



THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR  
**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN**  
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IRELAND

# **Annual Report 2021**



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in the Catholic Church in Ireland  
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## STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIRPERSON



The period reviewed by this Annual Report was marked by the continued adaptation of our Chief Executive Officer Teresa Devlin and her team to ongoing Covid restrictions. Like other organisations we continued to use Zoom for meetings and learned to adapt to working from home. Indeed the benefits of working from home continue to be enjoyed by Teresa and her team. Equally the board continues to hold its monthly meetings by Zoom with the obvious benefit for all board members of not having to travel from various parts of the country to Maynooth. From a work point of view Covid brought many benefits.

On behalf of the board I would like to thank Teresa Devlin and her team for their outstanding work during the year in which they again demonstrated their singular and unique dedication to the Church's ministry in safeguarding young people. The extent and nature of this work is outlined in this report and does not need to be repeated here.

The directors met on 11 occasions. In addition there was one joint meeting between the directors and members of the company on the occasion of the Annual General Meeting. All meetings took place via Zoom. I wish to thank each of the directors for their regular attendance commitment and support.

Last December the Sponsoring Bodies confirmed to the board their intention to proceed early this year with a strategic review of all aspects of safeguarding and outreach to the survivors of abuse in the Catholic Church in Ireland. The National Board welcomes this important initiative and looks forward to cooperating fully with this review.

Finally I would like to pay tribute to John Morgan whom I replaced as chairperson in January 2022. The contribution made by John to the work of safeguarding children in the Catholic Church in Ireland can not be overstated. His work has been and continues to be exemplary.

Garrett Sheehan  
Chairperson  
April 2022

## REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



This report is being written at a time of great uncertainty in the world. Covid is still around, and a war is raging in Ukraine. None of us can fail to be affected by the images on our TV screens and the pointless destruction of human life.

Another recent image on our screens that has had an impact on me was that of adult men and women crying in Stormont, Northern Ireland, after receiving an apology from Members of the Legislative Assembly and representatives of religious congregations for the abuse they experienced as children. Childhood is precious, and harm and trauma experienced as a child can have lifelong consequences. It is important that we are reminded of the damage done to children in the Church, to prevent us from making the same mistakes and causing harm to other innocent children. The ministry that we are engaged in is important; we must strive to improve our practices, particularly in relation to how we respond to people who come forward to share their experiences. We cannot afford to become weary of hearing stories of abuse; we must not ignore the pain suffered by people who have the courage as adults to speak about their painful past experiences. The National Board has initiated a review of the Church's child safeguarding policy and part of this involves us 'listening' – to children, their parents and carers, to complainants, victims and survivors, to accused priests and religious; to clerics and religious who minister with children, and to Church leaders. One recent listening meeting with a survivor had a deep impact on me. This survivor told me that she lost her voice through abuse by a priest. My hope is that she and others find their voices, and that we in the Church will listen and act to make those voices stronger.

This annual report will, once again reflect upon the work that we in the National Board have engaged in, to support and promote good safeguarding practice

in the Catholic Church in Ireland. However, before setting out our achievements, I really do want to acknowledge the collaborative and positive engagement we have experienced from across the religious orders and dioceses in Ireland.

The National Board has many roles, some of which present more challenges than others. We understand that reviews of safeguarding practice can cause anxiety. However, we also know that this aspect of our work can bring about positive change and improvement, so I would encourage interested Church authorities to request a review by us. Other aspects of our work are received with greater enthusiasm and we are happy that National Board training, as well as our advice and support, are generally appreciated by Church child-safeguarding personnel.

We realise that the people who do the real safeguarding ministry in the Church are the thousands of staff and volunteers in parish communities and religious congregations across Ireland. The National Board would like to pay tribute to their continued commitment to keeping children safe in the Church.

The reporting year of 2021/22 proved to be another challenging year, with much of our work remaining online. While we adapted and got on with the job, the absence of in-person contact has made a difference. Video conferencing has had some benefits, but it is not as satisfying or effective as being in a room full of people, or chatting over coffee. The benefit of course has been to cut down on travel and to be able to engage more with international audiences, as we have done with the seminarians who participate in the National Board's Head to Heart child safeguarding training as an integral part of formation. We have been very pleased with how this initiative has taken root in the four seminaries involved, and it will soon

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be extended to permanent diaconate training. This report will provide information on the Head to Heart programme and on the evaluation that we have embarked upon.

During 2021, we also reviewed the work of the National Case Management Committee (NCCM), and whilst presentations to the committee have decreased over the year, the feedback on the work of the committee was overwhelmingly positive and encouraging. A summary of the evaluation report will be set out in the section on Initiatives and Advices.

The National Board believes in the benefits of reviewing and evaluating practice, and in addition to the two evaluation exercises highlighted above, we have begun a process of reviewing Safeguarding Children – Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland – 2016. Since the last iteration of a safeguarding policy in 2016, there have been significant changes in civil legislation and regulation, and in canon law. We also have learned a lot from our own practices in Ireland, as well as from other countries in the joint endeavours of creating safe environments for children and of responding to abuse allegations.

The IEC and AMRI have commissioned RSM Ireland to conduct a Strategic Review of Safeguarding in the Church. This organisation will examine the work of the National Board, Towards Peace, and Towards Healing. For our part in the National Board, we are pleased to have the opportunity to reflect with a range of interested parties on what improvements we can make to our practices, and so we are approaching this review as a learning exercise.

In 2021, the National Board has been asked to assist the Church in developing a best practice template policy and recommendations to our Sponsoring Bodies about how to support the work of adult safeguarding in the Church. Those of you who are already immersed in adult safeguarding will understand the complexities of safe ministry with

vulnerable people. The differences between civil legislation and guidance in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and in canon law may make the development of this template challenging, but it is hoped by engaging with those who have experience of this ministry internally, and with relevant external experts, we will be able to provide our Sponsoring Bodies with the information they need.

The National Board's core activities have proceeded alongside the evaluations and reviews already referenced. During this reporting period, the National Board was informed of 178 reports of abuse allegedly perpetrated by clerics and religious. As always, it is important to state that these allegations do not represent proven cases. The report below in the section on Allegations will set out further information in relation to these.

Allegations are made in many ways, directly from complainants, through solicitors or other third parties and occasionally in unclear reports through media and other public information. In line with the civil law and the Church's *Vademecum* promulgated in July 2020, all knowledge about, concern about, suspicion of, or allegations of abuse that meet the threshold must be reported to the statutory authorities. In cases where the allegations are received from anonymous sources the Church's *Vademecum* makes clear that these should be not dismissed and must be appropriately addressed. This includes establishing whether the information received meets the threshold for reporting to the statutory authorities and canonical action. It is at this point that Church authorities may seek advice from the National Board. During 2021/2022, advice relating to Standard 2 on responding to allegations was provided on 63 occasions. This represents a significant drop in the number of this type of advice being offered in the previous year, which had been 156, but we cannot say with any certainty why less advice was sought in relation to Standard 2 in the reporting year. We will examine the trends in the allegations notified to the National Board in this report's section on Allegations, based on the limited data we are provided with. Overall, there

## REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

was a decrease in the number of occasions on which advice was sought in 2021/2022, relating to all of the Standards: 241 pieces of advice were offered, compared with 392 in 2020-2021. This is interesting, given that ministry was restricted due to Covid-19 during both reporting periods. Full details of advice offered are set out in the section on Initiatives and Advices offered by the National Board.

Pages 23-31 of this report will provide an overview of the training and support initiatives. Again, this was significantly impacted by pandemic restrictions, as almost all training was held via video conferencing. The exception was a Train the Trainers course and formation training with pastoral theology students, both of which physically took place in 2021. I would like to pay a special word of thanks to the external trainers who assisted in facilitating these courses, as well as to the participants who, in spite of (limited) risk of infection, attended and participated fully. The Train the Trainer course was risk-assessed by the Director of Training and Support, who together with the Board Directors sought to ensure that any risk was minimised.

In spite of Covid-19, we did manage to make some progress in relation to conducting safeguarding reviews in dioceses and religious congregations. We moved some of the review work online; however, this proved to be more time-consuming and resource intensive. Towards the end of 2021 and into 2022, the lifting of restrictions has enabled work on reviews to get back on track, and I am pleased to report that we have now completed nine diocesan reviews, two religious order reviews with five in process at the time of reporting. Reviews of practice have provided an opportunity for a Church authority to discover – through the lens of an external expert – how well safeguarding standards are being implemented in their Church body. The feedback received from those who have already been reviewed is that the process has been a productive learning experience.

