETTER



VOL 2: SPRING 2011

A WORD FROM THE BISHOP

Our children and young people are a gift from God and deserve our best care and protection. Safeguarding Children, in a Church context, is about valuing all children and valuing and supporting the adults who serve them. It is about ensuring that the settings children, young people and leaders occupy are respectful of the dignity of all, that they are safe, protective and holistically healthy. It is about valuing the welfare of all, especially children.

Our communities are blessed through the dedicated service of parents/guardians and other adults who give generously of themselves in fostering a culture of participation in ministry and appropriate service of community in our children and young people. In so doing they frequently contribute very positively to the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional and social development of children and young people and bring a welcome expression of their faith and goodness to our communal worship and service of God and each other.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who actively participate in our Diocesan Safeguarding Structures: the members of the Safeguarding Children Advisory Committee; the Diocesan Advisory Panel; Designated Persons; Director of Safeguarding; Safeguarding Trainers; Support Persons and Adviser. At parish level my sincere thanks to our Priests, Local Safeguarding Representatives and our Parish Recruitment and Selection Committees on whom the continued work of implementation and monitoring of best practice rests.

It is my fervent prayer that our continued development and promotion of a culture of safety for our children and young people will lead to a new and sustained confidence in our Church as it continues to proclaim the gospel of Christ to each new generation, bringing peace, joy and new life to all.



+ Christopher Jones

Christopher Jones DD Bishop of Elphin



SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN TRAINING

The Diocese of Elphin has signed up to the HSE Keeping Safe Training Initiative in order to ensure accredited training is delivered to staff and volunteers throughout the diocese. The diocese currently employs two HSE Accredited Trainers to deliver the programme. The provision of Keeping Safe Training for all people in our parishes who through their ministry have contact with children/young people under eighteen years old is a core component of the diocese's work in adhering to best practice in the area of Safeguarding Children. Any person whether Full-time, Part-time or Volunteer who through his/her ministry in the name of the Church has contact with children,

has an inherent obligation to attend Keeping Safe Training. Others who may not have an obvious direct ministry with children may however due to their job description and responsibilities in the parish also require training, for example our parish secretaries.

A total of 101 volunteers have received Keeping Safe Training since December 2009. This added to those trained prior to 2009 brings the number to over 300 priests and laity who have undergone Safeguarding Children Training in our diocese.

DIOCESAN POLICY STATEMENT

“Each child/young person is a gift from God and has an inherent right to dignity of life and bodily integrity, which must be respected, nurtured and protected by all. We recognize the dignity and rights of every child/young person and are committed to ensuring their safety and well-being. The welfare of the child must always be paramount. We acknowledge that all who work with children/young people have a special duty of care towards them. Leaders must create a safe environment for children/young people in order to secure their protection and enable their full participation in the life of the Church.”



During 2010 Bishop Christopher Jones officially launched the New Revised Policy and Procedures for the Safeguarding of Children and Young People in the diocese of Elphin. The gathering included members of the diocese's various Safeguarding Committees along with members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Priests' Council. Also present were, Rev Raymond Brown and Mrs. Mary Nicholson, Diocesan Designated Persons, and Mr Colin Harrison, Childcare Manager HSE West.

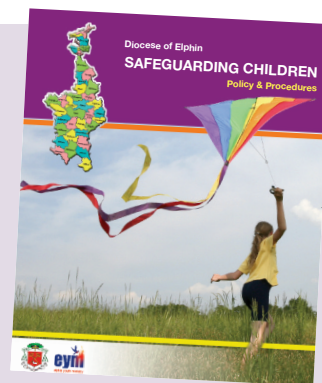
Mr Frank McGuinness who is the Elphin Diocesan full-time Director of Youth Ministry and Safeguarding Children and HSE Accredited Keeping Safe Trainer introduced the document. He outlined how all people, paid or voluntary, who through their ministry in the Church within the Diocese of Elphin have contact directly or indirectly with children and young people, are obliged to sign up to and adhere to this policy document.

