



# **Communications Strategy**

**January 2023- December 2024**



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the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2023

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# **Two-year Communications Strategy National Board for safeguarding Children**

## **January 2023 - December 2024**

### **Introduction**

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

- To develop and recommend in consultation with the Sponsoring Bodies, protocols for the safeguarding of children, and to recommend adherence by any Constituent or Constituents to those relevant protocols.
- To provide advice and training on policy and case management matters.
- To audit and review practice against the Church's safeguarding standards (2016).

The Board reports annually on its objectives.

### **Aims of Communications Strategy**

Through this strategy, the National Board sets out how it will communicate its activities to constituent members.

### **Objective**

The overriding objective for communications is to raise, build and sustain awareness of the importance of child safeguarding within the Catholic Church on the island of Ireland, and within the wider communities in which the Church ministers. This strategy identifies how the National Board will support that objective through communication of its work.

### **Subsidiary Objectives**

In strategically planning to fulfil its vision and goal, the National Office staff team through the National Board's CEO has undertaken to do the following:

- A. To meet with Directors monthly to provide information on the achievement of all objectives and seek direction and approval on strategic matters.
- B. To provide the members of the Board with a quarterly report in which details will be given about:

## **Two-year Communications Strategy National Board for safeguarding Children**

**January 2023 - December 2024**

- Advice and Support on all aspects of child safeguarding and case management provided to Church authorities and their nominated personnel;
  - Meetings of the National Case Management Committee;
  - Training and Support services delivered;
  - Guidance created;
  - Allegations received;
  - Data protection issues.
- C. To produce an annual report for members of the Board containing details by way of:
- Statistical and explanatory information on advice provided;
  - Statistical and explanatory information on allegations received;
  - Statistical and explanatory information on Reviews completed of Church bodies' compliance with the 2016 Standards.
- D. To effectively communicate with all stakeholders through:
- The continued development and maintenance of an accessible and informative website;
  - The production of regular e-Newsletters;
  - The production of policy papers, journal articles and GAP (Guidance, Advice and Practice) papers;
  - Attendance at and reporting to the quarterly meetings of the Irish Bishops' Conference;
  - Attendance at and reporting to meetings of AMRI (Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland), as required;
  - Attendance at and reporting to the AGM of Coimirce;
  - The organisation and running of a bi-annual National Child Safeguarding Conference
  - Attendance at and contribution to international child safeguarding conferences and seminars, as appropriate.

Overall, these initiatives and actions are being undertaken to secure the commitment of all stakeholders to adopting, supporting and improving child safeguarding; to participate in the development of effective child safeguarding through sharing and partnerships; and to influence the development of child safeguarding policy and practice within the Catholic Church and the communities in which it operates.

# **Two-year Communications Strategy National Board for safeguarding Children**

## **January 2023 - December 2024**

### **Specific Objectives 2023-2024**

#### **1. Supporting Best Practice.**

To do this the National Board has developed a range of mechanisms to ensure that it is informed by best practice and that it can share best practice amongst constituent members.

The National Board will update its constituents on developments in best child safeguarding practice through:

##### **a) Interagency Initiatives**

The National Board will engage with others working in the field of child safeguarding within the statutory and voluntary sector. Through sharing knowledge and practices, the National Board will update its guidance, which will be available to inform improvements in practice across the Church.

##### **b) Development of GAP Papers**

To highlight best practice based on current research the National Board will develop a range of Guidance Advice and Practice papers (GAP) to assist Church bodies in taking appropriate child safeguarding action.

##### **c) Ecclesiastical Provincial Area Meetings**

The National Board will facilitate regional meetings of relevant representatives of the Church to assist with communicating the Church's child safeguarding message. Facilitating meetings of relevant Church personnel on a regular basis throughout the four ecclesiastical provinces (Armagh, Dublin, Cashel & Emly and Tuam) will ensure that members of Church personnel understand and can contribute to the work of safeguarding on a national basis.

#### **2. Engaging with priority audiences.**

##### **a) Listening**

The National Board relies on its collaboration with others to inform the development of good practice in child safeguarding. The approach is to hold consultation meetings and other listening events with the following:

- Children and young people and their parents.
- Complainants of abuse
- Those accused of abuse.
- Lay Faithful.

