



THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

**Review of Child Safeguarding Practice
in the religious congregation of**

The Marist Sisters

undertaken by

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

Date May 2015

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Background

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) was asked by the Sponsoring Bodies, namely the Irish Episcopal Conference, the Conference of Religious of Ireland and the Irish Missionary Union, to undertake a comprehensive review of safeguarding practice within and across all the Church authorities on the island of Ireland.

The NBSCCCI is aware that some religious congregations have ministries that involve direct contact with children while others do not. In religious congregations that have direct involvement with children, reviews of child safeguarding have been undertaken by measuring their practice compliance against all seven Church standards. Where a religious congregation no longer has, or never had ministry involving children and has not received any allegation of sexual abuse, the NBSCCCI reviews are conducted using a shorter procedure. The size, age and activity profiles of religious congregations can vary significantly and the NBSCCCI accepts that it is rational that the form of review be tailored to the profile of each Church authority, where the ministry with children is limited or non-existent. The procedure for assessment of safeguarding practice with such congregations is set out in the contents page of this report. The NBSCCCI welcomes that in order to have full openness, transparency and accountability, religious congregations that do not have ministry with children have made requests to have their safeguarding practice examined and commented upon.

The purpose of this review remains the same and it is to confirm that current safeguarding practice complies with the standards set down within the guidance issued by the Sponsoring Bodies in February 2009 *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland* and that all known allegations and concerns had been appropriately dealt with. To achieve this task, safeguarding practice in each of these Church Authorities is reviewed through an examination of policy and procedures, and through interviews with key personnel involved both within and external to the Religious Congregation.

This report contains the findings of the *Review of Safeguarding Practice within the Congregation of the Marists* undertaken by the NBSCCCI in line with the request made to it by the Sponsoring Bodies.

The findings of the review have been shared with a reference group before being submitted to Sr Vera Magee along with any recommendations arising from the findings.

The review notes one allegation of child abuse which is referenced in the body of the report. The review also examines the policies and procedures made available, and highlights information shared in an interview with the sectoral leader within the congregation, particularly in the services run by the congregation.

1. Introduction

The Marist Sisters in Ireland are one branch of an international Marist family who came into being in France shortly after the French Revolution. Called by a gracious choice, their mission is to live and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to the world. They are inspired and challenged by the vision and witness of their foundress Jeanne Marie Chavoin to follow Mary through their life journey, to be the Marian face of the Church: to think, to judge, to feel and to act as Mary did. Long before Jeanne Marie Chavoin was invited to join the Marist project, she had decided to serve God in a life of prayer and service, but she turned down several invitations to join existing religious congregations. At 31 years of age, the Society of Mary as a multi-branched enterprise was presented to her as the “work of Mary” Enlightened by inner wisdom, she understood in an intuitive way that this project held for her the possibility of the form of religious life to which God was calling her – a form of vowed life lived in community combined with service in the midst of people.

Over the past 138 years, Marist Sisters have been involved in various forms of apostolate. On June 18, 1873, the first Sisters came to Ireland, in response to an appeal from the parish priest in Carrick-on-Shannon, to take over the primary school and tend to the needs of the poor. Since then, communities of Marist Sisters have served and continue to serve throughout Ireland in education, nursing, parish ministry, retreat work, social justice, prison and hospital chaplaincy, and a shelter for homeless families.

In Ireland, there are eleven Marist Sister Communities, which are located in Dublin, Bray, Belfast, Carrick-on-Shannon, Tubbercurry and Charlestown.

2. Role Profile (past and present role with children):

As already noted, the main ministry of Marist Sisters in Ireland has been within Education. On September 28, 1901 five Marist Sisters were invited by Bishop Lyster to take charge of the National School for girls and the Infant school for boys and also to train the parish choir and play the organ in Tubbercurry. This then became known as Holy Family National School. The sisters taught for 10 years in the old Carrowntubber School before moving in 1911 to the present site on the Ballymote Road. Today Holy Family National School is multinational, multicultural and multid denominational, with children in attendance from four continents. Since these early beginnings, communities of Marist Sisters have served and continue to serve throughout Ireland in education, nursing, parish ministry, retreat work, social justice, prison and hospital chaplaincy, and a shelter for homeless families.

The Marist Sister’s ministry with Children today is limited, with one Sister holding the post of Principal in a Primary School in Dublin; and one retired Sister does learning support on a voluntary basis in the same school. There are a number of Sisters are on Boards of Management of schools, where they have no direct contact with children in: Dublin; Carrick-on-Shannon Community School, St. Attracta’s Community School, Tubbercurry and in Charlestown

Two other Sisters are in nursing positions in St James Hospital, Dublin and the Mater.

