



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

**Second Review of Safeguarding Practice in the**

**De La Salle Brothers Ireland**

**[Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools]**

**undertaken by**

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

**Ireland (National Board)**

**Date of Review: January 2024**

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## Background

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (the National Board) was established in 2006:

- To provide advice, services and assistance in furtherance of the development of the safeguarding of children within the Roman Catholic Church on the island of Ireland.
- To monitor compliance with legislation, policy and best practice.
- To report on these activities as is comprehensively set out in the Memorandum of Association of the Company.

Church authorities who have entered into an agreement with the National Board through signing a Memorandum of Understanding have committed to following Safeguarding Children - Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016.

In order to assess compliance with the 2016 Standards, the Provincial of the De La Salle Brothers District of Ireland, Great Britain and Malta, Brother Ben Hanlon invited the National Board in November 2023 to undertake a Review of child safeguarding practice in the Order. The Order was previously reviewed in 2017 under the Safeguarding Children - Standards and Guidance for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2008.

The report of the first Review can be found on the National Board's website at [https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Congregations/De\\_La\\_Salle\\_.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Congregations/De_La_Salle_.pdf)

The recommendations from the first Review

Recommendations	Status of Implementation
<p><b>Recommendation 1.</b> The Provincial must ensure that the De La Salle Brothers in Ireland formally adopt the 2016 Safeguarding Children-Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland and ensure that the child safeguarding policy statement on page 8 of that document is appropriately completed and properly displayed in all De La Salle community houses and pastoral centres.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2.</b> The Provincial of the new province of Ireland, Great Britain and Malta must ensure that file records within the congregation's Irish sector are searched for any documents relating to canonical processes that were initiated in relation to De La Salle Brothers against whom allegations of child abuse have made.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3.</b> Once the HIA NI has issued its report in early 2017, the Regional Leader of the De La Salle Brothers in Ireland should engage someone with the requisite IT, archival and administrative skills to organise a central case file record system in both hardcopy and electronic format. Such a system needs to have the capacity to cross-reference all named complainants with all named Brothers against whom allegations have been made.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4.</b> When a central case filing system is in place, the DLP needs to make contact with the relevant police force and statutory child protection agency to make sure that all information that should be notified to these bodies concerning Brothers against whom allegations of child abuse have been made is now notified.</p>	<p>Yes</p>

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<p><b>Recommendation 5.</b> The Provincial must ensure that the De La Salle congregation in Ireland develops a written Pastoral Outreach Policy and Plan to address the needs of complainants, in which the resources, in terms of post holders, services and finances that are required to operationalize such a plan are identified and put in place.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6.</b> The DLP should develop a computerised database of all members of the congregation living in Ireland, to include a record of their Garda vetting / PSNI clearance status. This can then be used to track the status of all members and as a reminder of the need to update this status for members, as indicated</p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7.</b> The Provincial must ensure that each of the requirements of Standard 3 – i.e. all 12 of the criteria - are being met in all De La Salle related schools and pastoral centres.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 8.</b> The Safeguarding Committee should take responsibility for establishing the child safeguarding training needs of De La Salle Brothers and employees, and ensures that they are provided with the requisite training.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 9.</b> The Regional Superior and DLP in Ireland should review the agreement reached with HSE / Tusla in September 2014 regarding the programme of work to improve child-safeguarding practice and implement the steps that remain to be acted on.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 10.</b> The Provincial ensures that the De La Salle Brothers select, appoint and acquire training for a lay male Support Person and a lay female Support Person to work with complainants and victims.</p>	<p><b>Partially met</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 11.</b> That the congregation’s new Oxford-based Provincial Safeguarding Officer for Child Protection come to Ireland to work with the DLP on arranging for living Brothers against whom allegations of child abuse have been made; to undertake a professional Risk Assessment with a skilled independent consultant, on the basis of which a Safety Plan for each such member would be drawn up and implemented, in conjunction with Tusla.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 13.</b> <i>(Due to an editorial oversight, there was no Recommendation 12 in the 2017 Review Report).</i> That the Provincial of the new Province of Ireland, Great Britain and Malta, in cooperation with the Leader of the Irish Sector of the Province, review the supports that are in place for Brothers against whom allegations of child abuse have been made and make whatever improvements in such supports that are indicated.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 14.</b> The Child Safeguarding Committee must develop an annual Child Safeguarding Plan for the De La Salle Brothers and oversee its implementation.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p>

This update, authored in February 2023 by the DLP, was shared with the reviewers in January 2024, with information identifying individuals removed. Recommendation 10 is partially met and will be addressed under Standard 4 of this review.

