



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

**Second Review of Child Safeguarding Practice**  
  
**in the**  
  
**Archdiocese of Armagh**  
  
**undertaken by**  
  
**The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the**  
  
**Catholic Church in Ireland (National Board)**

**Date of Review Report: March 2022**

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## Background

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church Ireland (National Board) was established in 2006 to provide advice, services and assistance in the ongoing development of safeguarding children within the Roman Catholic Church on the Island of Ireland; to monitor compliance with legislation, policy and best practice; and to report on these activities. This 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, the Archdiocese of Armagh invited the National Board to undertake a review of practice, which took place in March 2022.

The Archdiocese of Armagh was previously reviewed in August 2013 under the *Safeguarding Children - Standards and Guidance for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2008*. The report of the first Review including recommendations can be found on the Archdiocese of Armagh website [www.armagharchdiocese.org](http://www.armagharchdiocese.org) and on the National Board's website [www.safeguarding.ie/publications](http://www.safeguarding.ie/publications).

The purpose of this 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* and make statements based on evidence, which 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

The Church of Armagh was founded by St. Patrick in the middle of the fifth century. It soon became a noted ecclesiastical centre with many churches and a monastic school, which attracted students from all over Ireland and abroad.

The Diocese has had many saints through the centuries including the 'Apostle of Ireland', St. Patrick, St. Brigid, St. Malachy and St. Oliver Plunkett.

Cardinal Seán Brady following his retirement on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2014 was succeeded by Coadjutor Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin as Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland. Archbishop Eamon Martin was elected President of the Irish Episcopal Conference in October 2014. He also serves as Chairman of the Council for Communications of the Conference. In April 2019, in addition to his duties in Armagh, he was appointed by Pope Francis as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Dromore. Auxiliary Bishop Michael Router and three Vicar Generals assist the Archbishop in the governance of the Archdiocese of Armagh.

There are 108 Diocesan priests; 9 religious priests; 14 permanent Deacons; 39 male Religious; and 230 female Religious within the Archdiocese of Armagh, as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021.

Two religious orders within the archdiocese attend to the spiritual needs of three parishes (Redemptorists (2), Rosminians (1)).

The Archdiocese of Armagh geographical area spreads across two jurisdictions, with separate political, legal, administrative, policing, welfare and educational systems. There are sixty-one (61) parishes spanning the counties of Armagh, Louth, Tyrone and Derry. Twenty-four (24) of the parishes are located in the Republic of Ireland and thirty-seven (37) in Northern Ireland. The area is mainly rural, but with a number of urban centres including Armagh, Newry (part), Dundalk, Drogheda, Dungannon, Cookstown, Coalisland and Portadown. There are 242,860 Catholics across the archdiocese (2018).

The Church in the Archdiocese of Armagh, in union with the Catholic Church worldwide, seeks to achieve its objectives through activities including the following:

- Proclamation of the Gospel
- Worship of God
- Provision of Clergy and pastoral personnel
- Support for families
- Formation and development of parish communities
- Provision of educational, pastoral and youth ministries
- Provision and maintenance of places of worship
- Aid for impoverished and needy communities worldwide

The Archdiocese of Armagh is committed morally and legally to upholding the rights of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The purpose of the Archdiocesan Safeguarding Office is to ensure the Archdiocese of Armagh adheres to the requirements of *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016*, and to the Archdiocesan Policy on Adult Safeguarding, 2017. It also takes responsibility to ensure that the legal requirements to keep children and vulnerable persons safe - in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland – are complied with.

The Safeguarding Office of the archdiocese consists of one full time equivalent Director of Safeguarding, one part-time Safeguarding Training Co-ordinator, and one part-time Administrative Officer. Both the Director of Safeguarding and Safeguarding Training Co-ordinator are Designated Liaison Persons (DLPs) and are available to receive any complaints in respect of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. The contact details for the DLPs are publicised on the Safeguarding page of the archdiocesan website ([www.armaghdiocese.org/safeguarding](http://www.armaghdiocese.org/safeguarding)) and on posters, which are displayed in churches and all archdiocesan buildings.

## **Recommendations of August 2013 Review Report**

There were six recommendations made in the August 2013 Review Report, as follows:

### **Recommendation 1**

The Archdiocese should set up a formal review of safeguarding files, with a view to standardising the structure, addressing gaps in the record, cross-referencing safeguarding and canonical information and ensuring that all files have summaries and time lines. Implemented

### **Recommendation 2**

The Archdiocese should develop an information protocol with the religious orders to ensure that it is informed whenever an allegation is made or in the event of a priest or other religious being removed from ministry. Information exchange must be based on the principle of the paramourncy of the child. This initiative should be undertaken in consultation with the NBSCCCI. Implemented, within the requirements of GDPR.

### **Recommendation 3**

The Archdiocese should design a programme and invite children and young people to become more actively involved in safeguarding awareness, including the design of complaints, referral and communications material for children and young people. Implemented.

### **Recommendation 4**

The Safeguarding Committee should co-ordinate training activity and practice within a formal training needs analysis and Training Plan and ensure that an evaluation of the cascade approach takes place. Implemented.

### **Recommendation 5**

The Archdiocese should start a process of developing a written policy for victim outreach and support. This should be taken forward in consultation with the NBSCCCI to ensure that learning and good practice can be shared nationally. Implemented - The Archdiocese adheres to Standard 3 and associated Guidance from the National Board.

