



# Newsletter

SPRING 2017

## Annual Report 2016

**The Diocese of Meath compiled a report on its compliance with the national policy of the Catholic Church in Ireland for the year 2016. This requires, inter alia, that the Diocese:**

- puts in place arrangements to ensure and evaluate its compliance with the safeguarding standards at local level
- produces a report on the level of compliance established through this audit exercise
- notifies the National Board in writing of the completion of this annual audit report.

The National Board requires that a parish safeguarding audit is carried out, returns are scrutinised by the Diocesan Safeguarding Children Committee, an annual report is prepared for the Bishop – with a review of compliance and recommendations for further action and improvement – and that these are incorporated into the three-year child safeguarding plan. This process applies to Standards 1, 5 and 6.

Notification that these processes have been completed was sent to the National Board by the Bishop on 31 January 2017.

## Main areas of work addressed by the Safeguarding Children Committee

### Revision of the Safeguarding Policy and Standards

**Aspects of the development, dissemination and implementation of the revised Policy and Standards were a major part of the work of the committee. The NBSCCCI launched the new material in June. Members of the Committee attended workshops related to its development and dissemination.**

Bishop Smith signed a commitment to follow the policy on behalf of 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 Policy document and the Operational Guidelines have been placed on a redesigned version of the website ([www.meathsafeguarding.ie](http://www.meathsafeguarding.ie)).

A series of four workshops was organised to inform clergy and parish safeguarding representatives about the new requirements for compliance with the Standards. At these, copies of the 'Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016'; a summary leaflet on the policy; and the poster for display were distributed. There was a very positive attendance, an enthusiastic engagement with participants and the trainers were encouraged by the feedback from both clergy and lay people. The Autumn edition of the Newsletter was devoted to information on the revised Policy and Standards.

# Report on the audit review of safeguarding children measures in the parishes of the Diocese of Meath

**All parishes were requested by the safeguarding committee to return their completed audit forms by 30 November 2016. As is usual practice, the returned forms were scrutinised by an independent assessor who compiled the following report:**

Sixty-six completed audit forms were returned out of a total of sixty nine by the end of January 2017.

Parishes are engaged in a number of child-related activities including altar serving, choir, readers, sacramental preparation, feast day celebrations, Lenten, Easter and Christmas pageants and plays, Legion of Mary and Young Pioneers.

Safe recruitment and vetting procedures are in place, kept up to date and securely stored in all parishes.

Some parishes are awaiting consent forms to be returned.

Altar servers are given training and all children involved in parish activities receive the appropriate information leaflet. The diocesan safeguarding poster is prominently displayed in appropriate areas e.g. Church porch, sacristy, parish centre and online.

No concerns or complaints were reported to the parish safeguarding representatives and as such no disciplinary procedures were invoked.

Regular contact between clergy and parish safeguarding representatives takes place; this contact varies on average from once a year to three or four times a year. Some meet monthly whilst others meet twice a year.

Suggestions, comments or assistance on improving safeguarding procedures or training are forwarded to the Resource Team and Safeguarding Committee.

The audits demonstrate the successful implementation of the diocesan safeguarding policy and procedures. It is evident that all parishes who returned forms are aware and compliant with the safeguarding policy.

## Training and Support

Antoinette Shaw and David Gavin will undertake the "Training for Trainers" programme provided by the NBSCCCI from 25 February until 1 April. The trainers have already attended briefing sessions on the revised Policy and Standards; the NBSCCCI Conference in October; and contributed to the four dissemination workshops on the revised policy and procedures. A training plan is developed each year by the trainers and ratified by the safeguarding committee.

## Meetings of the Safeguarding Children Committee

Meetings were held in March, June and September. The December meeting was postponed until January 2017.

The Resource Team, Fr Paul Crosbie, Ms Antoinette Shaw and Mr David Gavin, met on eight occasions.

Alan Doran (Dunderry) and Pauline Clarke (Glasson) were appointed as new members of the committee, as were Antoinette Shaw and David Gavin who had been recruited as Trainers.

## Garda Vetting

**The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 was commenced at the end of April 2016. This legislation places mandatory requirements on the Diocese which the Diocese is making strenuous efforts to meet.**

Parishes were directed to commence the vetting process immediately in the case of any of these personnel who have not been vetted.

The Bishop has appointed a new Liaison Person (Linda Duncan) to deal with applications from parishes. E-vetting is now in place. Priority is given to processing applications from new employees and volunteers for whom vetting is mandatory. Among those to be vetted retrospectively are clergy, parish safeguarding representatives, leaders of children's choirs and sacristans.

