

Overview Report

Overview of the Safeguarding Practice from Reviews conducted in to 8 Male religious congregations and 35 Female Religious Congregations.

As part of the process of Safeguarding reviews, the National Board was invited to examine the child safeguarding practice of the 43 Religious Orders and Congregations, whose reports are being made public today. Full details of those reviewed are appended to this overview.

The reviews were conducted according to two different methodologies, depending on the degree of ministry with children and whether there were known allegations against members of the Order/Congregation. The Terms of Reference for each type of review can be found on the Board's website www.safeguarding.ie and are attached to each review report.

The fieldwork which began in January 2015 and completed in July 2015 was initiated through the signing of a data processing deed which allowed National Board reviewers to access data held by the Order/Congregation. The reviews consisted of an examination of case files, policies and procedures as well as interviews with all those who hold a role in the safeguarding structure, a critique of this material and an assessment against the Church's seven safeguarding standards has been made in relation to those Orders/Congregations who have ministry with children and who have had allegations against their members.

The purpose of the full reviews is to ensure compliance against the Church's safeguarding standards, approved and adopted in 2009, *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland*, with particular reference to the management of safeguarding allegations. Where there were allegations of sexual abuse, all cases files were examined. In addition, at the request of the Church Authority, allegations of other forms of abuse, physical and emotional were also examined. The Terms of Reference are clear in stating that in terms of allegations, the concentration is on current risk, in other words the reviewers read files relating to living priests/brothers/sisters. Where the reviewers referenced priests, or brothers or sisters who were deceased, it is because the review of those cases merited comment in terms of future safeguarding practice.

Also included are reviews of the policy and procedures documents and other supporting written evidence maintained by the congregations including notifications to the civil authorities, advice offered on case management issues and contact with Survivors of abuse. In all cases, contact was also made by the reviewers with the civil authority agencies, to ensure that notifications had been made and for their critique of the relationship between the congregation/society and the statutory body in working together in the interests of safeguarding children.

A large number of the Congregations, mostly female in nature, no longer have ministry with children, and have not received allegations of abuse against their members; these

Congregations were assessed against a framework proportionate to their ministry. Many of these Congregations have not had contact with the civil authority agencies.

All reports have been checked for factual accuracy, have been reviewed by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland's (NBSCCCI) lawyer and have been scrutinized by an independent Reference Group, made up of Dr. Helen Buckley, TCD, Paul Harrison, TUSLA and John Toner, independent consultant and chair of SBNI Safeguarding Panels in Northern Ireland. This process ensures that all comments contained in the report are based on evidence and represents a fair assessment of the fieldwork findings.

The review process involved fieldwork conducted by reviewers employed by NBSCCCI and this fieldwork took place over a period between February 2015 and July 2015.

The reviews related to complaints reported from 1st January 1975 to the period of the review.

Key Findings of the Reviews

These can be divided into two parts – a) findings from the full reviews of 7 Male Congregations/Orders which were assessed against the 7 standards, and 1 Male Congregation assessed using the shorter methodology; and b) the shorter reviews of 35 female religious where there is limited or no ministry with children and no reported allegations of sexual abuse of minors in Ireland.

In relation to a) - findings over 8 Male Order/Congregational reviews - the following emerged:

- In the aggregate there have been 325 allegations made against 141 priests, or brothers.
- In the aggregate there have been 8 criminal convictions.
- Allegations relate to the period between 1941 and 1995 with one allegation relating to abuse having taken place in 2003.
- A number of the male Orders/Congregations have had substantial ministry with children previously through parish ministry and Institutional Care and Education.
- The differences in practice as is evidenced in the above reports and in the current case management files before and since 2009, when the Church's standards were adopted are striking. There has been significant improvement in all aspects of child safeguarding: prevention, reporting, responding, supporting complainants, and in managing respondents.
- All the Orders, reviewed, fully appreciate the extent of abuse of children under their care and have shown a determined effort to put in place good prevention safeguards.

- Historically there had been an absence of compassionate response to Survivors in some Orders. In others there has been appropriate, consistent genuine attempts made to reach out to Survivors, and in fact the reviewers considered that in such reviews there was evidence of best practice; these are highlighted in the individual reports. Overall there are noteworthy improvements in pastoral care and response to complainants.

- Significant improvements in reporting allegations to the civil authority agencies have been noted, with no outstanding cases requiring reporting action by the Orders/Congregations.

- Generally records in the past were not well maintained. Noticeable efforts to improve these are evident from the introduction of guidance from the National Board on “Recording and Record Keeping” in 2010.

- Management plans relating to accused priests and brothers were variable; often plans were in place but not written.

- In general good adherence to other aspects of the 7 standards, particularly in relation to prevention. Reviewers noted some best practice examples amongst some of the Orders.

- Overall there is strong leadership and commitment to child safeguarding. This was evidenced through good policies, structures, prompt reporting and in particular where the leader personally has engaged with the complainants.

Order/Congregation	Numbers of Priests/Brothers	Numbers of allegations, suspicions and concerns (sexual, physical and emotional)	Numbers convicted
Camillians	0	0	0
OFM Capuchin Friars	21	72	2
O Carmelites	11	17	0
Cistercians x 5 Abbeys	21	48	2
Sacred Heart (Dehonians)	0	0	0
Jesuits	36	79	0
Rosminians	43	98	4
Salesians	9	11	0
Total	141	325	8

In terms of b) – smaller reviews - the following issues emerged:

- A large number of female Congregations, and a few male Orders who had considerable ministry with children in the past, now have no such ministry;
- Congregations are declining in numbers and increasing in age profile;
- Good commitment to child safeguarding is evident;
- Recognition that previous care of children was often harsh;
- For those Congregations who have had allegations, these have been appropriately dealt with;
- Members who minister outside these congregation follow the policy and procedures of the diocese/service in which they work;
- There is a strong sense of commitment to working positively with the National Board in spite of the reduced relevance of their ministries from a child safeguarding perspective.

Conclusion

Overall there is considerable improvement in safeguarding practice evidenced in these reports. The history is undeniable, that once again a significant number of children were abused in the care of Religious. What is strikingly different from past responses is a determination to respond pastorally, report to the civil authorities promptly and to seek guidance in order to minimize risk to children.

There is no doubt about the commitment of all the Leaders to ensure that the abuse that was inflicted on children will not be repeated. There was also a very good recognition that past responses were inadequate and that responsibility for responding appropriately now rests with the Congregational Leadership.

The work that has been invested in written Policies and Procedures, and training is indicative of the learning that has taken place and the continuing need to improve practice further.

It is important that complainants come forward if there are still unreported allegations of abuse. The National Board encourages reporting to the diocese/religious order and to the civil authorities.

NBSCCCI also would encourage anyone who has suffered abuse to contact *Towards Healing*, counselling and support service for Survivors of clerical and religious congregations' abuse, which is totally independent although funded by the Catholic Church.

Contact details are:

Towards Healing - Click to visit the website: www.towardshealing.ie
Free phone 1800303416 (Republic of Ireland) Free phone 0800 0963315 (Northern Ireland)

Towards Peace- Spiritual support for survivors of abuse by Catholic Church personnel in
Ireland

Mrs Una Allen, Director

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Phone: + 353 (0) 1 5053028

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Monday – Thursday: 10am – 5pm

Email: towardspeace@iecon.ie

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