

# NBSCCCI Newsletter

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

## Spring 2026

## 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 Safeguarding [Julie McCullough](#)

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

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

**“Abuse prevention is not a blanket to be spread over emergencies but one of the foundations on which to build communities faithful to the Gospel.”**  
Pope Francis: March 2025.

## Introduction

Dear Colleagues, Welcome to our first Newsletter of 2026. As we move into the spring, I am reminded of the vital importance of our collective efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of children within our Church community. This season, marked by reflection and renewal, offers us a moment to look back on our progress and forward to the work that remains.



Delegates from the Religious Formation Ministry Programme at Safeguarding training.

We would like to take a moment in this edition to reflect on the wonderful Religious Formation Ministry Program as they wind down. The NBSCCCI have been honoured to participate in the schedule each year to help the learners understand safeguarding in the Irish context. Pictured above is our visit to the group last November. Sr Jennifer Burke, RJM, Br. Donal Kirk CFC and Sr. Angèle Nkamsi MSHR were the shepherds of this year-long course, which prepared participants for leadership and formation ministry roles within their congregations or dioceses. We want to thank them personally for the kindness, not least for the shared lunches, the cups of tea and the always warm, open welcome. We wish them luck on the next adventurous ministry they find themselves in.

## Contents/Highlights

*Voices of Courage – Stories that Break Silence, podcast series developed by the Special Advocate for Survivors*  
*Updates on the work of the SBNI: Online Safety Hub.*  
*NBSCCCI guidance on Trips Away with Young People*  
*Director of Safeguarding- Attends Durham University's Conversation, Culture & Communion Project.*  
*Trainers' Stories: Read about some of our trainers across the country.*

At the request of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference (IEC) and the Association of Leaders of Missionaries & Religious of Ireland (AMRI), the NBSCCCI, along with Towards Peace, worked on a project aimed at gathering resources for this year's Day of Prayer for victims and survivors of abuse. The resources were designed to support parishes and Religious Bodies in their liturgies. The day this year fell on the 20th of February (First Friday in Lent). Those resources remain available [here](#) throughout the year. It has been a busy but invigorating spring here in the NBSCCCI offices. We are grateful for the support we have received for our training sessions so far in 2026. We are delighted to bring you this expanded newsletter and we hope you find the additional content useful. Please also take some time to read about the work of the Special Advisor, along with many other articles and upcoming events we hope you will find useful. Safeguarding is not a static task but a continuous journey of care and accountability. I am grateful for your unwavering dedication to making our Church a truly safe and welcoming place for all.

*Aida Sada*

# Practice Focus –Nurturing a Culture of Safeguarding

## S5.F Guidance on Trips Away with Young People

Trips away that involve young people can be an extremely rewarding and fulfilling experience for adults and the young people involved. However, to do this safely and in a way that safeguards all concerned requires careful planning and consideration. Listed below are several areas that should be considered in planning a trip away.

### Considerations for planning trips away

Have you:

- Identified the aim and outcomes of the programme?
- Followed your Church body's child safeguarding policy and procedures?
- Carried out a hazard assessment (Guidance S5.A)?
- Recruited and selected staff/volunteers using safe practice procedures (Guidance S1.A)?
- Selected a key staff member who has overall responsibility for the trip?
- Selected staff for the trip who are appropriately trained, qualified and vetted (if appropriate) (Guidance S1.B)?
- Nominated a staff member who is responsible for first aid (Guidance S5.E)?
- Ensured that you have adequate and gender-based supervision in line with your safeguarding policies and procedures (Guidance S5.C)?
- Appointed a contact person at home who has access to all information and contact details?
- Checked your own insurance and ensured that you have coverage for all activities?
- Checked that the transport has appropriate insurance, qualified drivers and seatbelts?
- Carried out an equipment safety check?
- Checked the first aid kit?
- Ensured there is a contingency plan?
- Made provisions for returning home early?
- Allocated a budget and contingency fund?
- Checked out the locations and accommodation of the trip away to ensure they have:
  - Appropriate safeguarding policy, practices and procedures in place?
  - Insurance cover?
  - Appropriately trained and qualified staff?
  - Changing areas for boys and girls (if required)?
  - Disability access (if required)?

Have the young people/participants: • Been involved as much as possible in the planning of the trip? • Agreed a code of behaviour (Guidance S3.B)? • Agreed boundaries around unstructured time? • Been given information on appropriate clothing and contact details for leaders? • Consented to the trip away (Guidance S5.A Template 4)?

