

Newsletter



Latest News from the National Office for Safeguarding
Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland

May 2017

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Welcome

Welcome to the second Newsletter of 2017.

It is now just over a year since the introduction of “Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016”. To support the implementation of the Standards and the Guidance that supports them, the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (National Board) staff have been engaged in ecclesiastical provincial area meetings, meetings with safeguarding committees and tailored training events since January 2016. The final implementation meeting will take place in Dublin in June. (See [training section](#)).

This Newsletter will update on changes to guidance, legislation, and other developments taking place in the National Board and in the Catholic Church’s safeguarding practice.

Guidance Update

Over the past number of months, staff from the National Office, have facilitated four sessions on implementing the safeguarding standards across the four ecclesiastical provinces. The purpose of these sessions was to answer questions that Church personnel have in relation to the safeguarding standards, but also to hear directly from them what further support, clarity or changes to the guidance they would like to assist them with implementation. Following these meetings the following actions have been taken based on feedback:

- Word versions of the guidance have been made available and can be accessed by contacting imeldaashe@safeguarding.ie.
- A new section of the website has been created which breaks down the guidance by role, therefore only displaying the pages of the guidance which are relevant to the role in the safeguarding structure. To use this facility go to <https://www.safeguarding.ie/index.php/guidance-by-roles> and follow the on screen instructions.
- Each piece of guidance is now broken down by role and the web link can be copied onto the websites of Church bodies. Having a direct web link to the relevant piece of guidance to the National Board's website will mean that whenever a change is made to each piece of guidance the link will always access the most recent version. This limits the difficult task of changing forms or procedures every time the guidance is updated. To access the web links:
 - Go to <https://www.safeguarding.ie/index.php/guidance-by-roles>
 - Select the relevant role from the list provided
 - Select the relevant Church body from the categories provided
 - This will bring up a list of relevant guidance, select the piece of guidance you would like to link to and press the view button
 - Copy the link from the top of your web browser and paste this onto your own website using your content management system.

Alongside these changes that are already in place the National Board has also received a number of requests seeking clarity or additional pieces of guidance in relation to:

- Vetting and the possibility of a more centralised approach within the Church
- MOUs in relation to visiting priests/religious
- A checklist for all requirements at each stage of care for and management of respondents
- Terms of reference for safeguarding committees and advisory panels
- Written procedures for fulfilling indicator 1.10
- The role of lay chaplains and accountability for safeguarding
- Visiting priest requirements (depending on ministry)
- Monitoring respondents on behalf of other Church bodies
- Appropriate approaches to meeting complainants/respondents.
- Information sharing

Over the next few months the National Board will be looking at each of these issues in turn and updating the guidance as necessary. Please continue to check <https://www.safeguarding.ie/index.php/guidance> for the latest updates.

Reviews of Child Safeguarding Practice

All reviews of child safeguarding practice of dioceses and religious orders have now been placed in the public domain. The final four reviews were published by the respective orders in April 2017 and can be found on the National Board's website at <https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications>.

Internationally there are currently a number of important inquiries into child safeguarding which will inform future practice across the world. These include:

- Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, investigating the extent to which institutions have failed to protect children from sexual abuse in public bodies and other non-state institutions in England and Wales.
- The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry is looking at the abuse of children in care. This includes an examination of a number of religious orders who provided care to children in Scotland.
- The Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse is investigating how institutions like schools, churches, sports clubs and government organisations have responded to allegations and instances of child sexual abuse in Australia.
- TUSLA have advised that their Ferns Review report of Religious Congregations is currently with their legal advisors and will be finalised shortly.
- The McLellan Inquiry review of Safeguarding Policies and Practice in the Catholic Church in Scotland in August 2015.
- The HIA Report in Northern Ireland January 2017 which can be found on <https://www.hiainquiry.org/>.

