



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

**Second Review of Child Safeguarding Practice**

**in the Diocese of Kerry**

**undertaken by**

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

**Catholic Church in Ireland (National Board)**

**Date of Review Report: February 2022**

## CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction: .....	3
Standard 1: Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments: .....	8
Standard 2: Procedures for Responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations: .....	14
Standard 3: Care and Support for the Complainant: .....	21
Standard 4: Care and Management of the Respondent: .....	23
Standard 5: Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe: .....	25
Standard 6: Communicating the Church’s Safeguarding Message: .....	29
Standard 7: Quality Assuring Compliance with the Standards: .....	31
Summary: .....	33

## Introduction

In 2016, Church authorities adopted *Safeguarding Children - Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*. In order to assess compliance against the Church's standards, Bishop Ray Browne of the Diocese of Kerry invited the National Board to undertake a full Review of practice, initially in 2020. Due to the continued global pandemic it was initially agreed that a limited online review of the safeguarding standards would take place in May 2021. Due to a change in government guidance and the impact of the vaccination programme, a full review was, in fact, completed by early August 2021. The full review still involved online interviews by the reviewers, but it did enable an on-site review of the relevant case management files, and further face to face discussions with key safeguarding personnel.

The Diocese of Kerry was previously reviewed in June 2013 under the 2008 standards, *Safeguarding Children - Standards and Guidance for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2008*. The purpose of this second round of Reviews is to assess the 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 to make statements based on evidence, which provide:

- Public confidence that the Church body is safe for children.
- Confirmation 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 happening.
- Independent verification of Parish Self-Audit and subsequent analysis.
- Opportunities for learning.

The terms of reference for this review in terms of Case Management cover the period from the date of the last review in June 2013 to early August 2021; while Child Safeguarding practice - relating to all the 2016 standards - is assessed from the date of the introduction of these revised standards in January 2017 to early August 2021. The review was carried out with due regard to compliance with *Children First* on the basis that the Diocese of Kerry is deemed to be a relevant body under the Children First Act 2015.

The requirements for this review to initially commence on a remote basis were:

- There was online ministry with children in place; and the Bishop and his Child Safeguarding personnel had undertaken the National Board's Training for those ministering with children online;
- Key safeguarding personnel were available to be met remotely; and
- Appropriate safeguarding policy and procedures were accessible for remote access and review.
- Advanced public notice was given by the diocese that a safeguarding review by the National Board is to take place.

Meetings were held online during the review on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of May; on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of July; and on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 2021 with the following individuals or groups:

- The Church authority, Bishop Ray Browne of the Diocese of Kerry;
- The Diocesan Secretary, with a separate meeting in his role as coordinator of the Lourdes pilgrimage;
- The Director of Safeguarding, with additional meetings re: her additional roles as DLP, as Diocesan trainer, as lead for Garda vetting in the diocese and as lead for the Annual Parish Self Audit process;
- The two deputy Designated Liaison Persons (DLPs);
- Parish Safeguarding Representatives;
- Pastoral development workers with roles as Youth and Young Adult Ministry coordinators;
- Two (2) online parish youth groups, including separate meetings with their leaders and joint meetings with the young people attending;
- The Director of Safeguarding and the Chair of the Safeguarding Committee in respect of communicating the safeguarding message;
- The Diocesan Post Primary Advisor for Religious Education in respect of his additional role as coordinator of the Taizé pilgrimage;
- The Director of the Diocesan Pastoral Centre and of Pastoral Planning;
- A virtual meeting was attended by a reviewer at Fossa Church with the Director of Safeguarding and one of the local safeguarding representatives on site;
- The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee;
- A group of parish priests
- Representatives from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency;
- A representative from An Garda Síochana;
- A support priest for a respondent.

As noted above, due to the pandemic and associated restrictions, this review was primarily carried out remotely. Guidance received by the diocese from the Munster Diocesan Data Protection Officer in the form of a Data Protection Impact Assessment required that any personal data supplied remotely to the reviewers was redacted. This included for example redacting names from the diocesan safeguarding children training records, and the Garda Vetting Register. This redaction however did not interfere with the reviewers' ability to assess practice in relation to relevant Indicators. When one of the reviewers was able to visit the Diocesan Office, they viewed the list of the files held on the secure server, e.g. Training and Vetting files in particular. All but two meetings with the reviewers took place via the online platform, Zoom; the Director of Safeguarding was the initial host at all these video meetings. The only meetings that took place outside of Zoom was the online visit to the church in Fossa, and a face-to-face meeting with the Director of Safeguarding and one of the Deputy DLP's in respect of the case files.

The diocese ensured that any adults or young people involved in the review meetings had provided informed consent prior to engaging in any online discussion with the reviewers.

The Bishop of Kerry was given initial feedback on compliance with the safeguarding standards at a meeting with the reviewers on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Further feedback was given in respect of Standards 2, 3 and 4 on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Areas for improvement in respect of the standards were noted, and these will be detailed in the main body of this report.

### The Diocese of Kerry

The Diocese of Kerry is in the ecclesiastical province of Cashel and Emily. The diocese covers approximately 5,300 square kilometres comprising of all of county Kerry, except Kilmurrily, and part of County Cork.

The organisational structure of the diocese is divided between Diocesan and Pastoral Administration under the overall responsibility of Bishop Browne. Youth Ministry is located within both structures.

Diocesan administration is coordinated by the Bishop's Secretary. Diocesan Child Safeguarding structures are in place, and Child Safeguarding personnel have oversight of the safeguarding responsibilities of parishes. The Diocesan Administrator is responsible for the annual coordination of the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes. One parish has employed a pastoral care worker to develop and run its Youth Ministry.

Pastoral development is resourced by the Director of Pastoral Planning and his team; and the Diocesan Advisers for Primary and Post Primary education also are located within this section. The Pastoral Development Team is involved in Youth Ministry, through providing training for diocesan youth leaders; providing support and advice to school-based programmes, and to those run directly by parishes; and limited direct delivery of programmes to young people outside the parish structure. The Diocesan Adviser for Post Primary Education has responsibility for the annual youth pilgrimages to Taizé.

This organisational structure does not optimise effective child safeguarding, and this issue will be addressed later in this report.

The diocese has approximately 136,000 Catholics spread over 53 parishes. The diocese has 55 priests in parishes. Included in this total are seven priests from outside the diocese who minister in Kerry, and two Kerry diocesan priests who minister outside the diocese. There are 30 retired Kerry diocesan priests, 27 of who live within the diocese, and three who reside outside of the diocese. The diocese also has 24 retired priests from outside the diocese residing within its area. The diocese has six deacons and two seminarians.