Have parents/Guardians:

- Met with leaders and been informed of the programme?
- Been given a copy of the Church body's child safeguarding policy and procedures?
- Consented in writing (Guidance S5.A Template 4)?
- Given contact details, medical details including allergies, illnesses, medications and dietary requirements (Guidance S5.A Template 4)?
- Been given the contact details of the leaders and centre?
- Been given details for pick up and drop off of young people/participants?

Please see the full guidance on creating and maintaining safe environments for children and young people along with related guidance on recruiting volunteers, vetting requirements at [Creating Safe Environments - National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland](#)

# Pope Leo XIV Meets with the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors

By Teresa Devlin

On Tuesday 16th March 2025, Pope Leo XIV received the Pontifical Commission in a private audience, and in doing so demonstrated his commitment to supporting the Commission in its safeguarding ministry, and exhibited a sign of his personal dedication to ensuring the safety of children and people in vulnerable positions.

In his address, Pope Leo XIV offered a firm reminder that safeguarding is not a technical exercise but a profoundly human one and he invited the Church to recognise safeguarding as an expression of care for those whose lives have been marked by fragility and harm.

At the heart of his remarks was a simple conviction: that the protection of children and people in situations of vulnerability must arise naturally from the Church's moral imagination. Safeguarding, he suggested, ought not to be viewed as an obligation imposed by policy, but as the fruit of a faith attentive to suffering, attuned to human dignity, and willing to be shaped by the voices of those most deeply affected. The experiences of victims and survivors of abuse as well as their families, he noted, speak uncomfortable truths, yet they also illuminate a path towards healing—one which the Church cannot ignore.

Pope Leo XIV acknowledged the Commission's work, recognising that much of it takes place away from public view and often in demanding circumstances. At the same time he emphasised to the Commission that procedures alone are insufficient. What truly matters is the formation of a culture of care: a way of being that listens with patience, responds with integrity, and fosters communities where every person—especially the vulnerable—may live without fear.



Pope Leo meets the members of the Pontifical Commission  
for the Protection of Minors on 16<sup>th</sup> of March 2026

A significant feature of this year's reflection concerned the shifting nature of vulnerability to abuse and safeguarding in the digital age. Children and young people increasingly inhabit online spaces, and the Pope urged the Church to be alert to the subtle risks emerging there. Digital environments can conceal manipulation, exploitation, and isolation; safeguarding today therefore requires not only pastoral sensitivity but also a literate understanding of how online life shapes behaviour and exposes individuals to new forms of harm. This awareness, he argued, must inform both policy and pastoral practice if the Church is to protect effectively those at risk.

Pope Leo XIV also encouraged collaboration across the Church, both within the Holy See and in local communities around the world. Strengthening cooperation, he suggested, helps ensure that preventive efforts, disciplinary processes, and pastoral support are not isolated tasks but integrated expressions of the same commitment to human dignity. Pope Leo reminded us that safeguarding touches every corner of ecclesial life—formation, governance, pastoral care, and everyday encounters.

Throughout his address, Pope Leo XIV returned repeatedly to one essential truth: safeguarding begins with conversion of heart. It requires the willingness to let the suffering of others disturb complacency, the humility to learn from past failures, and the resolve to build communities—both physical and digital—where kindness, attentiveness, and safety are woven into the fabric of daily life. In this sense, safeguarding is nothing less than a work of hope: the hopeful conviction that the Church can and must be a place where trust is honoured, wounds are taken seriously, and every person, especially the vulnerable, is treated with the dignity they deserve.

## Get to Know NBSCCCI Accredited Trainers

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) maintains a network of trained safeguarding personnel who deliver standardised training across dioceses and religious congregations. Trainers are typically drawn from safeguarding offices, designated personnel, or individuals formally accredited through the NBSCCCI's Train-the-Trainer programme. This structure ensures consistency in safeguarding messaging, alignment with national standards, and a shared understanding of best practice across all Church bodies. And while training is consistent, each of those wonderful safeguarding personnel or volunteers is entirely unique. In this section of the newsletter, we want to introduce you to some of those valuable people. In this edition, we bring you a little about two of our good colleagues and their interests, along with a favourite photo. Read about Susan Gordon, from Down and Connor and John O'Reilly from Limerick.

**Susan Gordon** told us a little about her life below  
I live just outside Belfast with my husband, family, and our dog Charley, and I've always found enjoyment in sport and music. I am currently revisiting playing the clarinet, which has been a fun way to reconnect with something I loved when I was younger.

