



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

Annual Report 2022/23



**The National Board for Safeguarding Children
in the Catholic Church in Ireland**

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STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIRPERSON



On behalf of the National Board, I would like to thank Teresa Devlin and her team for their outstanding work during the year in which they again demonstrated their commitment to the ministry of safeguarding children and young people. I would also like to congratulate her on her appointment to the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, a clear and deserved recognition of the outstanding contribution she continues to make on a daily basis.

The directors met on ten occasions during the year and I would like to thank each of them for their regular attendance, commitment, support and unfailing good humour.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Garrett Sheehan".

Garrett Sheehan
Chairperson
May 2023

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Since the last annual report in 2022, life has settled back into the routine that we were all familiar with before the Covid-19 pandemic. Staff have returned to office working, in-person training has resumed, and the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland has progressed a significant number of reviews of child safeguarding practice in dioceses and religious orders. The reader will see from information contained in this annual report that there have been a significant number of new allegations reported (251 in 2022/23; 178 in 2021/22). Many of these relate to boarding schools during a time when they were run by religious orders. The National Board has consistently welcomed opportunities that give complainants a voice and a mechanism for sharing what happened to them as children. A series of media releases in the autumn of 2022, following a documentary called *Blackrock Boys*, provided such an opportunity, not just for victims of abuse in Blackrock College, but in other boarding schools and settings governed by male and female religious across Ireland. While we can be fairly confident that existing practice with children is well regulated, our work in safeguarding will not be completed until all of those who have been abused as children within the Church are enabled to come forward.

Between April 2022 and the end of March 2023, as part of the National Board's review of the Church's safeguarding policy, there have been extensive consultations with children and their parents and carers; victims and survivors of abuse; those accused of abuse; and those who work in the Church on

child safeguarding with the aim of receiving ideas to improve practice. These 'listening meetings' with victims and survivors have provided some powerful testimony to the reality of children who were abused being frightened and silenced by adults whose role should have been to care, support, educate and give example of the teachings of the Gospel. In the words of Pope Francis:

*'If one member suffers, all suffer together with it' (1 Cor 12:26). These words of Saint Paul forcefully echo in my heart as I acknowledge once more the suffering endured by many minors due to sexual abuse, the abuse of power and the abuse of conscience perpetrated by a significant number of clerics and consecrated persons. Crimes that inflict deep wounds of pain and powerlessness, primarily among the victims, but also in their family members and in the larger community of believers and nonbelievers alike. Looking back to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient. Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated. The pain of the victims and their families is also our pain, and so it is urgent that we once more reaffirm our commitment to ensure the protection of minors and of vulnerable adults.'*¹

Since April 2022, the National Board has been inspired to redouble efforts to find an approach through which victims and survivors will feel safe

¹ <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2018-08/pope-francis-letter-people-of-god-sexual-abuse.html>.

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

and supported in coming forward to the Church, and that when they do, they will be received with care and compassion.

This annual report will provide details of all the work the National Board has engaged in over the past twelve months. There were three major pieces of work outside the normal business of the National Board worth noting. These were: (i) a review of the Church's child safeguarding policy, (ii) work on developing a draft adults at risk safeguarding policy, and (iii) a review commissioned by the Irish Episcopal Conference (IEC) and Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI) of safeguarding structures in the Catholic Church in Ireland. This latter review included a focus on the work of the National Board, as well as of Towards Healing and Towards Peace, and we are advised that a report will be delivered to the IEC and AMRI in the coming months.

One of the highlights of 2022 was the National Conference, which took place in Monaghan in May 2022. The conference was a natural follow-on from a series of videos on a theology of child safeguarding prepared by experts for the National Board in 2021. The theme of the conference was 'Exploring a Theology of Safeguarding'. The Conference outline and presentations can be found at: <https://www.safeguarding.ie/national-conference-2022>.

The National Board has a number of roles, which include advising the Church on best child safeguarding practice, which we do through providing case management advice, training, and policy review. This year, advice was requested on 282 occasions, which represented an increase on the number of times that advice was offered last year (258). Page 17 of the report will outline the breakdown of advice offered, by the relevant standard. A significant number (148) related to case management matters – Standards 2, 3 and 4.

The reporting year 2022/23 saw a return to in-person reviews in dioceses and in a small number of religious orders. All of the review reports can be read on: <https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications/>

[national-board-publications](#). It is worth noting that significant improvements in practice across the seven standards have been identified, in comparison with the practice reviewed between 2009 and 2016. While the first round of reviews focused on establishing the levels of past abuse, as well as on analysing written policies and procedures, the reviews being conducted using the 2016 standards are highlighting the experience of providing and using Church child safeguarding services.

The reviewers who are employed as independent consultants meet children, carers, safeguarding personnel, and, where available, complainants of and respondents to allegations of abuse. This live feedback is of great assistance to the reviewers in assessing compliance of the Church body with the Church's standards. The National Board recognises the importance of regular audits and reviews, and we are pleased to report that all diocesan reviews will be concluded by August 2023, when we intend to produce a summary of key findings from this audit exercise.

In-person training, which is more interactive and productive than remote video-assisted training, was recommenced in the reporting year. In particular, the safeguarding in formation training (Head to Heart programme) came alive during in-person sessions. The National Board also extended this important work to the permanent diaconate and undertook an evaluation of the training with seminarians, which indicated significant support from those who had completed several modules. Details of this and all training can be read from page 25 onwards.

The directors of the National Board set the strategic direction and oversee the work of the National Office staff. The skills and expertise of the directors are called on in a wide variety of ways, and they, together with the office staff, negotiate challenges including data protection, charity regulation and compliance, legislation, financial controls and many other strategic management matters. I am grateful to them for their time, commitment, and due diligence in supporting me as CEO, as well as the work of the National Board.

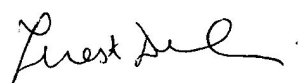
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Our finest asset, however, is the staff of the National Office who have contributed so much over the past year to ensuring the objectives of the National Board are met. We have been fortunate in having such hard-working skilled personnel, to whom I am indebted for their contributions to this important safeguarding work.

In conclusion, the work of the National Board is busy and varied. We do not like to stand still, and we work hard to equip ourselves and Church personnel with skills and knowledge to ensure that every child is safe in the Church, that complainants are listened to with care and compassion, and that respondents to allegations of abuse receive a fair and just process of inquiry. Each year we learn about new approaches to practice, and this last year has really been about listening.

We are grateful to those who have engaged with us on our project to develop an adult safeguarding template policy for the Catholic Church, and we want to take the opportunity to thank them for sharing their knowledge and expertise in assisting the Church in this next phase of its safeguarding journey. We also want to thank children, their parents and carers for taking the time to meet with National Board staff and to communicate their energy and ideas for safe faith ministry.

The most impactful meetings were, without doubt, those that took place with women and men who have been abused as children in the Church. For many, the pain endures long into adulthood, perhaps throughout their lives. We can only listen with openness; we cannot take away their pain. However, it is clear that listening is not enough. Based on what complainants have told us, the National Board is looking forward to considering with complainants what additional supports would assist them in dealing with the trauma of child abuse.



Teresa Devlin

Chief Executive Officer

May 2023



The directors of the Board met with the CEO on ten occasions between April 2022 and March 2023. Following on from Covid-19, the Board has developed a hybrid meeting system with seven meetings taking place online and three taking place in person.

The Board has a number of key roles, in terms of developing strategy, ensuring that resources are managed efficiently, adhering to company and charity law and regulations, and quality-assuring the work of the National Office. The directors reviewed income and expenditure at each Board meeting, and received an external audit of accounts. The directors are satisfied that there is good financial governance and oversight of scarce financial resources.

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.

Included in the full range of governance issues, the Board considered the following:

- » Charities Governance Code: The National Board Charities Compliance Notification was submitted to the Charities Regulator in September 2022, along with the audited accounts. Directors considered requirements to ensure compliance, and signed off on its revised record in January 2023. The directors' assessment is that the National Board is

a 'non-complex' charity, in line with the characteristics set out in guidance from the Charities Regulator.²

- » Risk Register
The Risk Register was considered at Board meetings on three occasions, and it was amended following return to full-time work post-Covid-19, and in light of data protection advice.
- » Operational Plan 2023.

² Charities Regulator (2021), *Charities Governance Code Complex and Non-Complex Charities*, accessible at: <https://www.charitiesregulator.ie/media/2225/complex-and-non-complex-charities.pdf>.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The following specific objectives were set for 2022/23.