There are seven congregations of Religious Sisters based within the diocese; and five male Religious Orders, of which three have priests (6) as well as brothers. None of these ordained Religious have diocesan roles, they do not administer parishes or provide cover for diocesan priests during holiday periods. They only celebrate sacraments within their own houses. On occasion, they may attend a Church function where they would be required to produce a valid *celebret* which is authorised by their own Religious superiors. The priests receive faculties from the bishop to hear confessions; these are requested by the Religious superior who provides a letter to the bishop stating that the named priest is of good standing.

The diocese was previously reviewed in June 2013.

Bishop Ray Browne was ordained bishop on July 21<sup>st</sup> 2013.

There were eight (8) Recommendations made in the last National Board Review Report in 2013 (in accordance with the 2008 Standards):

Recommendation 1: That the Bishop of Kerry ensures that the information that is required under the Criteria 1.3, 1.6 and 1.8 is prepared and placed on the diocesan website and that the revised diocesan child safeguarding guidance to be published later in 2013 also contains this information.

Recommendation 2: That Bishop William Murphy and his Designated Person together review all of the recommendations made in the independent report of April 2009 and ensure that each and every one of these has been acted on in full.

Recommendation 3: That the incoming Bishop of Kerry assists the Designated Person in the construction of comprehensive case files in accordance with the National Board's Recording Guidance.

Recommendation 4: That the incoming bishop must establish and maintain a register of visiting and retired priests and ensure that all vetting checks and references have been sought prior to allowing them to participate or conduct any public ministry.

Recommendation 5: That the Bishop of Kerry makes arrangements for the careful inventory and transfer of all Garda vetting files and other records from the home of the Diocesan Coordinator of Vetting to a secure location in the diocesan offices.

Recommendation 6: That the incoming Bishop of Kerry ensures that the revised diocesan guidance to be published later this year contain a dedicated chapter on Training that will address the matters listed in the four criteria under Standard 4.

Recommendation 7: That the incoming Bishop of Kerry ensures that a training needs analysis is conducted in relation to the Designated Person, Safeguarding Coordinator, Coordinator of Vetting, Safeguarding Committee members and other key personnel, and implements the recommendations of the report that is produced on that analysis.

Recommendation 8: That the incoming Bishop of Kerry convene a Review Day for key safeguarding personnel in the diocese to identify developments that are required to further enhance the overall safeguarding endeavour and to produce a set of clear and achievable goals for the next three years, to be written up into a Diocese of Kerry Child Safeguarding Plan.

The reviewers have received confirmation from Kerry Diocese that all of the recommendations were implemented prior to the commencement of this second review. These recommendations in effect set out a programme of work for Bishop Browne to tackle as the 'incoming bishop'; and the improvements that have resulted from their implementation are very welcome and are commended.

Since the first Review of the Diocese of Kerry, the 2016 Policy and Standards have been introduced, and it is against these that the diocese's compliance is now being evaluated.

**Reviewers’ findings in relation to compliance with the seven Child Safeguarding Standards.**

Suggestions for continued quality improvement are marked in the text with an asterisk \*

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**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.*

Safe recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers was demonstrated to the satisfaction of the reviewers. There is guidance in respect of safe recruitment in the Diocesan Safeguarding Handbook in hard copy, and on the diocesan website, under the Safeguarding drop-down menu. Interviews with Parish Safeguarding Representatives, Parish Priests, Youth Ministry group leaders and pilgrimage coordinators confirmed that the guidance on the safe recruitment of volunteers is being implemented.

Vetting

A redacted extract from the Diocesan Garda Vetting register was seen.

The Director of Safeguarding carries out a primary role in the Garda vetting process, and the need to provide some administrative support to her with this task was discussed by the reviewers with the bishop.

The Director of Safeguarding’s vetting responsibilities take up the equivalent of one day per week, and as this is essentially an administrative task, consideration should be given to reallocating it within the diocesan administration structure\*.

The Diocesan Office deals with all diocesan staff and volunteer vetting applications, while the Diocesan Pastoral Centre processes the schools’ vetting requests.

The following are the most recent figures of persons whose vetting applications were processed by the office:

| Year   | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|--------|------|------|------|------|
| Number | 419  | 333  | 271  | 183  |

Storage of records

The Director of Safeguarding (DSG) and the Diocesan Secretary confirmed to the reviewers that all case files and other records - including vetting records - are held securely in the Diocesan Office, including an inventory of all files, and this was subsequently confirmed by a reviewer during the fieldwork visit to the office. A sample of vetting files were viewed on the diocese’s secure server; and a redacted extract from the vetting register was also provided to reviewers for their examination.



Further developments in relation to the secure storage of records by the diocese, in conjunction with the designated Data Protection Officer, are underway and were shared with the reviewers. Specifically, all personal data currently recorded in soft copy on e-registers - linked particularly with vetting - is in the process of being transferred to a private secure server located in the Diocesan Office. This data can only be accessed by the bishop, the Bishop's Secretary and the Director of Safeguarding. The secure location was visited by a reviewer when on site.

Personal data related to safeguarding children that is still held by parishes is also being reviewed by the Data Protection Officer to clarify what should be retained, and where.

A Retention of Records Policy has also been signed off by the Safeguarding Committee, which was examined by reviewers and deemed fit for purpose.

This thorough approach to secure file data storage is commended.

#### Vetting renewals

The reviewers noted that the time frame for diocesan Garda vetting renewals is currently five years. As the Government is currently considering introducing mandatory re-vetting every three years, the Diocese of Kerry will be moving towards this best practice standard as soon as possible.

#### Visiting clergy

The register for visiting clergy is currently held in the Diocesan Office, as is the register for diocesan clergy ministering outside of the diocese.

There are two diocesan clergy ministering outside of the diocese, neither of whom has ministry with children.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Handbook has excellent guidance in relation to Diocese of Kerry incardinated priests, both those in ministry and those who are retired, as well as for visiting priests and priests from elsewhere who retire into the diocese.

#### Local Risk assessments

Detailed risk assessments were seen by the reviewers in respect of the 2019 Taizé and Lourdes pilgrimages, in terms of *Children First* compliance. These were completed after the pilgrimages at the request of the Safeguarding Committee, as a learning exercise. The Safeguarding Committee reviewed the risk assessments and gave feedback to the coordinator of each pilgrimage, along with the requirement that they be completed in advance for all future pilgrimages.

No risk assessments for either pilgrimage were completed for 2017 and 2018.

It is now the established practice in the Diocese of Kerry that the Safeguarding Committee must sign off all Youth Ministry requests to take young people away – whether overnight or not - and review the risk assessments for the activity that have been drawn up. This is required for all diocesan groups that propose to initiate such activities with children.

