



Vol. 6 Spring_Summer 2017

A SAFE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

When it comes to Safeguarding, I suppose most people feel that “no news is good news”. That is not always the case. I want to take the opportunity of this periodic Newsletter to give you an update on some important developments in safeguarding, both nationally and in our own Diocese. To begin with, let me tell you about some changes in our own safeguarding personnel at Diocesan level.



Over ten years ago, Bishop Christy Jones established a safeguarding committee to work with him in setting up the structures that were necessary to ensure that all adults are alert to best practice in safeguarding and that every child can participate safely in all activities associated with the Church. This committee included Fr. Joe Fitzgerald, Fr Eamon O'Connor, Mr. Paddy Hennelly, Mr. Oliver McDonagh, Ms. Dearbhla Gill, Ms. Pauline Scott and Mr. Bill Fox. They did their work well under very difficult circumstances. We had an opportunity recently to thank them personally and I want to do that again here in a more public way. As part of an overall review of our safeguarding structures, we have now established a new safeguarding committee to continue the good work.

Deacon Frank McGuinness who has served as Director of Safeguarding since January 2009 has been reassigned. He will now devote his energies full time to his responsibility as Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry as well as to his new responsibility as Director of Vocations. The experience he has gained in safeguarding will serve him well in these roles. I want to thank him for his hard work and attention to detail for which he is held in high regard, not just here in the Diocese but at national level.

I am very happy to announce that Ms. Mary Nicholson, who has many years of professional experience in the field of child welfare, and who has worked for the Diocese in a part-time capacity as one of our Diocesan Liaison Persons (DLP) with the statutory authorities, as well as being a Safeguarding trainer, has now agreed to take on the role of Director of Safeguarding. I welcome her to this new and important responsibility and I ask you to give her your full support in her new role.

Mary will be supported in her new role by a new Safeguarding Committee which, in addition to myself, includes Fr. Michael Duignan (Chancellor); Helen Diskin (our other DLP); Mr. Frank Mitchell (Support Person for Complainants); Fr. Brian Conlon (Advisor to Respondents) and Deacon Frank McGuinness, who in addition to his new roles, remains a Safeguarding trainer.

It is the responsibility of the Diocesan Liaison Persons to bring to the attention of the Garda authorities and of Tusla (The Child and Family Agency of the HSE) any allegation of child sexual abuse which may be made to the Diocese in relation to priest or a lay person ministering in or acting on behalf of the Diocese.

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Painful as it may be, I am personally committed to ensuring that any such complaint is listened to with respect and compassion, while always bearing in mind that I have obligations in justice both to the complainant and to the person against whom the complaint is made.

In my report in the Newsletter of Spring 2015, I informed you that one complaint had been made in mid-2014 against a deceased priest of the Diocese, in relation to incidents which were alleged to have occurred in the late 1960's. Between the lapse of time and the death of the priest in question, it was not easy to establish the truth in this case. I can now report that this matter has been resolved and the complaint discontinued, with no finding of any wrong-doing on the part of the priest. There are no other active cases at the present time.

As you may be aware, the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland, was established by the Catholic Bishops Conference, the Conference of Religious of Ireland and the Irish Missionary Union, to provide advice and support on all aspects of safeguarding children, to develop policy in keeping with best practice, and to monitor safeguarding practice within the Catholic Church in Ireland. Over the past two years, the National Board has been updating its standards and guidance. Frank McGuinness, in his capacity as Diocesan Director of Safeguarding has been actively involved in this process and, in partnership with the safeguarding personnel of other Western dioceses, has just completed the preparation of a new safeguarding handbook for the Diocese, which will be published very shortly by the Bishops of the Western Province.

In the meantime, also in cooperation with the other Dioceses of the Western Province, the Diocese of Elphin has adopted a new policy on safeguarding vulnerable adults. This policy will help us to put in place the kind of good practice that will not only protect adults who are elderly or otherwise vulnerable, but also those who minister to them in a professional or voluntary capacity in the Church. Training of parish representatives and clergy in both the new Standards for Safeguarding Children and in the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults, will be on-going through 2017.

Meanwhile, during 2016, the periodic renewal of Garda Vetting for all priests and deacons and for volunteers you have regular engagement with children, was carried out in accordance with the new Garda vetting legislation. Thankfully, electronic vetting is now in place and the process has become simpler and less time-consuming.

In the final analysis, of course, Garda Vetting is not the key to safeguarding children. It is simply a deterrent. The best way to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are safe in all their involvement with the Church is to ensure that best practice is observed at all times. In the Buddhist tradition, "awareness" is one of the great virtues. It is the responsibility of all of us to have our eyes open for any lack of good practice or any suspicious behaviour which might pose a risk to children or vulnerable adults.