The purpose of the second round of Reviews is to assess child-safeguarding practice against the Catholic Church in Ireland’s current Standards, as detailed in *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland (2016)*.

The review seeks a level and quality of evidence to provide:

- Public confidence that the Church body is safe for children.
- Affirmation to child safeguarding personnel that they are doing the right things well.
- Confirmation to the Church authority that what they want to be done is in fact being done.
- Independent verification of Self-Audit – or correction and/or improvement of Self-Audit.
- Opportunities for learning.

### Introduction

A detailed history of the De La Salle Brothers is contained in the Review Report of January 2017, available on the National Board's website.

The present organisation of the congregation has changed over the years to take account of numbers and local needs. Up until 1947, England and Ireland operated as one province; but in that year, the Brothers in Ireland, both from the Republic and from Northern Ireland came together as the Irish Province.

This remained in place until 2015 when Order was reorganised, and the Irish Province amalgamated with Great Britain and Malta, all three of which use English as their primary language. Today the Lasallian Province of Ireland, Great Britain and Malta is under one administration.

There are thirty-three (33) living De La Salle Brothers living on the island of Ireland, in community houses in Belfast, Dublin, Castletown (Co. Laois), and Waterford. The average age of these Brothers is 81 years.

The ministries in which twenty (20) De La Salle Brothers engage in Ireland include being the Provincial, Auxiliary Provincial, and community leadership, Bursar, Finance Managers, and Property Manager for the Order. Other in-house responsibilities include working in the development of Lasallian education, Guest Master, Student Supervisor. External ministries undertaken by Brothers include being Manager of a Pastoral Centre, being local Director of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, providing pastoral care of adults, and working with the Samaritans.

Thirteen (13) Brothers are retired from ministry, of whom nine (9) are living in care settings.

The Order believes that education enriches the whole person through teaching, technology, and the development of the students cultural, physical, social, and spiritual well-being.

On the De La Salle website (<https://www.lasalleigbm.org/safeguarding>), there is a written commitment to protect children, young people, and adults from neglect and from all forms of abuse. This commitment is based on the Brothers' Christian belief in the dignity and uniqueness of every person and in the recognition that everyone is made in the image and likeness of God.

The website further adds that the De la Salle Order abides by the safeguarding policies and guidelines provided by the Roman Catholic Church.

They indicate that they will promote the well-being of every child or young person at risk by providing the highest level of respect, care, and protection that they can offer. The statement goes on to say that ‘... for all those who work with us or who are in our charge, we offer safe, secure, and welcoming environment, one that is free from discrimination, exploitation, harassment, and maltreatment of any kind.’

The Order states that it will take seriously and report immediately to the relevant civil authority any allegation of abuse, including any disclosure of abuse directed at a third party. They commit to being open, transparent, and accountable, and to cooperating fully with any official investigation into allegations of abuse; and to work to ensure justice for those who are affected by abuse. They will respond to those affected by abuse with sensitivity, respect and compassion and endeavour to support them in whatever way is appropriate; and will respond positively to anyone raising concerns about their safeguarding responsibilities, or the conduct of anyone holding office within their Trusts or acting on behalf of the Trustees. They pledge to seek to always follow best practise in safeguarding by continuously learning and improving.

The order also placed notice on its website that the National Board would be conducting a Review of safeguarding practice.

The website has copies of the following key documents at <https://www.lasalleigbm.org/safeguardingireland>.

1. Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016, incorporating Child Safeguarding Policy Statement.
2. De La Salle Safeguarding Statement 2023.
3. De La Salle Safeguarding Procedures 2016.
4. Safeguarding structure of the De La Salle Order.
5. Contact information for Safeguarding and Support services.
6. Safeguarding Policy for De La Salle Pastoral Centres.

### **Process of Review**

An on-site visit was carried out in the Pastoral Centre at Glen Road, Belfast; and subsequently in the headquarters of the Lasallian Order in Ireland, based at Howth Road, Dublin with a fieldwork visit to the Pastoral Centre in Ballyfermot, Dublin during the latter part of the Review.

The reviewers met with the Safeguarding Coordinator – a Brother - on both the 16th of January in Belfast, and during the two-day visit to the Order’s Dublin headquarters on the 23rd and 24th of January.

They met with and interviewed the DLP who coordinated the provision of information required for the Review.

The reviewers also met with

- Two members of the Safeguarding Committee
- A respondent,
- A complainant
- A member An Garda Síochána.
- A Support Person.

They examined 32 case management files that had been identified as relevant to the period since the 2017 Review.

