

Newsletter

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

Contents/Highlights

- Updates to Garda Vetting and what this means within a Church context.
- NBSCCCI biannual conference: *"Towards a restorative and transitional justice model of engaging with victims and survivors in the Catholic Church in Ireland"*
- CEO, Aidan Gordon, talks about his experience visiting two summer camps this summer.
- A Safe and Welcoming Church Art Competition.
- Commission of Investigation into the Handling of Historical Child Sexual Abuse in Schools.

Introduction

October 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 the autumn edition of our
Newsletter. From 3rd to 5th of September
2025 we held our biannual conference
titled: *Towards a Restorative and
Transitional Justice model of engaging with
victims and survivors in the Catholic Church
in Ireland*. The months preceding the
conference had been somewhat hectic with
preparation.



Archbishop Luis Mariano Montemayor, Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland, at the opening of the NBSCCCI conference on the 3rd of September 2025.

The original idea for this Conference began
with the GAP Paper on Transitional Justice
produced by our predecessors in the
national office

https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/GAP_Papers/Gap%20paper%2012.pdf.

The event aimed to enhance the
understanding we all have of how we must
engage in a just and restorative way with
those who have suffered harm in the Church
in Ireland.

The Conference was a time of work and was
demanding of your thought and heart and
to that end, I want to thank all who
attended and supported this valuable event.
(see more about the Conference 2025 on pg 3)

Other important events occurred over
recent months, specifically around
changes to garda vetting. While we have
begun to address some of the changes
that have happened, we still have some
work to complete. Read about what we
have done with the help of many of our
safeguarding colleagues across the
country within this newsletter.

Within this edition of the newsletter, we
also put some much-deserved focus on
the work of the *National Advocate for
Survivors of Institutional Abuse* and her
office. Patricia Carey and her group
published their first annual report which
covers the activities and engagements of
the Special Advocate office between
March 2024 and March 2025. It details the
many issues raised by survivors and
affected persons. It also includes the
recommendations developed by the
Special Advocate in response to these
important issues.

The upcoming metropolitan meetings are
highlighted within this copy of the
newsletter. The meetings, very kindly
hosted by the four Archbishops, are an
opportunity to reflect on key areas
impacting safeguarding in our Church.
This year, we are pleased to have *Towards
Peace* and *Towards Healing* presenting at
the meetings alongside us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aidan Gordon'.

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.

The Special Advocate for Survivors of Institutional Abuse

In June this year, the Special Advocate for Survivors of Institutional Abuse Patricia Carey and her office released its first annual report.

Within the report, Patricia outlines her first year in office and meeting 1300 survivors of institutional abuse and forced family separation here in Ireland as well as overseas.

The annual report highlights some key areas of concern for survivors, such as

1. Full and unredacted access to records.
2. Inclusion of all survivors in state redress schemes.
3. Prioritisation of health and housing for survivors.
4. Identification of all burial grounds of those who died in institutions and funding for dignified burial and local memorialisation.

A range of other issues and recommendations are highlighted in her report, which uses:

- Establishment of an independent investigation into vaccine trials conducted without consent on thousands of children in institutions in the 1960s and 1970s.
- Establishment of an independent DNA and genealogy service for those whose births were illegally registered and for those seeking family tracing.
- Ease of access to Irish passports for those trafficked abroad for the purposes of adoption.
- More support and resources for those survivors living overseas, particularly in the UK and USA.

To read the full report and more on the work of the special advocate please go to

<https://www.specialadvocate.ie/our-work/annual-report/>

Ecclesiastical Provincial Area Meetings

As in previous years, the NBSCCCI is organising a series of four meetings, hosted by the four Archbishops. The purpose of the meeting is for staff from the National Office to meet with Bishops, Provincials, Superiors and safeguarding personnel from dioceses, religious congregations and orders across the ecclesiastical province area, to discuss common issues of interest, and to consider how further improvements in safeguarding practice can be made. This year we are delighted to let you know that *Towards Peace* and *Towards Healing* will be joining us at three of these sessions. Meetings are being held on the following dates:

Tuam: 05/11/2025

Cashel and Emly: 06/11/2025

Dublin: 10/11/2025

Armagh: 20/11/2025

Places can be booked online at this link: [National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland - Events](#)

National Conference 2025 – ‘Towards a Restorative and Transitional Justice Process of Engagement with victims and Survivors in the Catholic Church in Ireland’

The NBSCCCI held their biannual National Conference from the 3rd-5th September this year in the Sheraton Hotel, Athlone. The Conference was fully subscribed with 150 delegates joining us. For the first time a mixture of survivors, academics and Church Leaders presented and were joined by colleagues and Safeguarding professionals in considering the wealth of information and insight that was provided.

We are very grateful to all who generously gave of their time to present to us, whether they were survivors who shared some of their often harrowing experiences, or the academics who provided us with research frameworks within which to situate our thinking on how best to respond to the radical call of the Gospel. Thanks also to those Church bodies who gave us an insight into their work and some of the challenges that we will face in trying to respond to the needs of those who have been hurt in the Church in Ireland.