3. Profile of Members:

There are 61 Sisters living in Ireland. Two Sisters work on a fulltime basis as nurses in Dublin Hospitals; two retired sisters conduct chaplaincy work on a volunteer basis in hospitals in Belfast and Sligo; One sister ministers in Achonry Diocesan catechetical Advisor for Teachers; One sister works part-time in Adult Education with Ruhama; One sister works in day care centre for Adults in Tubbercurry; One sister works in Adult Retreat work in

Ardfert Centre in Kerry. One sister works in Social justice Ireland. One sister manages a hostel for Homeless people in Belfast. One sister works part time with AA in a centre organised by Sr. Consilio. One sister works as Secretary for MABS in Dublin. Other Sisters are involved in administration in Community Houses as Community Leaders and Bursars. There are three sisters living in Nursing Homes.

There are three sisters under the age of 65.

24 sisters are aged between 65 -80

26 sisters are over the age of 80-90

7 sisters are over the age of 90

1 sister is over 100

4. Policy and Procedures Document:

The Marist Sisters have a twelve page succinct safeguarding children and vulnerable adults' policy document which sets out their commitment to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. It highlights the Marist Sisters desire to have a one Church policy and states its commitment to following NBSCCCI's "Safeguarding Children, Standards and Guidance document for the Catholic Church in Ireland". Within the document and also on their website are details of those who hold safeguarding responsibilities. The policy statement which is also placed on their website recognises the dignity and rights of all children and vulnerable adults and states the Sisters' commitment to ensuring the protection from abuse of these groups.

Of note within the policy are references to the creation of safe environment for children (and vulnerable adults) in order to secure their protection and enable their full participation in the life of the church and society.

There is also reference to the cross referencing of other organisations child safeguarding policies, whereby the Sisters are expected to comply with those policies in specific ministries such as schools, hospitals, parishes, and other agencies.

There is a clear code of conduct which includes:

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- Children and vulnerable adults will be treated with respect and dignity
- The right to personal and physical integrity of children and vulnerable adults must be respected at all times. Personnel will endeavour to listen carefully and sensitively in any communication with children and vulnerable adults.
- Personnel will take care that they do not engage in inappropriate relationships with children and vulnerable adults.
- Personnel will not tolerate any behaviour - verbal, psychological or physical - that could be construed as abusive.

The Policy document then goes on to detail how allegations will be managed, that they will be processed by the designated liaison person through to the civil authority agencies, prior to any internal investigations. The document contains contact details for An Garda Siochana, TUSLA and the Designated Liaison person as well as Sr Vera Magee, Congregational Leader for the Sector in Ireland. The Sisters who minister within other organisations, either in schools or within hospitals are required to follow the policies of those establishments.

The reviewer is satisfied that, given ministry with children is very limited, within the Marist Sisters Congregation in Ireland, their policy is adequate. There is a commitment to follow the 7 safeguarding standards and the reviewer is satisfied that the Congregational Leader would seek the advice of NBSCCCI if required.

Structures:

Within Ireland there is a Congregational Leader who is accountable to the Regional Leader, located in North America and then to the Superior General who lives and ministers in Rome. The reviewer was advised of changes planned to the structure which will take place in December 2015, which will result in a “Unit Leader” being elected who will be supported by two counsellors.

Sr Vera Magee is the current Congregational Leader for the Sector in Ireland and she takes lead responsibility for all matters relating to child safeguarding. Sr Magee has an appointed designated liaison person to assist her with any case management issues

5. Management of Allegations and liaison with the statutory authorities:

In early 2002, information was received by the Congregational Leader at the time regarding abuse by a deceased Sister. Support was offered to the complainant at the time, but she did not want her identity shared. More recently it has been established that the abuse is alleged to have taken place when she was a minor. The matter has been reported to An Garda Siochana, but not to TUSLA as they do not require allegations against deceased members, given that there is no current risk to children. The complainant has been offered support and all appropriate action has been taken.

6. Conclusion:

The Marist Sisters are now a small Congregation of Sisters, mostly retired with limited ministry with children in Ireland. Their policy is adequate for the services they provide and the reviewer is satisfied that the Congregational Leader has a good understanding of child safeguarding and reporting requirements. There are no child safeguarding concerns about this Congregation.

Review of Child Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Ireland
Terms of Reference
Small Religious Congregations
(which should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Notes)

Introduction

In order for the NBSCCCI to be able to state that all Church Authorities on the island of Ireland have been evaluated in respect of their child safeguarding policies and practices, both historical and current, then some form of appropriate assessment has to be conducted of every one of these. It is rational however that the form of assessment is tailored to the profile of each Church Authority, and that needless expenditure of resources and unnecessary interference in the life of religious orders and communities that have no children-specific ministry would be avoided.