### STANDARDS

The Standards are a level of practice required to ensure good child safeguarding arrangements. Each standard is self-contained and supported by indicators to evidence if safeguarding arrangements and practice meet the required standard. The National Board has produced detailed Guidance, which is accessible on its website at <https://www.safeguarding.ie/guidance>.

The De La Salle Brothers agreed to adopt *Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016* as its child safeguarding policy through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Board. The adherence of the Order to the Policy and Standards is confirmed in its June 2023 Child Safeguarding Statement, signed by Brother Ben Hanlon, Provincial.

The seven Standards are:

Standard 1: Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments

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 5: Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe

Standard 6: Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

Standard 7: Quality-Assuring Compliance with the Standards

This Review concentrates on practice through evaluating written records and interviews with Church personnel.

An assessment of practice under each standard is set out below.



## **Standard 1: Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments**

*Church bodies provide an environment for children that is welcoming, nurturing and safe. They provide access to good role models whom the children can trust, who respect, protect and enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development.*

The De la Salle Order operates and manages three Pastoral Centres, one in Belfast, one in Dublin, and one in Castletown County Laois. During the Review, the Belfast and the Dublin centres were visited. The Order has developed safeguarding guidance for all three pastoral centres, a copy of which was provided to the reviewers. Each centre has its own website on which the relevant Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is accessible – Belfast at <https://delasalleretreatsbelfast.org/>; Dublin at <https://delasalleretreatsdublin.org/>; and Castletown, Co Laois at <https://delasalleretreatscastletown.org/>

The reviewers participated in a range of children’s activities in the Belfast and the Dublin pastoral centres, and during these visits met the centres’ directors. They were impressed with their safeguarding knowledge and understanding and its application in their centres. The reviewers want to acknowledge the warmth and generosity they received during their visits.

All Pastoral Centre staff are police vetted and have received appropriate safeguarding training. The centres have an attendance register for all young people. Consent forms are signed by parents at their school, prior to attending.

An Advisory Board manages all three Pastoral Centres, and the day-to-day management of each centre is undertaken by its Director.

The Belfast community of De La Salle Brothers is on the second floor of the building that houses the Pastoral centre. The living quarters are separate but are connected by a fire door, which cannot be locked. Centre staff highlight at the beginning of each session that this door is out of bounds and no child is permitted to go upstairs. There is an outdoor space, which is used for activities as weather permits.

The Belfast centre was set up in 2001 to meet the pastoral needs of young people attending schools in Belfast and its hinterland. It is now a stable and well-established pastoral centre serving the needs of over 2,000 young people per year. The stated objective of the centre is to enable the students to have a greater understanding and experience of their faith, and to help them to have a greater appreciation of themselves, to improve their self-image, and to be more accepting of themselves and others. The sessions are activity based.

The programmes are both pastoral and spiritual in nature helping students to develop their personalities and faith. The activities available there include,

- Primary School Retreats
- Post Primary School Retreats
- Journey to Your Heart and Ignatian Daily Examen
- Art Psychotherapy
- Other Retreats - these can include short talks, discussion, sharing, meditation, prayer service and creative activities for school staff, parish groups, folk-groups and youth groups.

The reviewers observed a primary school-aged group of children who are preparing for their Confirmation.

The mission of the Order to enable young people to continue nurturing their faith was evident during the session attended by the reviewers. The young students clearly enjoyed the activity and participated in the faith element of these sessions. The session was welcoming, full of fun and respected all those who attended some of whom were from a different faith or no faith at all. The programme was facilitated by three members of staff, all of whom have qualifications in religious education and allied subjects, with experience of training and of the pastoral care of young people. This team is led by a director, supported by four staff, one of whom works on a part time basis.

The Directors? met by the reviewers highlighted that the schools from which the young people come are responsible for undertaking risk assessments prior to the young people attending the centre, as well as for their insurance cover. An appropriate risk assessment was provided to the reviewers. Centre staff confirmed they have insurance that covers participants who come to the centre for retreats. The reviewers also inspected the incident report process, which was of the required standard.

The Director confirmed that all staff are trained in safeguarding and had attended the Down and Connor diocesan training for safeguarding, in line with Catholic Church training requirements. The documents are held in the Director's office, which is locked when not in use. The reviewers suggested to the Director and the Safeguarding Coordinator that a locked cabinet should also be made available to ensure that all confidential information is retained securely.

The centre made available risk assessments, hazard forms, safeguarding policy, whistleblowing policy and codes of conduct for adults and children. Safeguarding statement and policy were on display throughout the centre.