In last year's annual report, we shared our frustrations at not being able to run our biennial National Conference; unfortunately, conditions did not allow

us to proceed in October 2021. However, I am now very pleased to be able to say that everything is in place for the National Conference to go ahead in Monaghan on 12 and 13 May. The theme of the conference is Towards a Theology of Safeguarding. In the run up to the conference, we were delighted to commission presentations by nine theologians, experts, professionals and academics on the theme of a Theology of Safeguarding, and to host these on our website. These presentations have now been reproduced in a booklet, which will be available at the National Conference. The National Board is indebted to all nine presenters who shared so willingly their knowledge and experience, which will be very valuable to the Catholic Church in Ireland as we continue our safeguarding journey.

Finally, as always, the annual report provides an opportunity to thank the National Office staff for their continued commitment and hard work in supporting the Church's safeguarding agenda. The small team held together very well, while working at a reduced capacity, to deliver on our annual objectives. So too, I want to thank the National Case Management Committee who provide invaluable, sensible advice to Church authorities, and whilst their services were not called upon as frequently as in previous years, it is still very much appreciated.

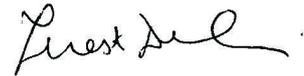
Lastly, the work would not be achieved without the support and direction provided by the Directors of the National Board. I admire their commitment, wisdom and unfailing support. We said goodbye in 2021 to Michael Ringrose, a long-time Director and font of knowledge, and wish him well in his retirement. We also said farewell to our outstanding Chairman John Morgan, who has been a Director since 2006 and Chair of the Board since 2009. Those of you who know John will recognise his immense contribution to the National Board, to child safeguarding, and to the Catholic Church in Ireland. We all owe John so much, but I know that he would shy away from any thanks, seeing this work as part of his life's commitment to the Church and to God. John has had to negotiate many a difficult issue and has always done so with grace and good

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will. He has constantly been available to me and has been particularly supportive when I have had to face some of the bigger challenges within this work. The abiding words of wisdom that I will retain from John are, “keep your inner peace”.

We welcome three new members to the Board. Our new Chair, Mr Justice Garrett Sheehan, brings significant experience in rights-based criminal law to the role. Garrett is proving to be a steady hand, taking over the tiller from John Morgan. We also welcome Phil O’Laoide – a solicitor, who has already shown her experience in influencing National

Board publications. The final new member is Gillian McGrath, with long experience working in the education sector and in inspection of safeguarding in schools.



TERESA DEVLIN  
Chief Executive Officer  
24 April 2022



The Board met 11 times during the reporting period April 2021 to March 2022, with all meetings taking place online, due to Covid-19.

At each Board meeting, National Office finances were reviewed; and we are pleased to report that in spite of the financial constraints, activities to achieve the objectives of the company proceeded at pace. These are detailed in the body of this report.

The Board reviewed its compliance with all statutory obligations and with relevant legislation; and submitted a return confirming its full compliance to the Charities Regulator.

An annual self-audit was undertaken by the Board Directors about the conduct of Board business, the management of meetings, and the effectiveness of the Chair and Directors. The Chair, Mr John Morgan, retired in December 2021, and he was replaced by Mr Justice Garrett Sheehan.

The following items were considered at the Board meetings:

- Code of Corporate Governance
- Governance Compliance Record
- Operational Plan
- Risk Register
- Staff remuneration

Two sub committees were established, as follows:

**Remuneration Committee** – terms of reference were approved and nominees appointed to review staff remuneration annually.

**Legislation and Data Protection Sub-committee**

Members of the Board were appointed, along with the Chair of the National Case Management Committee (NCMC) Mr Justice Iarfhlaith O'Neill. The function of the sub-committee is to consider the challenges presented by information sharing with the National Board; and to make recommendations for changes that would allow for easier sharing of essential data, including application to Government departments for support in managing the barriers to information sharing.

In line with the Operational Plan for 2021, the following work was presented and approved by the National Board.

## CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Objective	Progress
<p>To undertake a review of <i>Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016</i>. Consultation paper by April 2021; Report by December 2021.</p>	<p>This was delayed until December 2021, due to an external Strategic Review of Safeguarding being commissioned by the Sponsoring Bodies.</p> <p>Revised timeframe for review of the <i>Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016</i> – initiated in December 2021 – report in February 2023.</p>
<p>To redevelop the National Board’s website to ensure better accessibility to information.</p>	<p>This has been achieved. The new website can be accessed at <a href="http://www.safeguarding.ie">www.safeguarding.ie</a></p>
<p>To conduct a review of the National Case Management Committee (NCMC) – TORs to be approved by Board by March 2021.</p>	<p>Completed. The final report can be viewed at <a href="https://www.safeguarding.ie/component/content/category/89-publications?Itemid=557">https://www.safeguarding.ie/component/content/category/89-publications?Itemid=557</a> The Recommendations are being implemented by the NCMC.</p>
<p>To conduct – and report to the National Board on – Reviews of safeguarding practice (against the 2016 safeguarding Policy and Standards document), inviting dioceses and congregations to publish their Review Reports; and commenting on reviews and compliance with Standards in the National Board’s Annual Report.</p>	<p>Eleven Reports have been undertaken, including nine reviews of safeguarding practices in dioceses and two reviews in religious congregations. All Review Reports can be accessed by clicking on: <a href="https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications/national-board-publications">https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications/national-board-publications</a>.</p>
<p>To produce two guidance and practice (GAP) papers on relevant safeguarding issues.</p>	<p>Completed. A report on <i>Leadership in Child Safeguarding</i> (GAP Paper 9) was published on the Board’s website. A report on <i>Adult Safeguarding</i> (GAP Paper 10). Both papers can be accessed by clicking on: <a href="https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications/national-board-publications">https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications/national-board-publications</a></p>
<p>To produce and publish nine videos on a theology of safeguarding.</p>	<p>Complete. Videos and the transcripts can be accessed at <a href="https://www.safeguarding.ie/national-conference-2022">https://www.safeguarding.ie/national-conference-2022</a></p>
<p>To organise a National Conference in October 2021.</p>	<p>This was deferred until May 2022, due to Covid-19</p>



In line with data protection legislation the National Board appointed a data protection officer (DPO) whose role it is to assist the CEO and National Board with all issues relating to the protection of personal data. In particular, the DPO must: inform and advise the Board, the CEO and all staff of their obligations under data protection law to ensure that all their activities are in keeping with legislation.

There are two types of data that the National Board has: one is the data over which it is a controller, including staff information, staff advice and data it requires from others to deliver its service; the National Board also is a data processor of data shared by other controllers. In both situations, the National Board requires the highest standard of security and has systems in place to protect all data. The data protection officer keeps the National Board informed of how effective its data retention and destruction systems are, as well as briefing the Board on any new requirements from the Data Commission or Information Commissioner's offices.

In 2021, the DPO along with the CEO conducted a review of all data protection procedures and reported to the National Board in November 2021, January 2022, February 2022 and March 2022, on minor changes following a data protection impact assessment on the use of technology to allow for video conferencing, and data destruction processes.

In addition, the DPO advised on the following areas:

- The adequacy and effectiveness of secure storage of hard copy information
- Prevention of spam emails

- Production of appropriate permissions needed to collect and display attendee information at conferences and events
- Review of website cookies following published guidance from Data Protection Commission

The National Board has a robust annual process for review and destruction of data, in line with its data retention and destruction procedures, and this happened in 2021. All data received as a processor, in relation to notification of allegations received up to end of March 2021 has been destroyed or returned to the data controller. A similar process will now begin for data relating to allegations received up to the end of March 2022.

During 2021 the National Board was advised of differing legal opinion with reference to the position of the National Board as a data processor, in relation to receiving personal sensitive data. The legal advice also highlighted the barriers to sharing data with the National Board as part of its advice and review services. The National Board had adopted a position following meetings with the Data Protection Commission, but in light of its receipt of a differing legal view, they have decided to seek further legal advice. The National Board will keep constituents informed as this initiative concludes.

# ALLEGATIONS NOTIFIED TO THE NATIONAL OFFICE BETWEEN 1 APRIL 2021 AND 31 MARCH 2022



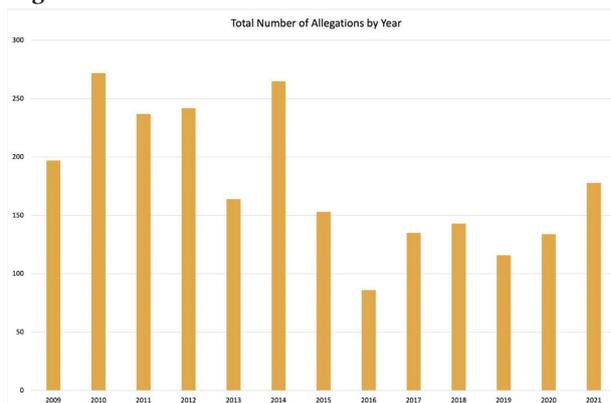
The National Board is restricted by data protection legislation as to what information it can receive, so it has become very challenging to report with the level of detail that the National Office would like to. The National Board does not receive any personal sensitive data, and if some data is not provided by the Church authority, the National Board cannot seek that data, as by doing so, the National Board could risk straying into becoming a data controller rather than a data processor. The information that is shared relates to the person accused of abuse. There have been suggestions made that the National Board should seek and retain statistical data on the complainant, such as gender of the complainant, age of complainant. However, in seeking such data the National Board would be acting *ultra vires*, as the role of the National Board in relation to notification of allegations is 'to monitor whether allegations have been reported and risk assessed.' We therefore cannot collect data on complainants.