This review seeks to examine the current arrangements for safeguarding children across small religious congregations /orders, and missionary societies in Ireland who have limited or no direct contact with children as part of the congregation's ministry.

It would also scrutinize practice within all known cases to ensure that they have been responded to appropriately.

The review's methodology is an adaptation of the methodology developed for all dioceses and large religious congregations and missionary societies, where the ministry involves regular contact with children.

The proposed review would consider the following:-

- (a) Former role with children
- (b) Allegations of child abuse against members and how these have been responded to
- (c) Existing relationships with statutory authorities such as the HSE, Gardai in the Republic and the HSCT or PSNI in Northern Ireland.
- (d) Policies in place and being applied for safeguarding children
- (e) Roles and responsibilities and where they exist the operation of Advisory Panels, and Safeguarding Committees

The objective of the review would be to confirm if there have been any allegations and how known allegations have been responded to; in addition the review seeks to confirm what the current arrangements for safeguarding children are. In particular, emphasis will be placed on establishing how policies and practice match up to the standards set down in *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland* published by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland and launched in February 2009. Priority, at all times, will be given to how policy and practice can be improved and strengthened. If policies and/or practices are identified that are concerning, inadequate, or dangerous, they will be addressed through the provision of guidance and support, and through the reporting of these situations to the appropriate statutory authorities, if this has not already happened. Similarly, those that are good examples will be highlighted with a view to them being adopted comprehensively across all parts of the Church. All cases that relate to alleged or known offenders that are alive will be read and included in the review. In cases where the alleged or known offender is deceased, these will be sampled in an attempt to gather learning from them that will be used to inform the framing of recommendations.

Guidance Documents

The review will be guided by the following:-

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

The review will be undertaken by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) through their National Office and led by the Chief Executive Officer.

The review process will be overseen by a Reference Group to whom the CEO will report on a regular basis. The membership of this Reference Group has been drawn from each of the statutory child protection agencies in both jurisdictions, along with eminent individuals in the field from academia. The current Reference Group consists of: Dr Helen Buckley (TCD); Mr Paul Harrison (Tusla), and John Toner (SBNI).

It is important to confirm that the value of the review is dependent upon full and complete access to all relevant documentation and information relating to the abuse of children known to the individual Church authorities. The review will proceed on the basis that willingness exists on the part of each of the subjects of the review to provide full access to the fieldwork team, subject, where relevant, to the terms of the Data Processing Deed agreed between the Sponsoring Bodies and entered into between the parties hereto.

Step Guide to the Review Process

Step 1.

A letter of invitation to review is sent by the Provincial/Regional Superior or other person responsible for the congregation/ order or missionary society (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Ordinary’).

Step 2.

The CEO will forward a survey to the provincial which will identify:

- Current number of members
- Past role with children
- Current role with children
- Total number of allegations received up to 2014
- Number of living members against whom there are allegations

Step 3.

For any Order where there have been allegations a full review will proceed, as per step 4 - 23. For those Orders where there have been no known allegations a desk top examination of policies and procedures will take place followed by a site visit to interview all relevant personnel within the safeguarding structure. For these orders step 5 and 13-23 will apply.

Step 4.

The CEO and Ordinary will confirm the dates for the fieldwork for the review, and names of the fieldwork team.

Step 5.

The Church Authority will be asked to make available all of the case files and related documentation in respect of any safeguarding concerns that have been identified within the diocese. The Church Authority will make available a room with wireless internet access for the reviewers to conduct their review of files, so that any records made by the reviewers can be directly typed and stored onto a secure server which is only accessed by the reviewers. In the absence of internet access the reviewers will type their notes onto a secure encrypted USB stick for later uploading onto the secure server.

Step 6.

The Church Authority will be requested to sign the revised Data Processing Deed prior to the arrival of the team.

Step 7.

The Church Authority will arrange a schedule of interviews with all who hold safeguarding roles within its functional area. The designated person and the Church Authority will be available to the reviewers throughout the period of fieldwork.

Step 8.

The fieldwork team when they arrive on site will firstly confirm that they have a suitable place to work in and that all the required documentation has been provided to them for their review. In the event that the fieldwork team forms the opinion that the Church Authority has not provided access to all such documents, the NBSCCCI shall give notice in writing to the Church Authority of the opinion of the fieldwork team and such notice shall specify the reasons for same. Thereupon, the Church Authority shall respond in detail to the notice. Each party shall use its best endeavours to resolve any differences of opinion which shall arise and, in the event that resolution is not arrived at, the parties will attempt to resolve the dispute by recourse to the services of a mediator agreed between them or nominated for the purpose at the request of any of them without prejudice to the NBSCCCI's entitlement to terminate the review. In the event that resolution has not been arrived at following mediation, either party shall be at liberty to terminate forthwith the review.

