

# Newsletter

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

October 2021

## National Office Staff

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

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Sister Colette Stevenson

## ALERT BOX

This part of the Newsletter is designed to draw the attention of  
Church authorities to important developments outlined below:

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New hazard assessment guidance	page 4

## Introduction

The National Board staff are slowly weaving their way back into the office in Maynooth. It is a delight to see the autumn colours around the grounds; and students full of energy as they start their new academic term. We look forward to settling back into the office and having face to face meetings as soon as it is safe to do so.

This Newsletter will provide information on:

- Development of Vulnerable Adults Policy and associated resources
- The revision of *Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016*
- National Board website
- Reviews of Safeguarding practice
- Annual Self Audits
- Training
- Head to Heart child safeguarding in formation
- Changes to National Board Guidance
- Theology Videos and National Conference
- Review of National Case Management Committee
- Risk Assessments
- SBNI consultation Northern Ireland
- Resources
- Safeguarding Sundays

# Development of a Vulnerable Adults Policy and Associated Resources

In September 2021, the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Association of Missionaries and Religious Leaders of Ireland (AMRI) made a request to the National Board to draft a Vulnerable Adults Policy and develop training for the Catholic Church in Ireland.

In order to do this, it is our intention to engage with a range of personnel, inside and outside the Church, to ensure that a vulnerable adult policy and associated guidance and training meets civil and criminal legislative requirements, best practice standards and is in line with the ethos and canon law of the Church.

Dr Niall Moore has been appointed to project manage the work. He has drafted a Project Plan with timeframes to chart the course of this work, which is due to be completed by September 2022. The plan will be reviewed by the National Board in October 2021 and then shared publicly.

The project plan sets out:

- Who will have oversight and assist in steering the work.
- How we will communicate our objectives, processes, consultation and status of the project.
- The need to undertake a literature review, which will inform the theoretical basis of the policy and guidance.
- Who we will talk to with the aim of understanding the needs of vulnerable people. The consultation will be comprehensive and will consider the views of people inside and outside the Church.
- Dates for interim and final drafts.

The hope is to engage the views of many people in this process as it develops.

A dedicated part of the National Board website will soon be established which will be regularly updated throughout the project.

We will also use this newsletter to keep in touch and provide relevant updates on aspects which you can become involved in, in this important work for the Church.

Should you have any questions or wish to contact us with any resources you may have that would help with this project please contact [acunningham@safeguarding.ie](mailto:acunningham@safeguarding.ie).

## National Board Website

The National Board has redeveloped its website to make information more accessible. For anyone experiencing difficulties accessing the site it is important to clear your browser history and data cache on each browser you use to access the site. Once this is done it will resolve any issues you are having. If this process does not work, please contact [niall.moore@safeguarding.ie](mailto:niall.moore@safeguarding.ie) for advice.

## Registering for Events on [safeguarding.ie](https://safeguarding.ie)

When you register for an event on the National Board's website you should receive an automated email from us which includes an invoice. Many of you are not aware of this; and it is possible that the automated response enters your junk folder. The contents of the junk folder are deleted after a period of time. It is therefore important, when registering for an event, that you check your junk folder, if you have not received an immediate reply from us.

# Training and Support

Since the last newsletter the following training events have been facilitated

Since the last newsletter in June 2021 the following training events have been facilitated:

- Session with Superintendent Barry Walsh (National Protective Services Bureau)- The purpose of this session was to introduce Superintendent Walsh to Church personnel and to enable the clarification of any matters relating to reporting allegations to An Garda Síochána.
- Session with the National Vetting Unit- The National Board hosted a short session with Sergeant James Gould (Jim) Anne-Marie Costello (Marissa) from the National Vetting Bureau. The purpose of this session was to clarify matters relating to vetting in the Republic of Ireland.
- Train the Trainers Course- following a delay in facilitating this course due to Covid 19, the Train the Trainers course will begin on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 2021 and will conclude on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2021. This course will take place in person, with good safety measures in place to protect participants and presenters.

