

# **Training and Support Strategy**

**2023-2025**



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

## **Background**

The Memorandum and Articles of Association of Coimirce (2009), govern the running and the operation of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (the National Board). The functions of the National Board can be grouped into three categories:

- Advice and support on all aspects of child safeguarding and case management within the Catholic Church in Ireland.
- Development of policy, procedures and practice on all aspects of child safeguarding within the Catholic Church in Ireland.
- Monitor child safeguarding practice of constituent members within the Catholic Church in Ireland.

This strategy supports the second of these categories - *Development of policy, procedures and practice on all aspects of child safeguarding within the Catholic Church in Ireland.*

## **Vision**

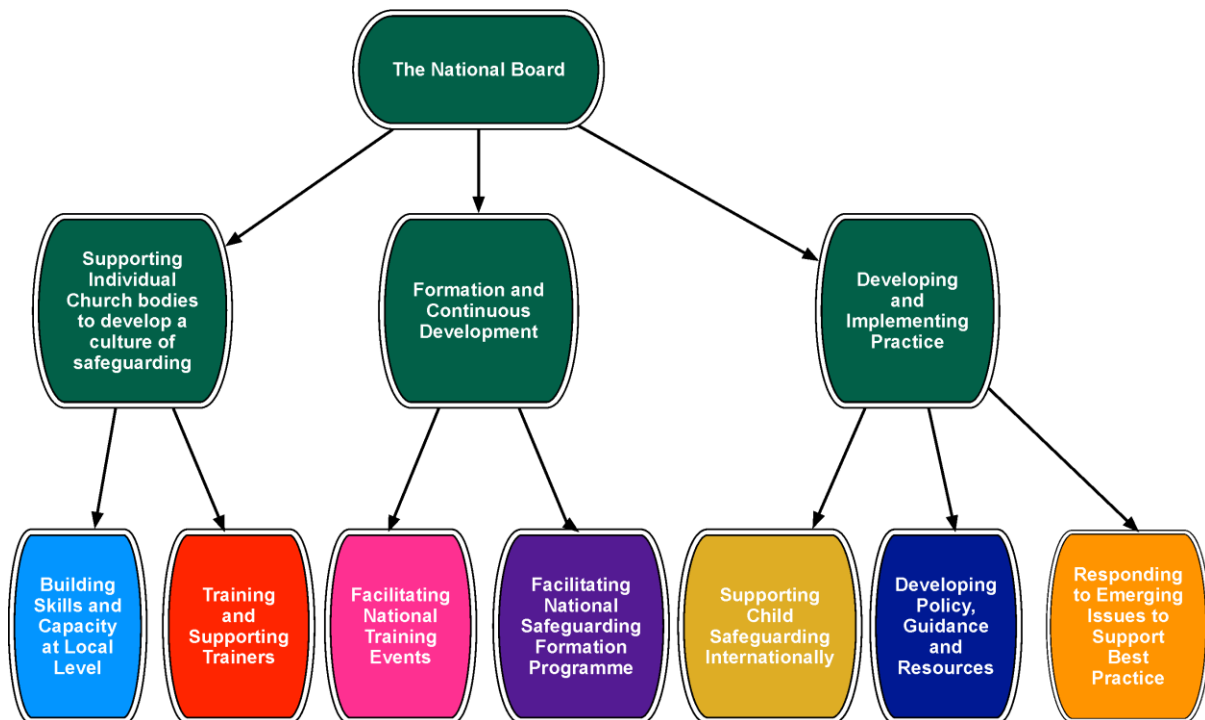
*Pope Francis said 'Our generation will show that it can rise to the promise found in each young person when we know how to give them space. This means that we have to create the material and spiritual conditions for their full development; to give them a solid basis on which to build their lives; to guarantee their safety and their education to be everything they can be; to pass on to them lasting values that make life worth living; to give them a transcendent horizon for their thirst for authentic happiness and their creativity for the good; to give them the legacy of a world worthy of human life; and to awaken in them their greatest potential as builders of their own destiny, sharing responsibility for the future of everyone. If we can do all this, we anticipate today the future that enters the world through the window of the young.'*

This strategy aims to empower and support Church authorities, Church bodies and Church personnel to create and maintain safe, material and spiritual environments for young people and the adults that work with them, through the provision of relevant, effective and high quality training and support.

