

Review of Safeguarding Practice in the Catholic Church

This Review would seek to examine the current arrangements for safeguarding children across all Dioceses, Religious Congregations/Orders, and Missionary Societies in Ireland. It would also scrutinize practice within all known cases to ensure that they have been responded to appropriately.

This proposal to undertake such a Review follows directly from the findings of the Commission of Investigation into the Management of Child Abuse within the Archdiocese of Dublin.

The proposed Review would consider the following:-

- (a) Policies in place and being applied for safeguarding children
- (b) Current and past practice in relation to the management of allegations of abuse;
- (c) Existing relationships with statutory authorities such as the HSE, Gardai in the Republic and the HSCT or PSNI in Northern Ireland.
- (d) Operation of Advisory Panels, and Safeguarding Committees
- (e) Current Risks, and their management

The objective of the Review would be to confirm how known allegations have been responded to and what the current arrangements for safeguarding children are. In particular, emphasis will be placed on establishing how practice matches up to the standards set down in the Safeguarding Children Guidance published by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church launched in February of this year. Priority, at all times, will be given to how practice can be improved and strengthened. If practices are identified that are concerning, inadequate, or dangerous, they will be addressed through the provision of guidance and support, and through the reporting of these situations to the appropriate statutory authorities, if this has not already happened. Similarly, those that are good examples will be highlighted with a view to them being adopted comprehensively across all parts of the Church.

The Review will be guided by the following:-

- (a) Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance;
- (b) Children First Guidelines in ROI; and Regional Child Protection Guidelines in Northern Ireland;
- (c) Legislation that exists in each jurisdiction which contributes to safeguarding children and young people.

The Review would be undertaken by the National Board for Safeguarding Children through their National Office and led by the Chief Executive Officer. They will look to strengthen their staff team as a matter of priority with

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additional suitably experienced personnel. An increase in their budget will be provided to enable them to recruit these extra staff members.

The Review process will be overseen by a **Reference Group** to whom the CEO will report on a regular basis. The membership of this **Reference Group** would be drawn from each of the statutory child protection agencies in both jurisdictions, along with eminent individuals in the field from academia, or from within related professions such as health or the law.

At the completion of each Review, a report outlining any findings will be prepared. This report will also include any recommendations that may be made. It is proposed that each Review Report will be published by the National Board for Safeguarding Children through their website, namely www.safeguarding.ie.

When all of the different parts of the Church have undergone the proposed Review process, the National Board will be asked to prepare and publish a composite report, outlining themes and key findings, along with general recommendations. The final report will comment on the overall standards of practice, and will also include recommended actions that are thought to be necessary to achieve improvements in practice or to address deficits in policy.

Signed:



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Catholic Church in Ireland