The Dublin centre provides a range of tailored programmes to students from schools across Dublin, which include,

- Secondary School Retreat/Reflection Days
- Confirmation and Sixth-Class Retreat Days
- Transition Year Ignite Programme (The Five Ways of Wellbeing)
- Glendalough School Pilgrimage
- Global Citizenship Education (Development Education Programme)
- Student Preparation Programme for 'Immersion Trips' Overseas
- Dublin Christian Heritage City Walk

During the fieldwork visit, there were 28 Second Year students attending from a school in northwest Dublin.

The reviewers were provided with sample worksheets, used to stimulate debate and discussion with the group, all within a safe care and therapeutic environment. The core approach is one of respect, listening, care and confidentiality. Codes of behaviour and rules are developed for each programme together with the young people. During the visit, the young people were very relaxed and happy, and engaged well with the facilitators.

The students complete an evaluation form at the end of each day, and these contribute to an annual review of the centre to assess whether their programmes remain relevant and meaningful to young people.

The centre is run by three full-time staff, supplemented by three to four facilitators who are contracted on a part-time basis. All staff are Garda vetted every two years, and they undertake safeguarding training every three years, working closely with the DLP. All documentation related to staff is kept in secure files, which are in locked filing cabinets.

The facilitators undertake a two-year training course (SHEKINAH) in Youth Retreat Facilitation (see <https://shekinah.ie/courses/>)

The centre has attendance registers for all programmes and consent forms for each student, which include information on any medical requirements or sensitive issues. For example, the centre has catered for children with a disability, including a young person with autism, and another with a speech impediment. There are disability toilets and ramps in the building. Hazard risk assessments are undertaken by the centre and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

School staff accompany the children to and from the centres.

The centre has developed a teacher's guidance pack, which outlines their responsibilities. The pack also highlights the importance of safeguarding, with a clear reference to the centre's child protection policy. The centre also has a complaints policy, and incident forms.

The number of students attending the centre continues to rise, from 2,507 in 21/22 to 3,156 in 22/23, which is testament to the hard work and commitment of the centre management and staff. Very positive feedback from the students and school staff is contained on the Dublin centre website.

There was clarity of roles and responsibilities across the Pastoral Centres visited, with a clearly outlined structure.

The Pastoral Centre staff are commended for their engagement, communication, and structured activities for the young people in both Belfast and Dublin.

Safeguarding was clearly a pillar for all activities within the centres, which was evidenced in the way staff worked with the young people.

From the information reviewed, the interviews that took place, and observations made by the reviewers, **Standard 1 has been met.**

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

*Church Bodies have clear procedures and guidance on what to do when suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations arise regarding a child's safety or welfare that will ensure there is a prompt response. They also enable the Church to meet all national and international legal and practice requirements and guidance.*

The congregation appointed a lay DLP / Safeguarding Coordinator in 2017. She has relevant experience as a former teacher, in working with children and overseeing arrangements for their safeguarding.

The following four-part Table 1 sets out the allegations, complaints and concerns reported to the De La Salle Order since the last Review. A number of allegations and complaints made to the Order did not identify a respondent.

The reader should note that the table also contains queries made by statutory services about named Brothers, but where no specific details of any allegation or concern has been shared with the Order.

Allegations of physical, sexual and emotional abuse made by complainants are captured in the table.

**Table 1. (a) Living Brothers**

Case number and Current status of respondent Brother	Number of Complainants, and abuse complained of	PSNI / Gardaí notified within required period	HSCT / Tusla notified within required period	National Board notified within required period	Appropriate canonical processes initiated
<b>Bro.1</b>	<b>2</b> A. Not specified B. No details yet available from Gardaí	Next day  Reported to Order by Gardaí	Next day  Within 1 month	Next day  Within 1 month	Insufficient information available
<b>Bro. 2</b>	<b>1</b> Sexual abuse	Same day	Same day	Same day	Removed from ministry

Table 1. (b) Deceased Brothers

Case number	Number of Complainants, and abuse complained of	PSNI / Gardaí notified within required period	HSCT / Tusla notified within required period	National Board notified within required period	Appropriate canonical processes initiated
Bro 3	1 Sexual Abuse	4 days	4 days	4 days	N/A
Bro 4	1 Sexual Abuse	5 days	5 days	5 days	N/A
Bro 5	1 Sexual Abuse	1 day	1 day	1 day	N/A
Bro 6	1 Sexual Abuse	1 day	1 day	1 day	N/A
Bro 7	2 A. Sexual Abuse B. Sexual, physical and emotional abuse	1 day Within 3 weeks	1 day Within 3 weeks	1 day Within 3 weeks	N/A N/A
Bro 8	2 A. Sexual, physical, and emotional abuse B. Not specified	Within 3 weeks 1 day	Within 3 weeks 1 day	Within 3 weeks 1 day	N/A N/A
Bro 9	1 Sexual abuse	Within 3 weeks	Not required	Within 3 weeks	N/A
Bro 10	1 Sexual, physical, and emotional abuse	Within 3 weeks	Not required	Within 3 weeks	N/A
Bro 11	1 Sexual abuse	Notified by Gardaí	Not required	Within 3 weeks	N/A
Bro 12	2 A. Not specified B. Sexual abuse	A. Same day B. 3 weeks	Not required B. 3 weeks	A. Same day B. Same day	N/A N/A