## Objectives

To support the development of good child safeguarding practice, the National Board will support individual Church bodies to develop a culture of safeguarding, support in the process of formation and continuous professional development and develop and influence child safeguarding practice. These aims have been broken into a number of objectives grouped under the following headings:

- A. Building Competence and Skills at Local Level.
- B. Training and Supporting Trainers.
- C. Facilitating National Training Events.
- D. Facilitating National Formation Programme.
- E. Supporting Child Safeguarding Internationally.
- F. Developing Policy, Guidance and Resources.
- G. Responding to Emerging Issues to Support Best Practice.



## A. Building Skills and Competence at Local Level

One of the main roles of the National Board is to empower local Church personnel to implement the child safeguarding policy and standards. To assist with this, local training will be provided to Church personnel at a time and date that suits them and can be tailored to the individual needs of each Church body.

We deliver this tailored training in two ways:

### 1. Training for Child Safeguarding Committees and Advisory Panels

These training programmes are delivered over 3 hours by staff from the National Board and aim to empower the members of the committee and panel to understand their roles within the child safeguarding structure and function effectively as a committee or panel.

### 2. Specific Training

These training programmes are designed to suit the needs of each Church body and can be focused on any aspect of child safeguarding. The diversity of ministry within the Church means that training must be adapted and tailored to particular circumstances; it is the responsibility of the National Board's Director of Training and Support to recognise this diversity through assessing need, developing and delivering specific training to reflect need. In delivering training this way the unique needs of each Church body can be explored with local Church personnel to skill them to meet local demands in relation to child safeguarding practice.

## What we have achieved

Between 2020 and 2022 we have:

- Delivered 20 workshops to facilitate online engagement with children and young people during the Covid 19 Pandemic.
- Delivered 15 Safeguarding Committee Training Sessions.
- Delivered 1 advisory panel training session.
- Delivered 15 bespoke training events on a range of safeguarding issues as requested by the Church body, these included training for local parish based committees, training for support people and advisors in one Church body.

## What we will do

In the next three years we will:

- By 2024- revise the audit framework as part of the revision of the Safeguarding Policy to enable the gathering of information to assess the training needs of Church bodies and respond with appropriate and relevant training.
- Annually deliver at least 3 local training events as requested by each Church body to empower Committees and Advisory panel members to further develop in their role.
- Annually deliver at least 3 specific training events as requested by each Church body to help provide clarity and consistency on child safeguarding issues whilst recognising the unique ministry of each Church body.

## B: Training and Supporting Trainers

A key aspect of ensuring the creation and maintenance of safe environments for children and the adults that work with them, is to deliver the message of child safeguarding and the structures within the Church in an appropriate way, to relevant Church personnel across Ireland. To do this, a one Church approach has been developed through the creation of a national basic awareness training programme, which is facilitated locally by trainers who are registered by the National Board.

The existing training programme will be adapted in 2023 to reflect a revised policy for safeguarding children, which is currently under development. In designing the new programme, a working group of trainers will be established so that their local knowledge and skills will be employed to assist in tailoring this important awareness programme to the needs of those who support child safeguarding within Religious Congregations and parishes

### What we have achieved

Between 2020 and 2022 we have:

- Facilitated 2 Train the Trainers courses (12 days) to prepare new trainers.
- Revised the training manual to include a new refresher session.
- Delivered 2 trainers update day and 15 cluster group training sessions to support trainers to deliver the new training manual.
- Appointed new tutors to support trainers.
- Revised the accreditation process for trainers.

### What we will do

In the next three years we will:

- Maintain and support the current level of trainers by delivering at least one Train the Trainers programme to ensure that there are sufficient skilled and experienced trainers to facilitate the one Church training programme.
- Facilitate 3 Annual support sessions for trainers to revise the one Church training programme to take account of changes in legislation, policy and guidance and emerging issues.