OBJECTIVE	PROGRESS
Organise a national conference on the theme of a theology of safeguarding.	Conference took place in May 2022.
Continue to undertake reviews of safeguarding practice across dioceses and religious congregations.	Nineteen reviews were concluded, with ten in process to end of March 2023.
Complete a review of <i>Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016</i> and make recommendations for change to the policy.	Work completed. Guidance Advice and Practice (GAP) paper completed. Recommendations on revisions to the Safeguarding Children Policy to be presented to Church leaders in June 2023.
Develop a template safeguarding policy for adults at risk in the Church and make recommendations to the IEC and AMRI on implementation of policy, guidance and structures for adult safeguarding.	Work completed. Template policy produced. GAP paper submitted in September 2022.
Develop a new Training and Support Strategy.	Completed and approved at a Board meeting on 18 January 2023 and can be found at: https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications/national-board-publications .



Data protection continues to be a large area of work for the National Board. This year a number of important developments have taken place, as detailed below.

Data Sharing

Since the introduction of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and its enshrinement in legislation in Ireland and Northern Ireland, the National Board has undertaken significant internal work to ensure compliance with legislation.

As a non-statutory body with regulatory functions, there are significant barriers relating to sharing of personal sensitive data with the National Board. A number of constituent members of the National Board had received independent legal advice, on the basis of which some questioned the legal basis of the National Board's requests to share data with it to assist with carrying out its normal activities. To help clarify the legal position, the National Board sought its own legal advice in the reporting year from a senior counsel, to complement the advice it had already received from the Data Protection Commission. The National Board can now clarify the following:

- » The National Board may be viewed as a data controller in respect of the processing of personal sensitive data when providing advisory services, and must comply with the obligations of a data controller under Article 5 of the General Data Protection Regulation. In particular, the National Board must have a legal basis to process the data, and the Church body must have a legal basis to transfer the personal sensitive data to the National Board and/or the National Case

Management Committee (NCMC). The National Board is of the view that both the Church body and the National Board can rely on the legal basis of *legitimate interest* when processing personal sensitive data for the purposes of its advisory services, subject to determination that the legitimate interest does not override the rights of data subjects. However, the National Board does not believe it has the legal ability to process special-category personal sensitive data, such as medical information, or information regarding sexual orientation, when providing advisory services. Accordingly, in order to avoid any data protection concerns, the National Board now asks that personal sensitive data not be shared by a Church body when it requests advice (i.e. any data that identifies or could identify a living individual), whether special-category personal sensitive data or not.

- » In relation to child safeguarding reviews, legal advice to the National Board is that the Board acts as a data processor and not as a data controller, given that specific instructions are provided by the Church with regard to the review and that the National Board is measuring the Church against standards set out by the Church. Accordingly, it could be said that the Church body is determining the purpose of the processing. In this regard, the National Board will continue to carry out its review work, on the basis that it is acting as a data processor, under the data processing deeds already agreed with the relevant Church authorities and reviewed with approval by the Data Protection Commission.

DATA PROTECTION

» Due to GDPR concerns in sharing personal data with a non-statutory/external organisation, some religious orders/congregations considered it necessary to seek legal advice to ensure that sharing such personal data with the National Board is legally safe. The religious order/congregations concerned have consistently stated their willingness to engage in reviews and continue to engage in efforts to resolve the legal concerns identified.

Development of a More Secure Database

As a data controller and processor, the National Board is required to observe good data storage practices. In 2022, the National Board was successful in obtaining funding from Porticus to develop a more efficient and secure database. The development of this database is being carried out by an Irish charity named Enclude. This involves the amalgamation of three existing databases, which are:

1. Contacts and Trainers – used to hold non-sensitive personal information relating to all Church personnel with whom the National Board engages, and the training records of registered trainers.
2. Head to Heart database – used to hold non-sensitive personal information relating to

all seminarians and deacons undertaking the Head to Heart Child Safeguarding in Formation programme.

3. Allegations and Advice – this is used to hold anonymised allegations reported to the National Board (and destroyed annually following the publication of the annual report) and advice offered to Church authorities, and is maintained to evidence the work of the Board.

The amalgamation process will complete in June 2023. Relevant personnel and Church authorities have been kept informed throughout regarding data security procedures and measures put in place to safeguard the data placed on this new database.

Data Destruction Process

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 continued in the reporting year. All data received by the National Board as a processor in relation to the notification of allegations received up to the end of March 2022 has been destroyed or returned to the relevant Church authority as the data controller. A similar process will now begin on data relating to allegations received up to the end of March 2023.

ALLEGATIONS NOTIFIED TO THE NATIONAL OFFICE BETWEEN 1 APRIL 2022 AND 31 MARCH 2023



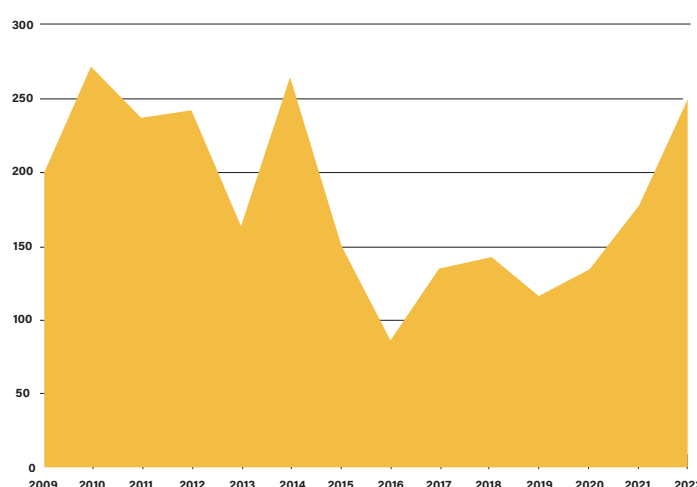
There was a significant increase in the number of notifications of allegations of abuse reported to the National Board over the last twelve months. It is clear from the source of the allegations that many of these relate to alleged abuse in boarding schools run and managed by male and female religious. The statistics for notifications per month are reported in Table 2.

Data protection legislation prevents the sharing, for advisory purposes, of special-category data with the National Board. This means that when notifications are received, they do not contain any identifying information. The role of the National Board is to ensure that the allegation has been reported to the relevant statutory authority agency, and to monitor that risk is being assessed. As the information received is anonymised, there is no ability to cross-reference to establish whether the respondent is already known, or to check if the allegation may already have been reported to the National Board by an alternative source. As referenced in previous reports, this means that the National Board cannot publicly report with the level of detail that it would like, in order to provide a detailed and transparent account of allegations received in any one year.

The National Board received 251 notifications of child protection concerns about clergy and male and female religious between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023.

Figure 1 sets out the allegations notified to the National Board since the start of annual reports in 2009, for comparison purposes.

Figure 1: Number of Allegations by Year



During 2022, there was a High Court judgment³ in the Republic of Ireland, which made clear what the expectations are of reporting allegations, suspicions, concerns and knowledge of child abuse. This judgment helpfully clarifies the expectations of reporting allegations, suspicions, concerns and knowledge of child abuse since it does clarify a broader requirement for such reporting. Prior to this judgment, it was established practice within the Church that all allegations must be reported to the police, irrespective of the status of the accused; and that allegations against living clerics and religious should be reported to Tusla – Child and Family Agency or Health and Social Care Trusts, as appropriate. The civil legislation in both jurisdictions is not clear on reporting allegations against deceased people. However, the High Court judgment stated:

³ 2022 357 JR McGrath v. HSE judgment.

ALLEGATIONS NOTIFIED TO THE NATIONAL OFFICE BETWEEN 1 APRIL 2022 AND 31 MARCH 2023

Given the statutory duty on Tusla is established as including a duty to investigate complaints of historical child abuse, it does not seem to me that s.14(1)(a) can properly be construed as requiring a report only in instances where past harm has occurred to a person who is still a child. Far from resulting in absurdity, as has been suggested, it seems to me that there are sound policy reasons which support a measure which requires a report of child abuse when the abuse suspected relates to the abuse of a person who is now an adult. Such a measure is tied to a desire to enhance child protection and to provide a remedy in respect of past wrongs. One only has to think of a report of historic child abuse made to a school or a religious institution at the hands of a teacher or cleric. It is not for the school or the religious institution to decide not to report to Tusla as the statutory agency on the basis of their view that there is no current or future risk to a child because a teacher or priest or nun is retired or has died. Indeed, if there is any lesson from the extensive litigation in the

area of historic child abuse coming before the Irish courts and leading to a decision of the European Court of Human Rights against the State in O’Keeffe v. Ireland [GC] (35810/09 Judgment 28 January 2014) it is that the report of a complaint is important as evidence that a complaint was made, quite apart from any duty to assess it.