I am a qualified social worker with experience across statutory, voluntary, and faith-based settings. Alongside this, I also trained and practiced as a counsellor.

I currently work in the Down and Connor Safeguarding Office, and safeguarding training is something I genuinely enjoy. There is always more to learn, and I take something meaningful away from every session. Training is one of the most effective ways we can help prevent abuse, and it is inspiring to see the enthusiasm of volunteers in Down and Connor who want to be equipped to safeguard children and young people. Hearing volunteers reflect on how they plan to apply their learning within their parish activities is one of the most rewarding parts of the role.

I feel privileged to be part of a team of experienced, National Board Registered Trainers who give their time so willingly. Self-care is important to me and playing tennis is my favourite way to switch off and recharge, which is why I chose a photo from the tennis court to represent me. When I am on court I am only thinking about the next ball I am going to hit!



Susan in a photo that depicts happiness.

**John O'Reilly**, Director of Safeguarding and Designated Liaison Person with the Diocese of Limerick.

John is a retired Garda Inspector with 30 years' experience in serious crime investigations and crime prevention. John also worked with the United Nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina investigating Human Trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. He holds a Master's in Science in Child Protection and Welfare, a Bachelor of Arts in Police Management.

John is the author of a book "Sex Slavery the way back", which outlines an interview technique he developed to assist victims of sex slavery break their silence and ask for help.



John with a photo that depicts happiness.

# Recognising Abuse

Recognising child abuse involves paying attention to patterns of behaviour or physical signs that suggest a child may not be safe or properly cared for. Children experiencing abuse might show unexplained injuries, sudden changes in behaviour, fearfulness around certain adults, or withdrawal from friends and activities they once enjoyed. Emotional signs can include low self-esteem, excessive secrecy, or extreme reactions to normal situations. Neglect may appear as poor hygiene, persistent hunger, or untreated medical needs. Because no single sign proves abuse, it's important to consider the overall picture and trust your instincts—if something feels wrong, it's always better to seek Safeguarding guidance from a professional.

Organisations used to group child abuse into **four core categories**: physical, emotional, sexual, and neglect. These remain the foundation. However, **more than four categories are now referenced** because our understanding of how children can be harmed has expanded. This isn't because the core types changed, but because professionals now recognise **specific forms of harm that didn't fit neatly into the original four**, especially in modern and online environments. <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect>

Core vs Expanded Categories of Child Abuse

Core Category	Definition (High-Level)	Examples of Expanded / Modern Safeguarding Categories Related to It	Why It's Expanded
1. Physical Abuse	<b>Causing physical harm to a child through intentional actions.</b>	• <b>Fabricated or Induced Illness (FII)</b> • <b>Harm caused by unsafe physical punishment</b> • <b>Non-accidental injuries tracked separately</b>	<b>Better identification of specific patterns (e.g., FII) that require specialist responses.</b>
2. Emotional / Psychological Abuse	<b>Persistent actions that harm a child's emotional development or self-worth.</b>	• <b>Exposure to Domestic Abuse</b> • <b>Coercive control within the family</b> • <b>Gaslighting/manipulation</b> • <b>Emotional neglect</b>	<b>Emotional harm is broad; subcategories help professionals record more accurate risks.</b>
3. Sexual Abuse	<b>Forcing or enticing a child into sexual activities (contact and non-contact).</b>	• <b>Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)</b> • <b>Grooming (online &amp; in-person)</b> • <b>Indecent image exploitation</b> • <b>Sextortion</b>	<b>Sexual abuse involving power imbalance, grooming, or networks requires distinct interventions.</b>
4. Neglect	<b>Failure to meet a child's basic physical or emotional needs.</b>	• <b>Supervisory neglect</b> • <b>Educational neglect</b> • <b>Medical neglect</b> • <b>Nutritional neglect</b>	<b>Breaking down neglect types helps identify which aspect of care is failing.</b>
— (Not in original 4)	—	<b>Online &amp; Digital Abuse (e.g., cyberbullying, online grooming, exposure to harmful content)</b>	<b>Modern technology introduced new forms of harm not captured by the original categories.</b>
— (Not in original 4)	—	Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)	<b>Recognition that children can be exploited into crime (e.g., county lines).</b>
— (Not in original 4)	—	Trafficking / Modern Slavery	<b>Requires separate processes and multi-agency responses.</b>
— (Not in original 4)	—	Peer-on-Peer Abuse (including harmful sexual behaviour)	<b>Understanding that harm can come from peers, not only adults.</b>

# Day of Prayer for Survivors and Victims of Abuse

To all parishes and religious congregations who marked the National Day of Prayer for Survivors and Victims of Abuse with such quiet compassion, your gentle presence, reflective prayer, and willingness to hold space for those who carry deep wounds speak to the very best of our shared mission. By gathering in humility and hope, you honour survivors and victims with dignity, and you help the Church continue its journey toward truth, safety, and healing for all.