The information pack provided to parents before a Taizé pilgrimage has recently been updated, but consideration could be given to consulting young people in respect of the framing of the content relevant to them.

A Code of Behaviour for adults is contained in the Safeguarding Handbook and in the documentation for the Taizé and Lourdes Pilgrimages. In addition, the guidance in the Safeguarding Handbook on trips away with young people is being reviewed to ensure that the adult code of behaviour it contains is fit for purpose and would safely cover extended overnight stays such as pilgrimages. This is commended.

The Director of Safeguarding is currently involved with her counterparts in the other Metropolitan Area dioceses in drafting a joint pilgrimage policy. The reviewers advise that as well as including risk assessment prior to taking young people away - especially abroad - such a policy should contain an evaluation process to be conducted after each pilgrimage; and that this evaluation would be reviewed by their relevant diocesan Safeguarding Committee\*.

The reviewers found it encouraging that one of the online Youth Ministry groups they met confirmed that they had developed their own Code of Behaviour, and that they were responsible, with the leaders' support, for the running of their online meetings. This demonstrated a very positive model of young people's participation in action, which can easily be replicated, and the leaders are to be commended for facilitating this process.

In respect of all Youth Ministry activities, a child-centred approach would actively seek young people's views in the drafting of a code of behaviour for them\*.

A code of behaviour for children is contained in the Diocesan Safeguarding Handbook. The reviewers suggest redrafting this to take into account the ages of children attending an activity, and any specific additional needs they may have\*.

Safe care for children was directly observed by the reviewers in how the online Youth Ministry meetings were planned and run. The young people confirmed to the reviewers that they were very clear on what to do and who they would talk to if they felt unsafe. Guidance on safe care is also included in the Diocesan Safeguarding Handbook and in the documentation for both pilgrimages; and this was confirmed in our meeting with the pilgrimage coordinators.

Safe care for altar servers was observed during the virtual visit to Fossa Church, in respect of the changing area and the use of the signing-in register. In the meeting with Parish Safeguarding Representatives, it was confirmed that one parish church had in fact moved the servers' robing area to the main body of the church to ensure full visibility during this process.

The reviewers are concerned that some Youth Ministry activity coordinated or supported by the Pastoral Development Team may not currently be included in the parish self-audit exercise. Clarity needs to be established as to how all Youth Ministry activity is to be tracked within the diocese from a safeguarding perspective\*. The reviewers suggest that the audit process would be more inclusive if all parish-based Youth Ministry is notified to the relevant parish priest, including the activities that are undertaken by schools within parishes with the support of the Diocesan Pastoral Development Team\*. This activity would then be included in the annual parish self-audit. The diocesan body with current overall responsibility for quality assuring safeguarding practice in youth activities at parish and diocesan level is the Safeguarding Committee; but at the time of this Review, there was no representation of Youth Ministry on the Safeguarding Committee, and this should be rectified\*.

The Safeguarding Parish Representatives (PSRs) met by the reviewers had been in their positions for between six and ten years. They were very clear about the roles they play within their parishes in helping to maintain safe environments for children engaged with the Church. They clearly saw themselves as part of a parish-based safeguarding team led by the parish priest.

There were no external groups using Church property in the parish visited. In another parish, the PSR reported that there is a centralised procedure in place, administered by the parish secretary. All groups must first complete a standard form, including confirmation of their insurance indemnity and safeguarding policy. The details are checked for compliance by the parish secretary, who is also responsible for bookings of Church property. This information is also included in the annual parish self-audit return. It was noted that less than 25% of the parishes actually have external groups using Church property.

The diocesan Pastoral Centre should follow the same guidance in respect of any use by groups catering for children in their building\*.

The reviewers noted that there is an anti-bullying policy in the Safeguarding Handbook and in the Code of Behaviour for both online Youth Ministry groups.

Children First legislation has introduced the need for localised risk assessment in respect of activities involving children. This has always been a part of the Church's standards (1.8). In preparation for the restarting of direct ministry with children, the records of the meetings of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee have for some time reflected the priority they have placed on ensuring that, as far as practicable, such localised risk assessments must and will take place.

Hazard/risk assessment guidance is made available in the Safeguarding Handbook. One of the online Youth Ministry groups produced evidence of completing a hazard/risk assessment with young people, and the young people discussed with the reviewers the future plans for completing similar assessments in respect of other activities they were planning.

The reviewers noted that the diocese will be requiring that a hazard/risk assessment is completed by every ministry involving children in each location before it occurs. Liaison will be required with any schools-based Youth Ministry programmes to ensure that hazard/risk assessments take place and that a system for quality assuring these is confirmed\*.

In addition, the diocese also requires that hazard/risk assessments will be completed by external groups involving children that will be using Church property.

A whistle-blowing policy is contained within the Safeguarding Handbook. The Safeguarding Handbook also contains a Complaints Policy. The reviewers were advised that neither policy had been used to date.

Significant guidance on the use social media and of digital technology is contained in hard copy within the Safeguarding Handbook, and on the diocesan website. Thirteen of the Safeguarding Children personnel within the diocese, including the bishop, attended National Board *Training for those Ministering with Children Online*, in April 2021. Those attending also included Pastoral Development Workers from the Pastoral Development Team and the current online Youth Ministry group leaders.

As noted earlier the Safeguarding Handbook does not currently contain guidance on diocesan clerics who minister outside of the diocese. However, the current 3-year Safeguarding Plan indicates that this shortfall is to be addressed in 2021.

Summary: The person with the delegated responsibility for Child Safeguarding in the diocese, the Director of Safeguarding, and the group responsible for overseeing the implementation of Standards 1, 5, 6 and 7, the Safeguarding Committee, are not integrated into the diocese in a way that allows them to influence the involvement of children and young people in diocesan activities that are not parish based. The reviewers' assessment is that this leads to problems for the diocese in being able to comply with all necessary Indicators, and this matter has been discussed with Bishop Browne in the feedback session at the conclusion of the fieldwork for this Review. Suggestions have been made of various ways in which these structural difficulties can be addressed.

The positive impact of the Director of Safeguarding and the Safeguarding Committee is obvious however in the ongoing and welcome development of safeguarding in parishes.

The reviewers have adduced evidence that three (3) indicators<sup>1</sup> are not being fully met, despite the best endeavours of the Director of Safeguarding, the Safeguarding Committee and safeguarding personnel in the parishes that constitute the Diocese of Kerry.

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Indicator 1.5: The Church body ensures that the safe use of Church property by external groups complies with effective child safeguarding practice.

Indicator 1.8: The Church body implements effective practice for Church personnel on assessment of hazards when working with children.