Detailed guidance has been provided to parishes; the Summer newsletter was dedicated to explaining the requirements; and these are also contained in the Operational Guidelines.

The diocesan office meets the criterion as a relevant organisation under (d) in the definition in the Interpretation section of the Act (and as defined in section 2 of DES circular 31/2016). Section 8.1 of the circular indicates that vetting disclosures received by the Teaching Council from the Garda Vetting Bureau will be sent electronically to the school authorities. The diocesan office will act as a conduit for the purposes of Garda vetting of all other persons. Therefore all such applicants are vetted by the diocesan office and for the Diocese of Meath rather than for a specific role in a school, parish or pilgrimage event.

## Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

**In line with the communications policy of the Diocese of Meath, a range of processes has been engaged in to communicate the safeguarding message. These include:**

**Safeguarding website:** This has been updated to incorporate the revised Safeguarding Policy and Standards and the associated Operational Guidelines. This is the principal means for communicating information on the policy and guidelines. However, print copies of the NBSCCCI document are available and it is planned to produce a limited number of the Operational Guidelines in hard copy.

**Newsletter:** Two newsletters were produced in 2016 covering information on a range of relevant topics eg Garda vetting, revised policy and procedures, training events, NBSCCCI conference. The newsletter is circulated in electronic and hard copy to clergy, parish safeguarding representatives and safeguarding related committees.

**Printed material:** Copies of the NBSCCCI policy document have been circulated to parishes and committee members. A new poster with the policy statement and details for reporting safeguarding concerns has been circulated.

**Consultation and feedback meetings:** Meetings, facilitated by members of the safeguarding committee, are organised with parishes with the aim of hearing the views and needs of parishioners on safeguarding issues. The facilitators report back on the outcomes to the committee information and, where indicated, for action. Four such meetings were held in 2016.

**Preparation of three-year plan:** This plan will cover the period 2017 – 2020; will adopt the format proposed in the NBSCCCI guidance; address the requirements outlined; and be informed by the outcomes of the parish audit. Members of the safeguarding committee have reviewed the existing plan and the relevant template. Members of the Resource Team have begun preliminary work on drafting the plan.

### Annual Report of the Designated Liaison Person

A report has been submitted to the Bishop by Nuala McLoughlin, Designated Liaison Person, on case management in compliance with Standards 2,3 and 4 and recommendations for action are incorporated into the child safeguarding plan.

# Pope urges all to work together to keep children safe

**Pope Francis wrote a letter to all Bishops in the Catholic Church on the Feast of the Holy Innocents 2016. The Holy Father addressed the cruelty of child abuse in many parts of the world.**

He spoke of the innocence robbed from children by the oppression of illegal slave labour, prostitution and exploitation, innocence shattered by wars and forced immigration, with the great loss that this entails. "Thousands of children have fallen into the hands of gangs, criminal organisations and merchants of death, who only devour and exploit their neediness" he said.

The Holy Father referred to "the sufferings, the experiences and the pain of children who were abused sexually by priests. It is a sin that shames us. Persons responsible for the protection of those children destroyed their dignity. We regret this deeply and we beg forgiveness. We join in the pain of the victims and weep for this sin. The sin of what happened, the sin of failing to help, the sin of covering up and denial, the sin of the abuse of power. The Church also weeps bitterly over this sin of her sons and she asks forgiveness. Today, as we commemorate the feast of the Holy Innocents, I would like us to renew our complete commitment to ensuring that these atrocities will no longer take place in our midst. Let us find the courage needed to take all necessary measures and to protect in every way the lives of our children, so that such crimes may never be repeated. In this area, let us adhere, clearly and faithfully, to "zero tolerance".



## Appointment of Richard Lowry as Support Person



**Richard Lowry, from Navan, is an accredited psychotherapist with the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and has worked for the past ten years in this sector, dividing his time between private practice and working with students in post primary education. He has also worked with Bethany Bereavement Support Group, training parishioners for ministry to the bereaved.**

### The role of the support person is to:

- Keep the complainant informed of the process of the case;
- Help the complainant identify and access counselling and support;
- Record any meetings or contact they have with the complainant, and pass on relevant information to the DLP, as appropriate;
- Uphold the seven standards in practice and behaviour.

Being attentive to the expressed needs and objectives of the complainant, the support person will:

- Encourage and support the complainant in getting suitable help;
- Be extra mindful of the vulnerability of the complainant during the process.

### Contacts

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#### Designated Liaison Persons:

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**Mons. Dermot Farrell** 01 8255 342

#### Support Person

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