



# Diocese of Elphin

## Safeguarding Children Newsletter

Vol. 5 Spring 2015

### A WORD FROM BISHOP KEVIN

I am very happy to welcome this edition of the Safeguarding Newsletter for the Diocese of Elphin. Safeguarding is constantly on my agenda as Bishop and scarcely a week has gone by since my appointment without a meeting of some kind, as part of our on-going commitment to ensure that the children can participate actively and safely in the life of the Church. As you will see from the Newsletter we are constantly working closely with the National Board and with other Irish Dioceses to ensure that safeguarding standards are reviewed and revised, in line with best international practice.



One new allegation of abuse has been made since my appointment as bishop. The abuse is alleged to have happened in the late 1960s and the priest in question is deceased. In keeping with best practice, this allegation has been reported to the civil authorities and to the National Board.

At this point in time, it is important that we do not become complacent. While our structures and our understanding are far better than they were ten years ago, human nature has not changed. I would ask all parishioners to be alert without being paranoid and to draw attention to any potential gaps in safeguarding procedures at local level.

In keeping with new legislation, we will shortly be embarking on a new round of Garda Vetting, for those who were vetted five years ago. It is our hope that this will be simplified somewhat by the introduction of a new electronic system for filing requests.

I am very grateful to all those who have assisted in the development and implementing of our safeguarding arrangements, our parish representatives, our Safeguarding Committees, our two designated persons, Mary and Helen, support personnel, as well as Deacon Frank McGuinness who oversees the safeguarding service in the diocese.

+ Kevin Doran [Bishop of Elphin](#)



### DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN 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

## APPOINTMENT OF NEW DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON



Ms Helen Diskin was appointed as Designated Liaison Person to replace Fr. Ray Browne who formally had this role before his appointment as Bishop of Kerry. Helen will work with Mrs Mary Nicholson who continues to work for the Diocese in this area. Helen is a native of Moylough, Co. Galway and is now married and living in Sligo with three young adult children. She worked as a Garda in the Sligo/Leitrim Division for over 30 years. Most of her service was spent in the Ballymote District where she retired as a Detective Officer. She was involved in the investigation of serious crime, domestic violence and sexual abuse cases – current and historic. She had a great working relationship with outside agencies especially the HSE and has extensive experience relating to child protection matters. Since retiring she has got involved in a number of voluntary support organisations and for the past eight years she has volunteered as a Youth Leader with the annual Diocesan Youth Pilgrimage to Lourdes. Helen brings a wealth of experience to this role with a comprehensive background in law, a warm nature, a great sense of empathy and understanding and an ability to deal with the complex issues which arise as a result of an allegation of abuse.

## SAFEGUARDING TRAINING UPDATE

NBSCCCI Accredited Full Safeguarding Training was offered to volunteers across all six deaneries in the Diocese. The training was attended by volunteers who have access to children through their ministry in their parish. In addition to this the annual Safeguarding In-Service Training was attended by Priests, Deacons and Local Safeguarding Representatives. The focus of the in-service was the implementation and monitoring of safeguarding policy and procedures at parish level. All diocesan training is offered by NBSCCCI accredited trainers:

Frank McGuinness and Mary Nicolson. The National Office in Maynooth also offered a significant amount of training for the Director of Safeguarding, DLP's and Safeguarding Support Personnel as follows:

- NBSCCCI Training Material Update
- NCMRG Training
- New DLP Training
- Recording Training
- Case Management Training
- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith - Overview of Safeguarding Practice Training
- Working with Survivors Training.

## SAFEGUARDING INDUCTION FOR NEW BISHOP

One of the recommendations from the 2012 NBSCCCI Review of Safeguarding Practice in the Diocese was to ensure that a comprehensive safeguarding induction programme was developed and delivered to the new bishop once he was appointed. The Director of Safeguarding, Frank McGuinness, developed this prior to Bishop Kevin's appointment and went through it with him shortly after his ordination as Bishop of Elphin.

## DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURES REVISION

The Diocesan Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures is due for revision and updating. With the agreement of the six Bishops of the Western Province the Director of Safeguarding has worked with his counterparts in the other five dioceses to develop a common Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures Template for the West Province. The draft is now complete and awaiting the New Safeguarding Children Standards and Guidance Document to be published by the NBSCCCI so that any new updates can be included in our common policy before being published. It is envisaged that the new revision of our Diocesan Safeguarding Policy and Procedures Document will be published once approval received from NBSCCCI.

## **SAFEGUARDING REVIEW OF PARISHES**

Each Priest in conjunction with their Local Safeguarding Representative was asked to complete a Safeguarding Review for each church area in their parish. These review forms were required to be completed and returned to the Safeguarding Office. This process is part of the Office's requirement to monitor and review the level of safeguarding practice in each parish in the diocese. This review is conducted every two years.