In relation to Northern Ireland, the National Board consulted the Department of Health NI, which agreed to consult further with children and adult services, to clarify what the reporting obligations are in that jurisdiction.

The reports of allegations received in the reporting year note the decade in which the abuse is alleged to have taken place. While the majority of allegations relate to the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, there are four allegations since 2000. One of these relates to a boundary violation and the others are of sexual abuse, demonstrating the need for continued vigilance and robust safeguarding measures.

Table 1: Decade in which the Abuse is Alleged to Have Taken Place

DECADE NOT GIVEN OR UNKNOWN	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	2020s
45	3	10	36	88	56	9	1	1	2

The majority of allegations received (200) state sexual abuse as the major abuse; there were a further thirty-seven allegations of physical abuse, one boundary violation, and thirteen cases of alleged abuse for which the type was not provided. In some cases notified, particularly in relation to sexual abuse, emotional abuse is also noted on the referral form.

Further information that can be deduced from the notifications indicates that 251 allegations were made against 170 respondents as illustrated in Table 2.

ALLEGATIONS NOTIFIED TO THE NATIONAL OFFICE BETWEEN 1 APRIL 2022 AND 31 MARCH 2023

Table 2 denotes the monthly notifications received by the National Board; Table 3 differentiates those received from dioceses and religious; Table 4 sets out the status of the clergy respondents and Table 5 that of the religious respondents.

Table 2: Notifications Received Monthly from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

Month	Diocese by number reported	Religious by number reported	Type of abuse by number reported
April 2022	1	3	4 sexual
May 2022	2	7	6 sexual 1 physical 2 not provided
June 2022	1	5	2 sexual 2 physical 2 emotional
July 2022	4	4	7 sexual 1 not provided
August 2022	1	5	3 sexual 2 physical 1 not provided
September 2022	8	6	10 sexual 2 physical 2 not provided
October 2022	2	7	7 sexual 2 physical
November 2022	3	14	6 sexual 7 physical 3 not provided 1 boundary violation
December 2022	3	76	75 sexual* 3 physical 1 not provided
January 2023	2	12	9 sexual 3 physical 2 not provided
February 2023	2	60	55 sexual* 7 physical
March 2023	7	16	16 sexual 6 physical 1 not provided
Total	36	215	251

*The spikes in notifications are as a direct consequence of media interest in reports of abuse in boarding schools.

ALLEGATIONS NOTIFIED TO THE NATIONAL OFFICE BETWEEN 1 APRIL 2022 AND 31 MARCH 2023

Table 3: Diocesan and Religious Respondents

Diocesan	Religious	
35	135	124 males
		11 females

Table 4: Status of Diocesan Clergy – All Forms of Abuse (35)

Deceased	Laicised	In Ministry	Retired	In Prison	Under Management Plan	Out of Ministry	Unknown
15	4	5	3	1	1	6	-

Table 5: Status of Religious – All Forms of Abuse (135)

Deceased	Laicised	In Ministry	Retired	Living in Nursing Home	In Prison	Under Management Plan	Left Church Body	Unknown	Out of Ministry
74	1	1	4	3	3	3	8	32	6

As already noted, the National Board cannot report with certainty, due to the limitations on sharing data, in relation to advisory functions. This is an unfortunate lacuna in the child safeguarding powers of the National Board and one that can hopefully be addressed through legislation.



The reporting year 2022/23 has been very busy for the National Board, being the first year back to full-time work post-Covid-19. Two National Board initiatives consumed a great deal of time, the first being a one-year project on developing a template adult safeguarding policy in the Church, and the second relating to the National Board commencing a review and revision of *Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*.

Draft Adult Safeguarding Policy

While the National Board is not constituted to develop policy and provide advice on risks to vulnerable people in the Catholic Church, AMRI and the IEC commissioned the National Board in September 2021 to carry out a one-year, time-limited project on adult safeguarding. Specifically, the project had four objectives:

- » **Objective A:** To produce a paper examining existing strengths of safeguarding policy and practice in relation to adults in the Church in Ireland and areas that require development.
- » **Objective B:** To write a template best practice safeguarding adults policy to assist dioceses and male and female religious to critique or develop policies, including giving limited guidance.
- » **Objective C:** To provide a recommendation as to what structures will assist a consistent implementation of such policy at local level, including the support mechanisms necessary in both guidance and training programmes.

- » **Objective D:** To produce a paper outlining the various issues that were raised through the consultation and listening processes, which need to be addressed but which fall outside the scope of this project.

In the course of this work, National Board staff consulted widely with Church personnel, and with key statutory authorities and relevant charities and organisations, in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The commission was completed in October 2022. The final package of information included a detailed Guidance and Advice Paper (GAP) (available at: <https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications/national-board-publications>), and a template adult safeguarding policy on and recommendations for implementation and managing other relevant adult safeguarding matters that fell outside the scope of the project. The National Board would like to thank the following members of the steering committee for their invaluable help, support and guidance throughout the project:

- » Mary May – Sisters of Mercy Northern Province
- » Sr Mary Healy – Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm
- » Dr Maria Corrigan – St John of God Brothers
- » Fr Kieran Shorten – Irish Capuchin Franciscans

INITIATIVES AND ADVICE OFFERED BY THE NATIONAL BOARD

- » Caroline Brogan – Diocese of Down and Connor
- » Maureen Walsh – Archdiocese of Tuam
- » Cleo Yates – Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly, Diocese of Cork and Ross, and Diocese of Killaloe
- » Kathleen Sherry – Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin and Diocese of Ossory

Revision of Safeguarding children policy and standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016

Following changes to civil and canon law, the National Board began reviewing the current Church policy relating to safeguarding children in January 2022. In light of over ten years' experience, the National Board decided that operational practice should be reflected in a revised policy. The value in listening to those who are the receivers of safeguarding has been a key part of other projects in which the National Board has been involved, and it therefore developed a consultation process. The goal of this consultation was to hear the views of children and their carers, complainants of and respondents to allegations of abuse, and statutory partners and external experts in child safeguarding, as well as Church personnel who have responsibilities for safeguarding. The process concluded in February 2023. The views expressed by those who participated in this review are contained in a GAP report – *Framing a New Policy for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland*, which can be read at: <https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications/national-board-publications>.

A steering group was established to help shape the policy and a final draft policy will be submitted to AMRI and the IEC in June 2023. The three pillars of the draft policy are:

- » Leadership and governance
- » Promoting good safeguarding practice – ensuring the creation of a safe environment for children
- » Responding appropriately to allegations, through reporting to statutory authorities, caring for those who allege they have been abused (and their families), and ensuring a fair process of inquiry.

The aim is to seek approval for the revised policy in the autumn of 2023, and then to develop a programme of induction and training in 2024.

The steering group members were selected from female and male religious orders as well as dioceses, as follows:

- » Avril Halley – Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
- » Mary Tallon – Irish Province of the Dominican Order, Irish Capuchin Franciscans, and Missionaries of the Sacred Heart – Irish Province
- » Garry Kehoe – Archdiocese of Dublin
- » Saoirse Fox – Society of Jesus
- » Joan Walsh – Diocese of Meath
- » Philip O'Hara – Diocese of Down and Connor
- » Brendan Dineen – Redemptorists
- » Abbot Brendan Coffey – Benedictines and AMRI
- » Archbishop Francis Duffy – Archdiocese of Tuam and the IEC

INITIATIVES AND ADVICE OFFERED BY THE NATIONAL BOARD

Strategic Review of Safeguarding

The IEC and AMRI have commissioned RSM Ireland to conduct a strategic review of safeguarding in the Church. This organisation examined the work of the National Board, Towards Peace, and Towards Healing. The National Board directors and staff engaged with the external reviewers to share experiences of offering centralised safeguarding children services to the Catholic Church in Ireland. This external review will be the second review of the effectiveness of the National Board conducted since its establishment in 2006. The results of this review are expected in the coming months.