## Conversation, Culture & Communion Project: Durham University

On February 4 & 5<sup>th</sup> 2026, Julie McCullough, Director of Safeguarding at the NBSCCCI, attended the third network gathering of the *Conversations, Culture, and Communion* project in the Royal Foundation of St. Katherine in London.

From 2019 to 2023, the Centre for Catholic Studies (CCS) ran the Boundary Breaking research project, which explored the ecclesial and cultural implications of the child abuse crisis in the Catholic Church in England and Wales. The main research report based on the qualitative work was published in April 2024, titled *The Cross of the Moment*.

A supplementary, quantitative report, *Attitudes of Catholics in England and Wales towards Child Sex Abuse in the Catholic Church* was published in October 2024 to accompany the main report. Dr Patricia Jones, a contributor to the project, spoke at the NBSCCCI National Conference 2025.

To respond to the challenges outlined in the report, a three-year project was initiated out of the Centre for Catholic Studies. Led by Professor Clare Watkins, the project focusses on developing networks, and fresh understanding around these complex topics.

This third network gathering comprised of representatives from youth ministry groups, survivors' groups, safeguarding personnel, theologians and academics. The project aims to connect safeguarding with culture and theology, not just compliance. It focuses on rebuilding authentic, safe and accountable community life after abuse scandals. There is an emphasis on promoting co-responsibility between clergy, religious and laity, encouraging transparent leadership and integrating safeguarding into the life of the Church, not just its structures.

## NBSCCCI Reviews of Safeguarding Practice

At this time of the year, as annual safeguarding self-audits are completed, we are all reminded that one of the main objectives of Coimirce is to monitor compliance with legislation, **policy and best practice**. The Church's commitment to Child Safeguarding is further demonstrated through the implementation of **Reviews of Child Safeguarding Practice (Reviews)** in Church bodies. **The NBSCCCI is an independent body within the Church framework**, funded by the IEC and AMRI (*Sponsoring Bodies*). Structurally, the NBSCCCI sits outside of dioceses and religious congregations but inside the Church system overall. The review process gains operational independence through the appointment of external professionals as reviewers. Reviews are not fully externally mandated as they are dependent on invitation by a Church Leader. However, in signing an agreement to implement the Church's safeguarding policy, participation in reviews becomes obligatory as a church leader is committing to: "Engaging in systemic review of practice (including undertaking annual self-audits and external reviews of practice) to enable learning for continuous improvement" *A Safe and Welcoming Church: Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (2024)*. A *working group*, established to inform the methodology to be applied in the next round of policy-based Reviews, is close to completing its work. Some invitations to be reviewed have been submitted by Church bodies. It is envisaged that Reviews will commence around summertime 2026.

## Upcoming Training Events

**27/05/2026 in Maynooth: 10:30 – 12:30 Artificial Intelligence in a Church Safeguarding context-** This day is for Church authorities, DLPs, Safeguarding personnel and Church Leaders

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly shaping the world in which we minister, communicate and safeguard. This pastoral leadership workshop invites all to reflect prayerfully and prudently on what AI is and is not, and how it is already influencing Church life. At the same time, it will address the real concerns surrounding AI, including data protection, digital manipulation, over-reliance on automated systems, and emerging risks to children and vulnerable persons, particularly in light of safeguarding responsibilities. Participants will consider how AI may influence and reshape safeguarding procedures, governance structures and episcopal oversight, ensuring that new technologies always serve the dignity of the human person and the protection of the vulnerable, as set out in *Antiqua et Nova*. This reflective and practical gathering offers Church and safeguarding leaders the opportunity to discern together how best to respond faithfully and responsibly in a rapidly evolving digital age.

Registration is at 10 am with Tea/Coffee and scones. The event begins at 10:30 am.