Information on allegations is reported to the National Board in anonymised form. Any cross referencing, or confirmation that the allegation has already been received is impossible. We therefore are cautious about the validity of the data presented in this report.

The National Board received 178 notifications of allegations against clergy and religious sisters and brothers between April 2021 and March 2022.

Figure 1 provides the comparative annual figures on allegations notified to the National Board since the first Annual Report in 2009.

**Figure 1**



The National Board has a role in monitoring whether allegations have been reported to the statutory authorities. The National Board has been advised that all allegations have been reported to the Police and, where appropriate, to Social Services in both jurisdictions.

The decade in which the abuse is alleged to have occurred (based on the data shared with us) is indicated in Table 1 below:

**Table 1**

Year of abuse not given or unknown	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
17	3	6	40	73	29	7	2	1

## ALLEGATIONS NOTIFIED TO THE NATIONAL OFFICE BETWEEN 1 APRIL 2021 AND 31 MARCH 2022

Table 2 sets out the notifications received monthly from 1 April 2021 through 31 March 2022.

The majority of allegations (140) relate to sexual abuse. There were 18 allegations of physical abuse, and eight alleged boundary violations. Twelve notifications were reported where the type of abuse was not specified. Notifications sometimes come to Church authorities in solicitors' letters indicating that abuse is alleged but without specifying the type.

Boundary violations do not constitute either a criminal or a canonical offence, but some Church bodies have reported this type of behavior, as it can often indicate attempts at grooming children and young people who can be later targeted for abuse that is more serious.

**Table 2**

Month	Diocese by number reported	Religious by number reported	Type of abuse by number reported
April 2021	1	44	Sexual 43 Physical 2
May 2021	2	31	Sexual 16 Physical 9 Boundary 5 Not provided 3
June 2021	0	5	Sexual 5
July 2021	3	14	Sexual 11 Physical 4 Not provided 2
August 2021	6	12	Sexual 11 Physical 1 Boundary 1 Not provided 5
September 2021	4	1	Sexual 5

Month	Diocese by number reported	Religious by number reported	Type of abuse by number reported
October 2021	0	5	Sexual 5
November 2021	4	3	Sexual 6 Boundary 1
December 2021	2	7	Sexual 8 Physical 1
January 2022	1	10	Sexual 9 Physical 1 Not provided 1
February 2022	3	6	Sexual 8 Boundary 1
March 2022	2	12	Sexual 13 Not provided 1
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>Sexual 140 Physical 18 Boundary 8 Not provided 12</b>

A number of issues stand out immediately from the table. The first of these is that in the months of April and May 2021, 43% of all cases reported to the National Office (76 from 178 cases) were notified. This happened because two religious orders conducted focused review exercises in relation to high profile, named deceased members. As is often the case, such an exercise encourages other victims to come forward.

The second obvious matter identified in the table is the difference between the number of reports made by dioceses, north and south (28), and the number made by religious orders (150) in the same reporting year. This again relates to the increased referrals made in relation to the two deceased religious referenced above.

## ALLEGATIONS NOTIFIED TO THE NATIONAL OFFICE BETWEEN 1 APRIL 2021 AND 31 MARCH 2022

Further information that can be deducted from the notifications indicates that the respondents are broken down as follows:

**Table 3**

Male (based on membership of Church body)	Female (based on membership of Church body)	Diocesan	Religious
109	2	27	84

Status of religious respondents

**Table 4**

Interim management plan	Permanent management plan	Deceased	Out of all ministry	Laicised	In ministry	Left Church body	Retired	Prison	Living in care	Not given
2	1	49	6	3	1	3	5	3	1	10

Status of diocesan respondents

**Table 5**

Deceased	Laicised	In ministry	Retired	Not given
15	2	2	2	6

The National Board again emphasises caution in interpreting this data as all the information received is anonymised and there is no way of crosschecking or confirming the validity of the information.

It is however important to note that allegations are still being made, and the National Board believes that every opportunity should be provided to those who have suffered abuse in the Church to come forward and receive support for the trauma they suffer.

## INITIATIVES AND ADVICES OFFERED BY THE NATIONAL BOARD



During 2021, the National Board had planned to undertake a review of *Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016*. The earlier part of the year was therefore dedicated to initial research and reading in anticipation of this major piece of work. Plans for this review were put on hold, as the Sponsoring Bodies indicated that they were commissioning a Strategic Review of Safeguarding, including the work of the National Board. By September 2021, the Board took a decision to proceed with its original plans, and a detailed project plan for the revision of *Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016* was presented to and approved by the Board in December 2021, and the project was initiated in December 2021. For full details on this important project, click on the following link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/review-of-safeguarding-children-policy-and-standards>.

The revision is necessary because there have been significant changes to civil and canon law, as well as advances in practice, and a need to reduce bureaucracy whilst retaining a focus on safeguarding practice. The early stages of the project involved listening meetings with Church safeguarding personnel, the first of which took place in December 2021. Meetings with complainants of abuse happened in February 2022, with further listening meetings with other complainants, with respondents, and with children and their parents and carers have been planned for later in 2022.

A new venture for the National Board began in September 2021, when the Sponsoring Bodies invited the National Board to put together a proposal to develop a template for a policy and recommendations for safeguarding adults at risk in the Catholic Church in Ireland. Once the proposal was approved, a project manager was appointed, a detailed project plan was written and work got underway. The first output of the project was a

detailed GAP (Guidance, Advice and Practice Paper) entitled *Adult Safeguarding: Current Content in the Catholic Church in Ireland*, which is based on a comprehensive review of relevant literature, research, legislation and best practice. That GAP paper can be viewed at [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP\\_Papers/GAP%20Paper%2010-%20Adult%20Safeguarding%20Current%20Context%20in%20the%20Catholic%20Church%20in%20Ireland.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP_Papers/GAP%20Paper%2010-%20Adult%20Safeguarding%20Current%20Context%20in%20the%20Catholic%20Church%20in%20Ireland.pdf). The next stages of this project include the setting up of a Steering Group, and convening a series of listening meetings, which will commence in April 2022.

Alongside these three major initiatives, (a. Strategic Review of Safeguarding; b. Revision of Safeguarding Children Policy; and c. Development of a template for a policy on adults at risk), National Office staff continued to provide support to Church personnel, and others outside the Church's safeguarding structures, by way of advice across all of the existing safeguarding standards; and the details of this work under each standard are set out below.

In addition, the National Board produced comparators for the last three years (Table 6). The reader will note the significant increase in the provision of advice during 2020/21 – when the pandemic caused so many Church ministries to stop. During that period, diocesan and religious order personnel turned to the National Board for advice, as some ministries moved online. The requests for advice in 2021/21 returned to previous levels, as can be seen in Table 6.

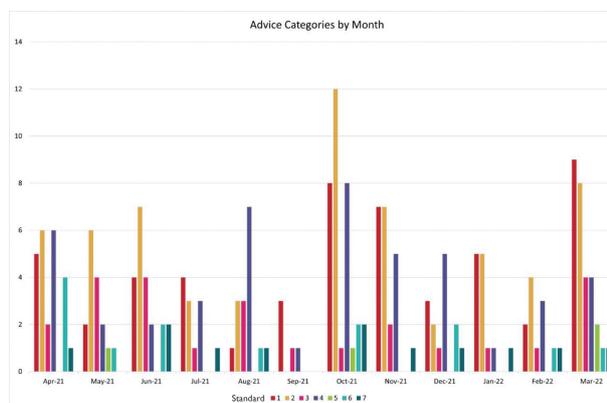
**Table 6 Total advice offered by year**

2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
260	392	258

## INITIATIVES AND ADVICES OFFERED BY THE NATIONAL BOARD

During 2021/2022, the National Office staff responded on 258 occasions, as follows:

**Figure 2**



As can be noted from the monthly Figure 2, there is no particular pattern, and it is unclear why there was an increase in requests for advice in October 2021, other than to state that the majority of advice sought related to reporting and responding to allegations, under Standard 2.