I want to thank all of you, priests and deacons, sacristans, volunteers, parishioners and, in particular, our parish representatives, for all that you have done and continue to do to ensure that the Church is a place of safety and welcome for children and vulnerable adults. May God bless you all.

+ Kevin Doran [Bishop of Elphin](#)

NEW SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY AND STANDARDS

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland has produced new revised safeguarding children policy and standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland. A summary of the Policy and the New Standards can be found below.

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY STATEMENT

As a constituent member of the Catholic Church in Ireland, we recognise and uphold the dignity and rights of all children, are committed to ensuring their safety and well-being, and will work in partnership with parents/guardians to do this. We recognise each child as a gift from God, and we value and encourage the participation of children in all activities that enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development. All Church personnel (including clergy, religious, staff and volunteers) have a responsibility to safeguard children through promoting their welfare, health and development in a safe and caring environment that supports their best interests and prevents abuse.

THE SEVEN SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS

There are **seven standards** that every Church body is required to meet to fulfil the child safeguarding policy. They are:

Standard 1: Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments

The Diocese provides an environment for children that is welcoming, nurturing and safe. It provides access to good role models whom the children can trust, and who respect, protect, and enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development.

Standard 2: Procedures for Responding to Child Protections Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations

The Diocese has clear procedures and guidance on what to do and how to ensure there is a prompt response when suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations regarding a child's safety or welfare arise. It also enables the Church to meet all national and international legal and practice requirements and guidance.

Standard 3: Care and Support for the Complainant

Complainants who have suffered abuse as children receive a compassionate response when they disclose their abuse. They, and their families, are offered appropriate support, advice and pastoral care.

Standard 4: Care and Management of the Respondent

The Diocese has in place a fair process for investigating and managing child safeguarding concerns. When the threshold for reporting has been reached, a system of support and monitoring for respondents (cleric or religious) is provided.

Standard 5: Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe

Church personnel are trained and supported in all aspects of safeguarding relevant to their role, in order to develop and maintain the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to safeguarding and protect children.

Standard 6: Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

The Diocese appropriately communicates the Church's child safeguarding message.

Standard 7: Quality Assuring Compliance with the Standards

The Diocese develops a plan of action to quality assure compliance with the safeguarding standards. This action plan is reviewed annually. The Church body only has responsibility to monitor, evaluate and report on compliance with the indicators under each standard that applies to it, depending on its ministry.



The Diocese of Elphin as part of its safeguarding work has produced Interim Diocesan Guidelines on Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults for Clergy, Staff and Volunteers.

SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY STATEMENT

The Diocese is committed to safeguarding as an integral component of the life and ministry of the Church and recognises that we have a special responsibility towards all vulnerable people who are members of our faith community. We are committed to creating a safe, caring and compassionate environment for all but especially those parishioners defined as "vulnerable".

OVERVIEW OF DOCUMENT: The Diocese recognises that there are many people with whom Church personnel have contact who require special care and attention. The Diocese values and encourages the participation

of vulnerable adults in all parish liturgies and activities that enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development. We believe that all Church personnel, including priests, religious, staff and volunteers must carry out their ministry respecting the rights of the individual in line with gospel values and human rights legislation.

The Diocese recognises and upholds the dignity and rights of vulnerable adults and is committed to safeguarding all our members. The guidance set out in this document provides a framework of how it is recommended that the Diocese ministers to vulnerable adults. It identifies what we mean by the term "vulnerable" and highlights values and principles which should underpin such necessary work.

These guidelines apply to all clergy (both Diocesan and visiting), staff, volunteers, and religious and adhere to current practice and guidance in the Republic of Ireland. The Diocese, through these guidelines, sets out to protect vulnerable adults from harm and exploitation and to uphold their rights by acting in their best interests and with their consent.

Training on these guidelines will be scheduled in the coming year for all of our clergy and others who minister to vulnerable adults.

The Policy and Guidance Document is available to download from our Diocesan Website at www.elphindiocese.ie/vulnerable-adults

GARDA VETTING – NEW e-VETTING SYSTEM

Applications for Vetting are now submitted electronically in a process known as e-Vetting. The National Vetting Bureau (NVB) is no longer accepting paper applications.

All information on how the new process works and relevant guidance and forms are available on the Safeguarding Section of the Diocesan Website at <http://www.elphindiocese.ie/garda-vetting>



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:



Ms Mary Nicholson, Director of Safeguarding, St. Mary's, Temple Street, Sligo.
Tel: 086 3750277

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

DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY STATEMENT

Child Safeguarding Policy Statement of the Constituent Members of the Catholic Church in Ireland

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