## **APPOINTMENT OF LOCAL SAFEGUARDING REPRESENTATIVES**

Each parish was asked to nominate a new Parish Safeguarding Representative(s) or re-nominate their existing Representative(s) by sending in a completed nomination form to the Safeguarding Office. The new term runs from October 2014 to October 2017. The role of the Local Safeguarding Representative in conjunction with their Priest is to promote safeguarding best practice by:

- Raising awareness of what safeguarding is.
- Disseminating information regarding standards and guidance.
- Ensuring church activities are provided in a way that ensures the safety and well-being of the children and volunteers involved.
- Ensuring contact details of Designated Liaison Persons, Garda and TUSLA/Gateway Team are widely publicised.

## **VETTING OF PARISH VOLUNTEERS**

The Safeguarding Review which was carried out in each parish identified volunteers who through their ministry have substantial unsupervised contact with children. These volunteers were asked to take part in the NBSCCCI full safeguarding programme training. Part of this training includes training on safe recruitment practices. Each volunteer in attendance completed Garda Vetting and other recruitment policy requirements as per our Diocesan Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

## **MEETINGS WITH TUSLA (Child and Family Agency)**

Regular meetings continued to take place with TUSLA and the Safeguarding Personnel of the Diocese. Case management and Safeguarding best practice issues and updates are discussed at these meetings. The Diocese would like to acknowledge with gratitude the on-going support and advice received from TUSLA on all matters pertaining to Safeguarding in the Diocese.

## **GARDA VETTING GOING ON-LINE**

An Garda Síochána have developed a new on-line vetting application process to cut down on delays. The current average processing time for applications is around 14 weeks from the date of receipt and is prone to seasonal fluctuations. The new system will allow for applications to be submitted electronically through a secure web service. The service is due to go live in 2015.



The Diocese of Elphin values any feedback on its Safeguarding Children Policy & Procedures. Whether you are a member of Clergy, Staff, Volunteer, Parent, Young Person or Child all feedback is greatly appreciated and evaluated in our annual review of our Safeguarding Policies, Procedures, Structures and Practices. Please contact:

**Mr. Frank McGuinness, Director of Safeguarding Children,  
St. Mary's, Temple Street, Sligo. Tel: 087 9880690**



# REVISION OF SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN – STANDARDS & GUIDANCE FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IRELAND



The NBSCCCI are currently revising “Safeguarding Children – Standards and Guidance for the Catholic Church in Ireland”. To assist them in this work the Board has appointed a Project Manager – Grace Kelly who took up her position on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2014. Eight working groups were established and have convened and as a consequence the following documents have been produced in draft form:

- Overarching Child Safeguarding Policy for the Catholic Church in Ireland
- Standard 1- Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments
- Standard 2- Responding and reporting allegations of abuse
- Standard 3- Care of the Complainant
- Standard 4- Care and Management of the Respondent
- Standard 5- Training
- Standard 6- Communicating the Church’s Safeguarding Message
- Standard 7- Implementation and Monitoring

All of these documents are available in for review by contacting [grace.kelly@safeguarding.ie](mailto:grace.kelly@safeguarding.ie)

A series of consultation meetings are taking place with TUSLA; DHSSPSNI; Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland; An Garda Síochána; PSNI; Survivors of abuse; One in Four; Towards Healing; Accused priests and religious; parents and Children. Final draft editing and printing is planned for June 2015



## Launch of “Towards Peace” by the Irish Episcopal Conference

Feedback from survivors has highlighted the profoundly negative impact that abuse has had on their faith and on their relationship with God. Towards Peace is a whole Church response to this concern. It is one of three services that form a pastoral response to abuse by the Church in Ireland. The other two services are: Towards Healing, the free and confidential counselling referral service and The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

Towards Peace offers spiritual support for survivors of abuse by Church personnel. The service is for those whose faith has been damaged by abuse and who wish to continue their search for meaning and for God. There is no pre-determined road map. Each person travels her/his own spiritual journey at a different pace. All additional information on Towards Peace is available at <http://towardspeace.ie>

**REPORTING A CONCERN:** If you have a Safeguarding concern or wish to report and allegation of child abuse, please contact one of our **Diocesan Designated Liaison Persons**, who are responsible for receiving/managing concerns and complaints relating to church personnel. Their names and contact details are as follows:



**Ms. Mary Nicholson**  
C/O St. Mary’s Temple  
Street Sligo  
Tel: 086 3750277



**Ms. Helen Diskin**  
C/O St. Mary’s Temple  
Street Sligo  
Tel: 087 0516888