Indicator 1.10: The Church authority has responsibility for ensuring that all clerics/religious, who are members of the Church body and are ministering with children in an external organisation/Church body, agree to follow effective safeguarding practice.

Standard 1 is not fully met.

**Recommendation:** That Bishop Browne convene a meeting at which the current diocesan structures can be reviewed in order to identify where changes are required that would ensure that all diocesan ministries involving children and young people come within the spheres of influence of the Director of Safeguarding and of the Safeguarding Committee.

## **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 Diocese of Kerry has adopted in full *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*, and the Guidance and procedures associated with it. In addition, they have produced a Safeguarding Handbook which references key information in respect of the policies and procedures required to safeguard and protect children. This handbook is available in soft copy on the diocesan website under the *Safeguarding* link, and in hard copy within parishes. In terms of Children First compliance, the Child Safeguarding Statement and associated risk assessment is also on the diocesan website. A list of mandated persons, as required by Children First, is in place and is held by the Director of Safeguarding.

In advance of the on-site review of case files, the diocese forwarded detailed statistical information about child protection concerns and allegations received by the Diocese of Kerry since the last review, about priests of the diocese, as well as priests of other dioceses resident within the diocese. The reviewers examined all of these case files, as they reflected the case management workload of the Director of Safeguarding and other safeguarding personnel in the diocese. There was no redaction made to any of these files as they were examined in situ.

A total of 31 reports of concerns or allegations were received concerning 15 priests of the diocese since the 2013 Review. This figure is somewhat inflated by the fact that there were 16 allegations received about one deceased priest. Of the 15 diocesan priests at the time of the Review, seven (7) were living, seven (7) were deceased, and one (1) had left the priesthood.

It is important to note that an allegation or a report of a concern is not the same as a confirmed case.

Five (5) further allegations received related to four (4) priests from other dioceses who had retired into the administrative area of Kerry Diocese; and a further allegation was received about a former priest (1) of the diocese who had since moved elsewhere.

There were no allegations reported to the bishop since the last Review in respect of the Religious Orders operating within the diocese; and no abuse allegations were received by the diocese relating to a lay member of Church personnel, or directly from a child.

Table 1 below summarises the allegations processed by the diocese since the last Review.

**Table 1: Incidence of safeguarding suspicions, concerns, knowledge and allegations received by the Diocese of Kerry against priests of the diocese, and against priests who are resident in the diocese, between July 2013 and early August 2021**

| Item | Category                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Number              |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1    | Total number of diocesan priests (living and deceased) about whom concerns have been reported, or against whom allegations have been made, since the 2013 up to the date of the 2021 Review                                                                                                                                         | 15                  |
| 2    | Number of concerns and allegations received since the last Review in 2013 against Kerry Diocesan priests                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 31 <sup>2</sup>     |
| 3    | Total number of diocesan priests about whom concerns and allegations have been received since the 2013 Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numbers against living priests of the diocese</li> <li>• Numbers against deceased priests of the diocese</li> <li>• Numbers against former priests of the diocese</li> </ul> | 7<br>7<br>1         |
| 4    | Status of living Kerry diocesan priests about whom concerns and allegations have been received since the 2013 Review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In ministry</li> <li>• Out of ministry</li> </ul>                                                                                                                    | 6<br>1 <sup>3</sup> |
| 5    | Number of Kerry diocesan priests who have been convicted of having committed an offence or offences against a child or young person since the last Review in 2013.                                                                                                                                                                  | 0                   |
| 6    | Number of Kerry diocesan priests who have been found guilty in a canonical process                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 0                   |
| 7    | Total number of concerns and allegations received by the diocese since 2013 about any priest                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 37 <sup>4</sup>     |

All reports were known to the Gardaí and to Tusla, either because they were notified to them by the diocese, or because they had themselves notified the diocese.

Of the seven concerns and allegations received about living priests of the diocese, in only one was it established following a canonical inquiry that there was a case to answer.

<sup>2</sup> One allegation from prior to 2013 was resubmitted, as the name of the respondent provided initially was incorrect

<sup>3</sup> One man died the year after the complaint was made known to the diocese, so he is recorded in 4 above, but not in 5 .

<sup>4</sup> One was subsequently categorised as suspected physical abuse

**Table 2: Suspicions, concerns, knowledge and allegations received since the previous Review.**

| 2 (a) Child Safeguarding concerns relating to living diocesan priests received by Kerry Diocese since 2013 Review |                                                 |                       |                            |                                    |                         |                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Cleric                                                                                                            | Current Status                                  | Number of allegations | Gardaí notified            | Tusla notified                     | National Board notified | Appropriate timely canonical action taken      |
| 1                                                                                                                 | Retired – priest in good standing               | 1                     | Yes                        | Yes                                | Yes                     | Yes                                            |
| 2                                                                                                                 | Retired – priest in good standing               | 1                     | Notified Gardaí themselves | Gardaí notified Tusla              | Yes                     | Yes                                            |
| 3                                                                                                                 | Retired - no public ministry                    | 1                     | Notified Gardaí themselves | Gardaí notified Tusla              | Yes                     | Yes                                            |
| 4                                                                                                                 | In ministry – priest in good standing           | 1                     | Tusla notified Gardaí      | Tusla notified the diocese         | Not required            | Yes                                            |
| 5                                                                                                                 | In ministry – priest in good standing           | 1                     | Gardaí notified diocese    | Garda decision not to notify Tusla | Not required            | Not required                                   |
| 6                                                                                                                 | In ministry – priest in good standing           | 1                     | Gardaí notified diocese    | Garda decision not to notify Tusla | Not required            | Not required                                   |
| 7                                                                                                                 | Laicised (not due to child protection concerns) | 1                     | Yes                        | Yes                                | Yes                     | Not possible as it was a third party complaint |



| 2 (b) Child safeguarding concerns relating to deceased diocesan priests received by Kerry Diocese since 2013 Review |                |                       |                                       |                           |                               |                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Cleric                                                                                                              | Current Status | Number of allegations | Gardaí notified                       | Tusla notified            | National Board notified       | Appropriate timely canonical action taken |
| 8                                                                                                                   | Deceased       | 1                     | Tusla's decision not to notify Gardaí | Diocese informed by Tusla | Insufficient detail available | Not necessary                             |
| 9                                                                                                                   | Deceased       | 1                     | Yes                                   | Not necessary             | Yes                           | Not necessary                             |
| 10                                                                                                                  | Deceased       | 3                     | Yes                                   | Yes                       | Yes                           | Not necessary                             |
| 11                                                                                                                  | Deceased       | 16                    | Yes                                   | Yes                       | Yes                           | Not necessary                             |
| 12                                                                                                                  | Deceased       | 1                     | Yes                                   | Yes                       | Yes                           | Not necessary                             |
| 13                                                                                                                  | Deceased       | 1                     | Yes                                   | Yes                       | Yes                           | Not necessary                             |
| 14                                                                                                                  | Deceased       | 1                     | Yes                                   | Yes                       | Yes                           | Not necessary                             |