Advice Offered by National Office Staff

A key component of the work of the National Board is providing advice to Church leaders and other Church personnel on all aspects of child safeguarding. As one might expect, there are many issues in common across Church bodies, about which advice is sought. When it becomes clear that a number of similar requests for advice or clarification have been received, rather than continuing to offer individual advice, staff in the

National Office produce a guidance document. In this way, the National Board has built an extensive resource from which it can respond to a range of issues across the seven safeguarding standards. This guidance is regularly reviewed and updated as legislation and practice change. Since April 2022, the National Board has produced or amended guidance on nineteen occasions.

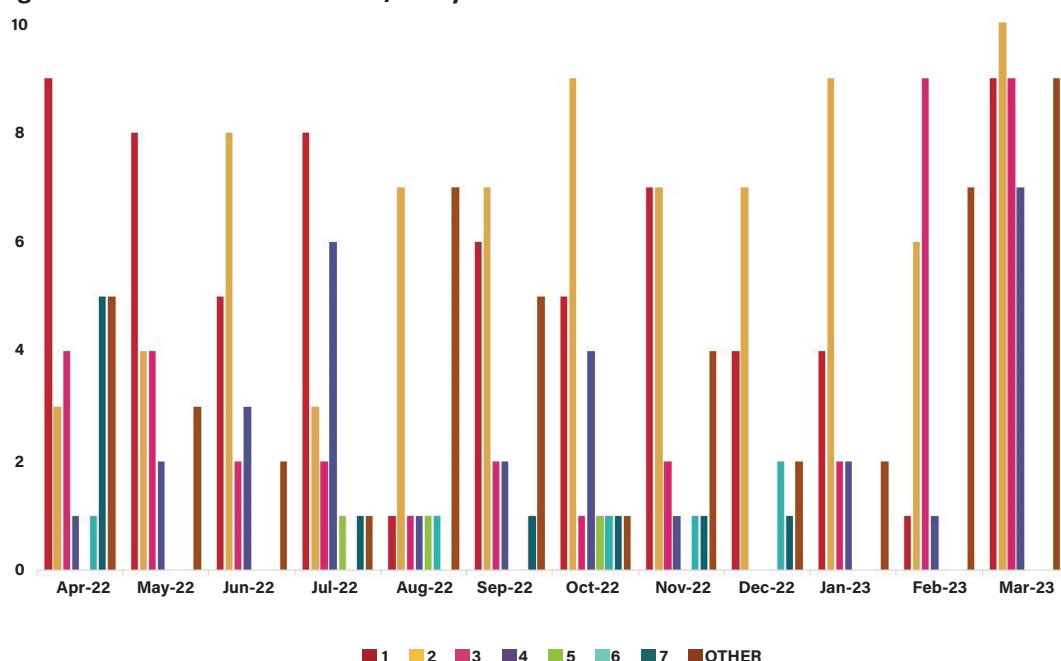
Table 6 sets out the advice offered by National Office staff in relation to each of the current standards, alongside comparators for the last four years.

With the exception of 2020/21 (Covid-19 years), when there was a spike in advice sought, the pattern is quite consistent over the last four years. On 282 occasions during 2022/23, advice was sought from National Office staff in relation to all seven safeguarding standards. Church personnel generally approach the National Office on matters of significant complexity, often relating to the management of cases and to the promotion of good safeguarding practice.

Table 6: Total Advice Offered Under All Seven Standards by Year

2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
260	392	258	282

Figure 2: Advice Offered in 2022/23 by Standard



INITIATIVES AND ADVICE OFFERED BY THE NATIONAL BOARD

There are seven safeguarding standards, and these are generally grouped into those that apply to prevention (child safeguarding):

Standard 1: Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments

Standard 5: Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe

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

Standard 7: Quality Assuring Compliance with the Standards (applies across the board).

For ease of reading, the section that follows is set out under these headings.

Child Safeguarding – Standards 1, 5 and 6

Standard 1: Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments

Covid-19 had a significant impact on Church attendance by families with children. This was reflected in the reduction of ministry with children in parishes and in male and female religious settings. The reporting year 2022/23 saw a return of some children's ministry, though it is noted that, in some places, this has been slow. The role of the National Board is to support good child safeguarding practice as this ministry starts up again. As will be noted in the training and support section, the National Office invested time in training and in offering

advice on undertaking risk assessment for new and developing ministries.

On sixty-seven occasions, specific advice was offered in relation to Standard 1, regarding recruitment, vetting, external groups using Church property, visiting priests, and the creation of safe environments generally.

National Office staff engaged directly with groups of young people who participate in summer camps led by male and female religious, as part of the revision of the Safeguarding Children policy. It was heart-warming to be assured by the children and young people of their understanding of what is required to keep them safe in Church ministry. It was equally rewarding to listen to the enthusiastic and well-trained leaders who had great clarity about the promotion of children's right to be safe and to participate actively in the safeguarding agenda that affects them.

Standard 5: Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe

As will be noted in the section on training, significant training was delivered at local level during the reporting year. It is reassuring to acknowledge the large numbers of trainers who are committed to supporting safeguarding practices. Given the National Board's well-managed training function, it is not surprising that trainers have become proficient and do not require much direction from the National Board. Trainers are also well known and are accessible locally, in both dioceses and male and female religious congregations. If advice under this standard is required, it is to the local trainers that Church personnel generally turn. The National Board was asked for advice on three occasions, in relation to bespoke training and to the accreditation of trainers.

Standard 6: Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

During this reporting period, the National Board offered advice under Standard 6 on six occasions about a broad range of issues around making

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communications accessible, communicating child safeguarding statements, and governance responsibilities to ensure that safeguarding messages are being delivered.

Case Management – Standards 2, 3 and 4

Standard 2: Procedures for Responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations

Given that there was a significant increase in the numbers of new allegations in 2022/23, it is not surprising to note the increase in requests for advice in relation to Standard 2. Such advice was offered on eighty occasions, compared to with sixty-three in 2021/22.

Unsurprisingly, requests for advice centred on whether the threshold for reporting to statutory authorities was reached. It is quite common that third-party reporters share vague information; when this happens, it requires that Church personnel gather additional data prior to being able to report.

Standard 3: Care and Support for the Complainant

The National Board engaged with a number of complainants as part of the revision of *Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*. Some complainants contacted the National Board directly to raise a complaint about how they were treated by a Church authority. The National Board refers all complaints to the relevant Church body for investigation. A pattern that was obvious from handling such complaints is that for some victims, the response offered by a particular Church authority does not meet the expectations set out in Standard 3. In particular, advice offered on thirty-eight occasions related to how to support complainants pastorally.

Standard 4: Care and Management of the Respondent

On thirty occasions, the National Board offered advice to Church authorities on caring for and managing those accused of abuse. Advice centred on preliminary investigations/collection of proofs, assessment of risk and management plans, sharing information when a respondent moved between dioceses, and the role of the priest advisor.

National Case Management Committee (NCMC)

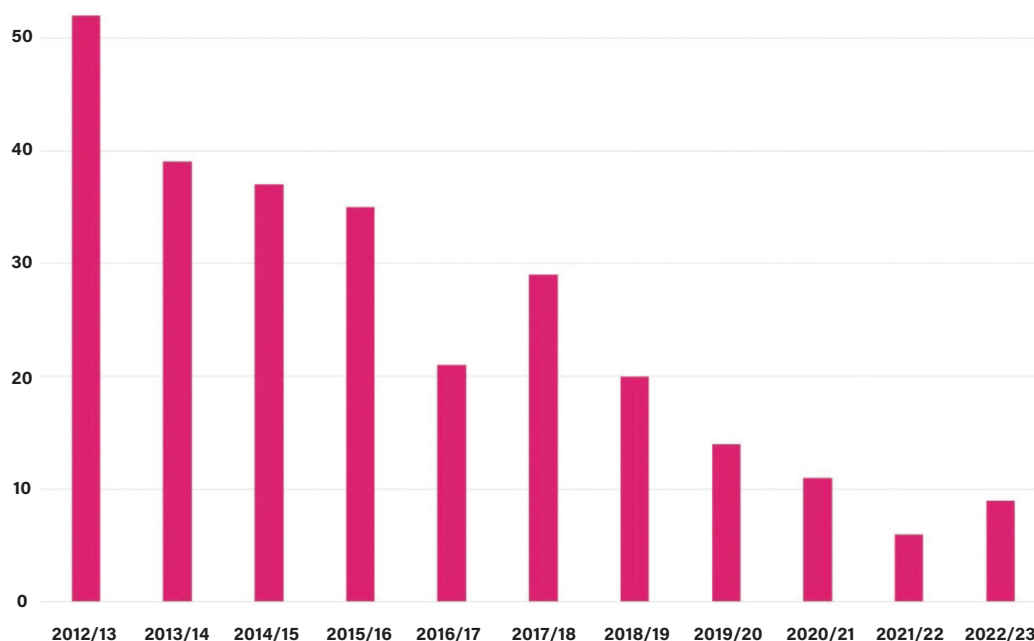
National Case Management Committee (NCMC) meetings returned to in-person sessions held in Maynooth. Membership of the Committee changed during the year with the retirement of Sean Moriarty, who was replaced by another former probation officer with experience in sex offender management, Miriam Tallon. The National Board would like to take the opportunity to thank Sean Moriarty for his steadfast approach to the important work of the NCMC. Sean brought with him skills and understanding in risk assessment and management, and his contribution is missed. The National Board welcomes Miriam Tallon who has already made a significant mark with her clear thinking, attention to detail, and her theoretical and practical application of knowledge on working with those accused of sexual abuse.