Table 1. (c) Former Brothers

Case number and Current status of respondent Brother	Number of Complainants, and abuse complained of	PSNI / Gardaí notified within required period	HSCT / Tusla notified within required period	National Board notified within required period	Appropriate canonical processes initiated
Bro 13	1 Sexual abuse	1 day	1 day	1 day	N/A
Bro 14	1 Sexual abuse	1 day	1 day	1 day	N/A
Bro 15	1 Sexual abuse	Same day	Same day	3 weeks	N/A [Deceased, having already left the Order]
Bro 16	1 Not specified	Reported to Order by Gardaí	2 days	3 days	N/A

Table 1. (d) Unidentified Brothers

Case number and Current status of respondent Brother	Number of Complainants, and abuse complained of	PSNI / Gardaí notified within required period	HSCT / Tusla notified within required period	National Board notified within required period	Appropriate canonical processes initiated
A	1 Physical abuse	2 days	2 days	2 days	N/A
B	1 Not specified	1 day	1 day	1 day	N/A
C	1 Sexual abuse	Same day	Same day	Same day	N/A
D	1 Sexual abuse	Not recorded	Not recorded	6 weeks	N/A
E	1 Sexual, physical, and emotional abuse	1 day	Not until complaint is made	8 weeks	N/A

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<b>F</b>	<b>1</b> Sexual, physical, and emotional abuse	1 day	2 days	1 day	N/A
<b>G</b>	<b>1</b> Sexual abuse	Same day	Not until complaint is made	Same day	N/A
<b>H</b>	<b>1</b> Sexual and physical abuse	Same day	Not until complaint is made	1 day	N/A

It is important to note that some cases in the table involved two or more Brothers, and individual Brothers were implicated in more than one case.

Twenty-eight (28) allegations and concerns have been received since the first Review; and of these, six (6) do not specify the type of abuse involved, either because it was not disclosed, or the DLP is waiting on additional information.

Eight (8) Brothers about whom allegations have been made remain unidentified – **A** to **H** above.

Allegations were made against two (2) Brothers who are living and who are still members of the Order. One of these was formally removed from ministry before he retired. He was subject to a collection of proofs investigation, and a Management Plan based on a risk assessment.

One case file related to a living Brother who remains a member of the Order. However, he is in an overseas Province, so that case has not been counted here.

Allegations have been made against ten (10) deceased Brothers; and allegations were made against four (4) former Brothers.

The reviewers note that some of the reports received by the Order were not clearly detailing allegations, but were requests from the Gardaí or from solicitors for information about particular Brothers. In many of these cases, there was limited information shared by the enquirer with the Order, which prevented it from determining if the threshold for notifications was met.

Several files recorded attempts by the DLP to seek additional information and clarification, before making notifications to the relevant agencies – the police, child-protection services, and the National Board.

Not all allegations, or requests to the Order for information, were noted on separate files. This created difficulties for the reviewers in clarifying specific information related to each Brother. Information was not available on some case management files.



Twelve (12) contacts with the Order relate to queries from the Gardaí or Tusla, where the DLP provided the information requested, but has not yet received any identification of who the complainants are. The delays in the Order notifying the National Board in two situations were due to several follow up attempts by the DLP to obtain the information required.

The reviewers have established that the Order has appropriate procedures and arrangements in place for responding to child safeguarding suspicions, concerns, knowledge, or allegations.

**The Standard is met.**

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

*Complainants who have suffered abuse as children receive a compassionate response when they disclose their abuse. They, and their families, are offered appropriate support, advice and pastoral care.*

Complainants who have a current involvement with the Order were advised about the National Board Safeguarding Review, and one complainant met with a reviewer during the Review fieldwork. This complainant felt listened to and said that they had received a compassionate response from the DLP, who had also acted as their support person. They described the DLP as open and caring, and wanting to help them. The DLP also significantly, acknowledged their hurt and the wrongs that have been carried out by members of the Order. The complainant stated that the DLP was and continues to be accessible and approachable, and communicates with them about any developments to keep them informed.