## Forthcoming Training

- 27/10/2021- Tusla Child Safeguarding Statements and Risk Assessment- representatives from the Registration and Enforcement at Tusla will present information on the importance of the Tusla Child Safeguarding Statement and ensuring compliance. Staff from Tusla will be available to answer questions or clarify any issues relating to Child Safeguarding Statements. Staff from the National Board will also present new guidance on risk assessment and deliver training on the importance of risk assessment for those ministering with children.
- Ecclesiastical Provincial Area Meetings- These meetings, which are now an annual event, allow us to share information with you on the work of the National Board, developments in child safeguarding practice, matters of interest in civil and in canon law. Given the work we are engaged in developing a vulnerable adults policy for the Catholic Church in Ireland, we intend to take the opportunity at the annual Ecclesiastical Provincial Area Meetings to hear your views on the issues relating to protecting vulnerable people in the Church. We will also share our work plan and invite you to participate in forthcoming consultations. To attend please select one of the following dates below, as the meetings are being facilitated online via Zoom. If the date does not suit for your particular ecclesiastical provincial area, please feel free to join one of the other meetings.
  - 9/11/2021- Armagh Ecclesiastical Provincial Area Meeting- you can book your place here <https://www.safeguarding.ie/events/armagh-ecclesiastical-provincial-area-meeting-2>.
  - 18/11/2021- Dublin Ecclesiastical Provincial Area Meeting you can book your place here <https://www.safeguarding.ie/events/dublin-ecclesiastical-provincial-area-meeting-4>.
  - 23/11/2021-Cashel Ecclesiastical Provincial Area Meeting you can book your place here <https://www.safeguarding.ie/events/cashel-and-emly-ecclesiastical-provincial-area-meeting>.
  - 24/11/2021- Tuam Ecclesiastical Provincial Area Meeting you can book your place here <https://www.safeguarding.ie/events/tuam-ecclesiastical-provincial-area-meeting-2>.

# Revision of Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016

The substantive legislation and guidance in the Church's current child safeguarding policy has now been superseded by changes in civil law, canon law and developments in best practice. In addition, there is a need to make changes following advice from Tusla. The National Board set an objective in its 2020 Annual Report to review the policy. We hope to establish a steering group to assist with this revision. It is also our intention to consult widely with children and their carers; complainants of abuse; respondents of abuse; internal Church safeguarding personnel and external safeguarding experts in the statutory and voluntary sectors.

We hope to streamline the Standards and indicators but will await your views before drafting any revision.

If you are interested in becoming a member of a working group or facilitating groups with children and their carers, complainants or respondents can you please contact [imeldaashe@safeguarding.ie](mailto:imeldaashe@safeguarding.ie) to register your interest.

## Reviewer Recruitment

We are seeking experienced and qualified reviewers to join the existing team of external consultants who undertake reviews of safeguarding practice. Interested parties should contact [acunningham@safeguarding.ie](mailto:acunningham@safeguarding.ie) for job description.

## Annual Self Audits for 2021

Standard 7 of the *Revision of Safeguarding Children, Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016* requires that the Church authority undertakes an annual self-audit of their Church body. During 2020, the National Board did not require that you inform us of the outcome of that audit. We now wish to resume the practice and invite you to notify Teresa Devlin via [imeldaashe@safeguarding.ie](mailto:imeldaashe@safeguarding.ie) that the 2021 audit has been undertaken.

## Changes to Guidance

Following consultation with the Compliance Unit in Tusla, the National Board has revised its hazard assessment process and updated the guidance. It is a requirement of the Church's safeguarding policy under Indicator 1.8 that all activities with children undergo a process of hazard assessment. This is also a key part of the Tusla child safeguarding statement and referenced in the National Board template.

Many thanks to Joan Walshe in the Diocese of Meath for her help and support along with the many volunteers who piloted this new version of the risk assessment and helped us develop a tool that was straightforward to use and met the expectations of Tusla. For more detail on the changes to the guidance please follow this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/policy-guidance/view-latest-updates-to-the-guidance>.

### Reviews of Safeguarding Practice

In-person reviews will now resume, though some work will remain on-line. If you are interested in having your Church body reviewed can you please write to [teresa.devlin@safeguarding.ie](mailto:teresa.devlin@safeguarding.ie) to request an initial planning meeting.

# Theology Videos and the National Conference

The final video in the series has now been posted on the National Board's website at <https://www.safeguarding.ie/national-conference-2022> . We wish to take this opportunity to thank all those who contributed:

Month	Contributor	Topic
January	Fr Hans Zollner	What areas would a comprehensive Theology of Safeguarding need to address; and how can Church safeguarding personnel contribute to its development?
February	Sr Nuala Kenny	Healing in a Wounded Church
March	Dr. Ethna Regan	How can a theology of safeguarding encompass human rights, including children's rights?
April	Fr Paddy Boyle	How to put theology of safeguarding into practice
May	Una Allen	How can (an understanding of) Pastoral Theology inform action to heal the spiritual damage caused by clerical child sexual abuse?
June	Dr. Jesse Rogers	Jesus puts a child in their midst and tells the disciples to welcome children as a way of welcoming Jesus. How can the Church take that seriously today?
July	Fr Jim Corkery	Does there now need to be a re-examination of the theology of salvation, in the light of the experience of survivors of abuse who did not sin, but were sinned against?
August	Dr. Marcia Bunge	Does there now need to be a re-examination of the theology of salvation, in the light of the experience of survivors of abuse who did not sin, but were sinned against?
September	Justin Humphrey ( <i>Thirty-one eight</i> )	How is a robust theology of safeguarding a gift to the Church?