The Committee met four times during 2022/23, and offered advice on nine cases, two relating to diocesan priests, and seven relating to a member of a religious order.

A review of the last ten years of operation has shown a pattern of decline in numbers of cases being presented to the NCMC, as shown in Figure 3.

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Figure 3: NCMC Cases Presented by Year



During 2022, legal advice in relation to sharing personal sensitive data with the NCMC was sought. It has been clarified that without the data subject's consent, there is no legal basis for sharing identifying personal sensitive information with the NCMC. The Committee has, therefore, amended its operating procedures to ensure that any data received contains no identifying information.

The advice sought by and given to the Church authority is usually related to complex cases, often in connection with conducting canonical inquiries, or following inquiries, in determining whether there is a case to answer. Given the serious nature of these cases, the experience and expertise of the Committee members are invaluable in assisting a Church leader to make a determination about the future ministry of a cleric or religious.

There have been clear lessons from history about the consequences of not having quality independent advice in relation to complex cases, risk assessment and case management. The learning from these indicates the value of seeking views of external practitioners who have no relationship with the

respondent, to assist in clarifying the issues and in assessing whether the allegation requires restrictions on ministry as a means of safeguarding children.

The NCMC is comprised of the following people: Chairperson, Mr Justice Iarfhlaith O'Neill (retired judge of the High Court); Ms Anne Confrey (retired solicitor); Fr Michael Mullaney (canon lawyer); Sr Helen O'Riordan (support person for complainants); Mr Phil Mortell (former Health Service Executive (HSE) social worker); Sr Colette Stevenson PVBM (Board Director of Coimirce); Fr Brendan O'Rourke CSsR (psychotherapist); Mr Peter Kieran, Director of Safeguarding, National Board (former HSE social worker); Ms Miriam Tallon (former probation officer); and Ms Teresa Devlin (minute taker and CEO of the National Board).

Standard 7: Quality Assuring Compliance with the Standards

In March 2023, Pope Francis issued an updated version of his Motu Proprio, *Vos estis lux mundi* (VELM). The original 2019 apostolic letter highlighted the importance of accountability and

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good governance. Extending the responsibilities to ensure that all aspects of safeguarding are promoted by Church leaders, Pope Francis added the following elements to his revised directive:

- » This is now permanent, effective from 30 April 2023.
- » The updated text specifies that leaders of international Catholic lay associations of the faithful, which are recognised by the Holy See, have the same responsibilities over their members that a bishop has over the priests of his diocese.
- » In the first version of VELM, the text referred to sexual acts with a minor or a vulnerable person. The updated version specifically refers to 'vulnerable adults' as one of the category of victims covered by the procedures. The updated text specifies, 'a crime against the Sixth Commandment of the Decalogue committed with a minor, or with a person who habitually has an imperfect use of reason, or with a vulnerable adult'.
- » The original 2019 text required 'stable systems' for receipt of allegations; the revised text goes further and requires dioceses and eparchies to operate an 'organisation or office which is easily accessible to the public in order to receive reports of cases of abuse'.
- » The revised VELM clarifies the responsibilities of the bishop or Ordinary, in terms of investigating where the reported events allegedly took place.
- » Finally, the revised VELM extends protections to 'the person who claims to have been offended and those who were witnesses' to ensure they are not silenced.

A part of VELM relates to management of allegations against bishops and their equivalents. During 2022, the National Board engaged with Church leaders to finalise guidance on the management of allegations against bishops and their equivalents, and in relation to actions or omissions by bishops and their equivalents. It is interesting to note the inclusion of lay associations within the latest version of VELM; in 2022, following consultation, the National Board updated guidance for lay associations of the faithful to ensure their adherence to good child safeguarding practice. Both these pieces of guidance can be read at: <https://www.safeguarding.ie/our-services/policy-and-guidance>.

Returning to children's ministry post-Covid-19 has been slow for some Church bodies. However, the National Board has decided that safeguarding arrangements as a core element of that return to ministry must be assessed against the Church's standards. The mechanism for ensuring this at local level is an annual self-audit conducted in parishes and religious communities, which is examined by the Safeguarding Committee of the Church body. The Committee provides the Church authority with information on practice, on what is working well, and on areas in need of improvement, and this information assists the Church body to set safeguarding objectives for the following year. In addition, the relevant designated liaison person (DLP) produces an annual report to their Church authority on cases that have been active during the year. The National Board requests each Church authority to confirm that these quality assurance measures have taken place.

Table 7 shows information about self-audits received by the National Board from religious congregations and dioceses in 2022/23.

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Table 7: Self-Audits Received, Up to 6 April 2023

Complete		In process		No longer necessary	
Dioceses	Religious Orders	Dioceses	Religious Orders	Dioceses	Religious Orders
25	76	1	2	—	80

National Board Reviews of Safeguarding Practice in Church Bodies

The second round of National Board reviews is now well underway. Having commenced in 2018, there was a pause in activity during Covid-19. Since returning to full-time work, the National Board has recruited new reviewers who are employed as independent consultants, and who engage with Church personnel to assess compliance of each Church body reviewed against the Church's standards. The focus of the second round of reviews is significantly different from the first reviews conducted. Much of the fieldwork now concentrates on hearing the views of those who are receivers and users of safeguarding services – children and their parents or carers, complainants of abuse and respondents to allegations of abuse, as well as all those engaged in a Church body with responsibility to uphold the standards. Hearing from people first-hand has enabled the reviewers to glean a much better understanding of safeguarding in action.

The National Board is very pleased to report that all twenty-six dioceses have now engaged in the

review process, and nineteen have been completed and placed on the relevant diocesan website, with a further ten diocesan reviews in process. The dioceses where reviews have been completed and reports issued since April 2022 are: Ardagh and Clonmacnois; Armagh; Cashel and Emly; Clogher; Cloyne; and Ossory.

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

The religious congregations where reviews have been completed and reports issued since April 2022 are the Benedictine nuns of Kylemore Abbey, the Redemptorists and the Augustinians.

In preparation for possible reviews, a small group of religious orders/congregations sought legal advice with regard to the sharing of personal data with an external organisation to ensure compliance with GDPR legislation. The legal advice provided by their Senior Counsel was that it is legally unsafe to share personal, sensitive data with a non-statutory organisation unless there is a legislative basis to do so.



As part of the National Board's corporate objectives, a new Training and Support Strategy covering the period from 2023 to 2025 has been developed. This strategy can be viewed at: https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Training_Resources/Training%20and%20Support%20Strategy%202023-2025.pdf.

It focuses on three objectives:

1. Supporting individual Church bodies to develop a culture of safeguarding.
2. Formation and continuous development.
3. Developing and implementing practice.

These objectives will be achieved through the following actions:

1. Building competence and skills at local level.
2. Training and supporting trainers.
3. Facilitating national training events.
4. Facilitating the national Formation Programme.
5. Supporting child safeguarding internationally.
6. Developing policy, guidance and resources.
7. Responding to emerging issues to support best practice.

Over the past year, there has been an increase in training delivered by National Board-registered

trainers at local level, as they have returned to facilitating training following pandemic restrictions. Interestingly, a significant number of local programmes are still being facilitated online, albeit with a slowing down in the use of this method of delivery as a return to in-person training is increasing.

