

Newsletter

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

April 2016



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Welcome

This time of year provides us with an opportunity to look forward with fresh hope at what we can collectively achieve in the interests of safeguarding children during 2016.

National Office staff have been meeting a great number of Church personnel at Induction meetings during February and March. This interaction is always good as it provides us with feedback and in reviewing the comments received, we are able to amend the guidance that we have produced to support the implementation of the standards.

In this newsletter we will offer information on how to access the guidance, which we will make available on our website in due course.

Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016

All induction sessions have now taken place across the four Ecclesiastical Provincial areas and copies of the Policy and Standards have been widely distributed. If you would like copies of Safeguarding Children (2016) please contact ann.doyle@safeguarding.ie or Imeldaashe@safeguarding.ie where copies can be purchased at €10 per copy.

To support the implementation of the Standards, the National Board has produced guidance. It is not mandatory to follow the Board's guidance, but each Church authority must be satisfied that they have in place effective guidance to realise the relevant indicators in the new standards.

The Board's guidance document will only be available electronically. This is to allow each Church body to adapt it to suit their ministry. It also means that the document can continually evolve, as new legislation, guidance, policy and practice become available.

The guidance will be released online in due course.

Update on Child Safeguarding Reviews

All Church bodies who hold an MOU with the National Board have now undergone a review of child safeguarding practice, with a few exceptions. These exceptions include Religious Orders (exclusively female) whose numbers are dwindling, age profile is increasing and where they have no ministry with children. In addition, a small number of Religious Orders are subject to investigation under the Northern Ireland Historical Inquiry (HIA); the reports by the National Board into the child safeguarding practice within these Orders cannot be produced publicly until after the HIA has reported in 2017.

Safe Environments

Child Protection Procedures

Management of Respondents

Care of Complainants

Communication

Training and Support

Quality Assurance

Revised Review Methodology

On behalf of the National Board, Peter Kieran is producing a proposal for the development of a revised review methodology. He has consulted with a small group of Church personnel, with independent reviewers and external regulators. A paper will go out for consultation with an expert group representing the Sponsoring Bodies shortly and following feedback a final proposal will be presented to the Board and to the Sponsoring Bodies for approval no later than September 2016

If you have ideas that you would like taken into account as part of this work please contact Peter Kieran on peter.kieran@safeguarding.ie who is leading on this project.

Training

A new training strategy is now being written to outline the training that will be delivered nationally between 2016-2018. If there is any training which you think could be included please contact Niall Moore (niall.moore@safeguarding.ie) and it can be fully considered for inclusion to the strategy.

With the induction sessions on the new policy and standards now complete our programme of national training will continue. All training dates for 2016 are available here <http://www.safeguarding.ie/training-strategy-2013-2015/>. Some upcoming training dates are shown below:

- **4th of May 2016- Developments in Governance for Safeguarding Committees (additional date)**- This training is for members of safeguarding committees and will cover advice on training, developing a three year plan and supporting local Church personnel. This training is being facilitated to accommodate those who were unable to attend this event last year. To book your place please follow this link: <http://www.safeguarding.ie/events/developments-in-governance-for-safeguarding-committees-additional-date/>.
- **8th of June 2016- Role Specific Training for New DLPs**- This is an annual training event which is run every year for those who are new to the role of Designated Liaison Person or Deputy Designated Liaison Person. Online booking will be available in the coming weeks by following this link <http://www.safeguarding.ie/training-strategy-2013-2015/>
- **Training for Safeguarding Committees and Advisory Panels**- Training for Advisory Panels and Safeguarding Committees are delivered locally at a time and date that suits participants. For more information on these sessions go to <http://www.safeguarding.ie/training-strategy-2013-2015/>.

Training the Trainers

This year the number of tutors who are volunteering with the National Board has increased to enable the process of re registration of trainers (whose registration with the National Board will expire this year) to be completed. A meeting of all tutors will take place in Maynooth on the 8th of April to agree timescales for the re registration process and all trainers who require re registration will be updated about the process in the coming weeks.

National Conference

The Board's second national conference will take place on 13th and 14th of October at the Tullamore Court Hotel, County Offaly. National Office staff are currently engaging with potential keynote speakers and will issue details nearer to the date of the conference. The theme of the conference will be to embrace the new Standards and particularly the two new Standards; Care of the Complainant and Care of the Respondent.

To express your interest in attending please contact imeldaashe@safeguarding.ie or ann.doyle@safeguarding.ie

Practice Issues: Information Sharing

The effective protection of a child often depends on the willingness of people to share and exchange relevant information appropriately. It is critical that there is a clear understanding of the Church Authority's professional and legal responsibilities with regard to confidentiality and the exchange of information.

All information regarding child protection concerns (current or historical) apart from those received in the Sacrament of Reconciliation should be shared on a "need to know" basis in the interests of the child, with the statutory authorities. **The provision of information to the statutory agencies for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection.**

Situations when information must be shared

Sharing Information with the Statutory Authorities- All allegations, suspicions, concerns or knowledge regarding child abuse, which meet the threshold for reporting (apart from those received in the Sacrament of Reconciliation) must be passed to the statutory authorities.

Sharing Information with The National Board- The National Board, when acting as a Data Processor to the constituent member under a relevant Data Processing Deed, is entitled to full access to the Church Authority's files and records for the purposes of analysing all such data in terms of compliance with best child protection practice and to report upon any issues which arise in relation to that investigation.

The National Board has entered into data processing deeds with various Church authorities following consultation with the office of the Data Protection Commissioner to ensure that these arrangements are in compliance with the Data Protection Acts. Once the Church authority has signed the data processing deeds, it is agreed that information will be shared with the National Board for these three purposes:

- The National Board maintains records of all allegations notified to it for monitoring purposes.
- The National Board retains records relating to advice offered directly or through the National Case Management Committee.
- The National Board accesses records for audit function and cannot retain and/or use the personal information accessed during its audit for further purposes.

In the above circumstances the National Board is satisfied that it is entitled to receive and examine all such records without there being a loss of privilege or protected confidence pertaining to those records.

Practice Issues: Information Sharing

Continued

Situations when information can be shared

There may be occasions when information between Church bodies is required. Under canon law, faculties to minister as a priest in public, must be given by a Bishop; therefore, it is appropriate that information is shared between the Church authority of an ordained cleric from a Church body when an allegation of child abuse is made against that cleric, so that the Bishop can determine whether to withdraw faculties. As each of these situations are unique the decision whether and what to share with another Church body will be on a case by case basis. To assist the following questions may be used:

- Does the recipient have a legitimate interest in receiving this information?
- What is the justification for sharing information?
- Is there a risk of harm to an identified or unidentified child, if such information is not shared?
- Can permission be obtained from the respondent to share information?
- Should the respondent be informed that the information is being shared?
- Is the respondent in public ministry as a priest and has faculties from the Bishop?
- Is the respondent in the public ministry of a Church body?
- Should information about the complainant be redacted?

Practice Issues: Vetting (ROI)

The Department of Justice and Equality have advised that The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 to 2016 will be commenced on 29th April, 2016. **Following this date it will be a criminal offence for a Church body to engage anyone in “relevant work” (Section 12 of Act), without receiving a vetting disclosure from the Garda Vetting Bureau.**

The amendments to the Vetting Act are contained in the Spent Convictions Act 2014. Attached is a link to the website that will contain this Act but you can see the final version of the Bill, as agreed by the Dail and Seanad on the Oireachtas website. (Oireachtas.ie). For Acts see:

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/acts.html>

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