## Head to Heart-Child Safeguarding in Formation

The Head to Heart programme run in three seminaries (St. Patricks College, Maynooth; Redemptoris Mater, Dundalk; Pontifical Irish College, Rome) has reached an important milestone this month.

The last of the 10 modules (*Safeguarding when Ministering with Children online*) will be facilitated in February 2022, before the cycle of module delivery begins again. The National Board are beginning an evaluation of the programme and will seek feedback from formators, participants and presenters about how we can improve the programme for the future. For more information on this you can contact [peter.kieran@safeguarding.ie](mailto:peter.kieran@safeguarding.ie).

The Head to Heart safeguarding in formation course has now been accepted for accreditation by St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. This means that seminarians who complete all 10 modules are eligible to receive a certificate of achievement from the university. The accreditation process has been developed to enable the growth of the Head to Heart programme to other relevant roles within the Church, and work has already started in developing a version of the programme for the permanent diaconate and those in ongoing formation. If you would like to learn more about the programme please contact [niall.moore@safeguarding.ie](mailto:niall.moore@safeguarding.ie).

## Proposed Amendments to the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (Membership, Procedures, Functions and Committee) Regulations (NI) 2012

The Department of Health in Northern Ireland is commencing a public consultation on proposed amendments to the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (Membership, Procedures, Functions and Committee) Regulations (NI) 2012 (the Regulations).

You can find the document at - <https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/doh-social-services-policy-group/proposed-sbni-regulations-amendments/> .

# Review of the National Case Management Committee

The monitoring of child safeguarding practice of constituent members within the Catholic Church in Ireland is one of the objectives of the National Board, and it is only right that it also monitors its own practices on a regular basis. This year a third review of the operation of the National Case Management Committee (NCMC) has been conducted by Peter Kieran, the National Board's Director of Safeguarding, and his report will be presented to the next Board meeting, on October 20<sup>th</sup>. Once approved by the Board, the report will be published on the National Board's website.

The Terms of Reference for this Review include the purposes to be served and methodology to be used in the exercise.

## **The purposes were:**

- To review the operating Terms of Reference to ensure their continued fitness for purpose;
- To assess whether the NCMC, as currently constituted and operating, provides a valuable service in offering advice to Church Authorities related to case management; and
- To make recommendations for change, if appropriate.

## **The methodology to be used was described as:**

- To obtain the views of the Church Authorities and Church bodies that avail of NCMC advice;
- To obtain the views of the Committee members;
- To obtain views of those Church Authorities who have agreed to and have paid to avail of the services of the Committee, but who have not done so; and of those Church Authorities who have decided not to use the services of the NCMC and to obtain case management advice from other sources; and
- To conduct a look-back on the operation of the NCMC since the 2017 review, in order to establish who is referring; what types of cases are being presented; whether there are any particular recurring issues; whether any patterns of change can be observed, etc.

There has been a 100% response to the questionnaires sent to the 26 dioceses on the island of Ireland. Three dioceses have not joined the NCMC, and they were sent a shorter questionnaire. Twenty-five Religious Orders have joined the NCMC and were sent the full questionnaire, to which 15 (60%) responded; and a further 29 Religious Orders that had not joined the NCMC were sent the shorter questionnaire, to which 16 (55%) responded. This is a favourable response rate to a postal questionnaire. In total, 23 dioceses have presented cases to the NCMC since January 2012, as have 31 Religious Orders / Congregations / Missionary Societies. The highest number of cases presented by a diocese is 12, and for a Religious Order / Congregation / Missionary Society is 9. A total of 273 cases have been presented for discussion and advice to the NCMC since it was established.

It is clear from the responses received that most users of the NCMC are satisfied with how the committee operates and with the quality of the advice that it provides to Church authorities. Some respondents made suggestions about how to rectify perceived weaknesses and problems, and these will be highlighted in the review report. The interpretation of the application of GDPR has been raised, predominantly by Religious Orders; and their concerns about this have led to a falling off in referrals to the NCMC from these Church bodies, something highlighted in the 2020 Annual Report of the National Board -

[https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Annual\\_Reports/NBSCCCI%20Annual%20Report%202020.pdf](https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Annual_Reports/NBSCCCI%20Annual%20Report%202020.pdf)

A full report on the review of NCMC will be submitted to the National Board in October 2021 and then be circulated across the Church and placed on the National Board's website.