The complainant continues to access therapy, which is financed and supported by the Order. They were very open and frank with the reviewer, and identified several areas where they believe the Order could move forward to improve the support to complainants, including that,

1. The Order needs to acknowledge the extent of the abuse, as well as the trauma, hurt, and damage caused to people's lives.
2. The Order needs to reach out more and to make it easier for victims to come forward. This could be done through several social media platforms, including the Order's website.
3. The Order could be more proactive by publicising and distributing leaflets with relevant contact numbers. In doing so, it is critical that the language used is measured and sensitive to the needs of victims.
4. If there is not one already, the Order should have a list of approved therapists for victims to access.

All of this is premised on the need for discretion sensitivity and confidentiality.

The complainant felt that their experiences of been subjected to repeated significant physical abuse by the Brothers had robbed them of their innocence and childhood.

The reviewers noted from case file records examples of where a more proactive and positive approach to engage with other complainants could, and should, have been explored more actively.

The Order had proactively appointed two Support Persons, one a male and one a female. What was less clear was how often they were contacted to provide this service and the method used to ensure that all complainants are fully aware of the service on offer. The reviewer met with one of the Support Persons, who had not yet been called on in this role. He clearly understood his task, and the need for him to demonstrate empathy, respect and listening to the person requiring support. However, the Support Person has not yet received any training, and he would be keen to avail of this. The reviewers suggest that this training be secured by the Order as soon as is possible to do so.

It is important that support persons are fully aware of their role and responsibilities, and themselves receive support in a structured way.

There was evidence in some case files of the DLP being proactive and supportive to complainants. Several had direct contact with the DLP and with the Provincial, whilst others availed of therapeutic involvement financed by the order itself. In several cases, an apology from the Order was noted on file.

Case files that had been opened following civil legal proceedings being initiated, showed limited direct contact by complainants with the Order, other than through their solicitors. In such cases, it would be helpful for the Order to make the offer of additional supports to complainants and their families through communication with their legal advisors.

The reviewers suggested to the DLP that good practice would be to follow up with the complainant with a further offer of support within a defined period as appropriate. This approach reflects that not all complainants may be ready and willing to avail of support at the time of contacting the Order. The previous review in 2016/17 made a similar recommendation, (Recommendation 10), but insufficient progress has been made to ensure compliance with that recommendation,

The reviewers overall assessment is that **this Standard has not been met.**

The reviewers are satisfied that the complainant that was interviewed did receive a positive experience and response from the DLP and the Provincial, but would recommend that the order consider the points made by the complainant. To that end, we would make the following recommendations.

### **Recommendation 1**

The Order should ensure that Support Persons have the appropriate training and support needed to undertake their role.

### **Recommendation 2**

The Order should develop a mechanism to ensure that all complainants are made aware of the Support Person's role and function, and of how to access this support. The Order should also ensure that where offers of support are initially declined, information is provided again later, to enable the complainant access the support when they are ready.

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

*The Church Authority has in place a fair process for investigating and managing child safeguarding concerns. When the threshold for reporting has been reached, a system of support and monitoring for respondents is provided.*

The DLP has significant experience engaging with children as a teacher and a guidance counsellor. She has been in the role of DLP since 2017, and is directly accountable to the Provincial. She is supported by an assistant DLP, who also acts as a Support Person. The assistant DLP is a practicing teacher.

The DLP is responsible for all case management. Since taking up this role, she has undertaken a review of all cases and filing systems in accordance with recommendations of the 2017 Review. The DLP uses the file structure index and template in accordance with National Board guidance on case management.

The Order has received allegations against two living Brothers. One living Brother is subject to a Management Plan, and he has been cooperative with that plan.

Both of these Brothers are elderly and living in nursing care, with no access to children; and the Brothers' care settings have been advised of the allegations against them.

Another Brother resides in a different Province. The Irish Provincial has outlined the nature of the child safeguarding concerns with the man's current Provincial, who in turn has confirmed that the Brother has no contact with children.

The respondent Brothers were given an opportunity to complete a questionnaire for the reviewers, but none did so. However, one respondent took the opportunity to meet with a reviewer.

This respondent described his shock at the allegations, and said that the first time he was aware of the detail of what had been alleged was when he was requested to attend for interview at a police station. He strongly denies the allegations. He said that as they were historic in nature, it was very difficult for him to build his defence due to the time that had elapsed. One of the allegations goes back 54 years, the other, 40 years. He described the investigation process as being quite lengthy, although he did have the support of a solicitor during his interviews with the police.

He described how he had received good support from his fellow Brothers. He said that a number of Brothers who could have provided witness statements to support his position are now deceased.