### **Recommendation 6**

The Cardinal should convene a safeguarding workshop in the Archdiocese and lead on a three-year strategic safeguarding plan. Implemented.

### **Process of Review**

The process of review was initiated through a letter of invitation from Archbishop Eamon Martin to the National Board and the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding and Data Processing Deed. The latter allowed the National Board reviewers to access all material held by the archdiocese relating to safeguarding and case management. There was one pre-fieldwork meeting with the Director of Safeguarding to agree parameters of the Review and gather background information. The Director of Safeguarding took responsibility for ensuring access to all case management records and relevant personnel in the archdiocese; in civil authority agencies; and with young people, complainants and respondents.

The on-site fieldwork took place on the 29th, 30th and 31st March 2022 based in Ara Coeli, Cathedral Road, Armagh, BT61 7QY, and with visits to the Archdiocesan Centre in Dundalk and parishes in Cullyhanna, Dundalk and Clonoe.

The following were met by the reviewers in person or via Zoom/telephone:

- Archbishop of Armagh and Auxiliary Bishop of Armagh
- Director of Safeguarding/DLP
- Safeguarding Training Co-ordinator/Deputy DLP
- Vetting Administrator
- Safeguarding Committee
- Advisory Panel
- Youth Ministry Coordinator Team
- Parish priests, local safeguarding representatives, a sacristan, a children's liturgy leader and administrator.
- Co-ordinator of Rainbows, Ireland (Dundalk)
- Pastoral Care Plan Co-ordinator
- Complainant
- Respondent (via completed questionnaire)
- Priest Advisor
- Two young people engaged in the Pope John Paul II Award Scheme

As part of the Review process, case management records were examined together with all relevant child safeguarding documentation in either electronic or hard copy format for the period being reviewed, August 2013 to March 2022. Discussions with the Director of Safeguarding and Safeguarding Training Co-ordinator allowed for clarity and understanding of case management practice and safeguarding arrangements for children in the archdiocese.

Child safeguarding practice is assessed against the revised Church's national standards – *Safeguarding Children - Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016*.

This Review took place at a time when Ireland had come out of an extended period of lockdown and partial lockdown because of Covid-19. During 2020 and 2021 ministry to children and young people was significantly reduced due to COVID-19 - Children's liturgy, altar servers' ministry, retreats and Youth Ministry programmes were suspended/restricted across the archdiocese in compliance with government guidelines. These factors are acknowledged by the reviewers in their assessment of compliance to the Standards.

At the time of the Review, ministries involving altar servers, children's liturgies and youth ministry were being considered or in the process of preparation for re-start, following closure of Church buildings during Covid-19.

The reviewers would like to express their gratitude to Archbishop Martin, his safeguarding staff and volunteers, priests, laypersons, and young people for their welcome and willingness to engage openly in the Review process.

## **STANDARDS**

The Standards are a level of practice to ensure good child safeguarding arrangements. Each standard is self-contained and supported by indicators. Review of compliance is undertaken and measured against the seven standards and indicators. The National Board has produced detailed Guidance, which is accessible on its website (<https://www.safeguarding.ie/guidance>).

The Archdiocese of Armagh has adopted in full the Guidance of the National Board, 2016.

This Review concentrates on practice through evaluating written records, interviews with Church personnel and young people; information from complainants and respondents.

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 children can trust, who respect, protect and enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development.*

The Archdiocese of Armagh has a Safeguarding Statement (updated 08/02/2022) on their website, in compliance with Children First, 2015.

The Archdiocese of Armagh Safeguarding Guidance for Parishes (updated 2019) is comprehensive and reflects the requirements of the *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016*.

The Archdiocese has comprehensive procedures for safe recruitment regarding both paid staff and volunteers – Safeguarding Guidance for Parishes, 2019, Section A. The recruitment and selection checklist was used for the recent recruitment of Youth Ministry co-ordinators.

Vetting is completed every three years, and this information is held on a database updated by the Archdiocesan Safeguarding Administrator from returns provided by the local safeguarding representatives. Vetting of all relevant personnel including volunteers is up to date. The central database was seen as part of the Review fieldwork and vetting documentation was viewed during parish site visits. All vetting documentation and personal information was securely stored.

The following are the vetting figures with An Garda Siochana for the years covered by the Review:	
Year	Figures
2016	175
2017	564
2018	587
2019	606
2020	360
2021	408

These numbers include Clergy, Parish Volunteers and those providing support to the Schools in the Southern part of the Archdiocese.

Northern Dioceses Vetting Office - database numbers vetted Numbers Vetted From 1st January 2016 - 31st March 2022	
Year	Figures
2016	174
2017	228
2018	116
2019	231
2020	35

2021	8
2022	5
Total	797

The fall-off in numbers vetted with Access NI is primarily a result of the lack of activity in Parishes due to the pandemic.

All visiting clergy, including those returning from overseas have been vetted, and they have completed safeguarding training. Visiting clergy to churches are required to produce a *celebret* in order to preside or concelebrate, or to administer any of the sacraments. This is overseen by the Parish Priest – Archdiocese of Armagh Safeguarding Guidance for Parishes, 2019, Section C.

The role of Eucharistic Minister to visit the housebound in Northern Ireland does not meet the definition of regulated activity that would require an enhanced check by Access N.I. whereas, Eucharistic Ministers visiting the housebound in the Republic of Ireland are required to be Garda vetted. The Director of Safeguarding advised the reviewers that development of a guidance/check list for Eucharistic Ministers visiting the housebound is a priority for the parishes in Northern Ireland and that this will be completed as soon as possible. The guidance will include the need for references; completion of safeguarding training; a suitable adult to supervise where children are present during a home visit; and a record completed of date, time and who was present in the home.