Revised Review Methodology

A short-life working group established to offer advice and recommendations on a future review methodology has now completed its work. The working group has presented a penultimate draft of its report to the April Board meeting of [Coimirce](#) for consideration. [Peter Kieran](#), Chair of the Working Group attended the Board meeting at which he explained the decisions made by the working group and responded to questions from Board members. Following discussion, the Board has asked for some minor amendments to be made to the Review Methodology. The amended document will be sent to Church authorities who have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Board, for their information.

The working group has also provided a written Code of Practice for reviewers, as well as suggestions to the CEO of the National Board about how reviewers should be recruited and trained.



Training and Support

All training and support is outlined in the Training and Support Strategy which can be downloaded [by following this link](#). Upcoming training for this year is available at this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/index.php/what-we-do/advice-on-effective-practice/training>. Specifically over the next few months the following national courses will be facilitated:

- 7/06/2017- Implementing the Standards Workshop facilitated by AMRI (Dublin Ecclesiastical Provincial Area)
- [13/05/2017- Annual Update for trainers registered with the NBSCCCI](#)
- 13/09/2017- Vetting legislation briefing with An Garda Síochána

Since the last newsletter the following national training has taken place:

- 18/01/2017- Role specific training for advisors

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- 18/01/2017- Role specific training for advisors
- 08/02/2017- Role specific training for support people
- 25/02/2017- Training for trainers course (5 days)
- 05/04/2017- Role specific training for DLPs
- 15/03/2017- Implementing the standards workshop (Cashel Ecclesiastical Provincial Area)
- 24/03/2017- Implementing the standards workshop (Armagh Ecclesiastical Provincial Area)
- 27/04/2017- Implementing the standards workshop (Tuam Ecclesiastical Provincial Area)

In addition, since the last newsletter staff from the National Office have:

- Facilitated individual safeguarding committee training for five religious orders
 - Facilitated advisory panel training for one diocese
 - Presented to Masters for Social Work students in Queens University Belfast
 - Delivered a support meeting on the relevant indicators of the safeguarding standards to representatives of six enclosed convents for one religious order.
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THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IRELAND

Practice Issues

Mandated Persons under Children First 2015 (ROI)

It is anticipated that towards the end of 2017 Mandatory Reporting under [Children First Act 2015](#) will become law. If that proceeds as planned mandated persons as specified in the Act will be required to report allegations of child abuse, suspicions, and concerns to the Child and Family Agency – Tusla.

Under Section 14, Schedule 2 identifies who are specified persons as ‘Mandated Persons’ and who are obliged under the Act to report Child Protection and Welfare Concerns to Tusla.

Subsections 1 & 2 require that where a mandated person knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is being harmed, has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed, they must report that belief or suspicion to the agency. The mandated person must also report disclosures by a child. Subsections 3 & 4 of the Act outline when a mandated person shall not be required to make a report to the agency; subsection 6 makes further provision for joint reporting; subsections 7 & 8 provide that reports are to be made on a mandated report form that will be made available by the Tusla. In situations where the mandated person suspects that a child may be at risk of immediate harm the report should be made verbally to the Tusla and the completed form provided to the Agency within 3 days; subsection 12 reiterates that the Act does not affect any other obligation a person has to disclose information to An Garda Síochána under the Criminal Justice ([Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons](#)) Act 2012.

Amongst those identified as mandated persons are:

- A member of the clergy (howsoever described) or pastoral care worker (howsoever described) of a church or other religious community;
- A safeguarding officer, child protection officer or other person (howsoever described) who is employed for the purpose of performing the child welfare and protection function of religious, sporting, recreational, cultural, educational and other bodies and organisations offering services to children.

The National Board has agreed with the Minister for Children and Tusla that any mandated person within the Catholic Church should make the notification to the statutory authorities jointly with the DLP.

When it has been confirmed that this part of the Act has commenced, the National Board will amend the existing guidance and notification form, in line with the requirements of TUSLA. Until then all allegations must be processed through the DLP.

Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI)

An interim independent chair Ms Bernie McNally, has been appointed to SBNI. Members of the National Board will meet Ms McNally to share the work relating to child safeguarding and the Church’s Policy, Standards and Guidance.

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