Of concern to the reviewers was his contention that he has not had direct contact with the DLP, and that he was unaware of any Management Plan being put in place, either to manage the level of risk, or to coordinate supports to him. The Brother interviewed was of the view that the legal system does not listen to the alleged offender.

This Brother, and indeed all respondent Brothers who are still alive, would benefit from a care and management plan. This will require further consideration by the Provincial and the DLP.

The DLP confirmed that one Brother is subject to a Management Plan, although there were several cases where a Management Plan should have been considered. This could have been developed alongside a collection of proofs, which may have proved beneficial to the respondent, while addressing risk at the same time.

Not all complainants identified the Brothers who they allege abused them. Some of the case files simply contained information requests from a statutory agency, primarily the Gardaí.

In situations where the respondent Brothers have been identified, it often took a considerable amount of time from the initial contact made with the Order to the investigation proceeding. In some instances, these investigations are not yet concluded. In such circumstances, the DLP should actively consider whether a Risk Assessment and Interim Management Plan are required. Her starting position in each case should be to ask why these should not be completed.

The reviewers also had the opportunity to interview a representative of the Gardaí who has worked cooperatively with the DLP. They confirmed that the DLP has provided considerable assistance with several criminal investigations, some of which remain ongoing. The Garda highlighted the benefit of having a named contact person for the Order, particularly for information sharing and in relation to retrospective allegations. The Garda provided positive feedback about the DLP's engagement with statutory agencies, and stated that the system works well.

Having considered the information provided in case management files, and in discussion with involved parties, the reviewers' assessment is that **Standard 4 is not met**.

### **Recommendation 3.**

The DLP should actively assess any risk posed by living Brothers against whom there has been an allegation, and develop Interim Management Plans based on these assessments.

If the decision is taken that a Management Plan is not required, the reasons for such a decision should be detailed in writing and retained on the case management file.

The DLP should also ensure that consideration with the Provincial of the appropriateness of collection of proofs is noted on the relevant case management file.

## **Standard 5: Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe**

*Church personnel are trained and supported in all aspects of safeguarding relevant to their role, in order to develop and maintain the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to safeguard and protect children.*

The Order's eleven-person Child Safeguarding Committee has carried out a training needs analysis, and has developed a Training Plan. This plan identified who was to be trained, when and with a named trainer. The training was provided by either the Down and Connor diocese or a trainer who had been trained and registered with the National Board. Pastoral centre staff underwent training at various dates between November 2022 and February 2023. The DLP retains records of all Brothers and lay staff who have completed the safeguarding training and refresher training. The Safeguarding Committee receives updates from the DLP regarding mandatory safeguarding training; and an annual training return is submitted to the National Board.

The reviewers met with staff from both Pastoral Centres, and it was clear that all staff had undertaken appropriate training facilitated by National Board registered trainers.

Training is facilitated by registered trainers from Dublin Archdiocese for Pastoral Centre staff in Dublin. Staff in the Belfast centre attend training facilitated by registered trainers from Down and Connor Diocese.

The reviewers are satisfied that the Order has an up to date training schedule and that training is facilitated by registered trainers from the National Board or the Down and Connor diocese. Training is a priority for the Order's Safeguarding Committee, which monitors the implementation of the Training Plan.

**This Standard is met.**

## **Standard 6: Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message**

*Church Bodies appropriately communicate the Church's child safeguarding message*

The National Board Review was promoted by the Order, and a notification was placed on the Order's website <http://www.lasalleigbm.org>:

The De La Salle Order has invited the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland to conduct a review of safeguarding practice. If you wish to report a safeguarding concern please see: [Contact Information in Safeguarding and Support Services](#), for all contact details.

The Order's website includes all the relevant safeguarding policies, and it can be accessed at [www.lasalleigbm.org/safeguarding](http://www.lasalleigbm.org/safeguarding)

The DLP also updated the policy for the De La Salle Pastoral Centres, which was made available to the reviewers. The Children First Act (2015) child safeguarding statement was also prominently displayed in several facilities visited by the reviewers.

A Communication Plan was in place for 2022, which provided details on target groups, such as the general public, pastoral workers, and the Brothers. The plan detailed contact arrangements, policy information, safeguarding statement and safeguarding structures. The order deployed various mechanisms to communicate safeguarding, including their website, hard copy information handouts, personnel booklets, and training, all of which were evident to the reviewers during their visits to various facilities.

Reviewers also evidenced various communications, including safeguarding strategies, safeguarding policies, code of conduct for adults, and a code of conduct for children, all of which were available at the Pastoral Centres.

