

Newsletter

Latest News from the National Office for
Safeguarding Children in the Catholic
Church in Ireland

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Introduction

December
2025

National Office Staff

Click on any of the links
below to send an email
directly to any member of
staff

Chief
Executive
Officer [Aidan Gordon](#)

Director of
Training and
Support [Lyn McDermott](#)

Director of
Safeguarding [Julie McCullough](#)

Administrators [Imelda Ashe](#)
[Ann Cunningham](#)

Dear Colleagues,
Welcome to our final edition of the NBSCCCI
newsletter for 2025.



Archbishop Francis Duffy of Tuam, along with Aidan Gordon
presenting the prize in the winner of the 16yrs to 18yrs
category of the NBSCCCI art competition.

We were delighted to meet with many of
you throughout November during the four
Ecclesiastical area meetings which provided
an opportunity for us to feedback to you on
our work over the last year and provide an
overview of our plans for the next twelve
months. Thank you again to Tuam, Armagh,
Cashel and Emly and Dublin for their
hospitality and to all who attended and
supported the events.

In a shift from usual proceedings, it was a
privilege to have our colleagues from
Towards Peace and Towards Healing
present alongside us at many of the
Ecclesiastical meetings. We hope this will
continue in future years.

One of our highlights of the last few months
has been our Art competition, which started as
a way of measuring the impact of *A Safe
and Welcoming Church; Safeguarding
Children Policy and Standards for the
Catholic Church 2024* but became a project
full of joy and authenticity.
We received over 400 unique views on what
a safe and welcoming Church looks like.

Presentations to the prize winners took
place at some of our metropolitan meetings,
and some occurred within schools such as St
Vincent's National School, Navan Road, Scoil
Naomh Dúigh, Anagaire, Leitir Ceanainn,
New Row, St Patrick's, Castledawson,
Magherafelt, Irish Town National School,
Claremorris and St Aidan's in Cootehill. The
welcome we received in each location was
full of warmth, kindness and celebration.
To every one of the wonderful artists who
took part, thank you.

On the 25th of October 2025, we were
saddened to receive news of the passing of
a former director of the NBSCCCI, Jim
O'Higgins. Jim was a trusted colleague
whose sound advice and dedication to
safeguarding saw him serve on the board
for 12 years. We extend our sincere
condolences to Jim's family.

Lastly thank you for all your support and
work across safeguarding in 2025, wishing
you and yours a blessed, safe and happy
Christmas.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aida Sada'.

CEO, NBSCCCI





Changes to Church Authorities

The NBSCCCI provides regular advice to Church authorities and organises an induction for new Church leaders annually. When a Church leader changes, it is important that you inform us and provide us with the contact details of the new Church leader by emailing admin@safeguarding.ie.

Our website provides links to Designated Liaison Persons within each diocese and a link to AMRI, where religious congregations' websites can be found, along with contact details for additional help and support. If you notice any errors in any of this information, please contact us so that we can make the appropriate amendments.

Updates from The Pontifical Commission on the Protection of Minors

The Commission presented the second annual report in October of this year. The report aimed at fulfilling Pope Francis' mandate for annual transparency and accountability in the global Catholic Church's safeguarding efforts.

This second report, covering the 2024 reporting period, focused specifically on the pillar of **reparations**.

Key Focus: The report emphasised that reparations must be comprehensive, going beyond financial compensation to include:

- Creating safe, "welcoming listening centres" for victims/survivors.
- Providing professional psychological and spiritual support.
- Making transparent public and private apologies.
- Allowing survivors to help develop safeguarding policies.

The report incorporates data from external sources, such as the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

To read the full report, including the recommendations outlined within please go to

<https://www.tutelaminorum.org/annual-report/>

The European region of the Commission launched a new webinar series on 3 December aimed at strengthening safeguarding practices across dioceses, religious congregations and Church institutions.

While the first session looked at the theme "Governance and Independence." If you happened to miss this session, please do keep an eye out for dates for the next three online events which are planned to take place during January and February 2026. Participants will engage with survivors, safeguarding officers, canon lawyers, NGO partners, bishops and religious superiors, as well as colleagues working in conflict-affected areas. Each webinar will address a distinct dimension of safeguarding and will feed into the drafting of the European Safeguarding Toolkit.

For this event and other events planned by the commission

<https://www.tutelaminorum.org/european-webinar-series-on-safeguarding-to-launch-on-3-december/>

Responding to Online Child Abuse in Ireland

In Ireland, a multi-faceted approach is used to ensure children's cyber safety, with the government, online platforms, and support organisations all sharing responsibility. This strategy emphasises strengthening parent-child communication, improving digital literacy, and utilizing technical safety controls.