Its contents are underpinned by the statutory guidelines found in the state document *Children First. National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* which form the basis of the now normative and binding *Safeguarding Children – Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland* published by the National Office for safeguarding in the Catholic Church which is headed by Mr Ian Elliott CEO.

The colourful and attractive publication includes not only the diocesan policy and associated statements but also codes of behaviour, core prevention and reporting procedures, Garda Vetting policy and procedures for the vetting of clergy and laity along with supporting forms and resources for those working in this area.

Presenting the document, Mr Mc Guinness re-iterated the words of Pope Benedict XVI in his Pastoral Letter to the Irish Church, that: *"the Church in Ireland must first acknowledge before the Lord and before others the serious sins committed against defenceless children. Such an acknowledgement, accompanied by sincere sorrow for the damage caused to these victims and their families, must lead to a concerted effort to ensure the protection of children from similar crimes in the future."* He concluded that the launch marked a significant step in such a concerted effort to do all in our power as church to put children first – both now and in the future.

Commenting on the document and congratulating those who have invested a large amount of time and energy in this work over the last few years with the support of personnel from the HSE and the Church's National Office for Safeguarding Children, Bishop Jones pledged that the church *"is prepared to do everything in its power to establish best practice and ensure that the dignity and bodily integrity of the children and*



young people of every parish of our diocese are recognised, respected and protected." He also thanked the work and commitment of parish clergy, parents, guardians and volunteers who are taking these initiatives on board and facilitating their implementation in an accountable manner at local parish level.

In a message of congratulations to the gathering the National Office of Safeguarding for the Catholic Church in Ireland, expressed the hope that the implementing of this New Revised Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures for the Diocese of Elphin will *"ensure that children are safe and warmly welcomed into all aspects of the life of each individual parish."*

Subsequent to the official launch it was disseminated to all key personnel in all parishes throughout the diocese. This was followed by information and support evenings for each of our six deaneries, which provided for an overview of the new document for priests and other safeguarding personnel, with a view to advancing the continued implementation of best practice of safeguarding children in their parishes.

It is worth noting that we have published our revised 'policy and procedures' within a ring binder. This serves as an indication that we understand them always to be in the process of transition and fine-tuning. The separate sections can be updated and extended as required. In particular any change to the statutory or Church guidelines will be fully and quickly reflected in future revisions.

Bishop Christopher Jones with members of the Diocesan Safeguarding Children Advisory Committee who were present at the official launch. Chairperson of the committee, Mr. Paddy Hennelly second from left.



GARDA VETTING; RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF CHURCH VOLUNTEERS

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY AND SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN



Garda Vetting is a core element of best practice in the recruitment and selection process of staff and volunteers for any organisation. In line with this national guideline it is now a requirement within the Diocese of Elphin that all Church personnel who have direct contact with children and young people undergo Garda Vetting.

In conjunction with the Diocesan Office of Youth Ministry and Safeguarding Children, the diocese of Elphin has worked collaboratively with the other five Dioceses of the Western Province and the Garda Central Vetting Unit to establish a common Policy and Procedures Document in relation to Garda Vetting.

This policy, which has been ratified by the six Bishops, provides a standardised procedure and ensures a unified approach to the vetting of all adults, both clerical and lay, who work with children and young people in our Church settings.

In order to ensure the smooth and efficient administration of Garda Vetting for the six dioceses, the Western Province has set up a central vetting service to administer the vetting of all church personnel. The office, The Western Province Diocesan Vetting Service, is based in the Galway Diocesan Pastoral Centre and is staffed by trained personnel.

The vetting of church personnel is being rolled out in phases. The first phase is completed and involved the vetting of all our diocesan clergy. The Bishops of the Western Province have already submitted themselves to Garda Vetting. The next phase will be the vetting of lay people both paid and voluntary who have through their service in the Church direct contact with children and young people, which is underway and should be completed by the end of 2011.

TO OUR CHURCH VOLUNTEERS

Staff and volunteers in our parishes are valued, appreciated and very necessary. They give of their time, talents and experience willingly. In particular volunteering is a practical way to show that we care and that we want to be involved in the future growth and development of our church community.