## C: Facilitating National Training Events

Organising training at a National level offers opportunities for skills development and exchange of ideas and practice among specific disciplines within the Church. We envisage that National training events will not just assist embedding good practice, but will also assist in increasing knowledge

### **National Training Plan**

The National Board updates its website regularly with national training dates. Each training session within this plan has set learning objectives which are evaluated at the end of each session to ensure training is relevant and appropriate.

### **Targeted Training**

The National Board will continue to develop its administrative, communication and electronic systems, to ensure that training is targeted and communicated to relevant personnel, taking cognizance of data protection requirements. To assist, the National Board will initiate a project to update the database systems within the National Board to ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness.

### **What we have achieved**

Between 2020 and 2022 we have:

- Facilitated 29 National Training Dates in line with our annual training plan. The majority of these took place online due to Government Restrictions associated with the pandemic.

### **What we will do**

In the next three years we will:

- Develop 3 annual training plans with specific topics and dates to facilitate national training events in line with assessed need.
- Ensure that training dates are accessible and available on our website
- Develop a new database system for greater efficiency and effectiveness of communication by 2024.

## D: Facilitating National Safeguarding Formation Programme

The National Board has created a formation programme called *Head to Heart-Child Safeguarding in Formation*. The aim of the programme, as identified in the name is to enable a cultural shift by providing child safeguarding training which is truly reflective, rather than simply knowing about the policies and procedures, to understand how they can be integrated into the spiritual lives of priests.

Each seminarian completes ten modules across their period of formation and each is assessed using reflective readings and exercises before and after each module, to assist with integrating the theory and practice of safeguarding into ministry. The course is accredited through St Patrick's College Maynooth. In 2022 the programme has been evaluated and recommendations for change will be implemented in the delivery going forward.

In addition to delivering this programme to seminarians, the course has now been adapted for the permanent diaconate programme. In late 2022 the National Board began to deliver this course to those training to become permanent deacons. The National Board will continue to explore opportunities to expand this course in relation to ongoing formation and those in formation for religious life.

Alongside the formal formation programme, the National Board continues to provide training in formation through Loreto House Religious Formation Program and Pastoral Theology students in St Patrick's College Maynooth. In September 2022 the National Board expanded its formation programme to provide input into a new course on Youth Ministry for students at St Patrick's College Maynooth.

### What we have achieved

Between 2020 and 2022 we have:

- Facilitated 10 modules and 3 induction sessions for seminarians as part of the Head to Heart Programme.
- Completed an evaluation process.
- Facilitated 1 induction as part of the Head to Heart programme for the permanent diaconate.
- Facilitated 3 sessions with pastoral theology students at St Patrick's College Maynooth.
- Facilitated 1 session with youth ministry students at St. Patrick's College Maynooth.
- Facilitated 2 sessions as part of the religious formation programme in Loreto House.

### What we will do

In the next three years we will:

- Deliver 4 Head to Heart modules annually (3 for seminarians 1 for deacons).
- Implement the recommendations from the evaluation of the programme by 2024.
- Explore opportunities to expand the programme for religious formation and those in ongoing formation.
- Engage with other institutions and third level organisation providing formation training to lay people, to potentially expand the Head to Heart programme.
- Improve statistics and feedback to students through a new database project being implemented by 2024.
- Deliver at least 3 sessions annually for the formation programme for pastoral theology students, youth ministry students and Loreto House.

## E: Supporting Child Safeguarding Internationally

The remit of the National Board is specifically for ministries of Dioceses and Religious in Ireland and in Northern Ireland. Many Religious whose provincialate operates out of Ireland also have ministries abroad. To support such ministries, the National Board is available to provide safeguarding training to Irish Congregations working internationally. We support this objective in the following ways:

### 1. Supporting Irish missionary orders who minister overseas

The National Board provides training for Irish missionary orders who minister in missions abroad to assist them in embedding good child safeguarding from Ireland in the countries in which they minister. This training is accompanied by guidance and templates based on the safeguarding standards of Ireland.