An Garda Síochána's response to cybercrime is continuously developing, often concentrating on the following key areas:

1. **Tailored Advice for Vulnerable Groups:** An Garda Síochána offer specific guidance to parents, guardians, and young people concerning issues such as cyberbullying and online child exploitation. They strongly advocate for open dialogue within families and the implementation of robust parental controls.
2. **Evolving Legislation and Policy:** Law enforcement operates under a developing legal framework designed to combat online offenses. This includes significant legislation like the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 (commonly known as Coco's Law) and the Criminal Justice (Offences Relating to Information Systems) Act 2017, both of which criminalize various harmful online activities and enhance the capabilities of law enforcement agencies.

In October 2025 the Garda National Cyber Crime Bureau (GNCCB) released an update on their **ongoing Investigations into Identification and Safeguarding Victims of Online Child Sexual Abuse in Ireland**. You can read the update here <https://www.garda.ie/en/about-us/our-departments/office-of-corporate-communications/press-releases/2025/october/an-garda-siochana-ongoing-investigations-into-identification-and-safeguarding-victims-of-online-child-sexual-abuse-in-ireland.html>

Implementing Ethical Guidelines for Internet Use Within the Church Community

You can build your knowledge on supporting a safe online environment by having a look at some of the websites below. By staying informed and engaged, we can help children to navigate the digital world safely and responsibly.

Webwise: Ireland's Internet Safety Awareness Centre, providing extensive resources, advice, and educational materials for parents, teachers, and young people, funded by the Department of Education.

CyberSafeKids: An Irish charity that delivers online safety workshops in schools and workplaces, conducts research into children's online habits, and offers e-learning courses for parents and educators.

Barnardos Online Safety Programme: Offers workshops and resources for children, young people, parents, and teachers on safe internet use and cyberbullying.

Coimisiún na Meán: Ireland's media regulator responsible for enforcing the Online Safety Code, which requires platforms to have age checks, parental controls, and clear reporting mechanisms for harmful content.

ISPCC Childline: Provides a 24/7 listening service for children and young people who are worried about something they've encountered online.

Hotline.ie: Ireland's national channel for confidentially reporting suspected illegal content online, particularly child sexual abuse material

S7. B Guidance on Conducting Ministry with Children Using Digital Media

Introduction to use of the internet and other forms of digital media

It is recognised that the internet, and other forms of digital media (WhatsApp, texting etc.) are valuable and widely used. Within the Church context, clear guidelines must be developed and added into the code of behaviour for each Church activity involving children (Guidance S3.B).

The following are deemed unacceptable behaviours, and must be avoided in every situation:

- Visiting internet sites that contain offensive, obscene, pornographic or illegal material;
- Using a computer to perpetrate any form of fraud or piracy;
- Using the internet or email systems to send offensive and harassing material to others;
- Using obscene or racist language in computer-assisted communications;
- Publishing defamatory or otherwise false material generated by oneself or by others through social networking;
- Introducing any form of malicious software into the used network;
- Intentionally damaging any information communication technology equipment;
- Using another user's password, or giving that password to a third party.

It is important that the following are made clear to all who use the internet:

- All Church personnel/volunteers/group leaders must be made aware of their responsibility, and sign up to appropriate use of the internet as part of a code of behaviour (Guidance S3.B);
- Responsibility is about safeguarding children, taking care of oneself, one's co-workers and group leaders;
- Anyone using a shared computer requires their own individual password;
- Training in appropriate and responsible internet and computer use is imperative in order to follow best practice in all activities that concern children, co-workers and volunteers.

For guidance on the use of technology, text and email communications, use of photography or CCTV and webcams please go to <https://www.safeguarding.ie/creating-safe-environments> and for the NBSCCCI Gap paper on Child Safeguarding and Digital Media https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP_Papers/GAP%20Paper%201%20Child%20Safeguarding%20and%20Digital%20Media.pdf

NBSCCCI GOOD PRACTICE CORNER

With all the excellent work that goes on across Church bodies we want to highlight good safeguarding practices that keep children and young people safe, and to inspire others.

In this edition of our Newsletter, with a spotlight on cyber safety, we wish to highlight: **Working Safely with Children & Young People: Use of Information and Digital Technology (2024)** produced by the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service of the Archdiocese of Dublin. This informative and directive document equips church personnel to work safely with children in all aspects of digital technology. It can be accessed here: <https://csps.dublindiocese.ie/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2024/01/Safeguarding-Digital-Policy-2024.pdf>

If you have examples from your Order, Congregation or Diocese that we could highlight, please forward this to us at admin@safeguarding.ie

World Children Day 2025

World Children's Day 2025 took place on **November 20, 2025**. The annual event, hosted by [UNICEF](#), is a global day of action for children, by children, to promote international togetherness, awareness of children's rights, and the improvement of children's welfare.