Archdiocesan Centres in Armagh and Dundalk and parish churches visited in Armagh, Dundalk, Cullyhanna, and Dungannon, had clearly displayed information about safeguarding (including child-friendly versions), with current DLP and statutory authority contact details included, at entrances and in the Sacristy. Information about *Towards Healing* and *Towards Peace* support services were also on display.

There is guidance in place for external organisations/groups use of archdiocesan premises, including church property for hire and private functions – Archdiocese of Armagh Safeguarding Guidance for Parishes, 2019, Sections O and P.

The reviewers had the opportunity to meet the Co-ordinator of the Rainbows Ireland group in Dundalk Archdiocesan Centre, which is a service to support children with bereavement, parental separation and relationship breakdown. Rainbows Ireland is funded by Tusla and is required to meet both archdiocesan and Tusla safeguarding requirements. Vetting and safeguarding training was update for all adults involved in the group. Parental consent forms are completed and a parent/carer accompanies the child to and from a group session. The Rainbows group was stood down during the Covid-19 pandemic, but preparation is now underway to restart the group. Reviewers had access to evidence of completed vetting, training, insurance, parental consent and sign-in register documentation, all of which was securely stored.

The personal, physical care of each child and young person with special needs involved in pilgrimages, youth camps and retreats is assessed on an individual basis. This includes obtaining parental consent, an identified suitable adult to undertake personal care and ensuring appropriate supervision ratios - Section M, Archdiocese of Armagh Safeguarding Guidance for Parishes, 2019. Pilgrimages - including to Lourdes - did not take place during 2020 and 2021.

Guidance on Whistleblowing is included in the Archdiocese of Armagh Safeguarding Guidance for Parishes Section R, 2019. There were no whistleblowing reports since the last National Board Review in 2013.

A Complaints Procedure for Safeguarding Concerns that are not Allegations of Abuse is included in the Archdiocese of Armagh Safeguarding Guidance for Parishes, Section S, including template S1: *Complaints form*. There were no current complaints during the time of the Review.

The use of CCTV and webcams is clearly displayed at church entrances. The archdiocese has up to date guidance in place for use of technology, internet, texting/email, photography and CCTV/webcams – Archdiocese of Armagh Safeguarding Guidance for Parishes, Sections U to Y, 2019.

As part of the Review, there was an opportunity for reviewers to meet with a range of Church representatives at Armagh and Dundalk Archdiocesan Centres and local parishes in Cullyhanna, Dundalk and Dungannon. These representatives included the Archbishop, Auxiliary bishop, a Canon, Parish Priests, Director of Safeguarding/DLP, Safeguarding Training Coordinator/Deputy DLP, Vetting Administrator, Youth Ministry Co-ordinators, Local Safeguarding Representatives, a Sacristan, a Children's Liturgy Leader, a Parish Secretary and Pastoral Care Co-ordinator. All were clear about their role and responsibilities within their remit to safeguard children and young people. Local representatives reported good working relationships with each other and were very positive about the support they received from the Director of Safeguarding, Safeguarding Training Co-ordinator and Vetting Administrator. They were able to articulate their knowledge of safe care and arrangements needed to achieve this, for example, training; vetting; parental consent; adult supervision ratios; hazard assessment; sign-in registers; codes of behaviour for adults and children; display of safeguarding information in Church premises; and how to respond to and report a concern. Evidence of these examples were seen as part of site visits completed by the reviewers.

The Armagh Diocesan Youth Commission (ADYC) was established in 2000 by the Archdiocese of Armagh (the Commission is appointed by the Archbishop) to share good practice, offer information and support, and to help provide effective activities, events, and programmes for young people at diocesan and parish level. An initial objective for ADYC is to inspire young people to grow in faith, confidence and self-esteem.

The position of Director of Youth Ministry has been replaced by two regional Youth Ministry Coordinators, one based in Dundalk and the other in Donaghmore. The Youth Ministry Coordinators work with the Diocesan Pastoral team and are responsible for implementing the Youth Ministry element in the Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan. They work with parishes and pastoral areas to meet the goals of the Archdiocese of Armagh Youth Commission's (ADYC) Strategic Plan 2019 – 2024, *Encourage, Enable and Empower*.

ADYC offers faith encounters for those postConfirmation to young adulthood. From April 2020 to March 2021, the school-based Pope John Paul II Award Scheme - (a faith achievement award for young people who take part in parish and social activities) - and Muiredach Cross Awards - (a faith development award for young people in the early years of secondary school) - were sustained. Some modifications to these schemes were required due to Covid-19, and 350 young people across a number of schools in the archdiocese were involved.

Safeguarding guidance is in place for the Pope John Paul II Award Scheme (to complement the Pope John Paul II Award Scheme Handbook) – Section L, Archdiocese of Armagh Safeguarding Guidance for Parishes, 2019.

Preparations are currently underway to restart (post Covid-19) the Youth Ministry parish-based initiative, and to build the community capacity to lead on this. This will include the Pope John Paul II Award Scheme being parish based rather than school based, but maintaining a strong connection with schools. It is proposed for 2023 to re-introduce retreats, pilgrimages and youth camps in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Two young people agreed to share their experience of involvement in Church activities. They had been involved in the Pope John Paul II Award Scheme, and although Covid-19 restricted parish and social activities, they were both positive about involvement in the scheme. They were aware of who they could talk to if they had any concerns about safeguarding, and confident that they would be listened and responded to if they needed to report any concerns. Both young people had previously been altar servers, this also had been a positive experience and they never had any worries about their safety. Both young people are now Eucharistic Ministers in their Parish church.