### 2. Sharing resources and Experience with Church and state bodies on an international level

The National Board shares the guidance, and material it produces with other Church and state bodies, nationally and internationally. If requested by other Church bodies internationally the National Board will provide guidance and support as appropriate.

### 3. Facilitating training for visiting clerics, religious and members of Church personnel

The National Board facilitates formation training at Loreto House as part of their ongoing formation programme for students from across the world, in addition the National Board will, if requested by another Church body, endeavor to facilitate visits from other Church personnel to enable them to learn from the experience of child safeguarding in Ireland.

## What we have achieved

Between 2020 and 2022 we have:

- Delivered 7 safeguarding training sessions to international religious orders. To assist them in embedding best practice.
- Delivered a presentation to the Bishops' Conference in Chile.
- Delivered a presentation to the Institute for the Prevention of Sexual Violence in Germany.
- Attended the International Safeguarding Conference facilitated at the Gregorian University, Rome.
- Delivered a presentation as part of the licentiate in Child Protection in the Gregorian University Rome.

## What we will do

In the next three years we will:

- Respond to requests to share good practice by way of training for Church bodies based in Ireland but with ministry abroad.
- Continue to share best practice with other Church bodies engaged in safeguarding work internationally by attending relevant international conferences and presentations at international formation programmes.



## F: Developing Policy, Guidance and Resources

Child Safeguarding Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016, requires updating, in line with new developments in civil and canon law. Work on this was initiated in 2022 and will continue throughout 2023. Once a revised new policy is approved, a significant amount of work will be required to induct Church personnel into the new policy. The objective of developing policy, guidance and resources can only be meaningful if supported through:

### 1. Continuous development of supporting Guidance

The National Board will continue to develop guidance on the implementation of the revised safeguarding policy when required and ensure this guidance is accessible to all personnel who wish to use it.

### 2. Training Resources

The National Board will work with trainers to share best practice and resources and make these available to Church personnel who wish to use them.

## What we have achieved

Between 2020 and 2022 we have:

- Developed a series of 10 videos on the theology of safeguarding to explore the links between theology and safeguarding ministry.
- Updated the guidance 60 times.
- Updated our website and guidance sections following feedback from users to make it more user friendly.

## What we will do

In the next three years we will:

- Once the revision of the 2016 policy and standards has been approved by the sponsoring bodies, revise associated guidance and resource and ensure they are available across the Church.
- From 2024 develop a communications and support plan to assist Church personnel and induct them into the new safeguarding policy once it is approved by the sponsoring bodies.

## G: Responding to Emerging Issues to Support Best Practice

The National Board responds to requests from its sponsoring bodies relating to new and emerging areas of safeguarding. During 2020-2022 this included development of a template adult safeguarding policy and developing specific resources and training, to assist Church bodies in delivering ministry safely online during the Covid Pandemic.

The National Board stands ready to respond to further requests for support from our sponsoring bodies as required. To do this the National Board will aim to ensure that it is informed by research and evidence which will be used assist the Church in improving practice.

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

- 1. Interagency Initiatives**
- 2. Development of GAP Papers and Briefing Papers**
- 3. Ecclesiastical Provincial Area Meetings**

### What we have achieved

Between 2020 and 2022 we have:

- Facilitated 12 ecclesiastical provincial area meetings.
- Conducted listening meetings on the production of an adult safeguarding template over 7 dates with 164 people in attendance.
- Conducted listening meetings with safeguarding personnel and those directly involved in ministry with children, on the revision of the child safeguarding policy over 8 dates with 224 people in attendance.
- Held 2 listening meetings on both adult and child safeguarding with female religious on 2 dates with 40 people attending.
- Produced 7 GAP papers and 4 Briefing Papers.

### What we will do

In the next three years we will:

- Participate and report back on appropriate network and support groups to develop best practice.
- Develop GAP and briefing papers as necessary to ensure safeguarding children practice is informed by developments nationally and internationally.
- Facilitate 4 ecclesiastical provincial area meetings annually to ensure that each Church body feels connected and able to contribute to the work of the National Board.