The theme for World Children's Day 2025 was "**My day, my rights**". Other related themes and calls to action included "For Every Child, Every Right" and "Prioritizing Children Now: Shaping Our Future". The primary goals were to:

- **Amplify children's voices:** Encourage children and young people to speak about their lives, hopes, and rights.
- **Raise awareness:** Shine a spotlight on key issues affecting children, such as child poverty, education, health, and protection from violence and conflict.
- **Advocate for children's rights:** Call on world leaders to uphold their obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and prioritize child-friendly policies and budgets.

The date of November 20th is significant as it marks the anniversary of the UN General Assembly adopting the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989.

To celebrate the day the Ombudsman for Children's Office hosted an event in the Helix in Dublin where they welcomed 1000 children from all over Ireland. In their commitment to the voice of young people they heard from six young speakers who shared their stories on critical issues such as the housing crisis, extremism, girls in STEM, and the importance of youth services.

The event, now in its eighth year, was co-hosted by science communicator Mark Langtry and past speaker Ben Barrett. To read more about it go to <https://www.oco.ie/childrens-rights/child-talks/>

In Northern Ireland the official who promotes and safeguards the rights of children and young people is the **Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY)**, which is currently Chris Quinn. This office actively participates in World Children's Day events and advocacy.

Over 80 young people gathered at Stormont on the 20th to share their views on children's rights and push for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to be incorporated into domestic law. The youth-led event, hosted by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People's (NICCY) Youth Panel, included the launch of their new report, which outlines current shortcomings and provides a rights-based perspective on improving young lives in Northern Ireland.

To read more about this endeavour <https://www.niccy.org/news/children-and-young-people-mark-world-childrens-day-at-stormont-and-call-for-the-uncrc-to-be-incorporated-into-ni-law/>

A note for your diary in 2026!

The Vatican has announced the dates for the **second World Children's Day**, which will be held in Rome from September 25–27, 2026. The event, initiated by Pope Leo XIV, is designed as a global meeting for children and their families, featuring a weekend dedicated to celebration, prayer, and community connection. This occasion provides an opportunity for the Church to highlight the central role of children, the value of family units, and the importance of environmental stewardship.



Upcoming Events

The NBSCCCI are pleased to announce a training event being held in February 2026, places are limited to 30. To book your place please go to www.safeguarding.ie

Title: **Sexual Abuse: Understanding the Dynamics and Effective Responses**

Aimed at: Safeguarding Lead Personnel.

Delivered by: F.S.P.S. (Finnegan Specialist Psychotherapy Service) is a Specialist Therapeutic and Forensic Intervention Service set up by Eileen Finnegan. Eileen is accredited with MIACP, MIAHIP, MEAP, MEAC, and FTAI as both a Psychotherapist and Supervisor

Date: 12th of Feb 2026 Location: Glenroyal Hotel, Maynooth, Co. Kildare Duration: 6 hours

Learning outcomes:

- Understand the system or context in which abuse took place
- Understand the trauma of sexual abuse
- Understanding the motivations of those who perpetrate sexual abuse
- Understand the impact on those managing the disclosure

Training for New Church Authorities 2026

This training day has been organised specifically for new leaders of Church bodies across Ireland to induct them into their strategic role in relation to child safeguarding.

This training was previously facilitated in February 2025.

Duration: 6 hours

Proposed date: 26th of February 2026

Location: Columba Centre, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.

The day will cover a range of topics relating to safeguarding, including:

- The strategic role of the Church authority in relation to safeguarding.
- Pastoral ministry and safeguarding.

Please note if you have already attended this training previously, you do not need to attend again.

Day of Prayer for Survivors and Victims of Abuse 2026

First held in 2017, the Day of Prayer for Survivors and Victims of Abuse is a prayer initiative of the IEC to be held across Ireland to pray for the recovery of all who have been impacted by abuse in our Church. All parishes and religious communities are encouraged to light a candle of atonement and to organise a service or moment of prayer on the first Friday of Lent. In 2026, this day will fall on **Friday 20th of February**. Resources for liturgies are available at

<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/day-of-prayer-for-survivors-and-victims-of-abuse-2025/>

Training Returns

The NBSCCCI report on training across the country through our annual report. This year, the reporting period will be from the 1st of April 2025 to the 31st of December 2025. The training returns are an important part of monitoring our practice and ensuring we are actively keeping up to date with our safeguarding responsibilities. Completing training returns should be done following each training session; this will make it easier for yourselves as trainers to keep track of where and whom you trained, along with eliminating a bigger task at the year-end. Registering for training is very simple and can be completed in a matter of minutes on the NBSCCCI website. One key point for sessions where two trainers deliver in partnership is to agree which trainer will record the training on the site. One trainer can then complete on both trainers' behalf.