The assessment of the reviewers is that in addition to there being clear procedures, all who minister with children are aware of their roles and are committed to ensuring the safety of children

**This standard is 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.*

Archbishop Martin has appointed two Designated Liaison Persons (*Ref: Various Safeguarding Roles in the Archdiocese of Armagh - ([www.armaghdiocese.org/safeguarding](http://www.armaghdiocese.org/safeguarding))*) who can act in the event that one Designated Liaison Person is not able to deal with a concern/allegation, where there may be a conflict of interest, or where they are unavailable due to absence or incapacity. The Designated Liaison Persons are widely identified so that everyone knows who to go to if they have a safeguarding concern. This is achieved through display of DLP contact details on the archdiocesan website and at all Church premises.

Both the Director of Safeguarding/DLP and the Safeguarding Training Co-ordinator/ Deputy DLP reported that they meet with safeguarding leads from the Dioceses of Dromore, Down and Connor, Clogher, Derry, Raphoe, and Kilmore. These meetings provide opportunities to access peer support, share good practice, discuss challenges and learn from the experience of others. The dioceses have agreed to put shared panels in place for Support Persons and Advisors as part of the case management process. This will allow for joint training, development of knowledge and expertise in both support roles.

The reviewers examined all the notifications of abuse reported to the archdiocese since the last Review in August 2013.

**Table 1- Allegations reported to the Archdiocese of Armagh since 2013**

Cleric	Current Status	Number of Complainants	Gardai/PSNI notified	Tusla/SHSCT notified	National Board Notified	Appropriate and timely Canonical action taken
1.	Living	1	Yes – within 3 days	Yes – within 4 days	Yes – within 4 days	Not possible (see Standard 4 below)
2.	Living	1	Yes – within 3 days	Yes – within 4 days	Yes - within 4 days	Not possible (see Standard 4 below)
3.	Living	(1)*  (2)	Yes – within 8 days  Yes – next day	Yes – within 8 days  Yes – next day	Yes – 5 months later  Yes – next day	Yes

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		(3) <b>3</b>	Yes – same day	Yes – same day	Yes – same day	
<b>4.</b>	Deceased	<b>1</b>	Yes – within 2 days	Yes – within 3 days	Yes – within 3 days	N/A
*This was an allegation of physical abuse and had been discussed with the National Board some time before it was formally notified to it.						
<b>5.</b>	Living (Religious Order priest)	(1)   (2)  <b>2</b>	Yes – within 4 days	Yes – within 9 days	Yes – same day	Yes  (by the relevant Religious Order)
			Yes – within 4 days	Yes – within 4 days	Yes – within a week	
<b>6.</b>	Living (Religious Order priest)	<b>1</b>	Yes – same day	Yes – same day	N/A	Yes  (by the relevant Religious Order)
<b>7.</b>	Living	(1)  (2)  <b>2</b>	Yes – same day	Yes – same day	N/A	N/A  (Laicised before previous Review)
			Yes – within 9 days	Yes – within 8 days	N/A	
<b>8.</b>	Deceased (Layperson)	<b>1</b>	Yes – within 6 days	N/A	N/A	N/A

(Please cross-reference above with summary of cases under Standard 4.)

Case records were up to date, including minutes of meetings and current management plans.

Records were securely stored.

The DLP followed up any delays in criminal investigations and kept all parties up to date about the current situation.

The Canon Law 1717 preliminary investigation process was initiated, as appropriate, following completion of statutory civil investigations.

The Archbishop had oversight and knowledge of all cases. The Director of Safeguarding and the Archbishop both reported to reviewers that they met regularly to discuss cases and the actions required by the archdiocese. These discussions also included the exchange of information about support to complainants and respondents. This was also evidenced in the case files reviewed.

Civil statutory agencies in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland confirmed that timely notifications of complaints were made, together with relevant sharing of information, and that a good working relationship had been established with the Director of Safeguarding.

The Director of Safeguarding also received notifications of allegations of abuse that relate to other dioceses or to Religious Congregations/Orders for investigation. Records showed immediate follow up by the Director of Safeguarding with the relevant Church body - both by telephone and in writing – and the forwarding of documentation received by the archdiocese.

The Reviewers note that all allegations were reported to the statutory authorities in a timely fashion, and that appropriate initial risk assessments are conducted, to ensure the safety and well-being of children.

**This 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.*

There was evidence on all case records examined and from discussions with the archbishop and Director of Safeguarding that complainants had a timely response, were listened to, treated with respect, and offered support from a named Support Person, and from the Towards Healing Counselling Service.

One complainant was unable to be contacted following receipt of their allegations, in spite of efforts by the DLP. A formal complaint to civil statutory authorities was not made by this complainant.

Another complainant did not want ongoing contact with the archdiocese; but they availed of support from the Towards Healing Counselling Service, and they agreed for communication from the archdiocese to be made via Towards Healing.

Archbishop Martin proactively reached out to meet with complainants.

There was evidence on the case files that complainants were kept up to date about progress with their case.