| 2 (c) Child safeguarding concerns relating to non-diocesan priests received by Kerry Diocese since 2013 Review |                                                                 |                       |                          |                            |                               |                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Cleric                                                                                                         | Current Status                                                  | Number of allegations | Gardaí notified          | Tusla notified             | National Board notified       | Appropriate timely canonical action taken |
| 15                                                                                                             | Retired to Kerry from diocese abroad – no public ministry       | 1                     | Yes                      | Yes                        | Yes                           | Yes - by home diocese                     |
| 16                                                                                                             | Living in diocese but from another diocese – no public ministry | 1                     | Yes                      | Yes – by home diocese      | Yes – by home diocese         | Yes - by home diocese                     |
| 17                                                                                                             | Retired to Kerry from diocese abroad – no public ministry       | 1                     | Yes                      | Yes - immediately          | Yes - immediately             | Yes - by home diocese                     |
| 18                                                                                                             | Retired to Kerry from diocese abroad – now deceased             | 2                     | Tusla informed Gardaí    | Complaints came to Tusla   | Insufficient detail available | Yes - by home diocese                     |
| 19                                                                                                             | Retired priest in good standing – now living elsewhere          | 1                     | Gardaí informed by Tusla | Tusla notified the diocese | Not required                  | Yes                                       |

**Brief description of Case Management**

This Review has focused on any activity that has taken place in cases since the previous Review in 2013.

There are seven (7) priests of the diocese against whom allegations have been made and who are still alive. In five of these situations, the reports to the statutory authorities were made by a third party and not by someone who themselves alleged that they had been abused. The statutory authorities conducted inquiries in all seven cases, and did not proceed with any action in six (6) of these. The diocese did not receive full information about, or any contact from the alleged victims to enable them to conduct inquiries.

Following statutory and canon law processes it was established that one priest had a case to answer, and he is out of ministry under a safety plan.

There are a further seven (7) deceased priests who were incardinated into the Diocese of Kerry about whom allegations have been received since the 2013 Review. In the case of one of these men, there had been concerns raised about him when he was still alive, which had led to his dismissal from the priesthood. In the other six cases, the allegations were received following their deaths. In one case, the report was made by a third party, but the alleged victim made no complaint themselves. Appropriate notifications to the two statutory agencies were made in every case. Contact was made with every complainant where their identities were available; and the case files record the substantial support provided to those who chose to engage with the diocese.

Finally, Kerry Diocese has been dealing with the cases of four (4) priests who retired into its administrative area about whom there had initially been difficulties in receiving full information from their home diocese. However, Bishop Browne of Kerry persisted in demanding all of the necessary information and cooperation that is required to ensure that a previously unknown cleric cannot put children at risk by ministering in Kerry Diocese.

The reviewers discussed this issue with the bishop and relevant safeguarding personnel, and it was decided that Kerry Diocese Safeguarding Office will conduct an annual review of the status of these four respondents with their home diocesan bishop and safeguarding service.

One case of a priest now deceased, retiring to Kerry from abroad, was very poorly handled by the home diocese and by Kerry Diocese in the past. The Bishops of Kerry who were in office between 1972 and 1995 mismanaged this matter, and due to their failure to act decisively, children were placed at avoidable risk. In October 1996 the then Bishop of Kerry issued a canonical precept refusing this priest the faculties to minister as a priest within the Kerry Diocese.

In the cases of deceased respondents, there were some delays in reporting to the statutory agencies, while the diocese awaited further information. The reviewers established that no risk was caused by any delays in reporting.

Examination of the case management files established that all relevant notifications to the statutory child protection agencies in respect of the above allegations were made. This evidence was supported by the interviews with the representatives of the Tusla Retrospective Abuse team and the representative from the Kerry Division Protective Services Unit of An Garda Síochána. The meetings with both statutory agencies focus on case management. Case files also contained records of notifications to the National Board, when and where relevant. Discussions with representatives of Tusla and An Garda Síochána indicate that the diocese has good working relationships with both statutory agencies in which information is shared on a *need to know* basis, with the primary objective of safeguarding children.

Kerry Diocese is a member of the National Case Management Committee (NCCMC) of the National Board, from which it seeks advice, as necessary.

All case management files are well structured, are comprehensive in their content, and are readable; and all relevant civil law and canon law documentation is contained within the files. The files contain information on the priest respondent, as well as recording activity related to supporting complainants, including referral on to appropriate services, and the management of any financial support. The files were seen to be stored in a secure location, with a limited number of key diocesan personnel having access to them.

The reviewers established that the current bishop has taken proportionate actions in respect of the ministry of diocesan priest respondents. The particular challenges raised by the situations of respondents who reside in the diocese, but who are the responsibility of other dioceses, is dealt with under Standard 4 below.

#### Assessment of compliance with Standard 2

It is the opinion of the reviewers that sufficient proof was established - both on files and gathered in meetings with diocesan personnel - to confirm that child safeguarding policy within the Diocese of Kerry is in place and is being implemented. Regarding the implementation of procedures, the core elements of the recognition of abuse concerns and the appropriate reporting to the civil authorities, are both functioning well.

The reviewers are also satisfied that when necessary, canon law processes were initiated and completed.

Bishop Browne is very clear about potential risks to children, and he demonstrates a good level of compassion and support to complainants. He is prepared to take decisive action in relation to respondents, while affording them a fair process. The current DLP and her predecessor in that role are very competent and responsive in their case management practice. The diocese has made very good attempts to engage complainants, and to conduct inquiries. In the opinion of the reviewers, Case Management in Kerry Diocese is in safe hands.

Standard 2 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.*

Bishop Browne informed the reviewers that if a complainant comes forward, he offers to meet with them. He displays a strong pastoral response to complainants and is clearly very sensitive to how difficult it is for them to come forward. His meetings with complainants are recorded on at least five of the case management files reviewed. There is evidence on file of the bishop giving complainants personal apologies, and of the diocese providing them with appropriate pastoral and practical supports.

Prior to the Review, a notice was placed on the diocesan website and in Parish Newsletters advising people of the planned Review, and giving an open invitation to people to come forward if they wished to meet with the reviewers. No one came forward.

At times it can be problematic for the diocese to make and maintain connection with complainants, due to their location. The reviewers however have seen records that attest to a persistence in sustaining contact, even when months or even years pass before a complainant re-engages with the diocese.