One hundred trainers are currently registered with the National Board, with a number retiring during 2022. It is sad to see these trainers leave this important role, but the National Board is grateful for the sterling work they have engaged in. To them and our current trainers, we offer a big thank you for their dedication, hard work and support.

Review of Objectives

1. Building Competence and Skills at Local Level

One of the roles of the National Board is to empower local Church personnel to implement *Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*. To assist with this, local training is provided to Church personnel that is tailored to the individual needs of each Church body, as follows.

» Safeguarding Committee Training

Safeguarding Committees are important components of the safeguarding structure and they exist 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;

Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message; and Ensuring Compliance with the Standards) are implemented locally within each Church body. In this reporting year, this training was delivered five times in five dioceses.

» Specific Training

The diversity of ministry within the Church means that at times training must be adapted and tailored to particular circumstances. It is the responsibility of the National Board's Director of Training and Support to recognise this diversity through assessing need, and by developing and delivering specific training to meet the unique needs of each Church body. This year, specific training was developed and delivered six times (four dioceses and two religious orders); and topics covered included training for new DLPs, training for support persons, and training on the history of safeguarding in Ireland.

2. Training and Supporting Trainers

A key aspect of ensuring the creation and maintenance of safe environments for children and

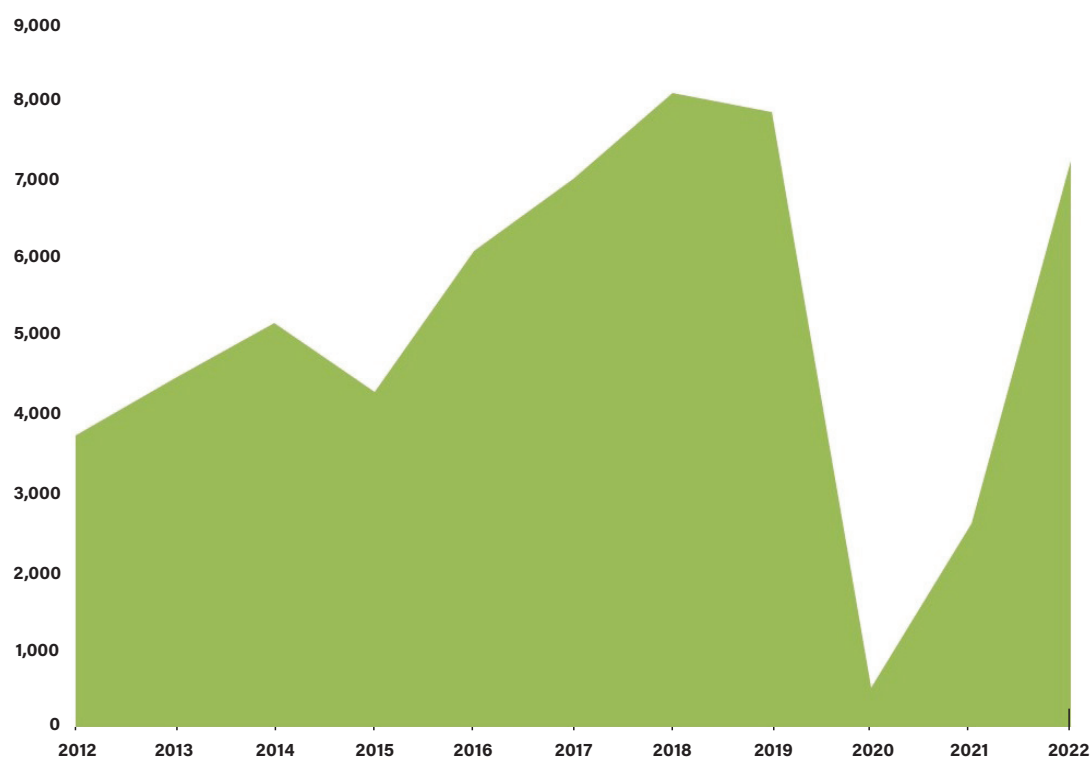
the adults who work with them is to deliver the messages of child safeguarding in an appropriate way to relevant Church personnel across Ireland. To do this, a one-Church approach has been developed through the creation of a national, basic-awareness training programme, which is facilitated locally by National Board-registered trainers. Trainers are supported by the Director of Training and Support, alongside tutors in each of the four ecclesiastical provincial areas of the Church in Ireland. Annual update sessions are facilitated, and the National Board is exploring how to use these sessions for continuous professional development in recognition of the important work that trainers do. Despite a number of trainers stepping back from the role, the number of trainers and those in the process of being registered as trainers (applicants) has increased from eighty-eight as recorded in the 2021/22 annual report to one hundred this year.

» Local Safeguarding Awareness Training

This year, 7,219 people were trained by National Board registered trainers, which represents an increase of 276 per cent on the previous year's annual report figure of 2,611 and brings the figure above the amount of training delivered in 2017 (6,989). See Figure 4.

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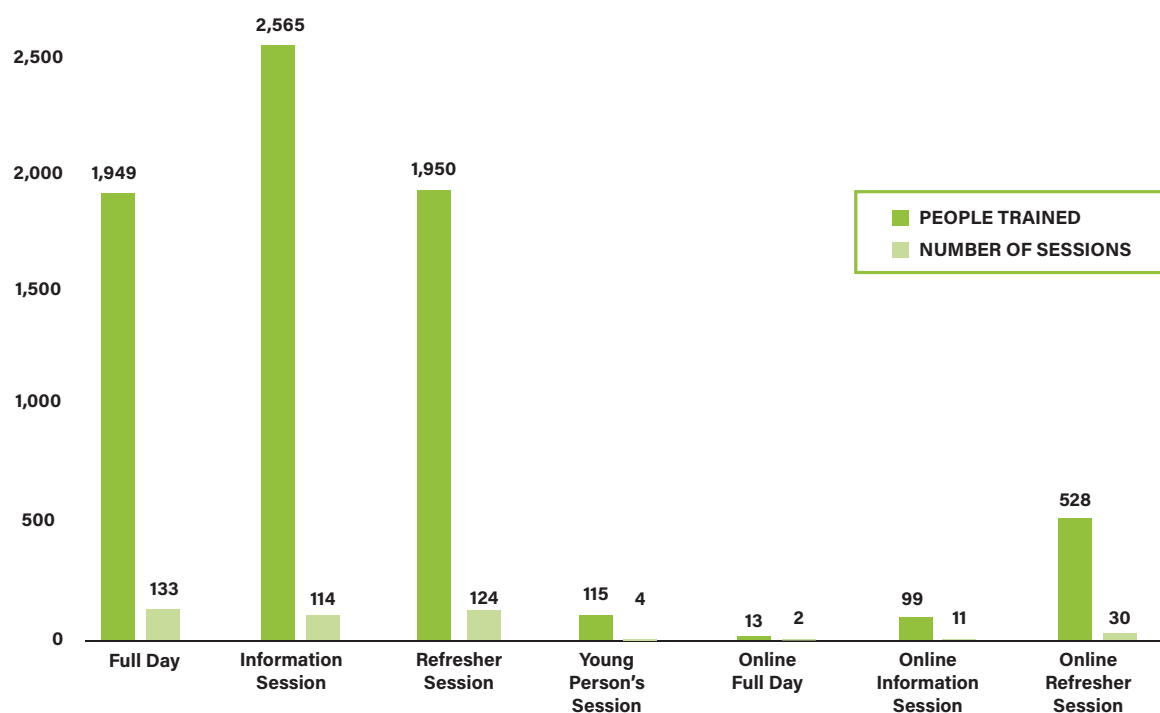
Figure 4: Training Delivered by Year



These training figures are based on the returns received from every one of the registered trainers.

Figure 5 illustrates the type of training delivered. Each session of the National Board's training programme is shown as to whether it was delivered online or in person.

Figure 5: Number of People Trained and Type of Session



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The most popular type of training is in-person full-day training (133). Attendance at this training is compulsory for anyone who has a safeguarding role, or who is a cleric or religious in ministry with children. It is required that at least one leader of each group ministering with children should attend this training. However, given the amount of group work involved in this type of training session, the numbers who can participate at one time are restricted. Shorter information sessions were delivered on 114 occasions to 2,565 people.