The overwhelming positivity of the feedback we have received confirms our conviction that it is only by speaking and listening together that we will be able to effectively journey towards healing for all who have been impacted by abuse; those who have survived that abuse and those who have feel betrayed by the abuse perpetrated in the past by those who were members of our Church. That journey will be difficult at times, and we will have to speak and hear things that make us uncomfortable and challenged, yet that is what we are called to do. We must commit to just outcomes, especially for those who have been most hurt.

The other clear message from the Conference was one of hope, epitomised in the Jubilee Prayer, which we prayed together at the beginning of each day. Being pilgrims of hope is not optional; rather it is mandatory for Christians, and especially for those of us who work in this arena.

On behalf of the NBSCCCI I would like to thank sincerely everyone who made this Conference possible and such a success. Thanks are also due in no small measure to our own staff, particularly Lyn, Julie, Imelda and Ann. Their hard work and dedication made the whole event very worthwhile. Thanks to everyone who participated in, and organised, our Liturgies. They certainly added to the prayerfulness of the Conference, as did the availability of a Prayer Room in the hotel.

The NBSCCCI staff will now give consideration to the presentations from the Conference and the feedback received in order to see what the next steps for us might be. The potential to offer a further GAP Paper on the topic is one option under consideration, as is the possibility of issuing guidance on the operation of any Redress or Restorative Justice process a Church body may wish to undertake. Your feedback on any possible actions is welcome, so please send your thoughts to myself, Lyn or Julie.

Some of the feedback we have received advised that the programme was very packed and intense. This, and other helpful suggestions on how the Conference could be improved, are very welcome and will be incorporated into our thinking when we begin planning for the 2027 Conference.

Aidan Gordon, CEO

NBSCCCI

Knockadoon and Dromantine Summer camp visits

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to visit two of the many Youth Summer Camps which take place around the country. On the 10th July, I was in Knockadoon, Co. Cork, for the annual Dominican Summer Camp and on the 21st July, I visited the SMA Summer Camp in Dromantine, just outside Newry in Co. Down. These visits were in response to the suggestion from the Directors that it would be useful for me to see 'safeguarding in action'. This would, it was hoped, enable me to reassure myself and the Directors that our work around good safeguarding practices in engaging with children and young people was having a practical outcome.



Aidan Gordon at Knockadoon with a group of Summer camp leaders and Fr John Harris OP and Mary Tallon DLP.

To say that the experience was inspirational would be a gross understatement. Across both visits I observed really strong practices around ensuring the children entrusted to our care were kept safe and informed of what to do if they were in any way uncomfortable or upset. The support the leaders received from the Safeguarding personnel and the Provincial Leadership of both Church bodies demonstrated a commitment to good safeguarding practice allied to a determination to ensure our young people are informed of the good news of the Gospel. The leaders in each camp were such fantastic young people themselves and invariably had been previous attendees at the camps. They came from all walks of life and volunteered their time each year to ensure others had a positive and enriching experience of engaging with the Church.

The clear message that I was able to take back was that there is a hunger among our young people for a message of hope and meaning, and we have an opportunity to provide that. My hope is that these camps, and the numerous others which take place each year, will continue to be places of welcome and safety for our young people. From our perspective here at the NBSCCCI we will continue to support their development by keeping you updated on best safeguarding practice around their organisation.

My sincere thanks to Fr John Harris OP and Mary Tallon, DLP for inviting me to Knockadoon and to Fr Anthony Kelly SMA and Rosarie O'Riordan, DLP for welcoming me to Dromantine.

Aidan Gordon

The Way

In this section we continue our focus on *The Way*, a digital multimedia platform set up by the Irish Bishops' Conference dedicated to sharing the Good News and the witness of the Catholic Church in Ireland. In the link below, Archbishop John Kennedy, Secretary for Discipline at the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, in Rome shares with us his vocation story, how he came to work in the Vatican, and the challenge of leading the Discipline office that deals with cases of the abuse of minors by clergy, which he calls 'the worst of the worst'.

<https://theway.ie/every-suffering-of-the-church-is-yours/>



Archbishop John Kennedy talks to The Way.

National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland

Child Safeguarding Reviews

***“Their mission is to promote safeguards: education that informs, oversight that prevents, listening that restores dignity...by embedding preventative measures even in the most remote communities, they are making a promise- that every child, every vulnerable person, will find safety within the Church “
Pope Francis, March 2025***

Child Safeguarding Reviews assist the Catholic Church in cultivating a strong safeguarding culture, identifying examples of good practice and pinpointing areas that require further development. They are an essential component of the continuous quality improvement process in safeguarding practices within the Catholic Church in Ireland, demonstrating a proactive approach to child safeguarding.

The third phase of child safeguarding reviews in the Catholic Church in Ireland will seek to assess the practice of all Church bodies which hold a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) against the three standards set out in *A Safe and Welcoming Church: Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2024*:

- Leadership, Governance & Accountability
- Nurturing a Culture of Safeguarding
- Responding Pastorally and Reporting According to Civil & Canon Law

In the spirit of pastoral care and openness the review framework will strive to support Church bodies to strengthen abuse prevention; identify safeguarding risks; foster environments where children are not only protected but valued and heard while responding holistically to victims and survivors of child abuse.