In order that our parishes and community continue to grow and thrive it is essential that sound recruitment and selection procedures are put in place, and that all our clergy, staff and volunteers will be committed to ensuring the safety and well being of children and young people.

Some volunteers, particularly those already known to the parish community, may feel that the recruitment and selection process is unnecessary, however by having good standards of practice in place more volunteers will come on board and work towards restoring confidence in our Church as a safe place for our children to flourish and grow as God intended.

In time, for the genuine and well motivated applicants, the recruitment and selection process, of which Garda Vetting is a core element, will become routine and accepted as part of our overall safeguarding policy which is in the best interest of everyone.

Frank McGuinness,

Director of Youth Ministry & Safeguarding Children

Parish Recruitment & Selection Committees (PRSC)

It is recommended that each Parish put in place a specific committee that will oversee the recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers engaged in ministry in the parish. The Parish Recruitment and Selection Committee will consist of at least two people comprised of some or all of the following: - The Parish Priest or his nominee; A member of the Parish Pastoral Council; A local Safeguarding Representative and one other person if necessary in the interest of gender balance. Recruitment procedures include: appropriate advertising, application form, declaration form, identification, referees, interviews and Garda Vetting.

A complete outline of the diocese's recruitment and selection process can be found in Section 7 of our Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures.

A Map of the Diocese of Elphin

showing the parishes within each of its six deaneries.

- Sligo
- Boyle
- Castlereagh
- Strokestown
- Roscommon
- Athlone



RESPONDING TO & REPORTING

Child Protection Concerns, Allegations or Disclosures

SOME WAYS YOU MAY BECOME AWARE THAT ABUSE IS HAPPENING

People may tell you about:

- Abuse that is happening to them now – current.
- Abuse that happened to them some time ago – historical.
- Something they've been told by someone else and that they strongly believe is true.

You may witness or people may tell you about:

- Signs of abuse, such as physical injuries to a child.
- Something such as, the behaviour of an adult to a child that made you/them feel uncomfortable.

IF A CHILD BEGINS TO TELL YOU ABOUT ABUSE

Children may tell an adult they are being abused if they feel they can trust this person. This happens for many reasons but the important thing to remember is that if they do tell, they are doing so in the hope that the abuse will be stopped. This is true even if the child asks that nothing be done with the information.

If a child tells you about abuse it is important that you: Listen, Record and Report

DO:

- Stay calm and listen - give the child time to say what she or he wants to say.
- Listen carefully and attentively; take the child seriously.
- Reassure the child that they are doing the right thing.
- Explain that you will need to discuss this with someone else.
- Record the disclosure as carefully as possible; outline what the child said, in the language the child used.
- Inform the Parents/Guardians of the disclosure unless doing so could put the child/young person at risk.
- Report the child's disclosure to the Diocesan Designated Person immediately.
- If there is a serious risk or danger for the child concerned please contact the HSE and/or An Gardaí immediately.

DO NOT:

- Panic.
- Ask leading questions or make suggestions.
- Stop the child recalling significant events.
- Ask probing questions or make the child repeat the story unnecessarily.
- Promise to keep it a secret.
- Express opinions about the child or members of his or her family.



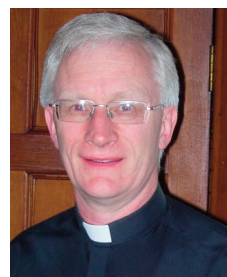
DIOCESAN DESIGNATED PERSONS

The Diocese of Elphin has appointed two Designated Persons, Mrs. Mary Nicholson and Fr. Ray Browne. Their role is to receive all concerns relating to the safeguarding of children, including any disclosures or allegations of abuse and take responsibility for managing the response to that concern or disclosure. This will include referral to the HSE and the Gardaí.

In the event of a Diocesan Designated Person not being available or when a child is at immediate risk contact should be made with the local Health Service Executive's Duty Social Worker or during 'out of duty social work hours' with local Gardaí. Contact details available on Safeguarding Notice in all church buildings in the diocese.



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