In line with best practice, and to ensure the competency of trainers, all trainers are required to undergo an initial assessment by a tutor registered with the National Board. Following this, trainers are reassessed every three years by one of the National Board-registered tutors. Due to the impact of the recent pandemic, many assessments and reassessments were delayed, but as training resumed, assessments were reinstated. In total in 2022/23, forty-three trainers were assessed or reassessed and approved as trainers for the National Board.

3. Facilitating National Training Events

A key role of the National Board is to highlight and encourage best practice, and to share the latest developments in child safeguarding policy, legislation and guidance. Traditionally, this has been done by holding monthly workshops on a range of relevant topics, either online or, increasingly, in person. A significant number of listening meetings were held this reporting year with various groups of Church personnel to inform the revision of the child safeguarding policy, as well as the development of a template adult safeguarding policy.

As part of this objective, the National Board is required to develop systems to enable the effective targeting of training. During this reporting year, the National Board secured funding to redevelop its existing databases into a new, more secure system, which allows for targeting training and communications more effectively, and in line with data protection legislation. This project began in January 2023, and it will be completed in June 2023.

The training and support aspects of the database have now been completed.

During 2022/23, the following training initiatives were delivered:

2 April 2022 – Train the Trainers Course (six days to complete the course)

Applicants who wish to become registered trainers with the National Board must undertake a six-day training and assessment process, which includes developing knowledge in relation to safeguarding children in the Catholic Church in Ireland, group work, and facilitation skills. 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. The process in its entirety is of seven days' duration.

26, 27, 28 April 2022 – Adult Safeguarding Listening Meeting for Safeguarding Personnel Involved with Adult Safeguarding (three separate events)

The National Board engaged in three listening meetings to hear views on the work the National Board was asked to undertake in relation to the development of a template adult safeguarding policy. At the meetings, the National Board updated participants on the work and sought feedback, which was then incorporated into the final draft.

11, 12 May 2022 – Exploring a Theology of Safeguarding: National Child Safeguarding Conference 2022

The National Conference was held in Monaghan on 11 and 12 May 2022 on the theme of 'A Theology of Safeguarding'. The National Board wishes to pay tribute and offer thanks to all the speakers, Mr Justice Garrett Sheehan, Cardinal Sean O'Malley, Sr Colette Stevenson, Fr Andrew Small, Dr Jessie Rogers, Dr Niall Moore, and Mr Paschal Moynihan, all of whom shared wisdom and insight which will help inform the Church's work in safeguarding children.

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The National Board commissioned a series of video presentations in 2021 on the theology of safeguarding in the lead-up to the National Conference. The National Board commends each of the presenters who offered their views on a theology of safeguarding, repairing wounds, and healing both victims and the Church. All the presentations have been assembled into a booklet, which can be downloaded at: https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Corporate_Publications/Theology%20of%20Safeguarding%20Transcripts.pdf.

27, 30 June 2022 – Listening Meeting for Female Religious (two separate events)

These events focused on understanding specific ministries with adults in which female religious are involved, so that the safeguarding policy, guidance and practices of the Church could better reflect those ministries.

Participants were invited to consider:

- » Appropriate language relating to clerics and religious involved in safeguarding ministries.
- » Ways in which the Church's policies on safeguarding children and safeguarding adults could be more reflective of ministries in female orders.
- » Specific suggestions for improvements to language and activities that are more reflective of female religious ministries.
- » Feedback on the National Board's approach to requiring all congregations to follow all the safeguarding standards, in spite of the decreasing engagement of female orders in children's ministry.
- » Issues that relate to adult safeguarding that are specific to female orders.

27, 28, 29 July 2022 – Adult Safeguarding Listening Meeting for Those Involved in Facilitating Ministry with Adults (three separate events)

The National Board engaged in a series of listening meetings to hear views on the work it had been asked to undertake in relation to the development of a template adult safeguarding policy.

At the meetings, the National Board heard from participants directly involved in facilitating ministry with adults, and incorporated their views into the work of the project.

20 September 2022 – Localised Risk Assessment and Local Audit Training

This training day was for those whose diocese or religious order is involved in ministry with children, and covered the following areas:

- » Understanding the localised risk assessment process and template.
- » Exploring best practice in terms of carrying out the safeguarding audit (Standards 1, 5 and 6), and the DLP's annual file audit (Standards 2, 3 and 4).
- » Exploring together alternative methods for conducting the annual audit.

8 November 2022 – Record Keeping Training

This training day was for those involved in maintaining case management records, and covered the following areas:

- » Understanding what to record and not to record.
- » Understanding why certain records need to be made.
- » Exploring best practice in how to record, including case file structure.

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- » Discussing a process of review of case files by the Church authority and DLP.

10 November 2022 – Listening Meetings for Those Involved in Ministry with Children

As part of the work of revising the child safeguarding policy, the National Board held a number of listening meetings. These specific meetings were for those involved in ministry with children.

At the meetings, participants were updated on the work undertaken so far, and the views of participants were incorporated into the work of the project.

10 November 2022 – Listening Meeting for Safeguarding Trainers

As above, this specific meeting with registered trainers was to receive their feedback on the requirements of a revised child safeguarding policy.

11 February 2023 – Training for Lay Associations of the Faithful

This training was for those national lay associations that are ministering with children in Ireland and that wish to follow the Church's child safeguarding policy, *Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*. The aim of the course was to:

- » Familiarise participants with the requirements of the Church's safeguarding children policy and standards.
- » Outline the governance requirements in relation to safeguarding children.
- » Outline the process to become an associate member of the National Board.

15 February 2023 – 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.

20 March 2023 – Session with Detective Superintendent, Garda National Protective Services Bureau

The National Board hosted a short session with the Detective Superintendent of the Garda National Protective Services Bureau. The purpose of this session was to introduce the Detective Superintendent to relevant Church personnel, to enable them to clarify any matters relating to reporting allegations to An Garda Síochána, and to assist and support a positive working relationship.

4. Facilitating the National Formation Programme

Head to Heart

The Head to Heart is a formation programme, which seeks to provide participants with a deeper understanding of the core elements of child safeguarding. The National Board has worked with seminarians in formation from St Patrick's College, Maynooth; Redemptoris Mater Seminary, Dundalk; and the Pontifical Irish College, Rome, for over ten years, and introduced this modular programme in 2018 to develop a deeper understanding of promoting good safeguarding practice, caring for complainants of abuse, and ensuring that reports are made in a timely fashion. The Head to Heart formation programme has developed significantly in the last three years.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the programme, the National Board undertook an evaluation with the formation teams, session presenters, and the students themselves. A report on the findings was

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submitted to the Trustees of the Seminaries. The evaluation highlighted significant satisfaction with the programme and included recommendations for improvement.

In the reporting year, two induction sessions, along with the following three modules, were delivered over five days:

- » **Boundaries:** This module was designed to allow participants to consider the concept of boundaries and how good management of self links with integrity in ministry and child safeguarding.
- » **Impacts of Abuse** (two dates, one in each seminary): This module included input from a survivor of abuse, and included content on reporting allegations and the impact that abuse has on the individual, their family and their community.
- » **Leadership** (two dates, one in each seminary): This module explored aspects of leadership and power and how a priest can be an effective leader in child safeguarding.

In addition to these modules for seminarians, the National Board adapted the programme for those training to be permanent deacons. During 2022/23 an induction session was delivered to thirty-one men, and the first module was delivered to twenty-five men (and some of their partners) beginning their formation for the permanent diaconate.

6 September 2022 – Pastoral Theology Students – St Patrick's College, Maynooth

Staff from the National Board delivered training on safeguarding to pastoral theology students in St Patrick's College, Maynooth. The focus was to ensure the students were informed about the creation and maintenance of safe environments for children, as well as about how to respond to allegations and disclosures of abuse prior to undertaking their pastoral placement. The students

were asked to complete a short reflective exercise as part of this.

In addition, staff from the National Board facilitated training on the new Youth Ministry programme within St Patrick's College, Maynooth. Discussions are in progress with staff from the college to explore how to streamline further the input of safeguarding into these courses, in line with the Head to Heart programme.

Loreto House Religious Formation Programme

Staff from the National Board delivered training to students in the Religious formation programme in Loreto House in Dublin, over two sessions. The students consisted of ordained or vowed religious from countries across the world who attend Loreto House as part of their formation. The input by the National Board focused on the development of safeguarding standards, particularly on how to create and maintain safe environments.