There are seven safeguarding Standards, and these are generally grouped into those that apply to prevention (Child Safeguarding), which are:

- **Standard 1** – Creating and Maintaining of Safe Environments;
- **Standard 5** – Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe; and
- **Standard 6** – Communicating the Church’s Safeguarding Message;

and those that apply to reporting and responding (case management):

- **Standard 2** – Procedures for Responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations
- **Standard 3** – Care and Support for the Complainant
- **Standard 4** – Care and Management of the Respondent

Quality assuring compliance with the Standards (**Standard 7**) applies across the board.

For ease of reading, this section is set out under these headings.

### CHILD SAFEGUARDING – STANDARDS 1, 5 AND 6

#### Standard 1 – Creating and Maintaining Safe environments

On 53 occasions, advice was sought and provided on creating and maintaining safe environments. This is a significant number, particularly in view of the limited children’s ministry that was in operation during the period. The most frequent requests for advice related to Garda vetting, on eleven (11) occasions; other advice sought under Standard 1 related to visiting priests; recruitment; consent; and risk assessment.

It is important to note in relation to this standard that the National Board engaged with Tusla, and with Church safeguarding personnel, to ensure that where there is ministry with children, Child Safeguarding Statements, which include assessment of management of risk, as required under the Children First Act 2016 and the Church’s Child Safeguarding policy, are assessed and written. Child Safeguarding Statements are based on assessment of risk to children, and measures to mitigate risk identified within the statement. This requirement under *Children First* only applies within the Republic of Ireland. However, Church authorities are required to risk assess all ministries in line with Standard 1.8., in whichever jurisdiction they are located.

#### Standard 5 – Training and Support

Training underpins all good safeguarding practice. The National Board has established a comprehensive structure of tutors and trainers, who are guided and supported by the Director of Training and Support. For details on all the training provided directly by the National Board and through registered trainers, see <https://www.safeguarding.ie/news-events/events>. It is satisfying to note that the well-managed

## INITIATIVES AND ADVICES OFFERED BY THE NATIONAL BOARD

training operation of the National Board means that additional advice on training is rarely sought – in 2021/2022 on only four occasions.

### **Standard 6 – Communicating the Church Safeguarding message**

Advice sought under Standard 6 related to topics including, the revision and display of the Child Safeguarding Statement; sharing information concerning safeguarding practice with children; communicating information about deceased respondents; and translating safeguarding information into languages for use in a multicultural Ireland. Fourteen such advices were offered.

### **CASE MANAGEMENT – STANDARDS 2, 3 AND 4**

#### **Standard 2 – Responding to child protection suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations**

As was the case over the last few years, National Office staff offered a significant level of advice on responding to Allegations, on 63 occasions. It is undoubtedly the case that Church personnel fully understand their legislative and Church-required duty to report allegations to the statutory authorities. In the section on allegations, we note that 178 new allegations, suspicions and concerns were reported. Advice is rarely offered in response to straightforward notifications of allegations. However, where it is unclear to the Church body whether the threshold for reporting has been reached or not, advice regarding this may be requested by dioceses and religious orders. In these situations, National Office staff assist in reviewing the information gathered and then offer advice on whether to report. Even where the threshold has not been reached, staff offer advice around consulting the statutory bodies.

Other types of advice in relation to this standard relate to record keeping, and information sharing. Given the complex issues related to information sharing, the National Board has engaged further with legal advisors to try to clarify the legal basis for Church bodies sharing information with each other, and with the National Board, while complying with

the Data Protection Acts 2018 in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland.

#### **Standard 3 – Care and Support for the Complainant**

The National Board has consistently promoted the need to show a compassionate and caring response to those who come forward to disclose abuse. From the direct feedback the National Board receives from complainants, it is clear that the impact of their abuse as children has lifelong consequences for them. Complainants can hold the secret of their abuse for years, for many reasons, which may include fear of distressing a parent or loved one. Victims and survivors have shared how the abuse – and their silencing by the perpetrator – can render them powerless, and often unfairly leave them feeling guilty. We still have much to learn, and we need to do more to assist with healing. In the experience of the National Board, the learning will come from listening to the person who has been abused. We are therefore exceptionally grateful to those who have shared their stories with us, as providing this information assists the National Board in influencing better practice. It is interesting to note that of the 25 occasions on which our advice was sought in relation to Standard 3, ten of these were through direct contact with the complainant themselves. As well as sharing information with a complainant, the general nature of the 25 advices included offering counselling and support; assisting in directing complainants to services when a Church body appears not to respond appropriately to them; and engagement with a complainant once statutory inquiries have concluded and canon law processes are commenced.

#### **Standard 4 – Care and Management of the Respondent**

The number of requests for advice under Standard 4, in relation to care and management of respondents, was consistent with last year and remained higher than the previous year: 47 in 2021/22; 53 in 2020/2021; and 28 in 2019/2020. Almost all advice was offered to Church authorities – a bishop or provincial – while a few respondents also contacted the National Board for advice.

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The processes involved once an allegation has been notified can be complex, so seeking advice from the National Board is a wise course of action. Church authorities understand very well their civil legal obligations to report; however, assessing whether restrictions on ministry may be required is not so straightforward. The types of advice that were offered under Standard 4 included assessing and managing risk; consideration of restrictions on ministry; and managing preliminary investigations and canon law processes. It is reassuring to see cases being progressed canonically; this was not always the case in the past, which left many respondents in a state of uncertainty. It is also important to note that during the last two years there has been greater clarity in relation to the requirements under canon law, with the publication of Vatican guidance in the *Vademecum* of July 2020, and the revised Book VI of the Code of Canon Law in June 2021.

### **National Case Management Committee (NCMC)**

Advice on the management of cases can be offered by a member of National Office or by the National Case Management Committee (NCMC). Membership of the NCMC is achieved through paying a small fee (€600 for two years); signing a memorandum of understanding; and signing a data processing deed to enable the exchange of information. Currently 23 Dioceses and 25 Religious Congregations are members of the NCMC.

In February 2021, after nine years of operating, the National Board agreed that a third review of the National Case Management Committee (NCMC) was required. Terms of Reference were approved and Mr. Peter Kieran was appointed to coordinate and carry out the review. This review was conducted into the operations of the NCMC during 2021, to assess satisfaction with the work of the Committee among the members that used it. In addition, the views of non-member Church bodies were sought. This third review followed an initial independent review in 2013, a year after the Committee began its operations; and a review in 2017 of the consistency of the advice provided by the Committee.

The methodology utilised in this third review involved seeking the views of the Committee itself; of Church authorities from dioceses and religious orders who have sought advice from the Committee; and of other Church authorities who have not engaged the NCMC, perhaps because they have their own Advisory Panel in place, or because they have not had case management difficulties. Consultation was by questionnaire, and a simple analysis of the responses received was undertaken.

The NCMC then met as a group to consider the points made in the returned questionnaires, and agreed a number of changes to the operations of the Committee as follows:

1. Revisions to be made to the *Case Submission Form*, to ensure that the Committee has sufficient information to guide it (subject to agreement on information sharing and data protection).
2. On a case-by-case basis and where relevant, the Church authority will be invited to include other documents with their submissions, such as
  - » Assessment Reports
  - » Written submission from respondent
  - » CDF correspondenceAppropriate permissions should be sought for sharing these reports:
3. Internal operations of the Committee to be adjusted to ensure that presenters are put at their ease, can share information without difficulty, and can receive a clear verbal and written advisory response.
4. Members' contracts to be renewed on a three-year basis, with the option of renewal for a further three years.
5. Committee membership to be reviewed annually to allow members to retire, and new members to be recruited in line with skills needs of Committee.
6. Committee to receive training and updates on current safeguarding challenges at least annually.
7. Video conferencing will continue to be an option for NCMC meetings, to be decided on a case-by-case basis.

## INITIATIVES AND ADVICES OFFERED BY THE NATIONAL BOARD

The full report of that review can be found at [www.safeguarding.ie/](http://www.safeguarding.ie/)

The Committee met four times during the reporting year, and offered advice on seven (7) cases, six (6) relating to diocesan priests and one (1) relating to a member of a religious order.

A review of the last 10 years of operation has shown a steady decline in cases being presented to NCMC.

**Table 7**

2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
53	39	37	35	21	29	20	14	11	6

Table 7 demonstrates a steady decline in NCMC usage, with a particular fall off in the last three years. The National Board is aware that legal advice has been provided to religious orders on the implementation of data protection laws in respect of sharing of information with the National Board and with the National Case Management Committee. The NCMC will only offer advice based on the sharing of full information, as to do otherwise would mean that advice is provided on selective information, which in any circumstances would not be sound advice.

Another reason for fewer presentations of cases to the NCMC could be that many dioceses and religious order have developed their own skills and expertise in case management matters, and therefore no longer require the advice of an advisory panel.