Cost: €30 to register:

## DLP/Deputy DLP training

This training is designed for people who have recently taken on the role of Designated Liaison Person (DLP) or Deputy DLP, or who have never been able to attend role-specific training before. It will be co-facilitated by an experienced DLP, and it covers the following areas:

- Clarifying the role of DLP
- Hearing safeguarding concerns and record keeping
- Communication and supervision
- Conducting an internal report on cases for the Church authority

Location: Maynooth Date: 21/05/2026  
Registration at 09:30, training event begins at 10am and runs to 3pm.

**The cost for this training is €85 per person.** To learn more or book your place  
<https://www.safeguarding.ie/events/training-for-new-dlp-s-2>

## 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](mailto:admin@safeguarding.ie).

Our website provides links to Designated Liaison Person's within each diocese 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.

## Safeguarding and Renewing the Heart of Ministry

In safeguarding, we often speak about creating environments where dignity, and safety flourish. Through the Holy Thursday Chrism Mass, the Church offers the same vision. We are reminded that the ministry of every priest is rooted in healing, strengthening, and supporting. The oils blessed at this time accompany people at their most vulnerable moments in life.

For our clergy, this Mass is also about the renewal of promises made at their ordination. Perhaps a time to acknowledge the joys and burdens of their ministry.

We pray for priests who minister to those who have suffered abuse and who try to bring the healing of the Gospel to their lives. We pray they will be strengthened in their resolve to challenge all forms of abuse. Safeguarding encourages a culture where asking for help is a sign of strength not weakness.

This year, Pope Leo's monthly prayer intention places a special spotlight on priests. In his video message, he invites the whole Church to pray for those who serve in ministry—acknowledging both their generosity and the challenges they face. He speaks of those who “work hard and sometimes feel tired or lonely,” and he urges the faithful to support them with prayer, encouragement, and closeness. The Video released on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2026 can be viewed here: [Video Message “Pray with the Pope” — April: For priests in crisis - Calendar of Activities | Vatican.va](#)



Pope Leo in his video message released 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026

# Training Returns

Training returns are now required for 2025. The NBSCCCI report on training across the country through our Annual report. 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 you 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](http://www.safeguarding.ie) given to each trainer as part of their registration.
- Following log in, click the 'log a training event online' button on the top right-hand side of the screen.
- Filling in the relevant details and then submit.
- 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 user name and password please contact [acunningham@safeguarding.ie](mailto:acunningham@safeguarding.ie)

## Annual Self Audit

Thank you kindly to everyone who has completed their annual safeguarding self-audits for 2025 and submitted confirmation of their completion to the NBSCCCI. This year many congregations who have no ministry with children and are not managing cases had to recommence annual safeguarding self-audits following a period of exemption under the 2016 child safeguarding policy. We wish to acknowledge the generosity of the disalced Carmelite Sisters in New Ross who piloted a new self-audit template for this category of Church bodies and whose work has greatly assisted others in completing their annual self-audit.

Please see below links to optional self-audit templates on our website. These are in word and in excel and can be downloaded and completed offline.

- If you have ministry with children and also managing cases complete this audit:

[Ministry with children and managing cases](#)

The Church authority then notifies the NBSCCCI that this is complete.

- If you have ministry with children but no cases, you complete this audit:

[Ministry with Children: No cases](#)

The Church authority then notifies the NBSCCCI that this is complete.

- If you have no ministry with children but are managing cases, you complete this audit

[No ministry with children but managing cases](#)

The Church authority then notifies the National Board that this is complete.

*An extension until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026 was given to Church bodies who have no ministry with children and are not managing cases to inform the NBSCCCI of the completion of their annual safeguarding self-audit.*



## Barnardos Support Services

The Irish State has officially recognized the Barnardos Boarded Out Practical Support Service, providing free and confidential assistance to adults who were "boarded out" as children. This service offers specialized support for navigating records, mental health, and social services, confirming that such placements do not constitute a criminal record. For more information, visit the Barnardos website.

In his State apology on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2026, the Taoiseach Micheál Martin highlighted the Barnardos Boarded Out Practical Support Service as a key resource for adults who were "boarded out," "farmed out," or "nursed out" as children in Ireland.

This free and confidential service is designed for individuals who experienced being raised by families other than their own prior to the 1991 Child Care Act.

### Supports Available Through Barnardos

The service provides a range of practical and therapeutic aids for survivors:

- **Practical Assistance:** Helping individuals fill out complex forms and grant applications.
- **Access to Services:** Support in navigating and accessing health, community, and social services.
- **Tracing & Records:** Assistance in accessing early life records and birth history information.
- **Wellbeing Support:** Guidance for managing feelings of isolation and loneliness.
- **Therapeutic Referrals:** Direct referral to specialized therapeutic supports through [Barnardos Birth History Service](#).
- **Advocacy:** Providing information, signposting, and general advocacy for survivors' interests.