One complainant gave feedback by telephone to a reviewer. The complainant reported that the Support Person was respectful, and that their support was timely and helpful. Ongoing support remains available to the complainant. A preliminary canonical investigation process commenced following completion of civil statutory investigations, and the complaint will be considered as part of that process.

The Director of Safeguarding advised that he is liaising with the other Northern dioceses about them together establishing a pool of Support Persons – male and female. This will develop the expertise of support persons; facilitate suitable matching of a support person with a complainant; facilitate shared specialised training and group mentoring/support. This approach is supported by the reviewers.

The overall assessment of the reviewers is that complainants are offered pastoral care and support when they approach the Archdiocese of Armagh with their complaint.

**This standard is met.**



## **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 (cleric or religious) is provided.*

In line with the requirements of Standard 4, cases are managed by the Director of Safeguarding. He is supported in his role by the Archdiocesan Advisory Panel. This panel of skilled personnel is appointed by the Archbishop in order to advise and assist him at all stages of the investigative process into alleged abuse. The Panel provides a consistent and accessible source of guidance for the Archbishop, using a process of risk assessment. He has specific responsibilities for decision-making in response to alleged or actual abuse involving a priest or religious. The Advisory Panel is comprised of volunteer members who bring to their role independent, professional expertise in the fields of law, medicine, probation, psychiatry, social work, policing, education, pastoral care and canon law.

The Advisory Panel provides advice on:

- The complaint itself;
- Ensuring that the safety and welfare of the child remains paramount;
- The appropriateness of providing help to a child making an allegation, and to the family of the child;
- The appropriateness of the respondent continuing in his or her present pastoral assignment, having regard to the paramount need to protect children;
- How the right of the respondent to a fair trial, on any criminal charge, may be preserved, and his or her good name and reputation may be appropriately safeguarded;
- Whether a specialist Risk Assessment of the respondent should be sought;
- The needs of a parish or other community in which a respondent has served;
- The needs of the wider community, including the appropriateness and timing of any public statement.

The Advisory Panel maintains a record of its recommendations and notes the matters upon which it has given advice and the documents it has considered.

The Archbishop attends a Panel meeting at least once per year. The Director of Safeguarding attends all Panel meetings and acts as Secretary.

*Ref: Various Safeguarding Roles in the Archdiocese of Armagh -*

([www.armaghdiocese.org/safeguarding](http://www.armaghdiocese.org/safeguarding)) and Archdiocese of Armagh Advisory Panel Constitution.

The Advisory Panel met with reviewers on the 30/03/2022 to share experience of their role and responsibilities as a Panel member. The chairperson stated that the range of Panel members' professional backgrounds, together with their knowledge and expertise in their field (psychiatry, psychology, civil and canon law, social work, public protection and primary health care), provided assists with the formulation of robust management plans in individual cases. He made it clear that decision-making in the Panel is underpinned by the principle of the paramountcy of the welfare of the child.

The Panel are currently scheduled to meet four times per year, but it has flexibility to meet at short notice when a new complaint is received or there is significant new information regarding an existing case that needs reviewed.

Panel members shared in the discussion that the group have respect for each other, which allows for challenge and sharing of robust views in a safe group environment. Time is given for reflection during review of each case, and meetings conclude with an agreed management plan in place.

The Panel valued the experience and contribution of the Director of Safeguarding in the case management process. They felt listened to by the Archbishop in relation to their views and conclusions about how a case should be managed.

The Director of Safeguarding added that he could approach any Panel member outside of meetings for their analysis/view in relation to a specialist report received regarding a respondent, e.g. psychiatric and psychological assessments.

During the meeting, the need for national consistency in how risk is assessed, monitored, and safely managed to inform formulation and ongoing review of management plans for respondents was raised. The Panel are willing to engage with the National Board in respect of this.

The Panel highlighted the importance of ongoing training in relation to their role; and they expressed a preference for any National Board training to take place in the evenings (Monday to Friday), where possible.

The Panel acknowledged the importance of the Support Person role to the complainant and the Advisor role to the respondent. Members emphasised the need for supervision and/or mentoring for people in both these roles, and suggested specific training for this challenging and complex work. They suggested that training should also be provided for both roles in relation to recording of work completed, taking into account the potential for disclosure of records in any legal proceedings.

Although there have been some changes to Panel membership, the majority have been members for over five years. The benefits of a consistent Panel include the building of professional relationships; the development of knowledge and expertise; and learning from what works well and what does not work well. However, the reviewers consider that there should be appropriate limits in respect of the tenure for which a person should stay on a Panel, having regard to proper governance requirements, and that the length of service of a member should be stipulated in the Panel's Constitution.

It is important to maintain the balance of experience and the range of expertise following the resignation of panel members, and the appointment of new members. Therefore, the reviewers suggest that Archbishop Martin, the Director of Safeguarding, and the Chairperson of the Advisory Panel should review membership annually, to enable succession planning and forward planning to fill any potential vacancies that may arise in the following twelve months.

### **Summary of Cases**

Two priests were subject to allegations by the same complainant, who made no formal complaint to the civil statutory authorities. The complaint was notified to the Archdiocese by the HIAI Redress Board, and not directly from the complainant. Since there was no Police investigation or Social Services assessment, and the complainant declined to engage with the Archdiocese, no canonical process was possible.

A third priest is out of ministry and is subject to a Management Plan, monitored and reviewed by the DLP. Following completion of the civil statutory investigations, a preliminary canonical investigation process was initiated.