In some case files the reviewers saw evidence that complainants wanted to tell the story of their abuse to the diocese, but did not want to participate in any follow up by the statutory authorities. This was particularly the case when it was known that the respondent was deceased. In relation to one deceased respondent, multiple complainants came forward following media publicity about him. While the majority of these individuals wished for the diocese to hear their story of child abuse, they did not subsequently engage with the statutory authorities. Two of them indicated that they might contact the diocese in the future to access other supports. The diocese respected the complainants' wishes, while at the same time making it clear that the safeguarding service remained available if they wished to contact them again. In all relevant cases, the diocese reported to the statutory agencies as required.

In terms of practical support to complainants, the case management files record a number of complainants' requests for referrals to support services, all of which were met. The primary counselling support offered to complainants is a referral to Towards Healing. For a number of complainants who live outside of the jurisdiction, Towards Healing have facilitated linking them with counselling services in their countries of residence, when necessary.

It was clarified during the review that in handling cases it would not be appropriate that a DLP would provide a service to both the complainant and the respondent in the same case. To assist the DLP group, training should be accessed in supporting complainants, and in managing respondents. This would then provide the diocese with the option of allocating a female or male support person to a complainant, depending on their preference. It is suggested therefore that the three members of the DLP group in Kerry Diocese receive role-specific training in respect of supporting complainants and in managing respondents\*.

Assessment of compliance with Standard 3

The reviewers had no direct contact with any complainants. However, both the case management file records and the meetings with diocesan personnel highlighted that the diocese has in place a strong pastoral response to complainants, led by Bishop Browne. The reviewers saw that a range of supports was provided to complainants in response to their individual presenting needs. It is also evident that the diocese recognises that care and support to some complainants can be required on a long-term basis.

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.*

At the time of this Review, the Diocese of Kerry has one diocesan priest who is receiving care and management.

As mentioned, the diocese is a member of the National Case Management Committee of the National Board. The reviewers discussed with the bishop and the Director of Safeguarding the merits of also formalising the internal review of all Kerry cases by establishing a case review group with practitioners who are already relevantly engaged in safeguarding within the diocese. Regular meetings of such a group could review the status of all active cases to ensure that appropriate actions had been taken, and to monitor/track progress.

As noted previously, there are three (3) priests residing within the diocese who also require care and management, but they are the responsibility of other dioceses. Two of these three (external) priests has support from Kerry Diocese. The third man has been suspended from ministry by his own bishop, and he remains the full responsibility of his home diocese.

The reviewers recommend that all formal contacts by any diocesan safeguarding personnel with priests out of ministry, whether diocesan or from elsewhere, are to be recorded on the relevant case files\*.

The reviewers met with an experienced priest advisor who works with a respondent with whom he maintains very regular contact. He impressed with how he described his role, and with his clarity about the responsibilities that go with the role. This priest would benefit from role-specific training\*.

In the cases where a diocesan priest was appointed as a support person, they were chosen by the respondent concerned.

As he needs to be accountable for all support offered on behalf of the diocese, Bishop Browne should maintain a list of all priest advisors supporting non-incardinated priests living in the diocese, and have this updated annually\*.

The case files clearly record the level of liaison that takes place with An Garda Síochána and Tusla, before the diocese approaches a respondent regarding an allegation; and at times, one of the statutory agencies has asked the diocese to hold off advising a respondent. However, there was also evidence of the diocese trying to achieve a balance by recognising the right of an individual to be informed about an allegation in a timely manner.

Preliminary canonical investigations

Of the living respondents who were or had been priests of the Diocese of Kerry at the time an allegation was made, two (2) were subjects of preliminary investigations, which had been concluded. Case management files contained documents showing that the appropriate canonical activity had been carried through. Records of internal case review discussions and of advice from the NCMC are also appropriately filed and maintained.

The Diocese of Kerry should ensure that there is an annual review of all active cases\*. Key elements to be reviewed are to include the management plan, and the feedback from the priest advisor and the relevant DLP.

Finally, as they are responsible for risk assessments in respect of such respondents, Tusla agreed in July 2021 during a meeting with the reviewers and the DLP to be supportive of the diocese in ensuring that appropriate information is secured from external dioceses, as appropriate.

Assessment of compliance with Standard 4

The reviewers had no direct communication with respondents. It is evident from the case files, and from discussions with the bishop in particular, that care and support of respondents is a priority.

The diocese now needs to ensure that the priests out of ministry from other dioceses who live in the diocesan area, are receiving the equivalent level of care and support. The implementation of the annual review for all priests out of ministry will be important in ensuring that all respondents are being managed in a safe and compassionate manner.

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.*

A Training Plan for 2021 has been developed for all relevant Church personnel, including clergy and volunteers, and the reviewers were satisfied that it is of a sufficient standard. This plan targets in particular the development of online training, as well as specific child safeguarding training for sacristans. This Training Plan is integrated within the 2021 to 2023 Diocesan Safeguarding Plan, which was also examined. The safeguarding Training Plan for 2021 now also includes vulnerable adults training.

Due to the pandemic, the last Safeguarding training day took place in November 2019. The next full day was to have been in March 2020, but this was cancelled. Pre-pandemic, all relevant personnel received the full day training every 3 years. The training figures for persons receiving safeguarding training from 2017 to 2021 are:

| Year   | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020                               | 2021                                          |
|--------|------|------|------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Number | 81   | 132  | 114  | 1 online pilot training course run | 120 people attended online refresher sessions |

The Director of Safeguarding is currently the only accredited National Board Trainer. She delivered a pilot of refresher child safeguarding training online in July 2021 in the format of a two-hour session. A person has been identified within the Pastoral Development Team who is awaiting relevant training by National Board, after which he will become a second trainer for the diocese.<sup>5</sup> This person is also the recently identified link person between the Diocesan Pastoral Centre and Safeguarding. This is a new and critical role which requires clear terms of reference\*.

The reviewers were advised at the initial feedback meeting with the diocese that the Director of Safeguarding attends at least one of the annual meetings held with the diocese’s priests. Records of discussions in the Safeguarding Committee Minutes document the reviewing of the current delivery of safeguarding training to diocesan clergy; the goal is to make this training more accessible to them.

The reviewers did see a redacted version of the training register. Policy and procedures regarding training are on the diocesan website and in the Safeguarding Handbook.

<sup>5</sup> This appointment has been made since the fieldwork for the Review was completed.