## **Two-year Communications Strategy National Board for safeguarding Children**

**January 2023 - December 2024**

- Priests and Religious, including hierarchy.
- Seminarians.
- Members of other faiths.
- Church Safeguarding personnel - professionals and volunteers.
- The full child safeguarding constituency - academics, researchers and practitioners, including statutory child protection agencies, and children and families. NGOs; what the National Board does also matters.
- Policy makers at local, regional, national and international level.
- Media and General public.

Information obtained from these influential children and adults will be used to develop policy and guidance and best practice initiatives.

### **b) Communicating**

Child safeguarding means the creation and maintenance of safe environments for children and for the adults who work with them. In order to achieve this need to have clear messages about standards of practice and implementation of those standards. Through our communication approaches, we will advise all relevant personnel of best practice approaches to ensure that:

- The Catholic Church on the island of Ireland is a safe and worthwhile place in which children and young people can become engaged in meaningful and beneficial activities.
- The Catholic Church on the island of Ireland takes responsibility for its past behaviours in relation to victims of clerical child sexual abuse.
- Safeguarding is Christ-centred, Scripture-focused and theologically sound.
- Safeguarding is uncomplicated if you simply exercise common sense and 'follow the rules'.
- Safeguarding supports priests and Religious, and other adults who work with children and young people.
- Safeguarding has already achieved a lot - review the last 20 years.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. This includes the National Board, which responsibility is explicitly accepted and described in its Memorandum of Association.

## **Two-year Communications Strategy National Board for safeguarding Children**

### **January 2023 - December 2024**

#### **Strategic Goals for National Board Communications 2023 – 2024**

Existing communications activities will be sustained throughout the period of the strategy; and actions undertaken and completed in one year will have follow-through in subsequent years.

YEAR	GOAL	DETAILS
2023	To extend the consultation initiated in 2022 with children and young people; complainants and respondents; Church personnel and lay faithful; and external agencies in relation to developments in guidance, training and practice, as appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Consider views obtained to revise <i>Safeguarding Children Policy and standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland (2016)</i></li><li>○ Include research in the development of the new policy</li></ul>
	To continue to produce four e-Newsletters in the calendar year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Using standardised format, and usual dates for publication on the National Board website – March, June, October and December</li></ul>
	To produce Briefing Notes and GAP Papers in the calendar year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Briefing notes are generally produced to explain a major event or report that has a safeguarding children focus, so publication is on an as-and-when basis.</li><li>○ The subject matter for GAP Papers is in response to suggestions from constituents, or new insights into an aspect of safeguarding, e.g. a development in canon law, statutory regulation, or safeguarding practice</li></ul>
	To respond to media inquiries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ This is ongoing</li></ul>
	To communicate new developments through annual ecclesiastical provincial area meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ These are scheduled each year in Q4</li></ul>

**Two-year Communications Strategy National Board for safeguarding Children**  
**January 2023 - December 2024**

	To liaise with IEC and AMRI by: attending meetings; facilitating liaison committee and providing training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This is an established practice and is ongoing</li> </ul>
	To produce an annual report on all activities of the National Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The reporting year is April 1 to March 31, so the report is generally published in May / June each year.</li> </ul>
<b>2024</b>	To communicate how to implement a revised policy and guidance document to ensure best practice in child safeguarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consultation with child safeguarding personnel across the Catholic Church on the island of Ireland</li> <li>○ Delivering written updates</li> <li>○ Providing training events</li> <li>○ Offering support to specific Church bodies on implementation</li> </ul>
	To develop Briefing Notes on research and on developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Summarising academic papers, research reports, statutes and regulations, news items of interest etc.</li> <li>○ Digest in the form of a Briefing Note</li> </ul>
	To produce a summary of lessons learned from National Board Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Analyse completed published reviews and identify good practice and opportunities for improvement</li> </ul>
	To continue to produce four e-Newsletters in the calendar year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Using standardised format, and usual dates for publication on the National Board website – March, June, October and December</li> </ul>
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**Two-year Communications Strategy National Board for safeguarding Children**  
**January 2023 - December 2024**

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