Table 8 details the seven cases presented to the NCMC by month and Church body:

**Table 8**

Month	Diocesan	Religious Order
April 2021	2	
May 2021		
June 2021		
July 2021		
August 2021	1	
September 2021		
October 2021		
November 2021		
December 2021	2	
January 2022		
February 2022		
March 2022	1	1
Total	6	1

In spite of the obvious decline in usage of NCMC, the majority of responses received from dioceses and religious orders who engaged in the Review of NCMC expressed support for the work of the Committee and a desire for its continuation, and conveyed their appreciation for the independent and clear advice offered.

The NCMC is comprised of the following people: Chairperson – Mr Justice Iarfhlaith O’Neill (a retired judge of the High Court); Mr Sean Moriarty (formerly of the Probation Service); Ms Anne Confrey (a retired solicitor); Fr Michael Mullaney (a canon lawyer); Sr Helen O’Riordan (a support person for complainants); Mr Phil Mortell (a former HSE social worker); Sr Colette Stevenson PVBM (Board Director of Coimirce); Fr Brendan O’Rourke CSsR (a psychotherapist); Mr Peter Kieran, Director of Safeguarding, National Board (a

## INITIATIVES AND ADVICES OFFERED BY THE NATIONAL BOARD

former HSE social worker); and Ms Teresa Devlin (minute taker), CEO of the National Board.

### Standard 7 – Quality Assuring Compliance with the Standards

In 2018, Pope Francis promulgated *Vos estis lux mundi*, an apostolic letter which amongst other things highlights the importance of accountability and good governance. In line with this, the National Board produced a GAP paper, entitled *Shedding light on vos estis lux mundi* (available at: [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP\\_Papers/GAP%20Paper%206-%20Shedding%20Light%20on%20Vos%20estis%20lux%20mundi.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP_Papers/GAP%20Paper%206-%20Shedding%20Light%20on%20Vos%20estis%20lux%20mundi.pdf)), which considered the importance of good leadership in safeguarding, as well as the qualities of a good leader, and what a leader can do to develop a safe Church and a safeguarding culture which is open to review and change, as new challenges emerge.

An important aspect of ensuring good practice is engaging with safeguarding personnel within the Church body to review and examine their current practice. A requirement under Standard 7 is for the Church authority to have an annual self-audit conducted with their safeguarding personnel. In 2020, the National Board advised Church authorities that there was no need to confirm whether a self-audit had been undertaken within their Church body, on the assumption that ministry with children was significantly limited during the pandemic. However, some Church authorities did confirm that they had undertaken their self-audit, as some limited ministry, including online ministry, had happened. With the opening of churches, the National Board once again reminded Church authorities of the need to ensure that safeguarding measures were in place, and that there was a need to advise the National Board that they had undertaken their self-audit. The National Board has taken a decision that as responsibility for governance rests with the Church authority, the scrutiny of their annual self-audit would take place only when a Church authority invited the National Board to conduct a full Review of child safeguarding practice.

What became evident in 2021/2022 was that an increasing number of religious congregations and orders had ceased ministry with children because of their aging membership, and that a requirement to conduct an annual self-audit in these circumstances was meaningless.

Table 9 below therefore reflect the responses regarding self-audits received from religious congregations and dioceses.

Table 9

Complete		In Process		No Longer Necessary	
Dioceses	Religious Orders	Dioceses	Religious Orders	Dioceses	Religious Orders
26	128	0	0	0	34

### NATIONAL BOARD REVIEWS OF SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE IN CHURCH BODIES

The second round of National Board Reviews commenced in 2018, following the drafting of a revised methodology. The Board's approach to conducting reviews now ensures a greater focus on examining practice rather than on written policy and procedures. Hearing the views of those using safeguarding services has become a priority. Given the need for reviewers to speak directly with children, their parents and carers, complainants and respondents of abuse as well as those within the safeguarding structure, face to face contact has been important. However, once the pandemic led to restrictions in travel and in person-to-person contacts, in-person reviews had to be suspended. The National Board did attempt some hybrid reviews by conducting some meetings online, which was challenging. Towards the end of 2021, in-person reviews resumed; and a good programme of reviews of dioceses has now been planned for 2022.

## INITIATIVES AND ADVICES OFFERED BY THE NATIONAL BOARD

The total number of reviews fully completed to date is 9 dioceses and 2 religious congregations. Fieldwork in three further dioceses and three religious congregations has commenced and two further dioceses have dates for reviews agreed. The Church bodies where reviews have been completed and reports issued are: Kilmore (August 2018); Benedictines Glenstal (August 2018) Ferns (January 2020); Killaloe (March 2020); Dublin (March 2020); Limerick (April 2020); Cork and Ross (May 2020); Meath (December 2020); Presentation Sisters (August 2020) Tuam (November 2021); Kerry (February 2022)

Reports of all these Reviews can be read at <https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications/national-board-publications>

### **OTHER ADVICES**

On 40 occasions, the National Board was asked for advice on other matters, including adults at risk on nine occasions. It should be noted that offering advice on the safeguarding of adults at risk falls outside the remit of the National Board, and in these circumstances, staff signpost Church personnel to other national bodies. On a further six occasions,

advice was sought in relation to data protection. Here again it should be noted that the National Board cannot offer data protection advice per se; but its staff can advise on the challenges of sharing personal sensitive data. In these circumstances, staff suggest that Church safeguarding personnel consult with the nominated Data Protection Officer for their Church body; or they might be referred to the appropriate statutory agency for advice.

An increasing activity for the National Board is responding to requests for training and advice from Irish Provincial leaders whose Church body is ministering abroad. Such international advice was requested on 16 occasions. The type of advice offered related to the development of a local child safeguarding policy, to training, and occasionally, on case management matters. Requests from lay apostolates account for four advices provided. During 2021/22, the National Board produced guidance on safeguarding practice by lay apostolates, accountabilities to Diocesan and Religious Congregational leaders, and management of allegations. The Sponsoring Bodies are considering how to enable lay apostolates to become associate members of the National Board.



This section of the report deals with work undertaken as part of the Training and Support Strategy (2019-2022). The Strategy (available at: [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Training\\_Resources/Training%20and%20Support%20Strategy%202019-2022.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Training_Resources/Training%20and%20Support%20Strategy%202019-2022.pdf)) details all initiatives undertaken to support Church personnel in training and communicating the Church's safeguarding messages, and ensuring their implementation at a national and local level.

This year is the final year covered by this Strategy and a new Strategy will be developed in 2022 as part of the corporate objectives outlined.

The objectives covered in the current Training and Support Strategy are:

1. Building competence and skills at local level.
2. Training and supporting trainers.
3. Supporting individual Church bodies.
4. Facilitating national training events.
5. Facilitating a national seminary formation programme.
6. Supporting child safeguarding internationally.
7. Developing policy, guidance and resources.
8. Supporting best practice.

This reporting period, like the last, has seen a change in how training is delivered. The measures put in place last year, to train trainers in the new training manual have meant that the trainers have been ready to deliver training face to face; however, for many this was not possible given Covid-19 restrictions, and in addition there was a nervousness from participants and trainers to undertake face to face training. In response to Covid, the National Board enabled the adaptation of the training programme, to allow trainers to deliver elements of the programme from the training manual online, for the first time. It must be acknowledged that the current training manual was not developed or written to be delivered online

using video-conferencing software, but trainers with support from the National Board have adapted and are now delivering training as a hybrid model, with some online facilitation and some face to face.

The National Board wish to pay tribute to the adaptability, courage and skill of our registered trainers for being able to take on the challenge of delivering such important training in a new and unfamiliar online environment.

### REVIEW OF OBJECTIVES

#### **1. Building Competence and Skills at Local Level**

Ensuring the implementation of *Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016* requires building capacity and skills of people in local safeguarding roles, with a key responsibility to oversee and advise on the implementation of all the relevant safeguarding standards. All of the training delivered under this objective was online. This year the focus has been on continuing to train local safeguarding committees.

#### **Safeguarding Committee Training**

The Safeguarding Committee is an important component of the safeguarding structure and exists to support the Church authority to ensure that the child safeguarding requirements of Standards 1, 5, 6 and 7 (Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments; Training and Support; and Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message) are implemented locally within each Church body.

In this reporting year, despite the Covid restrictions this training was delivered online six times (two to dioceses and four to religious orders).

#### **Online Ministry with Children**

During the Covid pandemic, the implications of Covid restrictions meant that many ministries with

## TRAINING AND SUPPORT

children in the Church could no longer be delivered in the traditional way. Many chose to move this ministry online and delivered a mix of live interactive ministries or pre-recorded information online.

To assist with ensuring good child safeguarding practice while engaging with young people online, the National Board developed a bespoke training programme to assist those in key responsibilities of child safeguarding to understand and manage risk in these settings.

The request for this training has lessened over the reporting period as restrictions have eased and more ministry has moved back to face to face. Despite this the training was delivered three times to two dioceses and one religious order.