### Training structures

The Director of Safeguarding has the following responsibilities for Safeguarding training within the diocese:

- Undertaking the training needs analysis for the diocese (with oversight by the Safeguarding Committee (SC))
- Developing the training plan and driving its implementation (with oversight by the SC)
- Planning and organising training (identifying participants, organising venue, refreshments, application forms, letters of invite etc.)
- Delivery of safeguarding training
- Reviewing feedback/evaluation forms after delivery of training
- Developing & updating training materials
- Maintenance of a training database/register and all training records/ files

The reviewers were concerned that the current trainer has no administrative support available to her to assist with training-related administration. On training days, a member of the Safeguarding Committee usually attends to assist with registering participants and to act as support as required. However, dedicated administrative support remains an issue outside of the actual training session times\*.

A Religious Sister from the diocese who has completed the National Board *Train the Trainers* course has also assisted with training inputs on occasion.

### Training needs analysis

As noted above, one full-day of safeguarding training is provided to relevant persons in the diocese. The average number of participants in these training sessions is thirty persons. However, there are no information sessions or other training formats for safeguarding being provided. This appears to be largely due to the lack of capacity/time/resources available to the Director of Safeguarding to deliver such programmes, being the only trainer, and having a significant overall safeguarding workload.

A decision was taken in consultation with the Safeguarding Committee that the Director of Safeguarding should prioritise parish visits ahead of delivering information sessions.

If, as planned, the training capacity increases, the diocese would look to provide a more varied approach to training while maintaining the pattern of local delivery; this might be facilitated by continuing with an amount of online training. The Safeguarding Committee have also identified a need for targeted training with specific groups (such as sacristans, parish safeguarding representatives). In targeting certain groups for training, the reviewers would advise that the committee would also ensure that their own members receive specific Safeguarding Committee training when National Board training resumes.

There was no in-person safeguarding training provided in the diocese during 2020, due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The Safeguarding Handbook sets out which personnel are required to attend safeguarding training. Additionally, it was noted that every person who attends the Diocesan Pastoral Centre training for leaders in Youth Ministry must also complete the full day diocesan safeguarding training.

All new clergy must complete the safeguarding training; and every priest is required to renew their training on a 3-yearly basis.

A Training Needs Analysis and a Training Plan for 2021 were examined by the reviewers, both of which documents were informed by the 2020 Annual Parish Audit. The training needs analysis is normally based on feedback from parish visits undertaken by the Director of Safeguarding (especially with priests and PSRs); the annual audits; analysis of training evaluation forms; and needs identified by the Safeguarding Committee. The Director of Safeguarding confirmed that on receipt of parish audit returns, she cross-references the training details contained in the audit form against the training database records to ensure accuracy. The Safeguarding Committee has a key role in developing these plans and in overseeing their implementation. It would strengthen this planning if the bishop would appoint a member to the committee from the Pastoral Development Team.

Due to the pandemic, the 2021 plan could not be informed by feedback from completed evaluations of training sessions, or from parish visits by the Director of Safeguarding. In a normal year the Director of Safeguarding would complete an average of 12 parish visits between September and December.

The reviewers were advised that the diocese is aware of and has accessed the role-specific training provided by the National Board. However, the reviewers noted that the Designated Persons appointed for the Taizé and Lourdes pilgrimages have not received role-specific training; these pilgrimage personnel need to complete National Board DLP training as soon as practicable\*.

The reviewers noted that the parish self-audit does not appear to capture the training or vetting needs of those associated with pilgrimages, particularly as one pilgrimage coordinator works within the Diocesan Office and the other reports to the Pastoral Development Team. This has been highlighted to the diocese in the feedback as an area they need to be aware of\*. However, both the vetting and the training for all those who attended was completed between the relevant pilgrimage Director and the Director of Safeguarding prior to the pilgrimages.

### Information and support to parents/guardians

The Director of Safeguarding confirmed that there is a standard information pack which includes safeguarding information for both parents and children (copy on diocesan website). This pack was updated in May 2021. The content is discussed by the group leader or priest with parents at an introductory meeting. There is also a code of behaviour available for children, but it is also allowed that groups can develop such a code in collaboration with participating children / young people in their first session. Parish Safeguarding Representatives and Youth Ministry leaders also confirmed to the reviewers that this process is followed within parishes.

The Lourdes and Taizé pilgrimage coordinators also advised how they provided young persons and their parents with information, advice and support on keeping children safe, and the information packs used were seen by the reviewers. In all situations involving ministry with children, parental and young person's consent was secured.

The safeguarding children information provided in posters and leaflets needs to be produced in a child-friendly and age appropriate format, and the diocese should engage children in designing these\*.

The Taizé pilgrimage coordinator meets families individually to brief them about the pilgrimage including information in respect of safeguarding children. The reviewers suggested in their feedback that the diocese might consider the additional option of group briefings with an input from the Director of Safeguarding\*.

It was evident that the Director of Safeguarding is regarded as being accessible and helpful, and her approachable nature was valued by volunteers, priests and staff who met with the reviewers. The Director of Safeguarding in her turn receives support from the Safeguarding Committee, in particular from the chairperson on an as required basis. As the committee meets on average five times a year, this limits the amount of support it can provide to her. The diocese has indicated to the reviewers that the support and supervision needs of the Director of Safeguarding will be addressed in the near future. With the addition of appropriate administrative support, the Director of Safeguarding could potentially extend the amount of support she is able to provide, for example, by developing Support Networks for Parish Safeguarding Representatives. The reviewers recognise that the professional supervision required by the Director of Safeguarding may require external sourcing by the diocese\*.

In the meeting with the Parish Safeguarding Representatives, they were very positive about attending safeguarding training. They also emphasised that if support networks could be established for them, for instance at pastoral area level, that this would be very beneficial\*. The draft proposals of the Pastoral Development Team to develop networks for volunteer leaders in Youth Ministry will further enhance support structure for volunteers in the diocese. This Standard is met - with the caveat that the diocese needs to ensure that all staff and volunteers working with children and young people receive appropriate role-specific child safeguarding training as soon as this can be sourced for them\*.

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

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

The reviewers commend the clarity of the overall approach of the Bishop of Kerry – that safeguarding children should be everyone’s business. This view was supported in our engagements with clergy and volunteers at parish level, pilgrimage personnel, Youth Ministry group leaders and the young people in the online groups, the Safeguarding Committee, and in thier contact with the Director of Safeguarding and with the bishop.

However, the current diocesan organisational structure does not fully facilitate effective and clear internal communication of the safeguarding message. For example, the reviewers would like to have seen mention of safeguarding children in the draft documents produced by members of the Pastoral Development Team relating to Youth Ministry.