Another priest belongs to a Religious Order, and he was subject to allegations by two (2) complainants. The case management file is held by the Religious Order, and their DLP manages the case. There is communication between the archdiocese's Director of Safeguarding and the DLP of the Religious Order, and updates on progress with the Management Plan are provided. A Garda investigation is ongoing, during which the priest is out of ministry.

A fifth priest is a member of another Religious Order. A Management Plan, which is the responsibility of his Religious Order to support and supervise, is in place. The Armagh Director of Safeguarding receives regular updates from the Religious Order about progress of the case and the operation of the Management Plan.

A sixth priest was deceased when the allegation was received about him.

Finally, another man was already laicised when two new complainants came forward. As with other complainants subject of this Review the Archbishop did offer to meet with these two people, and support services were offered to them, including Towards Healing.

All complainants who wished to be contacted by the Diocese were responded to in a respectful and timely manner and were offered and facilitated to avail of appropriate support.

All notifications in respect of respondents were notified as required to the appropriate statutory authorities.

The Archdiocese of Armagh Advisory Panel was notified about all relevant complaints. Following discussion of the facts of each case, a management plan was agreed where appropriate, which has then been kept under review, and amended to reflect the current circumstances of the respondent. Each case has an appointed case manager, who is the DLP.

The review of case files provided evidence that respondents are offered support from a Priest Advisor, and their welfare is considered as part of case management.

Two priest respondents completed the National Board questionnaires, sent to them through Archbishop Martin as part of the Review to ascertain their views about the management of their cases and the care and support they received.

The respondents had had contact from the Archbishop, including visits. Appropriate information was shared with the respondents about the allegations made, and their initial responses to the allegations were listened to. The respondents also reported that they were asked about their well-being and offered ongoing support from a Priest Advisor.

The respondents were advised about their right to instruct a solicitor.

One respondent advised he was supported by his solicitor to make a written statement to the police in response to the allegations made against him. He advised that the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer was helpful and courteous at all times during the investigation process.

The other respondent said that he was entirely innocent, and that the process of vindication takes too long. He confirmed that he has a canon lawyer to support him during the current preliminary canonical investigation. He felt that despite assurances from the archdiocese and National Board, there is no presumption of innocence, and that a priest has to work hard to prove his innocence.

The Director of Safeguarding reported that he is liaising with the other Northern dioceses about establishing a pool of Priest Advisors. This will allow for the development of experience and expertise; shared specialised training; group mentoring/support; and a choice for the respondent of an advisor who is not involved in the management of his case. This approach is supported by the reviewers.

The reviewers suggested to the Director of Safeguarding that it would be useful to complete a case review form on each active case on an annual basis. This exercise would include recording new concerns or complaints; noting the liaison between the complainant and their support person; and the liaison between the advisor and the respondent; a legal update; and an update of the risk management plan. The Director of Safeguarding supported this and agreed to action.

The reviewers are satisfied that each case is carefully considered, appropriate assessments of risk have been undertaken and that due process has been followed.

**This standard is met.**

## 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.*

There is a dedicated, part-time, accredited Safeguarding Training Co-ordinator, who ensures the delivery of mandatory safeguarding training for clergy, co-workers and lay people across the archdiocese. The Safeguarding Training Co-ordinator is supported by parish information facilitators to deliver safeguarding refresher sessions. The information facilitators are appointed following an expression of interest and a recruitment interview process. They receive training from the Safeguarding Training Co-ordinator, together with ongoing supervision/support.

There is a centralised training record maintained of clergy, co-workers and lay people who have completed one-day safeguarding training and refresher training.

Child Safeguarding Mandatory Training Figures	
Year	Figures
2016 - May 2022	1,372

The Safeguarding Committee receives quarterly updates from the Safeguarding Training Co-ordinator regarding mandatory safeguarding training, and they submit an annual training return to the National Board including evaluation and feedback.

Parish Priests and local Safeguarding Representatives identify training needs at parish level during completion of self-audits, and in discussions with the Training Coordinator. This information is collated, and it informs the Training Plan for the following year. Current training needs include specialist training for priests; working with children with special needs; and role specific training for Support Persons and to Priest Advisors. It is planned to develop the knowledge and skills of all safeguarding personnel (within their remit) to respond to primary and secondary trauma of children and adults from the impact of self-harm or suicide, addiction, mental illness, and domestic and sexual violence and abuse.

During parish meetings with clergy, local Safeguarding Representatives, Youth Ministry co-ordinators, a children's liturgy leader, and a Sacristan, the reviewers received positive feedback about the support received from the safeguarding Trainer and on the benefits of face-to-face training, which they said provided better opportunities to learn from each other. A return to face-to-face training from March 2022 is welcomed by parish representatives.

Local representatives highlighted the importance of not being complacent about safeguarding arrangements currently in place for children and young people; and they emphasised the need for continuous learning, improvement and ongoing development in safeguarding practice.

One hundred and fourteen clergy (114) in active ministry during the past year have completed mandatory training; and one priest who did not take up this training opportunity is being followed up. Safeguarding training for clergy from overseas and visiting priests was up to date.

Due to Covid-19, there has been delay in delivering refresher training to local Safeguarding Representatives. Twenty-seven (27) out of one hundred and eight (108) local Safeguarding Representatives completed National Board training via Zoom.

The Training Co-ordinator has updated the safeguarding training register, as some local Safeguarding Representatives had left their role, and others had been appointed in their place during the past two years. A plan is in place for local Safeguarding Representatives to complete training prior to the end of June 2022. There will be a mix of in-person and Zoom training offered, which will take account of individuals' circumstances.