Safeguarding children leaflets and information were prominent in both Pastoral Centres, visited with the relevant contact details of the DLP and statutory agencies clearly visible. The information is written in English; and the Order may wish to consider providing this information in other languages, if required. The Child Safeguarding Committee could review this matter.

As evidenced in various documents, the Order has developed clear policies and procedures, which are based on the National Standards, and were made freely available to the reviewers during the process of the review.

The reviewers are satisfied that the Order has appropriate systems in place for communicating the safeguarding message, and is using up-to-date accessible information and methods to achieve this.

**This standard is met.**

## **Standard 7: Quality-Assuring Compliance with the Standards**

*The Church Body develops a plan of action to quality assure compliance with the safeguarding standards. This action plan is reviewed annually. The Church body only has responsibility to monitor, evaluate and report on compliance with the indicators under each standard that apply to it, depending on its ministry.*

The reviewers did not participate in a meeting of the Child Safeguarding Committee, but did meet with the Chairperson and one other member. From that meeting evidence to support the implementation of Standard 7 was obtained.

The Child Safeguarding Committee meet on 2/3 occasions per year. The agenda is derived from the Safeguarding Plan, which has been developed by the Committee. The DLP has a very active role with the Safeguarding Committee, in supporting them and providing the relevant information to members, as required.

The DLP also meets regularly with the Safeguarding Coordinator to highlight emerging issues or themes, which are also then communicated to the Safeguarding Committee. The Safeguarding Coordinator provides advice and support to the DLP, and acts as a link to the Brothers. He provides a useful link to the Provincial on safeguarding issues alongside the DLP, in ensuring notification of concerns are addressed promptly and in line with the statutory requirements. He has worked closely with the DLP since her appointment. The committee also identifies any emergent themes or critical areas that may require additional discussion at future meetings, which are logged in the minutes and placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

The reviewers are satisfied that the Child Safeguarding Committee has a clear focus and is mandated by the Order to ensure that safeguarding remains a priority within and across the Order's various facilities. However, the reviewers note the need for the Committee to draft formal Terms of Reference or Constitution.

The Committee have produced a Communications Plan, a training need analysis, and an annual Safeguarding Plan for 2023/2024. This plan details goals of restructuring of the electronic information and data system, the clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the various safeguarding personnel, ensuring that vetting and training are carried out in accordance with the Order's policies, and ensuring that there are clear reporting systems in place. The plan also addresses how complaints are managed, that the website is up to date, and that the National Board's Standards are met. Other goals set down are that annual audits are properly conducted and analysed, that safeguarding posters and statements have been updated, and that insurance is in place for all ministries. The plan clearly articulates who is responsible and that it is monitored and updated accordingly at safeguarding meetings.



Following discussions with the reviewers, it was confirmed that the Safeguarding Committee would now expand this plan into a three-year plan, to take account of the forthcoming revised Church Policy and Standards.

The DLP collates and analyses the information contained in the various annual self-audit returns and a report is then shared by her with the Child Safeguarding Committee. The committee reviews and offer recommendations for future safeguarding actions. A report is then compiled and shared with the Provincial, and action needs are communicate to the facilities where children's ministry takes place.

The reviewers commend the positive working relationship between the Safeguarding Coordinator and the DLP, which demonstrates their commitment to improving overall safeguarding practice in the Order and responding in a more proactive way to allegations of abuse.

The reviewers note significant improvements in structure, processes and responses since the previous review.

**This Standard is met**

### Conclusion

At the time of the previous Review, it was clear that much work was required to bring the De La Salle Order up to the standards expected in Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016. The reviewers acknowledge that significant improvements have been made, and they commend the introduction of a layperson as DLP, who has worked closely with the Provincial to introduce improved structures, systems and training.

The leadership of the Safeguarding Coordinator and the DLP was evident throughout the Review process.

The reviewers are satisfied that De La Salle Order now fully understand and follow most of the requirements set out in the Church's standards.

Arrangements are in place to promote the welfare and safety of children within the Order, as was evident during the visits to the Pastoral Centres. These centres provide high-quality activities, organised sessions to engage with the local faith community and the skilled staff group within safeguarding structures. The reviewers were assured by the commitment, enthusiasm, and caring approach by all the staff whilst engaging with young people in the various sessions.

The reviewers are assured by the caring approach and commitment of all involved in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, which was evident in the DLP, the vetting and training requirements and policy and procedures during the review process. Some further improvements are required to bring Standards 3 and 4 into line with expectations.

The Safeguarding Coordinator of the Order provided an open and transparent approach to the reviewers. Similarly, the DLP was enthusiastic, positive, and engaging, not only with the reviewers.