### How to Access the Service

Survivors can reach out via the following contact points:

- **Email:** [birthhistory@barnardos.ie](mailto:birthhistory@barnardos.ie)
- **Dublin Centre:** (01) 813 4100
- **Cork Centre:** (021) 203 8005
- **Galway Centre:** (091) 454 489
- **Helpline:** (01) 454 6388 (Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10am – 1pm)

## News from the Special Advocate

The **Voices of Courage** podcast is a storytelling series created by the **Special Advocate for Survivors of Institutional Abuse** in Ireland. Its main purpose is to provide a space where people who experienced institutional abuse or forced family separation can share their personal stories in their own words.

### What the podcast is about

The podcast focuses on **first-hand accounts from Survivors**. Each episode is a conversation with someone reflecting on their life experiences, including:

- Childhood in institutions such as **Mother and Baby Homes, Industrial Schools**, or similar settings
- Experiences of **forced adoption or family separation**
- The long-term impact these experiences had on their identity, family relationships, and wellbeing  
Their hopes for recognition, justice, and change in Ireland

The aim is to **break silence around Ireland's history of institutional abuse** and help ensure that Survivors' voices are heard in public conversations and policy discussions.

### Format of the series

- **Season 1** includes **four main episodes**.
- Each episode features **one Survivor telling their story in depth**.
- The conversations focus on lived experience rather than commentary or analysis.

For example, one episode features **Anne Murphy**, who was born in the **Castlepollard Mother and Baby Home** in the 1950s and later emigrated to Canada while searching for answers about her early life and family history. **Who created it** The podcast is connected to the work of **Patricia Carey**, who was appointed in 2024 as Ireland's Special Advocate for Survivors. Her role is to engage with Survivors and ensure their experiences inform the State's response to historical institutional abuse. To listen to the episodes <https://www.specialadvocate.ie/projects-and-events/podcast-page/>

The Special Advocate has also released their latest newsletter. You can find it here <https://www.specialadvocate.ie/resources/our-newsletter/>

# Hear Me Now

CEO of the NBSCCCI, Aidan Gordon, was delighted to be invited to attend the launch of *Hear Me Now* in **Dublin, on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025**: At this event the advocacy and support group Restore Together announced the launch of *Hear Me Now*, a major personal oral history-gathering initiative designed to record the lived experiences of those affected by child sexual abuse in Spiritan (previously known as Holy Ghost) schools in Ireland. It will be led by Professor Marie Keenan, Emeritus Professor of Criminal and Restorative Justice at UCD's School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice.

The initiative forms a central pillar of the wider Restorative Programme developed for victims/survivors of abuse connected to Spiritan schools. *Hear Me Now* seeks to provide a safe and respectful opportunity for people to share their experiences, have their voices heard, and contribute to a fuller public understanding of the abuse that occurred and its long-term impact. The first phase of the project will result in the publication of a report in the Spring of 2027.

Professor Keenan will oversee an independent project team with experience in working with survivors of trauma and child sexual abuse. It is designed as a victim-centred and trauma-informed process grounded in restorative principles such as dignity, respect, voluntary participation and co-design with victims/ survivors.

The *Hear Me Now* project team is inviting victims/survivors, as well as family members, former pupils, staff, and others who were affected in any way, to come forward and participate in the project.

Through confidential interviews, written submissions, or recorded narratives, participants will be able to share their experiences and perspectives. Their stories will be preserved and published — anonymously or identified, depending on each participant's preference — as part of a collective archive that aims to create a clearer picture of the experiences of those abused and the wider context in which the abuse occurred.

**Professor Marie Keenan** said the project represents an important opportunity for those affected to be heard.

“For many people who experienced abuse in Spiritan schools, their voices have never been heard or recorded.

All of these experiences form part of the historical record. *Hear Me Now* aims to create a safe space where survivors and others affected can share their experiences in their own words and on their own terms. By bringing these narratives together, we hope to deepen public understanding of what happened and to whom.

The records collected by the *Hear Me Now* initiative will be brought together and published in a publicly accessible report and online archive. Participants will also have the opportunity to raise questions, seek information, or request documentation from the Spiritan Order through the project.

**Philip Feddis of Restore Together** said the initiative is an important step in acknowledging the experiences of those affected and encouraging people who may not yet have spoken about their experiences to come forward.