### Communications Plan

The Communications Plan for 2021 has been signed off by the Safeguarding Committee and was examined by the reviewers. This 2021 Communications plan is integrated within the Three Year Safeguarding Plan, 2021 to 2023. This plan focuses in particular on communicating the safeguarding message to targeted groups across the diocese, i.e. the annual meetings of sacristans, and the annual meeting of parish secretaries. A safeguarding input has also been planned for the study days for diocesan priests.

Kerry Diocese’s Safeguarding Sunday took place in 2020. In 2021, the Safeguarding Committee decided to move the date from November to January 2022 to avoid clashing with other planned events.

Information on safeguarding children is displayed in churches, and on the diocesan website via a separate drop-down menu. The virtual visit to Fossa Church confirmed that this safeguarding children information was displayed in key areas within that church. During this visit attention was also drawn to the live-streaming notices which are displayed at entrances to the church to advise attendees. The meeting with the Parish Safeguarding Representatives and the virtual visit confirmed that the physical display of safeguarding information is one of the key roles that they undertake within the parishes.

The presentation of this information could be more child-friendly, as discussed in the reviewers’ meeting with the Safeguarding Committee.

### Child Safeguarding Newsletter

The diocesan clergy and volunteers who we met spoke positively about the Safeguarding Newsletters and the annual Safeguarding Sunday as effective means to communicate the safeguarding message to the parishes. Copies of previous Safeguarding Newsletters were examined by the reviewers; and tracking of the planning for previous Safeguarding Sundays was also possible through access to minutes of the Safeguarding Committee.

The Director of Safeguarding provided information for priests and Parish Safeguarding Representatives at parish level in relation to this Review. This information was supported at diocesan level with a news item announcing the review on the web site, seen by the reviewers of this content.

Safeguarding materials are produced in English, Irish and Polish. The safeguarding material does however need to be reviewed with children to make the content more accessible to them.

The reviewers saw a record of dates of regular diocesan meetings with Tusla, attended by the Director of Safeguarding, which focused on case management issues. There is a commitment from Tusla that such meetings will be structured as quarterly meetings in the future; other meetings can also take place as required for a particular case.

The reviewers noted the dates of the regular meetings between the Director of Safeguarding and An Garda Síochána. Again, a commitment has been given by An Garda Síochána that there will be at least one annual review meeting, with the relevant managers attending from both bodies; and An Garda Síochána meetings with the diocese will also take place as needs arise regarding individual cases of concern.

The diocese ensures that complainants are given information in respect of Towards Healing. The Director of Safeguarding attends meetings of the Metropolitan Area DLP group, where a significant degree of shared learning and support takes place.

#### Internal diocesan safeguarding links

Currently, there is at least one annual safeguarding meeting in each parish to prepare for the self-audit exercise. The reviewers suggest that the diocese might consider developing more regular safeguarding meetings at which parishes could come together and where parish volunteers could receive information and support.

More frequent meetings at both parish and pastoral area level should also include parish-based Youth Ministry group leaders to enhance communication between them and safeguarding representatives\*.

Another area in which the reviewers perceive that communications in respect of safeguarding children could be further improved is between the Pastoral Development Team and the Diocesan Safeguarding Office\*.

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 noted that Kerry Diocese fully completed the parish self-audit in 2020, even though there was no requirement from the National Board to do so. The reviewers were advised at the meeting with priests that one of the reasons for completing the self-audit was to ensure safeguarding children would remain an active issue at parish level.

A sample of annual reports compiled by the Director of Safeguarding from 2018 to 2020, following her completion of the analysis of parish self-audits, were seen by the reviewers. These reports were signed off by the Safeguarding Committee for consideration by the bishop.

In practice, the Safeguarding Committee has a primary role in providing oversight of the implementation and quality assuring of child safeguarding practice within the diocese. The capacity of this committee to carry out this governance role could be enhanced by reviewing membership with particular regard to securing Youth Ministry representation\*.

As noted earlier in this report, the Director of Safeguarding normally undertakes monitoring visits to parishes on behalf of the bishop, but in 2020 these visits did not occur due to the pandemic. Instead, on line support was provided by the Director of Safeguarding as and when needed, and the clergy and the Parish Safeguarding Representatives confirmed that the Director of Safeguarding has continued to be as available to support them on line during the pandemic as she had been previously; and they appreciate this. She is commended for her negotiating around the restrictions arising from the Covid-19 situation.

The Director of Safeguarding has developed an annual audit of the Diocesan Pastoral Development Team, in relation to the groups using the Pastoral Centre. This has been conducted at the end of 2020 and at the end of 2021.

A further quality assurance issue arises from the current arrangement whereby the Pastoral Development Team resource and advise parishes in respect of Youth Ministry programmes; however, the responsibility for delivery, governance and quality assurance of these programmes then rests with the parish. The reviewers are concerned that the individual parish may not have the capacity to carry out these functions. This approach also has the potential to create varying standards of programme delivery.

The diocese updated their Child Safeguarding Statement, including a risk assessment, in July 2020; this is required under the Children First Act of 2015.

### Three Year Safeguarding Plan

The current three-year Safeguarding Children Plan, 2021-2023 has been signed off by the Safeguarding Committee and scrutinised by the reviewers. It sets out actions in respect of each standard related to specific objectives; identifies the person or body responsible for implementation; sets out the projected implementation date; and indicates the review date for each. While this plan is relevant and sufficient, its implementation has been frustrated by the pandemic.

### National Board Review

The Bishop of Kerry initially requested this National Board Review in 2020, in respect of all the seven Standards. Due to the impact of the pandemic, the Review was initially limited to an online review of the four Child Safeguarding Standards; but after a short delay, it became possible to review all of the Standards.

This Review Report contains one formal Recommendation, along with 23 suggestions for further quality improvement

This Standard is met



## Summary

The reviewers appreciate the significant level of cooperation given to them prior to and during this Review; and they wish to acknowledge Bishop Ray Browne, the Director of Safeguarding and the Diocesan Secretary for the support provided to the reviewers and for the high level of commitment they gave to the audit process. The Reviewers would also wish to reference the engagement of all clergy they met, the young people, and the safeguarding staff and volunteers. In particular, the reviewers want to acknowledge the vital contribution of the young people who agreed to meet them while they were attending the online Youth Ministry groups, as well as the voluntary parish-based safeguarding representatives.

It is of note that research is underway in the diocese with a view to assisting the transition currently underway in Youth Ministry. This research will require engagement with the Safeguarding Office and the Safeguarding Committee. In terms of safeguarding children, Youth Ministry and pastoral development are critical elements which need to be integrated across the diocese in a coordinated approach to keeping children safe.

It is very evident to the reviewers that safeguarding children is an important ministry within the Diocese of Kerry, and as such it remains under constant review by the Director of Safeguarding and the Safeguarding Committee.