5. Supporting Child Safeguarding Internationally

Religious congregations based in Ireland may also have missions abroad. For some of these, the religious leaders have concerns about how well safeguarding practice is developed in the countries in which they minister. During 2022/23, approaches were made to the National Board to support the creation of safeguarding policies and to offer training to relevant personnel in mission countries.

This year, seven sessions took place over video conferencing, with the Presentation Sisters in Thailand and the Philippines (four sessions) and the Presentation Sisters in Pakistan (three sessions).

The National Board also facilitated two discussions with the Holy Family Sisters of Bordeaux who were seeking advice and support in developing their international policy.

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6. 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 produces optional web-based guidance, 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, and developments in best practice and experience. This year the guidance has been updated nineteen times.

Changes to the guidance focused on the following areas:

- » Use of Church property for single events.
- » Managing allegations against bishops and their equivalents.
- » Safeguarding for lay associations of the faithful.
- » Reporting allegations against deceased respondents.
- » Children First Act 2015, Child Safeguarding Statement.
- » Managing allegations of actions or omissions.
- » Safeguarding within boarding schools, following advice from the Department of Education.

7. Responding to Emerging Issues to Support Best Practice

Briefing Papers

The National Board produced three briefing papers in 2022/23. These papers are the National Board's critique and assessments of key points and lessons that can be learned from reports produced by investigators of alleged abuse in other countries. Briefing papers produced this year were:

- » **Briefing Paper 4:** A summary of *Report of an Independent Inquiry into Historical Child Abuse: Findings of investigations into allegations*

of sexual abuse by JMM and the handling of those events by the Focolare movement.

- » **Briefing Paper 5:** A summary of the *Control and Abuse: Investigation on Thomas Philippe, Jean Vanier and L'Arche (1950-2019)*.
- » **Briefing Paper 6:** A Summary of *Independent Commission for the Study of Sexual Abuse of Children in the Catholic Church in Portugal*.

All briefing papers can be viewed here: <https://www.safeguarding.ie/publications/national-board-publications>.

February 2023 – Ecclesiastical Provincial Area Meetings

The National Board facilitates ecclesiastical provincial area meetings at least once a year. This year five meetings were held, one in Dublin, one in Tuam, one in Armagh, and one in Cashel, and an additional online meeting was held to allow participants who could not attend the face-to-face meetings to join.

The aim of these meetings was for staff from the National Office to meet with bishops, provincials, superiors and safeguarding personnel from Church bodies to discuss developments in child safeguarding.

Meetings

Collaboration with Church personnel, other Church bodies, and statutory and voluntary partners is crucial to National Board staff keeping abreast of new developments in safeguarding. During 2022/23, there was a significant increase in collaborative meetings, mainly due to two projects – developing a template policy for safeguarding vulnerable adults and revising *Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*.

The following is a list of the main meetings and their purposes.

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2022/23 Reporting Period	Purpose of Meeting
IEC	Working together to develop a piece of safeguarding guidance following VELM
Safeguarding across denominational network meeting	Network meeting of those in safeguarding across a number of religious-based organisations and Churches to share best practice
Garda National Protective Services Bureau	Collaborative working
National Vetting Bureau	Ensuring best practice
Tusla – Child and Family Agency	Various – policy, procedure and practice issues
Allianz Insurance	Discussion on guidance for safeguarding children and adults
Permanent Diaconate Team	Meeting with those in charge of the Permanent Diaconate programme to discuss development of Head to Heart programme
Rector of St Patrick's College, Maynooth	Working on Head to Heart
Registrar of St Patrick's College, Maynooth	Discussions about accreditation of Head to Heart
Rector of Redemptoris Mater Seminary	Working on Head to Heart
National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children	Liaison over policy formulation
Safeguarding Ireland (Vulnerable Adults (VA) work)	Network meeting
RSM Ireland	Information meeting
Bishops' Conference of Scotland	Network meeting
Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors	Update on work
One in Four	Adult safeguarding
Church of Ireland	Adult safeguarding
International Safeguarding Conference	Sharing best practice
Society of Saint Vincent de Paul	Adult safeguarding
AMRI and its Executive	Providing updates and listening in order to understand developing issues
Department of Health (NI)	Adult safeguarding
HSE	Adult safeguarding
Women's Aid	Adult safeguarding
Men's AID (VA)	Adult safeguarding
Ombudsman for Children	Liaison on revision of safeguarding children policy
Thirtyone:eight	Theology of children and best practice in embedding culture of safeguarding
Executive Office, Northern Ireland	Liaison on VA policy, revision of safeguarding children policy, and threshold for reporting allegations
Porticus	Grant for new database
Enclude	New database

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2022/23 Reporting Period	Purpose of Meeting
Department of Health, Republic of Ireland	Liaison development of adult safeguarding policy
Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency	Learning from shared practice
Safeguarding Board, Northern Ireland	Liaison on revision of safeguarding children policy
Online Conference by IPA Germany	Sharing best practice
Diocese of Trier	Development of policy and standards
Students of Institute of Anthropology, Pontifical Gregorian University	Input on developing standards in safeguarding
Rector of Venerable English College, Rome	Head to Heart
Samaritans	Listening to victims
Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas	Sharing best practice in responding to allegations



The National Board had intended to review the Operational Plan in 2022, following the completion of the external strategic review of safeguarding. A delay in that review resulted in the National Board deferring the development of a new plan until the outcome of that review is known, in case there are recommendations about the structure and role of the National Board.

The following specific objectives will be undertaken in 2023/24:

- » Conclude the revision of *Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*.
- » Undertake reviews of safeguarding practice in all remaining dioceses, and respond to requests from religious congregations for reviews.
- » In consultation with relevant people, develop a framework for responding appropriately to victims of abuse and their families.
- » Complete the work on a new database for the National Board.



Members of National Case Management Committee

Garrett Sheehan

Is a former judge of the Irish Court of Appeal, in which role he served 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 and 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 Psychiatrists 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 and family services management. She joined the Board in 2008.

Jim O'Higgins

Is a practising 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 people with intellectual disabilities. 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 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 Conference of Religious of Ireland (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 is a retired secondary school teacher. She has served as principal of the school and chairperson of its board of management, and she was a member of the provincial team in the Southern Province. She was a member of the steering group in the Diocese of Cloyne when child safeguarding policies were being established, and she served as a member of the Safeguarding Committee in that diocese for a number of years. She is currently one of the victim support persons for the diocese. She joined the Board in October 2017.

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Fr Martin Whelan

Is a priest of the Galway Diocese and a canon lawyer. He was ordained in 2009, and he 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 forty years, first in her own general practice, and then for twenty-seven years as managing solicitor and regional manager with the Legal Aid Board.

Her expertise was mainly in family law, child care law, and in dealing with the consequences of 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 the former CEO of the Catholic Education Partnership, and is 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. Prior to that, she served as a primary school principal, and she 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 Who Retired in 2022

John Morgan, retired June 2022

Has had a career in business, primarily as a corporate lawyer. He served as chairperson of the Bishops' Committee on Child Protection, 2002–6. 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, was appointed chairperson in 2009 and retired as chairperson at the end of December 2021.

Members of National Case Management Committee

Iarfhlaith O'Neill, chair: Retired High Court judge.

Teresa Devlin, CEO: Secretary to the NCMC.

Sr Helen O'Riordan: Loreto Sister, Ferns Diocese, with experience in the area of pastoral support for victims.

Fr Michael Mullaney: Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly, canon lawyer.

Peter Kieran: Former HSE senior child and family services manager, with experience in risk assessment and management.

Phil Mortell: Former HSE senior child care manager, and currently the DPL for the Redemptorist congregation.

Sr Colette Stevenson: Has experience of working with respondents.

Anne Confrey: Civil lawyer, formerly worked with Mason Hayes & Curran.

Fr Brendan O'Rourke: Therapist with respondents.

Miriam Tallon: Former probation officer.

Management of National Office

Teresa Devlin, CEO, has been in her role 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

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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, a master's degree in criminology and a doctorate in childhood studies, which examined the role of the Holy See as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. He was appointed to the National Board on 1 February 2013.

Peter Kieran, part-time Director of Safeguarding, provides policy and case management advice. Peter is a professionally qualified social worker and has a master's degree in counselling. He worked in child protection with the South Eastern Health Board/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 taught on the MA (Leadership in Therapeutic Child & Social Care) course 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 IEC (Irish Episcopal Conference) and AMRI (Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland).

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

Website: www.safeguarding.ie



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