“We know that many people who experienced or witnessed abuse in Spiritan or Holy Ghost schools in the 1950s, 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s and 2000s have never had the opportunity to share their history in a setting designed around their needs. *Hear Me Now* is about ensuring that their life accounts are heard and recorded with dignity and respect. We would encourage anyone who feels they have a perspective to share — survivors, family members, former pupils or staff — to consider taking part.”

Participation in the project is entirely voluntary.

Participants will decide how they wish to share their account, how it will be recorded, and whether their identity is made public or kept anonymous.

Restore Together emphasised that *Hear Me Now* is not an inquiry or investigative process, but a restorative initiative designed to gather and preserve personal narratives and perspectives.

People interested in participating in *Hear Me Now* can register their interest by contacting the project manager directly at [Clodagh@hearmenow.ie](mailto:Clodagh@hearmenow.ie).

Any victim/ survivor of abuse who wants to engage with the wider Restorative Programme, including accessing to therapy and speaking to someone for the first time about their needs can access a range of supports through the Restore Together website — [www.restoretogether.ie](http://www.restoretogether.ie)

# New Artwork to Honour Survivors of Church-Related Abuse

A significant new artwork dedicated to people harmed by spiritual and sexual abuse in the Church is set to be displayed at sites that continue to exhibit mosaics by former Jesuit Marko Rupnik, who has been accused by more than 20 women of sexual, spiritual and psychological abuse.

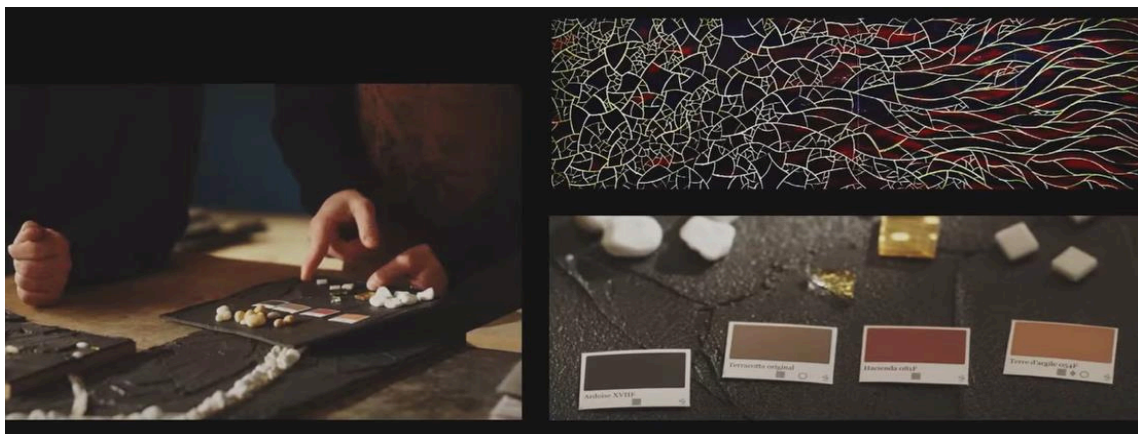
Rupnik's mosaics remain in prominent pilgrimage locations, including Lourdes, Fátima, Aparecida, the St. John Paul II National Shrine in Washington, D.C., the Sanctuary of St. John Paul II in Kraków, and several Vatican settings.

The new piece, titled *Rebirth*, is a 12.5m x 4m mosaic created by French artist **Sister Samuelle**, herself one of the women who came forward publicly in 2023–2024. She previously lived at Centro Aletti, the artistic community Rupnik founded in Rome.

Sister Samuelle describes *Rebirth* as a response to the harm she and others endured — a work that seeks to restore dignity, offer hope, and accompany survivors as they rebuild their lives. She calls it a “monument to the living,” intended to transform suffering into the possibility of renewal.

Each tile of the mosaic carries a handwritten message, prayer or name on its reverse side, contributed by survivors and those who support them across the world.