The archdiocese (pre-pandemic) had held a bi-annual Safeguarding Conference for all priests and local Safeguarding Representatives. The last one held provided the opportunity for participants to hear from a family about their experience of sexual abuse. The conference is another opportunity for learning together, sharing good practice and building relationships within parishes and across the archdiocese.

In conjunction with Women's Aid and Onus,<sup>1</sup> the Catholic and Church of Ireland Cathedral parishes in Armagh came together for training in the Safe Church Initiative. Clergy, as well as volunteer staff completed the training. The Churches pledged to play their part in raising awareness about domestic violence and abuse, and in supporting anyone affected to access information confidentially.

The reviewers commend the training being delivered.

**This standard is met**

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<sup>1</sup> Established in 2007 as a Social Enterprise, Onus offers specialist training and consultancy services on domestic violence and abuse

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

*Church bodies appropriately communicate the Church's child safeguarding message.*

The National Board Review was advertised on the archdiocesan website, and the Director of Safeguarding issued notification of the Review to all parishes. This invited anyone with views on child safeguarding practice that they wished to share to come forward.

The Archdiocese of Armagh has an easy to use website with a dedicated section for Safeguarding, which includes tabs on Contact us; How to Make a Complaint; Support; Policy & Procedures, Resources (leaflets, posters etc.); Training; Vetting Forms; Strategic Plan; and News.

The Archdiocese of Armagh Safeguarding Guidance for Parishes, updated October 2019 is available to all and can be accessed on the archdiocesan website. The Guidance was also issued to all parishes in the archdiocese.

All archdiocesan churches have dedicated safeguarding information points, e.g. at entrances and in sacristies. Children's Safeguarding posters were directly observed during the review in Armagh and Dundalk Diocesan Centres, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh and parish churches in Cullyhanna, Dundalk and Dungannon.

A dedicated Archdiocese of Armagh Safeguarding Newsletter was last issued in 2018, and it is planned to produce another newsletter in 2022, and annually thereafter, to promote safeguarding arrangements and new developments. Parish weekly bulletins have a safeguarding section, which contains contact details of the Designated Liaison Person/Deputy and of statutory civil authorities.

The restart of children's activities is seen as an opportunity by the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee and local Safeguarding Representatives to provide assurance about arrangements in place to safeguard children when communicating about and promoting the restart of activities with families. Resources are already available to facilitate this, e.g. Information and Guidance for Children, Young People and Parents; Carers Leaflet, Keeping Our Children Safe, a Short Guide for Parents/Carers; and Codes of Behaviour for Adults and Children.

There is safeguarding information available for people whose first language is not English, for example, Irish, Polish, Tetum<sup>2</sup> and Lithuanian. The need for information to be translated into Ukrainian is currently being considered by the Safeguarding Committee.

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<sup>2</sup> Tetum is an Austronesian language spoken on the island of Timor.



Archbishop Martin, together with the Director of Safeguarding engaged in a series of meetings across the Island of Ireland in early 2019 with victims and survivors of abuse. Feedback from these engagements informed the Archbishop's contribution at a meeting in Rome of the Presidents of the various Episcopal Conferences and major Religious convened by Pope Francis to discuss child safeguarding in the Universal Church. One of the positive initiatives from this engagement was the

'Candle of Atonement' Sunday for victims and survivors of abuse, which is held annually on the fifth Sunday of Lent in many Irish dioceses.

**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 Most Reverend Eamon Martin, DD, Archbishop of Armagh sent a letter of invitation in December 2021 to the National Board to review the archdiocese's compliance with *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016*. A previous invitation in November 2019 could not be met due to Covid-19.

Church related activities involving children and young people ceased during 2020 and 2021, due to pandemic restrictions and government directives. These activities included children's liturgy, altar servers, Youth Ministry, retreats, youth camps and pilgrimages. Preparations to restart these activities are underway and safeguarding arrangements are an integral part of this.

The Archdiocese of Armagh have a Safeguarding Statement dated (February 2022) as required by Children First, 2015. This is displayed on the archdiocesan website.

A mandated persons list has been produced, and this is available on the archdiocesan website, Safeguarding section. Currently there are one hundred and forty five (145) mandated persons in the archdiocese.

The Archbishop of Armagh established an Archdiocesan Safeguarding Committee on 20 October 2004. Its role is primarily focused on creating, maintaining and monitoring a safe environment for all aspects of Church life and activity, and for advising on the human resources required for implementing best safeguarding practice. Its role is supportive and developmental. It is not related in any way to the management of individual cases of suspected or alleged abuse. The Safeguarding Committee has responsibility for

- The provision of training;
- The safe recruitment of volunteers and staff within the archdiocese;
- Regular review of the diocesan Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding as and when required;
- Communication and promotion of all aspects and developments in relation to Safeguarding in the archdiocese.
- Producing a three-year plan for how to implement and maintain Standards 1, 5, 6 and 7 across the archdiocese. This includes the development of procedures and practice around creating and maintaining safe environments;
- Liaising with the Parish Safeguarding Representatives to identify areas where guidance and support on policy or practice is needed;
- Ensuring that records for activities related to child safeguarding are produced and stored appropriately.

The Director of Safeguarding and the archdiocesan Training Co-ordinator attend Committee meetings. The Committee comprises of volunteer members who bring to their role experience and expertise from education, parish ministry and social work.