Trainers can log their training by:

- Using the trainers' login button on www.safeguarding.ie, given to each trainer as part of their registration.
- Following login, click the 'log a training event online' button on the top right-hand side of the screen.
- Filling in the relevant details and then submitting.
- The event will automatically be added to the database.

Please can you complete this process for every training event facilitated. Submitting online is a much more efficient way of submitting returns. If you need any help with login or have forgotten your username and password, please contact acunningham@safeguarding.ie

Thank you

In November 2025, a new group of 15 dedicated individuals joined our existing 96 volunteer Trainers and Tutors across Ireland. These dedicated Trainers are crucial to our child safeguarding efforts, acting as one of the primary safeguards in cultivating a protective environment within the Church.

Their vital role involves delivering training that equips participants with the necessary knowledge to recognise, respond to, and report concerns of child abuse.

This collective group of Trainers empowered approximately 6,500 people during the 2024/2025 period, providing them with essential skills to ensure the safety of children within our Church community.

The NBSCCCI extends its sincere gratitude to all Trainers for their invaluable contributions.

Annual Child Safeguarding Self Audit

It is a requirement in the policy, *A Safe and Welcoming Church: Safeguarding Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024 (Standard: Leadership, Governance and Accountability, p11)* that each Church authority completes an annual child safeguarding self-audit. The annual child safeguarding self-audit provides an opportunity for Church authorities to identify what is working well and to highlight areas that require further development in child safeguarding within their Church body.

Recognising the diversity of safeguarding activity between Church bodies, the applicability of safeguarding criteria will vary. Appendix D of *A Safe and Welcoming Church: Safeguarding Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland (2024)* identifies four categories of church bodies based on safeguarding activity and the criteria that applies to each category:

Category 1: No ministry with children & not managing cases

Category 2: Ministry with children but not managing cases

Category 3: Ministry with children & managing cases

Category 4: No ministry with children but managing cases

Some Church bodies had been exempted from completing annual self-audits under the previous policy, *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland (2016)*. **This exemption no longer applies.** If you have any queries about completing an annual self-audit please contact Julie McCullough, julie.mccullough@safeguarding.ie

A Safe and Welcoming Church Children and Young Person's Art Competition

Presentations in photos



Photos of the winners of the art competition, with family and supporters receiving their much deserved prizes.

The Special Advocate for Survivors of Institutional Abuse

The office of the Special Advocate for Survivors of Institutional Abuse produces a quarterly Newsletter which aims to share key information and updates relevant to Survivors and Affected People, to announce upcoming events, and to signpost useful resources and supports. Their December Newsletter can be accessed here: [Our Newsletter - Special Advocate](#)

Safeguarding Board of Northern Ireland (SBNI)

A new five-part Trauma Informed Leadership course will be launching in early 2026. The "Leading with a Trauma informed lens" leadership development program is a fully funded, five-part course offered by the [Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland \(SBNI\)](#).

Host Organization: The program is run by the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI), which can be contacted via the [HSC Leadership Centre](#).

- **Curriculum:** The program integrates reflective and relational approaches to support leaders in creating safe, responsive, and inclusive environments. Participants will deepen their understanding of trauma-informed principles, their impact on organizational culture, and build practical skills.

Contact Details

National Office for
Safeguarding
Children:
New House,
St Patrick's College
Maynooth, Co.
Kildare
T: 01 505 3124
admin@safeguarding.ie

Commission of Investigation into the Handling of Historical Child Sexual Abuse in Schools

On the 4th of December 2025, the Chair of the Commission of Investigation, Mr Justice Michael MacGrath, provided an update on the preparatory work of the commission to date. To read the full content, go to <https://www.gov.ie/en/commission-of-investigation-into-the-handling-of-historical-child-sexual-abuse-in-schools/publications/commission-of-investigation-into-the-handling-of-historical-child-sexual-abuse-in-schools/>

Good Wishes from all in the NBSCCCI

On behalf of the NBSCCCI, the National Office staff and the National Case Management Committee (NCMC) can we take this opportunity to thank you all for your work on ensuring the safety of children in the Catholic Church. Christmas provides an opportunity and time for reflection, and we acknowledge the significant efforts made by all in the Church: Church leaders, safeguarding personnel, volunteers, and the lay faithful to safeguard the well-being of children and to promote best practice in protection and welfare across all our Church. We hope you all have a peaceful and joyful Christmas.

