

Safeguarding Children in the Diocese of Meath

Newsletter

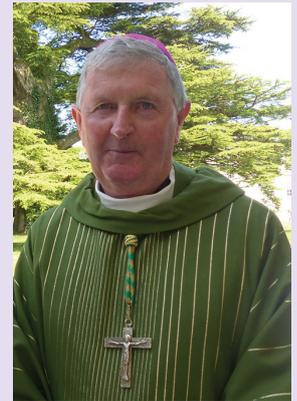


Bishop Michael Smith celebrates Safeguarding Children Mass

The National Conference for Safeguarding Children in Tullamore earlier this month began with Mass celebrated by Bishop Michael Smith.

In his homily, the Bishop thanked the many volunteers at parish, diocesan and national level whose efforts are creating the safest possible environment for young people in the Church.

The Conference was attended by several representatives of the Diocese of Meath including Joan Walshe, David Gavin, Antoinette Shaw and Fr Paul Crosbie.



In the keynote address, Archbishop Eamonn Martin referred to the significant work of "Towards Healing", the Church's counselling service for victims of abuse. Since 2011, "Towards Healing" has provided 141,410 hours of face-to-face counselling and supported 1,732 victims last year. The Conference also heard from Teresa Kettelkamp, a member of the Vatican's Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, established by Pope Francis in 2014 to advise him on child safeguarding measures.

Revision of Child Safeguarding Policy and Standards

Since the introduction of Safeguarding Children: **Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland**, in 2009, there has been a number of developments in legislation, policy and practice. These have led the NBSCCCI to revise and update the Standards. This process began in June 2014 and involved the establishment of eight working groups, (one for each Standard and one for the overarching Policy). Drafts of the revised material were the subject of consultation, both within the Church and with a wide range of external experts. The final draft Policy and Standards were adopted at a joint meeting of Coimisce and the NBSCCCI in November 2015 and by the Irish Bishops' Conference, the Conference of Religious in Ireland and the Irish Missionary Union in December 2015.

Printed copies of the revised Policy and Standards have been produced and made available to all Church Authorities. The National Office staff provided induction training, during February/March 2016 which was attended by a number of people from this Diocese. The revised Policy and Standards are published as two documents: Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland - adoption of this is mandatory; the second is the Guidance document (available on the NBSCCCI website) – the material in this is optional. Church bodies may adopt or edit this or produce new material, on the understanding that any guidance produced by a Church body should meet the threshold set out to comply with the Standards. Both documents are available on the NBSCCCI website – www.safeguarding.ie

For the Diocese of Meath, this guidance material has been adapted and is titled Operational Guidelines for Implementing the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. Both the NBSCCCI policy document and the Operational Guidelines are available on the Meath safeguarding website – www.meathsafeguarding.ie.

New Standards

Two new Standards have been developed: Standard 3 – *Care and Support for the Complainant* and Standard 4 – *Care and Management of the Respondent*. The safeguarding personnel who will be most involved in implementing these Standards will be the Bishop, Designated Liaison Persons, Support Person and Advisor.



Scope of the Policy

The policy applies to all Church bodies and is addressed to all Church personnel who are required to comply with it. Full understanding of and adherence to this policy should lead to a deepening in the understanding of, and respect for, the rights of children and young people to participate as people of faith in the life of the Church. The care and protection of children involved in Church activities is the responsibility of the whole Church, and is a requirement that applies regardless of the nature of the Church activities in which children are involved. Everyone who participates in the life of the Church has a role to play in creating an environment in which children can develop and be safe.

Operational Guidelines for Implementing Safeguarding Policy and Procedures in the Diocese of Meath

The Diocesan Safeguarding Children Committee decided that, to the extent compatible with the revised policy and procedures, existing resource materials should continue to be used and that additional and new material contained in the NBSCCCI Guidance would be made available in a user friendly set of operational guidelines for meeting the Standards.

The guidance material has been organised into three sections – those related to Standards 1,5, and 6 into a section headed 'Creating a Culture of Safety'; those relating to Standards 2,3, and 4 into a section headed 'Recognising, Responding and Reporting'; those relating to Standard 7 into a section headed 'Quality Assurance'. All of the associated forms and templates are collated into a single, fourth, section.

The rationale for this approach is based primarily on ease of access for users: the first of these sections covers mainly the areas of

concern to Parish Safeguarding Representatives; the second to the Designated Liaison Persons; while the third, though covering requirements at both parish and diocesan levels, is mainly the responsibility of the Safeguarding Children Committee. Overall, the NBSCCCI documentation remains the source and reference point for everything in the operational guidelines.

Putting the Policy into Action

The Diocese of Meath will implement this policy by ensuring that all our ministry and activities comply with applicable indicators of the seven safeguarding standards -

1. Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments.
2. Procedures for Responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations.
3. Care and Support for the Complainant.
4. Care and Management of the Respondent.
5. Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe.
6. Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message.
7. Quality Assuring Compliance with the Standards.

Commitment by the Bishop of Meath

On behalf of this Church body, as part of the Catholic Church in Ireland, I commit to safeguarding children by agreeing to follow this Child Safeguarding Policy.

I will abide by and uphold the seven standards and the applicable indicators in our entire ministry and contacts with children.



Bishop of Meath

Introducing the revised policy and procedures

It is intended to place the new material on a revamped safeguarding website and to run a series of meetings to assist those involved in safeguarding at parish level to familiarise themselves with the new requirements for compliance with the Standards.

The information sessions will take place as follows:

MONDAY 24TH OCTOBER at 7.30pm in TULLAMORE (Parish Centre)

WEDNESDAY 26TH OCTOBER at 7.30pm in ASHBOURNE (Parish Centre)

WEDNESDAY 16TH NOVEMBER at 7.30pm in MULLINGAR (Park Hotel)

TUESDAY 22ND November at 7.30pm in NAVAN (Parish Centre)

Training for new Parish Safeguarding Representatives and volunteers

David Gavin and Antoinette Shaw will host an information session for new Parish Safeguarding Representatives and volunteers on the following dates –

TUESDAY 25TH OCTOBER at 7.30pm in MULLINGAR (Parish Community Centre)

THURSDAY 10TH NOVEMBER at 7.30pm in NAVAN (St Anne's Pastoral Centre)

To book a place at either of these sessions, please email David and Antoinette at info@meathsafeguarding.ie

Designated Liaison Person

Fr Sean Henry has commenced a one-year sabbatical. Bishop Smith appointed Monsignor Dermot Farrell to assist Nuala McLoughlin as Designated Liaison Person in Fr Henry's absence.

Contacts

Trainers and Support Persons:

David Gavin 087 679 3523 • Antoinette Shaw 086 848 4518
Email: info@meathsafeguarding.ie

Designated Liaison Persons:

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