(Ref: *Various Safeguarding Roles in the Archdiocese of Armagh* - [www.armaghdiocese.org/safeguarding](http://www.armaghdiocese.org/safeguarding))

The archdiocese's Safeguarding Committee have a written Constitution and is appropriately constituted: meetings are scheduled for the year ahead, there is a core agenda which includes updates from the Director of Safeguarding and Safeguarding Training Co-ordinator, progress with actions of the three-year Children's Safeguarding Strategy, and parish updates. Minutes of meetings are completed and circulated. During 2020/21, meetings were held on a video conference platform due to Covid-19 – copies of Committee minutes were provided to the reviewers.

Committee members' safeguarding training is up to date.

An up to date three-year Children's Safeguarding Strategic Plan - including training and communicating the safeguarding message - has been in place since the last National Board Review in 2013, for the periods 2014 to 2016, 2017 to 2020 and 2020 to 2023 – copies of the plans were provided to the reviewers.

The Safeguarding Committee produce an Annual Safeguarding Report, which is informed by parish self-audits completed by the local Parish Safeguarding Representatives. Progress updates are provided quarterly to the Safeguarding Committee until actions are achieved – copies of parish self-audits and annual reports were provided to the reviewers.

Due to Covid-19, Parish safeguarding self-audits and annual safeguarding reports were not required for the period 2020/21, with the agreement of the National Board.

The parish safeguarding self-audits from all parishes for the period April 2021 to March 2022 have been submitted to the Director of Safeguarding for analysis, and to inform the April 2022 to March 2023 Annual Safeguarding Report.

The need to put in place a Communication Plan for 2022/23 is an immediate priority, especially with the restart of children's activities following relaxation of governments' pandemic restrictions.

A review of the archdiocesan website was due in 2021, but this was postponed due to Covid-19. It will be prioritised for completion in the next year, as an objective of the Communication Plan.

The Safeguarding Committee welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the update of the National Board's *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016*. They are also committed to engage in the consultation process underway to review the national safeguarding structures.

Due to Covid-19, parish visits by the Director of Safeguarding and Safeguarding Committee members were limited, but there is a commitment to restart these. The Director of Safeguarding is preparing a schedule of engagement with local Safeguarding Representatives involving three parishes per engagement session.

The Director of Safeguarding plans to base himself at the Dundalk Diocesan Office on scheduled days each month to enhance support and accessibility in the southern area of the archdiocese.

The reviewers had an opportunity to attend the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee meeting held on the 29/03/2022. The agenda for this meeting included a Director of Safeguarding update report, a training update report, the re-vetting of volunteers and support to parishes, and approval of a Digital Media Policy developed by the Youth ministry Co-ordinators (based on the Safeguarding Board N.I. Policy). The chairperson raised the need to start the process for consultation regarding the next three-year Safeguarding Children's Strategic Plan (2023 to 2026). This will be facilitated by the proposed parish visits over the next year. The reviewers support this inclusive and consultative approach to inform the Strategy for 2023 to 2026.

The Safeguarding Committee is committed to contribute actively to the development of the new Archdiocesan Pastoral Care Plan. The Director of Safeguarding is directly involved in this and has established links with the Pastoral Care Coordinator, and together with the Committee, they will ensure that safeguarding is an integral part of the new Pastoral Care Plan.

Reviewers received feedback from committee members about their role and experience of being a member. There was consensus from the group that all views are valued and there is no weighting of any views above others. They feel able to contribute to meetings and that their voice is heard. There is a culture of learning and improvement, and a priority given to training.

The attendance of the Director of Safeguarding and Safeguarding Training Co-ordinator at Archdiocesan Safeguarding Committee meetings provides an opportunity for regular updates about progress with agreed actions linked to the three-year Children's Safeguarding Strategic Plan. Their support is valued by committee members.

Members reported that there is a good connection with parishes and consider this to be essential, as safeguarding children happens in the parishes. They advised that there is a team approach to safeguarding alongside representatives in the parishes. It was highlighted that safeguarding children is embedded into day-to-day activity and not seen as an 'add on' to the ministry and pastoral care of families connected to the Church.

Local Safeguarding Representatives and personnel involved in Church-related children's activities corroborated at meetings with reviewers that there are good working relationships, effective communication and support between themselves and the Archdiocesan Safeguarding Office – Director of Safeguarding/DLP, Safeguarding Training Co-ordinator/Deputy DLP and Safeguarding/Vetting Administrator.

The reviewers were assured that the welfare of children is the focus of the Safeguarding Committee's business.

**This standard is met.**

## Conclusion

The reviewers were assured that the Archdiocese of Armagh is compliant with the *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016*.

There are robust procedures and safeguarding arrangements in place to promote the safety of children in the archdiocese. This is based on evidence from documentation examined, engagement and feedback from Safeguarding Office personnel; Parish Priests; local Safeguarding Representatives; co-workers; volunteers; young people; the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee; the Diocesan Advisory Panel; a complainant; and a respondent.

Everyone with a safeguarding role who the reviewers spoke with had a clear understanding of their remit and responsibilities to safeguard children.

It was clear to reviewers during the completion of the Review that there is a culture of reflection, learning and ongoing improvement to safeguard children across the Archdiocese. This is driven by the leadership of the Archbishop and his senior safeguarding team.

The reviewers commend everyone for their commitment, genuine care and working together approach at all levels within the Archdiocese of Armagh safeguarding structure to keep children safe.