To read more about this <https://www.ncronline.org/arts-and-media/rebirth-art-project-offers-counternarrative-marko-rupniks-abuse> or to view the documentary <https://youtu.be/5liRAI3TVVc>

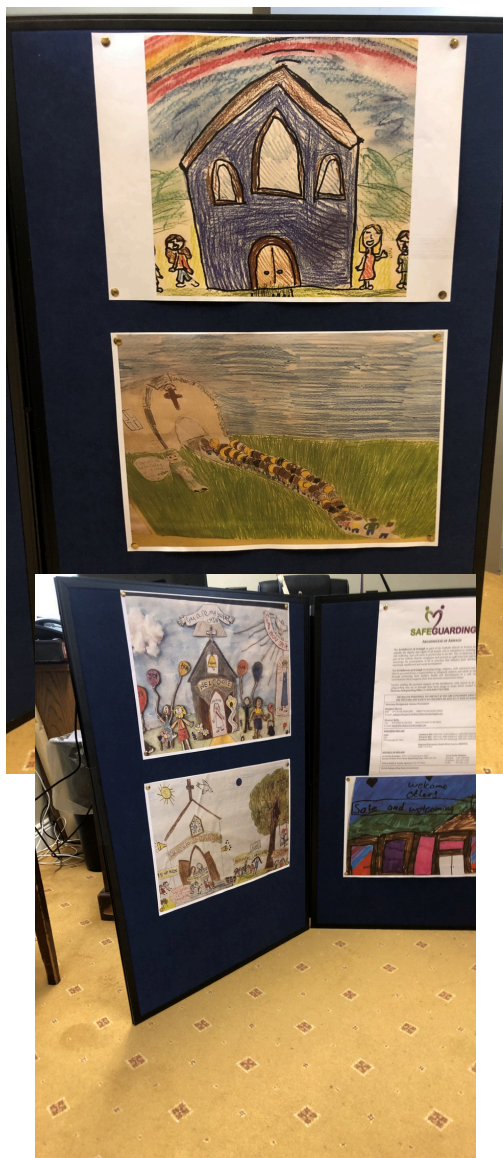


Sr Samuelle at work in her studio creating the tile mosaics.

# Good Practice Corner

On the weekend of the 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 2026 more than 300 delegates from across the Archdiocese of Armagh gathered in the Armagh City Hotel for the first Diocesan Congress on Youth, Family and Faith. Representatives from parishes, schools, clergy, families and young people came together to reflect on how the Church can better support young people and families in today's Ireland, with a strong emphasis on safeguarding and building safe, welcoming parish communities.

The Armagh Safeguarding team took the opportunity to host a safeguarding stand at the event. Using bright pictures from last year's NBSCCCI's *A Safe and Welcoming Church* Art competition, the team opened and encouraged conversations around what safeguarding means and what measures are in place to ensure safe environments for all. Below are some photos of the stand and the team.



Safeguarding Officer, Mrs Kate Mooney, alongside Mr Stehen Sherry, Director for Safeguarding Armagh Diocese.

## SBNI ONLINE SAFETY HUB

Launched in April 2024 by the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI), the Online Safety Hub is a comprehensive, multi-agency resource designed to help children, parents, and professionals navigate digital risks. Developed with Ineqe Safeguarding Group, the hub provides expert advice on topics like AI and online grooming, alongside customizable safety templates and accessibility tools.

### Key Features of the Hub

**Targeted Sections:** The platform is split into two distinct areas: one tailored for **adults (parents, carers, and professionals)** and another for **young people**.

**Comprehensive Topics:** It hosts information on critical digital issues, including:

- o **Artificial Intelligence** and emerging technologies.
- o **Online Grooming**, sextortion, and "Trust Trap" awareness.
- o **Digital Wellbeing** and managing screen time.
- o **Reporting Tools:** Clear pathways for reporting inappropriate content or concerns.
- **Accessibility:** Features integrated **assistive software**, including text-to-speech, reading support, and translation tools to reach diverse audiences.
- **Resource Repository:** Acts as a "one-stop destination" for resources from various partner organizations, including the **Education Authority (EA)** and the PSNI

You can access the hub and its various resources through this link  
<https://onlinesafetyhub.safeguardingni.org/>

## Contact Details

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

## NOTA Ireland & Northern Ireland Conference 2026

### Responses to Disclosures of Sexual and Domestic Abuse: Best Practice Approaches.

NOTA NI and NOTA ROI will host the first all-island conference in eight years, taking place on the 7th of May 2026 in Dromantine Conference Centre.

#### The Conference will focus on 3 core themes:

- **Justice responses that work:** Examining effective, fair, and compassionate responses for victims and survivors.
- **Victim, survivor, and lived experience voices:** Placing lived experience at the centre of learning and practice.
- **Trauma-informed safeguarding:** Embedding safeguarding and trauma-informed practice throughout every stage of the process.

To read more about the event, use this link <https://nota.co.uk/event/nota-ireland-northern-ireland-conference-2026/>