### 2. Training and Supporting Trainers

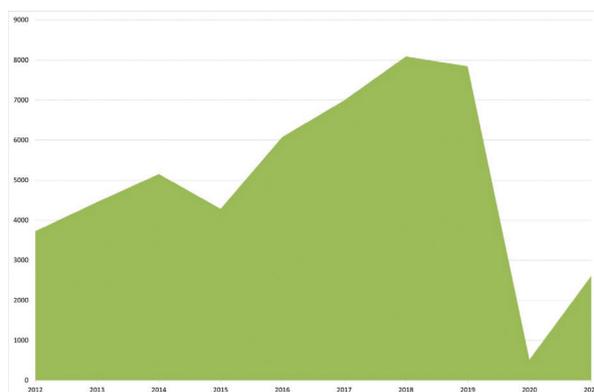
The accreditation and support of trainers following a six-day course run by the National Board continues to be a significant part of our work. There has been a reduction in the number of accredited trainers maintaining their accreditation (possible due to Covid and other personal factors). There are currently 88 trainers registered with the National Board.

#### Local Safeguarding Awareness Training

In 2020-2021 there was a significant drop in the amount of training delivered at local level; the number totalled 520 people trained by registered trainers. This drop was a direct consequence of the inability of trainers to deliver face-to-face training due to government restrictions in place. In January 2021, the National Board communicated directly with trainers to encourage them to facilitate certain aspects of the manual online. Through advice and support from each other and the Director of Training and Support, many delivered online training with the result that during 2021/22, 2611 people have been trained in child safeguarding. This represents a 5-fold increase on the previous year. Figure 3 charts the numbers of people attending child safeguarding training since 2012. The drop in 2020 is related to inactivity during Covid, with a marked increase in 2021/22. The National Board is grateful for the activity and commitment

shown by trainers in delivering training in such challenging circumstances.

Figure 3



These training figures are based on the feedback of 97% of the trainers registered (85). Three (3) trainers did not provide a return.

Table 10 below indicates how many training modules of each type were delivered in the reporting year, by method of delivery.

Table 10

Type of training	Full Day	Information Session	Mandated Persons	Refresher Sessions	Young Leaders Session
In person	34	26	5	21	5
Online	11	47	3	67	1

One of the additions to the suite of training was a new session called the 'Refresher Session'. This session is for those who have already attended a full day session. The previous guidance relating to requirements around training stipulated that after three years, each role holder had to be retrained. At the request of trainers and participants, a new, more focused refresher session has been created, which removes the need to attend a full day's session. The introduction of this new session has been welcomed by both participants and trainers, and the figures demonstrate that it is the most popular session delivered in this reporting period accounting for 40% (88) of the total training delivered.

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Despite the marked increase, the pandemic has still had an impact on the amount of training delivered. Of the 85 trainers who provided a return, 34 were unable to deliver any training this year. It is hoped that as we continue to move through the pandemic, the confidence of trainers and participants will increase and translate into further awareness raising training taking place, online and face to face.

### 3. Supporting individual Church bodies

This section of the *Training and Support Strategy* focuses on bespoke training delivered specifically for the needs of an individual Church body. In 2021/22, four training sessions were delivered, three to a diocese and one to an agency of the Bishops' Conference. These sessions focused on the role of the local safeguarding representative; governance; and the *Vademecum on Certain Points of Procedure in Treating Cases of Sexual Abuse of Minors Committed by Clerics* for those in the role of trustee. In addition, the NCMC hosted a training morning on the *Vademecum* and data protection.

### 4. Facilitating National Training Events

A key role of the National Board is to share best practice and latest developments in child safeguarding policy, legislation and guidance. Traditionally we do this by holding monthly workshops on a range of topics. As the work adapted, these sessions were moved online. Training online has some advantages, in terms of reaching a wider and smaller audience, within tighter timeframes. For in-person training to be cost effective, larger numbers are required. As a result of delivering to smaller groups, some training was delivered multiple times.

During 2021/2022 the following was delivered:

#### 8 April 2021 and 8 June 2021 – Training for Advisors (2 separate events)

This training was designed for new and existing advisors and focused on the practicalities of the role, including record keeping, working with respondents, and understanding the boundaries of the role as distinct from others in the safeguarding structure.

#### 20 July 2021 – Session with the Superintendent of An Garda Síochána responsible for the National Protective Services Bureau.

The purpose of this session was to introduce the Superintendent of the Protective Services Bureau, to relevant Church personnel and enable the clarification of issues relating to the reporting of allegations to An Garda Síochána. Such collaborative training also allows for better working relationships between Church personnel and An Garda Síochána.

#### 30 September 2021 – Session with the National Vetting Bureau

The purpose of this session was for staff from the National Vetting Bureau to clarify certain issues relating to Garda Vetting.

#### 12 October 2021, 27 January 2022 and 24 March 2022 – Training for new National Board Reviewers (3 separate sessions)

These sessions were designed to train newly appointed reviewers in their role. Topics included:

- Understanding the seven safeguarding standards and their applicability to practice
- Strategies for gathering evidence
- How to analyse data
- Report writing.

#### 16 October 2021 – Train the Trainers Course (6 days to complete the course)

Applicants who wish to become registered trainers with the National Board must undertake a six-day-long training and assessment process, which includes developing knowledge in relation to safeguarding children in the Catholic Church in Ireland, group work and facilitation skills. All six days were delivered in this reporting period. After this process is completed, a final day is delivered by the applicant in their own local Church body, where they are assessed by a National Board tutor.

#### 27 October 2021 – Tusla Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessments

This course focused on the requirements for Church bodies in the Republic of Ireland to have Tusla

## TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Child Safeguarding Statements. At the training new guidance on the statement and risk assessment was presented, and staff from the Compliance Unit of Tusla were present to answer specific questions from participants.

### **17 November 2021 and 29 March 2022 – Training for New DLPs (2 separate events)**

This training was designed for people who have recently taken on the role of Designated Liaison Person (DLP) or deputy DLP, and covered the following areas:

- Clarifying the role of DLP.
- Hearing and recording child safeguarding concerns.
- Communication and supervision.
- Producing an annual internal report on cases for the Church authority.

### **14 December 2021, 16 December 2021, 11 January 2022, 13 January 2022 – Listening Meetings on the revision of Safeguarding Children policy document of 2016 (4 separate events)**

These meetings form part of the consultation process on the revision of the child safeguarding policy. Each date was tailored for those in specific roles in child safeguarding (Church authorities; support people and advisors; child safeguarding committee members; DLPs and Deputy DLPs).

At the meeting staff shared plans for the revision of the policy and received comments which will be taken into account in the redevelopment of the policy.

### **19 January 2022 and 22 January 2022 – Annual Update for Registered Trainers (2 separate events)**

These sessions were for those who are currently registered as trainers with the National Board and covered the following areas:

- Providing an opportunity to network with other trainers from across the country.
- Allowing trainers, the opportunity to contribute their questions and ideas for the revision of the 2016 child safeguarding policy.

- Providing support to trainers on specific issues relating to the roll out of training.

### **9 February 2022 – Training for New Church Authorities**

This training was organised specifically for Church leaders to induct them into their strategic role in relation to child safeguarding. The day covered a range of topics relating to safeguarding including:

- The strategic role of the Church authority in relation to safeguarding
- Pastoral ministry and safeguarding
- The importance of governance

### **22 March 2022 – Session with CEO of Tusla, Child and Family Agency, Republic of Ireland**

The purpose of this session was to introduce the CEO of Tusla to relevant Church personnel and enable the clarification of certain issues relating to the operation of Tusla.

## **5. Facilitating National Formation Programme**

### **Head to Heart**

The National Board has been working with four seminaries (St Patrick's College, Maynooth; the Pontifical Irish College, Rome; Redemptoris Mater, Dundalk; and the Venerable English College, Rome (for two Irish seminarians currently studying there) to develop and deliver a national child-safeguarding formation programme. The course is called 'Head to Heart: Child Safeguarding in Formation'. The aim of this programme is to provide participants with a deeper understanding of the core elements of child safeguarding, which the National Board believe will assist in the development of a greater awareness of child safeguarding matters in newly ordained priests.

Two modules of this current cycle of Head to Heart were delivered. The National Board have initiated an evaluation of the programme and its content to enable learning and refinement of the programme as it enters its next phase. In addition, Head to Heart has now been accredited by St Patrick's College, Maynooth, with seminarians who complete all the

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modules being awarded a certificate of achievement from the university.

An induction session as well as the following three modules were delivered online:

- **Boundaries** – This module was designed for seminarians to understand the importance of good boundaries, integrity in ministry and the relationship between these two issues and child safeguarding practice.
- **Digital Media** – This module considered how Church personnel should communicate appropriately with children using electronic media, ensuring that online risks are assessed and managed.
- **History** – This module offered seminarians the chance to explore the history of abuse within the Catholic Church in Ireland and internationally to understand and appreciate the context of child safeguarding policies and procedures.