Step 9.

On arrival, the fieldwork team should be supplied with a single case file index that lists all the cases that have been created within the diocese. These may be divided into two groups. The first group will contain all allegations that relate to living alleged or known perpetrators. The second will contain any that are deceased.

Step 10.

Depending on the volume involved a decision should be made as to whether all or a random sample of the “deceased group” should be reviewed. Care should be taken to include all prominent cases in the sample.

Step 11.

Each case file will be reviewed by each fieldworker independently in the first instance. They will create a written summary with chronological information of the case. In certain cases a second reader may be required, this will be discussed and agreed between the fieldworkers.

Step 12.

Following the reading of the case and the creation of a summary, the fieldworkers will analyse and assess the actions taken in the case. They will assess compliance with agreed Church policy that was extant at that time. They will also indicate whether any current risk exists in respect of the information contained within the file and advise the church Authority of necessary safeguarding action to reduce the risk.

Step 13.

When all the case files have been read, the fieldwork team will then examine and review any procedures or protocols that exist within the diocese to confirm that they are in compliance with the *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance* document issued by the NBSCCCI in February of 2009.

Step 14.

To complete the review, the fieldwork team will then seek to speak to those directly involved in the safeguarding structure in the diocese. This should include the Advisory Panel, a sample of parish safeguarding representatives, the designated person, the safeguarding committee, victim support and advisors and the Bishop/Provincial. The purpose of these interviews is to form a view of the competence and effectiveness of the safeguarding structure that exists within the Church Authority.

Step 15.

The fieldwork team will also seek to speak to representatives of the key statutory agencies to provide them with an opportunity to express their views on the quality of the working relationships that exist between them and the Church Authority.

Step 16.

A verbal feedback session on initial key findings will be given to the Church Authority.

Step 17.

Upon completion of the field work, the team may request to take materials – other than casework records to review off-site; this alongside all materials gathered by the reviewers, including written notes on cases and meetings, will be analysed and will form the basis of the draft assessment review report.

Step 18.

The draft will be forwarded to the Church Authority for factual accuracy checking.

Step 19.

Alongside all other reports under review, the report will be presented in draft to the Reference Group for their critique and comment. If further work is required at the direction of the Reference group the CEO will ensure this work is completed and advise the Church Authority accordingly.

Step 20.

The report will be legally proofed by NBSCCCI lawyer.

Step 21.

The report will be forwarded to the NBSCCCI for approval

Step 22

A final draft report will then be submitted to the Church Authority. The expectation would be that the report will be published by the Church Authority at an agreed time in the future.

Step 23.

All case material written, including summaries, as part of the review, which are for the reviewers use only, will be stored on a secure server.

Guide for Reviewers

In terms of small (female religious orders) reference should be made to the following:

1. Has the Order provided alternative care to children in an orphanage, industrial school or children's residential home, but no longer is engaged in running such services;
2. Has the order provided education to children, in both or either boarding schools and day schools, but no longer does so ;

3. Has the order provided medical and/or nursing services to children, but no longer does so;
4. Has the order provided any other services to children, in community services centres, youth clubs etc., and no longer does so;
5. Does the order currently provide any sort of service to children and families that brings them into regular contact with children;
6. Has the order never provided any service to children (e.g. contemplative orders).

In relation to category 1 above;

1. The reviewers will establish whether any service they provided is included in the list of children's residential services produced by the Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB);
2. If this is the case, reference should be made to this.
3. If complaints have been referred to the Redress Board or Ryan Commission, this review cannot access these records and that will be stated in the report.
4. If the order has received complaints which have not been processed through Redress or Ryan these cases will be thoroughly examined as detailed above.

Review of Policy and Procedures

1. It is recognised that not all Orders will have any ministry with children and therefore their policies and procedures should reflect the work that they do with children.
2. If the Order only works through other organisations, example in Diocesan work or in schools, they are required to follow the policies of those organisations.
3. If there are gaps in the policy document an assessment should be made as to whether the ministry engaged in requires full compliance with all criteria attached to the seven standards
4. Where it is clear that the criteria do not apply a reference should be made at the beginning of the review report that the Order's ministry is not directly with children and therefore adherence to particular criteria do not apply.
5. If the Order is a contemplative Order, there is no expectation that they will have detailed policies and procedures, but reference should be made to their ministry and that they have no contact with children.
6. In all cases, contact will be made with the civil authorities to identify if they have any child safeguarding concerns in relation to the order.