# Resources

## Pornography and Safeguarding

The Apostolic Letter, *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, issued *motu proprio* by Pope Francis in June 2019, specifically mentions child pornography, which was a welcome development for everyone interested in safeguarding children. An unreflective response to child pornography is that it is a 'victimless crime', based on the incorrect assumption that, as the viewer is themselves not engaged in in-person sexual abuse, then there is no child victim. The reality of course is that every child portrayed in child pornography, whether by photographic or video images, is a non-consenting victim of the persons involved in the making of these images, and is often being actively sexually abused in the images being generated. In addition, every time these images are viewed, these children are abused again. The viewing of pornography can become addictive, and the indications are that regular viewers gravitate towards images that become more and more abusive, and/or in which the people depicted are younger and younger. Algorithms and deliberate behavioural targeting are used by content providers to quickly bring internet users who have previously viewed pornography quickly and efficiently to more graphic and explicit websites.

A US NGO named *Thorn* is an excellent source of research-based information about all aspects of child pornography. This can be accessed at <https://www.thorn.org/>

Many national Churches have developed their own documents on Integrity in Ministry, as a type of code of ethics and practice for clergy and Religious. Another US organisation named *Integrity Restored*, at <https://integrityrestored.com/overcoming-porn/> describes its purpose as follows: 'Integrity Restored provides education, training, encouragement, and resources to break free from pornography, heal relationships, and to assist parents in preventing and responding to pornography exposure which is so devastating in the lives of our children'. This organisation has developed a series of 80 podcasts - available at <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/integrity-restored-podcast/id1488667468> - on all aspects of pornography and how to deal with it, including the spiritual harm that it causes, and how for Catholics, including clergy and Religious, prayer and the Sacraments can assist recovery from porn addiction.

Children as victims is only part of the problem of internet pornography. Two other issues of concern are children accessing adult pornography, and children generating sexual images of themselves and sending these to others via sexting. These are topics that will be addressed in future Newsletters.

## Safe use of Social Media – News

It has recently come to light that Facebook, which also operates Instagram have known from their own research that a percentage of adolescent girls who use Instagram have suffered emotional and psychological harm from viewing certain shared photographic content. This story was broken by The Wall Street Journal in September 2021, described by the New York Times in an article on October 1<sup>st</sup>:

'Facebook has been in an uproar over the past few weeks, which the meetings were held to quell. The tumult began after The Wall Street Journal published a series of articles last month that showed Facebook knew about the harms of its services, including teenage girls saying that Instagram made them feel worse about themselves. The articles were based on a trove of Facebook documents, which were leaked by an unidentified whistle-blower'.

This whistle-blower has now identified herself as Frances Haugen, a former Product Manager with Facebook, and in a detailed television interview – which can be viewed on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lx5VmAdZSI> - she has outlined how algorithms are used to make teenage girls use the app more, which sets up a self-perpetuating cycle of hating their own bodies more and more.





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



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Safeguarding Sundays are days on which dioceses, parishes and religious orders focus on Child Safeguarding. Some Church bodies have widened the timescale for this event to a weekend, or a week, or, in at least one instance, a month. Church bodies have chosen their own date on which to highlight Child Safeguarding; and while the National Board has previously attempted to reach agreement with Church authorities on setting one day as the annual 'Safeguarding Sunday' for the Catholic Church in Ireland, this proposal has not been taken up.

The core idea of planning and holding a Safeguarding Sunday is to use all communications channels available to the Church body to promote the occasion, to stimulate interest among the lay faithful, and to provide them with information that they can take home to read and reflect on, and to keep for future reference. Websites, newsletters, Mass leaflets, posters and specially prepared pamphlets are used. The celebrant can prepare a special sermon for delivery at Masses, linking Child Safeguarding with scripture; or lay speakers can address the congregation after Communion, describing the work being undertaken by safeguarding personnel and providing notice of upcoming information sessions and training.

Special liturgical events that focus on the needs of complainants / victims /survivors may be held to coincide with Safeguarding Sundays, or they can be held separately. Liturgies of Lament and Repentance, walks and pilgrimages, and times of prayer and fasting have been held by different Church bodies; and while the focus and intent is somewhat different to that of the Safeguarding Sunday, some of the resources generated can be interchangeable between both types of event.

A Christian organisation in the UK, *thirtyone:eight*\*, promotes an annual Safeguarding Sunday for participating Churches there, and in 2021 the event fell on Sunday, October 10<sup>th</sup>. In preparation for this annual event, *thirtyone:eight* prepares a set of resources that can be downloaded, adapted for relevance to the specific Church body, printed out and used to support the events planned by for their congregations. It is worthwhile to view what is available on the *thirtyone:eight* website at <https://thirtyoneeight.org/news-and-events/safeguarding-sunday/resource-pack/> These include activity ideas, short films and animations, liturgy, poems and prayers, ideas for homilies, hymns and songs, and children's activity sheets. These are all of a high quality, and together provide a valuable cache from which to resource a Safeguarding Sunday initiative at diocesan, parish or Religious congregation level.

\*The name *thirtyone:eight* is a reference to verse 31:8 from the Book of Proverbs – 'Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; defend the rights of all those who have nothing'.



THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR  
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