The National Board has been engaging with those who are responsible for overseeing the permanent diaconate programme with a view to developing a version of Head to Heart for those in formation to become permanent deacons. The first modules of this programme are scheduled to be delivered in Autumn 2022.

### **Pastoral Theology Students – St Patrick’s College Maynooth**

As in previous years, staff from the National Board delivered training to pastoral theology students in St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth, on elements of practice in their pastoral placement. This session included focusing on boundaries, reporting procedures and on how safeguarding links with effective pastoral ministry. The students were asked to complete a short reflective exercise as part of this.

### **6. Supporting Child Safeguarding Internationally**

Staff from the National Board are from time to time asked to assist other international organisations working within child safeguarding in the Church.

This year staff from the National Board presented to staff from the Chilean Bishops’ Conference on the history of the abuse crisis in Ireland and the response of the Irish Church.

In addition, training on developing a safeguarding policy and implementing standards was delivered by way of two workshops on line, to a Religious Congregation in India, whose Superior General is based in Ireland. This same Superior General had requested the same training for their members in the Philippines, Thailand and in Pakistan. These programmes will take place during the forthcoming year.

Finally, staff from the National Office ran two workshops for the Licentiate programme in child protection, organised by the Gregorian University in Rome.

### **7. Developing Policy, Guidance and Resources**

To support the implementation of *Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*, the National Board produced extensive web-based practice guidance. The guidance is an optional resource to be used as appropriate when a concerning matter arises. By its nature, it is open to review and revision following changes to legislation, regulation, canon law, developments in best practice and experience. This year the guidance has been updated 15 times.

Much of the changes associated with this year’s guidance relates to the outworking of the *Vademecum on Certain Points of Procedure in Treating Cases of Sexual Abuse of Minors Committed by Clerics*. In addition, guidance from Tusla around the outworking of the Child Safeguarding Statement, have resulted in changes to the risk management template and also the template statement itself, to ensure best practice in managing risks when engaging with children and young people.

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### 8. Supporting Best Practice

#### Meetings

Staff from the National Office regularly met with a range of lay apostolates, agencies of the Irish Bishops' Conference, Government officials, non-governmental organisations, international bodies and representatives of international bishops' conferences to share and support best practice. The following is a listing of these meetings and their purpose:

Organisation	Purpose of Meeting
IEC	Working together to develop a piece of safeguarding guidance following <i>Vos estis lux mundi</i>
Safeguarding across denominational network meeting	Network meeting of those in safeguarding across a number of religious-based organisations and Churches to share best practice.
National Protective Services Bureau	Collaborative working
Garda Vetting Bureau	Ensuring best practice
Tusla	Various – policy, procedure and practice issues
Allianz	Update on work
Diocesan Data Protection Officers meeting	Network meeting of those designated as Data Protection Officers in dioceses across Ireland to share best practice.
Permanent Diaconate Team	Meeting with those in charge of the permanent diaconate programme to discuss development of Head to Heart course.
Council for Justice and Peace	Working to contribute to a consultation on restorative justice
Rector of St Patrick's College, Maynooth	Working on Head to Heart
Rector of Redemptoris Mater Seminary	Working on Head to Heart
Vice-Rector of the Pontifical Irish College	Working on Head to Heart

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Towards Healing	Update on work
Dean of Theology – St Patrick’s College, Maynooth	Working on accreditation process for Head to Heart
NSPCC	Liaison over policy formulation
Access NI	Clarification on vetting requirements
Disclosure and Barring Service	Update on work
Safeguarding Ireland	Network meeting
IADC – Rome	Networking
RSM Ireland	Information meeting
Scottish Catholic Bishops’ Conference	Network meeting
Pontifical Commission for the Protection on Minors	Update on work
International Union of Superior Generals on Safeguarding	Network meeting
Hourglass	Network meeting

### Guidance and Practice (GAP) papers

In 2018 the National Board decided to produce detailed research papers which provided advice and practical guidance to Church personnel on important safeguarding initiatives and issues. In this reporting period two papers were produced:

- Leadership and Child Safeguarding (February 2022)

This paper outlines through exploration of theory and lessons learned from statutory reports, the importance of leadership and governance in relation to child safeguarding. You can read the GAP paper here [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP\\_Papers/GAP%20Paper%209-%20Leadership%20and%20Child%20Safeguarding.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP_Papers/GAP%20Paper%209-%20Leadership%20and%20Child%20Safeguarding.pdf).

- Adult Safeguarding Current Context in the Catholic Church in Ireland (February 2022)

This paper seeks to outline the current context of adult safeguarding within the Catholic Church in Ireland. It examines definitions of vulnerable adults or adults at risk across civil law in both jurisdictions in Ireland and canon law. The paper then explores current issues which need to be considered when engaging with adults as well as exploring the current context of policies across the Catholic Church in Ireland. The GAP paper can be viewed here: [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP\\_Papers/GAP%20Paper%2010-%20Adult%20Safeguarding%20Current%20Context%20in%20the%20Catholic%20Church%20in%20Ireland.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP_Papers/GAP%20Paper%2010-%20Adult%20Safeguarding%20Current%20Context%20in%20the%20Catholic%20Church%20in%20Ireland.pdf).

## TRAINING AND SUPPORT

### Briefing Papers

In addition to the other initiatives established to support best practice in 2021 the National Board developed briefing papers. In essence, these papers are the National Board's critiques and assessments of key points and lessons that can be learned from externally written reports. This year one report was published:

- Summary of the *Report of the Independent Commission on Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church in France (CLASE)* (December 2021)

This paper seeks to set out in summary form the recommendations and work of the Commission which had four objectives

1. To shed light on the sexual violence committed in the Catholic Church in France since 1950;
2. To examine the extent to which these cases were, or were not, dealt with;
3. To assess the measures taken by the Church to "treat this scourge";
4. To make recommendations.

The briefing paper can be viewed here: [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Briefing\\_papers/Briefing%20Paper%203.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Briefing_papers/Briefing%20Paper%203.pdf)

### Theology of Safeguarding Videos

In early 2021, given that the National Conference had to be delayed due to Covid restrictions, the National Board wanted to start a conversation across the Church in Ireland on why the safeguarding ministry is central and essential to what we do as Church. To inform this conversation, the National Board invited a number of theologians, spiritual directors, ethicists and experts in safeguarding to share their thinking in short videos which were presented monthly on the National Board's website. In total nine videos were developed, six of which fall into this year's reporting period. The videos and their topics are outlined in Table 11.

It is our hope to continue to develop the thinking and topics highlighted in these presentations at our National Conference on 11 and 12 May 2022 and in our future work.

Table 11

Month	Contributor	Topic
January 2021	Fr Hans Zollner	What areas would a comprehensive Theology of Safeguarding need to address; and how can Church safeguarding personnel contribute to its development?
February 2021	Sr Nuala Kenny	Healing in a Wounded Church
March 2021	Dr Ethna Regan	How can a theology of safeguarding encompass human rights, including children's rights?
April 2021	Fr Paddy Boyle	How to put theology of safeguarding into practice
May 2021	Una Allen	How can (an understanding of) Pastoral Theology inform action to heal the spiritual damage caused by clerical child sexual abuse?
June 2021	Dr Jessie Rogers	Jesus puts a child in their midst and tells the disciples to welcome children as a way of welcoming Jesus. How can the Church take that seriously today?
July 2021	Fr Jim Corkery	Does there now need to be a re-examination of the theology of salvation, in the light of the experience of survivors of abuse who did not sin, but were sinned against?
August 2021	Dr Marcia Bunge	What is the significance of a robust and biblically-based theology of childhood for safeguarding children and strengthening Christian theology and the Church's work in the world?
September 2021	Justin Humphrey	How is a robust theology of safeguarding a gift to the Church?

## TRAINING AND SUPPORT

### **Ecclesiastical Provincial Area Meetings**

The National Board facilitates Ecclesiastical Provincial Area Meetings at least once a year. This year five meetings were held, two in Dublin, one in Tuam, one in Armagh and one in Cashel. The additional meeting in Dublin was part of the cycle of ecclesiastical provincial meetings from last year. The aim of these meetings is for staff from the National Office to meet with bishops, provincials, superiors and safeguarding personnel from Church

bodies to discuss developments in child safeguarding.

Topics for discussion included:

- Update on review of safeguarding children
- Outline of work on adult safeguarding
- Changes in personnel at the National Board
- Guidance changes
- Reviews of safeguarding practice
- Theology of safeguarding videos
- Update on Head to Heart

## OPERATIONAL PLAN AND OBJECTIVES



The current Operational Plan will be reviewed in 2022, following completion of the external review and the two internal initiatives – review of *Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016* and the development of a template Vulnerable Adult policy and associated resources. The current Operational Plan sets out all the activities of the National Board and can be accessed at <https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications/national-board-publications>

The following specific objectives are being undertaken in 2022/23:

- Organise a National Conference on the theme of a Theology of Safeguarding
- Continue to undertake reviews of safeguarding practice across dioceses and religious congregations
- Complete a review of *Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*, and make recommendations for change to the policy
- Develop a template Safeguarding policy for Adults at risk in the Church and make recommendations to IEC and AMRI on implementation of policy, guidance and structures for adult safeguarding
- Develop a new Training and Support Strategy.



### **John Morgan, Chairperson until December 2021**

Has had a career in business, primarily as a corporate lawyer. He served as Chairperson of the Bishops' Committee on Child Protection from 2002-2006. Prior to that, he had been a member of the committees established by the Bishops dealing with child protection beginning with the first formal Bishops' Committee on Child Abuse, which was set up in 1999. He joined the Board in 2006, and was appointed Chairperson in 2009 and retired as Chairperson at the end of December 2021.

### **Garrett Sheehan, Appointed as Director in October 2021; Chairperson from January 2022**

Is a former judge of the Irish Court of Appeal from 2014 until 2017. Prior to his appointment to the Court of Appeal, he was a judge of the Irish High Court from 2007. He was educated at Gonzaga College, University College Dublin and the Law Society of Ireland. He was enrolled as a solicitor in 1969. He is a bencher of the King's Inns. He retired from the bench in 2017. On 9 December 2020, he was appointed by President Michael D. Higgins to the position of Chairperson of the Standards in Public Office Commission. He became Chair of the National Board in January 2022.

### **Dr Keith Holmes**

Is a Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist. He was formerly lead clinician and Chairperson of the Medical Board in Lucena Clinic, Dublin, and former Chair of the Faculty of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry within the College of Psychiatry of Ireland. He joined the Board in 2009.

### **Marie Kennedy**

Has a background in social work and has extensive experience in child protection and welfare with a post-graduate diploma in child protection and an MSc in Health Services Management. Through a range of important assignments, Marie provides

significant and extensive experience in all aspects of child care management. She joined the Board in 2008.

### **Jim O'Higgins**

Is a retired solicitor and accredited mediator. He was founder member and co-designer of the state Family Mediation Service. He served as honorary secretary and Board member of Cheeverstown, a service for the intellectually challenged. He chaired the Advisory Panel on child abuse for the Ferns Diocese for eight years. He is a former Chairperson of the Peter McVerry Trust and of the Board of two national schools in a disadvantaged area in Dublin's North City. He sits on the board of Alliance Francaise. He joined the Board in 2013

### **Sr Colette Stevenson PBVM**

Is a Presentation Sister. She has been involved in child protection work within the Church since 1995, when she became Director of the CORI child protection office. Previously she worked as a teacher and later in retreat work. She is a qualified marriage and family therapist. She recently retired from the National Office as Director of Professional Standards. She joined the Board in 2013.

### **Sr Nuala O'Gorman**

Is a Sister of Mercy of the Southern Province of the Congregation and a retired secondary school teacher. She has served as principal of a school, chairperson of board of management and was a member of the provincial team in the province. She was a member of the steering group in the Diocese of Cloyne when child safeguarding policies were being established and served as a member of the child safeguarding committee in that diocese for a number of years, drafting policies with same. She is currently one of the victim-support persons for the diocese. She joined the Board in October 2017.

## THE BOARD AND OTHER CORPORATE INFORMATION

### **Fr Martin Whelan**

Is a priest of the Galway Diocese, and a canon lawyer. He was ordained in 2009, and has served as the Galway Diocesan Secretary since 2010. In addition to his administrative duties within the diocese, Fr Martin is curate at Galway Cathedral and chaplain to St Mary's College. Fr Martin has also served as a canon lawyer with the Galway Regional Marriage Tribunal.

### **Phil O'Laoide**

Is a retired solicitor having practised for almost 40 years first in her own general practice and then for 27 years as managing solicitor and Regional Manager with the Legal Aid Board. Her expertise was mainly in family, child care law and human trafficking. Since retirement she has been the Director for Recruitment and Branch Prison Liaison Officer for her local Branch of Samaritans in Athlone. She currently leads the Prison team and trains and support prisoners to be Samaritan Listeners.

### **Gillian McGrath**

Gillian has a background in education and is currently the CEO of the Catholic Education Partnership, due to retire this spring, and a member of the Board of the Education Authority, Northern Ireland. She was formerly the Director of Education in the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) and prior to that she served as a primary school principal and was employed by the Education and Training Inspectorate as an inspector of schools in all sectors and phases. Gillian currently works as an independent education adviser.

### **Members retired during 2021**

#### **Michael Ringrose, Retired in November 2021**

Is formerly Chief Executive PWD (People with Disabilities in Ireland), the National Representative Organisation for all people with disabilities, their parents, carers, families and advocates. Prior to that, he served as a Chief Superintendent with An Garda Síochána. He joined the Board in 2006.

#### **Fr Paul Murphy OFM Cap, Retired in May 2021**

Has wide experience in his own Order in Child Safeguarding, both as a member of its Leadership Team and as Designated Liaison Person. He served on the Child Safeguarding desk in CORI for eight years, during which time he was the Company Secretary for Faoiseamh Ltd (Towards Healing), the victims' support service. He also participated in the working group which drew up Our Children, Our Church. Paul has qualified as a Trainer of Trainers in Child Safeguarding; he also researched the monitoring and rehabilitation of sexual offenders in religious communities for a MA with the University of the West of England in Bristol. He joined the Board in 2013.

#### **Sr Evelyn Greene, Retired June 2021**

Is a Holy Faith Sister, with a background in education. She has been involved in various ways in the area of child safeguarding at congregational, diocesan and national levels for several years. At present she is designated trainer for child safeguarding. She joined the Board in October 2017.

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### **Members of National Case Management Committee**

**Iarfhlaith O'Neill, Chair** – Retired High Court Judge

**Teresa Devlin** – National Board CEO, Secretary to NCMC

**Sr Helen O'Riordan** – Loreto Sister, Ferns Diocese. Experience in the area of pastoral Support for Victims

**Fr Michael Mullaney** – Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly – Canon Lawyer

**Peter Kieran** – Ex HSE senior child care manager, experience from Waterford's panel in risk assessment and management

**Phil Mortell** – Ex HSE senior child care manager and designated person for Redemptorist congregation.

**Sean Moriarty** – Ex Probation Officer, ROI

**Sr Colette Stevenson** – Experience of working with respondents

**Ann Confrey** – Civil Lawyer, formerly worked with Mason Hayes and Curran

**Fr Brendan O'Rourke** – Therapist with respondents

**Peter Kieran, Part-time Director of Safeguarding – Policy and Case Management Advice:** Peter is a professionally qualified social worker and has a Masters qualification in counselling. He worked in child protection with the SEHB / HSE South from 1974, and became the Regional Specialist in Children and Family Services in 2004. He worked in that role until his retirement in December 2010. He has conducted a number of Reviews for the National Board since 2011 and is now working on research and policy development. He also teaches on the Masters in Therapeutic Child Care at Carlow College.

**Imelda Ashe: Company Secretary and Administrator**

**Ann Cunningham: Administrator**

**Training Tutors:** Fr Paddy Boyle, Julie McCullough, Eleanor Kelly, Aoife Walsh, Avril Halley, Maureen Walsh and Kevin Duffy – supporting the Director of Training and Support in the delivery of the Training and Support Strategy.

#### **Other Corporate Information**

The Members of the Board comprise the directors of Coimirce, a company limited by guarantee without a share capital (Co. Number 465899). The Members of Coimirce comprise nominees of each of the Episcopal Conference of Irish Bishops and AMRI (Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland). The Episcopal Conference of Irish Bishops and AMRI are described as the 'Sponsoring Bodies' of the National Board in this report.

The registered office and address of Coimirce is New House, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.

**Company Secretary: Imelda Ashe**

**Website:** [www.safeguarding.ie](http://www.safeguarding.ie)

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### **Management of National Office**

**Teresa Devlin, Chief Executive Officer,** has been in role as CEO since January, 2014; prior to that she was the Director of Safeguarding with the National Board. Teresa is a qualified social worker and has an advanced diploma in child protection; she has extensive experience in child protection management and family support, both at the levels of senior management and in the specific areas of risk assessment and care planning.

**Niall Moore, Director of Training and Support,** has a degree in Law and Masters in Criminology which he completed whilst working in the office of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY). He has experience facilitating professionals, coordinating teams and working directly with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Alongside his full time role of Director of Training and Support, he has recently completed his doctorate at Queens University in Belfast, examining the role of the Holy See as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Appointed 1 February 2013.



THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR  
**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN**  
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IRELAND