This will be achieved by:

- Ensuring comprehensive and consistent implementation of *A Safe and Welcoming Church: Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2024* by Church bodies
- Promoting continuous improvement in safeguarding practices
- Providing accountability to children, abuse survivors, the faithful, Church leaders, statutory authorities, and the public
- Enhancing transparency and trust in the Church's safeguarding structures
- Supporting a continuous learning culture of safeguarding in the Church

The nature and extent of a Church body's safeguarding activity will determine which Review Category is ascribed as per *A Safe and Welcoming Church: Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2024*, Appendix D. The four Review Categories are:

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

Julie is currently in the process of establishing a working group who will determine the methodology to be applied to the third round of child safeguarding reviews. It is anticipated that this next phase of review will commence in early 2026.

Garda Vetting

The *National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016* make it mandatory for people carrying out relevant work with children or vulnerable adults to be vetted.

The *Compliance Unit* in the Garda National Vetting Bureau ensure that relevant organisations are adhering to their statutory obligations. One of these obligations is to only vet people who carry out relevant work and that no applicant will engage in relevant work/activities **until a vetting disclosure has been officially received from the organisation** on behalf of the Garda National Vetting Bureau.

An individual cannot make a vetting application on their own behalf. Vetting is always carried out by the relevant organisation for which the applicant works/volunteers.

Since 7th July 2025 all Garda vetting applications must satisfy the terms of EU directive 2011/93¹ which requires EU countries to carry out enhanced police checks for sexual offences when processing vetting applications. If an applicant has lived outside of the Republic of Ireland/ Northern Ireland in an EU country and/or the UK, their Garda Vetting application must satisfy the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS) terms and as a result the application process will now take longer. The processing of these applications will take up to 10 additional working days for EU countries and up to 20 additional working days for the UK. These timeframes are in addition to the standard 8 to 10 working days, meaning the total processing time may be significantly longer in these cases.

The enhanced police checks are for sexual offences only and therefore these changes do not replace the existing requirement for Police Clearance Certificates. It is important to note that if an applicant has lived outside of the Republic of Ireland/Northern Ireland for six+ consecutive months, they must still provide a Police Clearance Certificate from each country they lived in during that time in addition to Garda Vetting.

The Garda National Vetting Bureau have been providing mandatory training to Garda Vetting Liaison Persons across Ireland since June 2025 to introduce the enhanced requirements, alongside updated identification verification requirements. Training is now mandatory for anyone verifying documentation for Garda vetting applications, this includes affiliates and validators.

An e-training program, created collaboratively between the Munster Safeguarding Liaison Persons Group, the Archdiocese of Dublin, and the NBSCCCI aims to support Church bodies to meet the requirements of *Article 10(3) of the Directive 2011/93/EU* and subsequent updates to the Garda vetting process. It is anticipated that it will be available on the NBSCCCI website from the end of October 2025.

¹Article 10(3) of the Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA and Criminal Records (Exchange of Information) Act 2019.

[illegible]

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 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 delivered in partnership, is to agree, which trainer will record the training on the site. One trainer can then complete on both trainers' behalfs.

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 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

Train the Trainer for 2025

Our proposed Train the Trainer course in child safeguarding will take place in November this year. Please see the details outlined here. The event requires a minimum of 10 attendees in order to go ahead.

Location: Shearwater Hotel, Marina Point, Dunlo, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway - [Shearwater Hotel | Four Star Hotel in Galway](#)
Attendance at all sessions is required to complete the course.

Dates: Wednesday 12th 6:30 pm- 9:30 pm via Microsoft Teams

Saturday and Sunday, 15th and 16th November in person

Wednesday 26th 6:30 pm- 9:30 pm via Microsoft Teams

Saturday and Sunday, 29th and 30th November in Person.

The training course is only for those who you would wish to become registered trainers for three years with the NBSCCCI. As the Church body, you must appoint and approve any delegate you wish to send.

The content of the programme will include:

- Context, Group work skills and facilitation skills
- Delivering the safeguarding children programme
- Assessment by a tutor and peers
- Final assessment by a tutor registered with the NBSCCCI

Costs

Cost for one attendee: €950

Cost for two attendees from same Diocese/Order: €1500

Cost for three attendees from the same Diocese/Order: €2000

Full price to be paid on completion of the course. Please note terms and conditions/late cancellation terms [Terms and Conditions- Training attendance.pdf](#)

If you would be interested in booking a space for one or more attendees please register here: [National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland - Train the Trainer 2025-Training Events](#)

For more information contact acunningham@safeguarding.ie

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



We are thrilled to let you know that the halls of New House are bright and colourful, thanks to over 400 submissions we received from children, young people, and schools.

To view a video collage of many of the entries, please go to this link <https://www.safeguarding.ie/news-events/a-safe-and-welcoming-church-art-competition-2025>



Below is a taster of the wonderful interpretations we have received about what a safe and welcoming church looks like.

Winners from each category can be seen on the next page of this Newsletter. Thank you to each and every child who took part in this competition.



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

Winning Entries

Extra abilities

Winners in the Extra ability category

1st Prize: Room 8, St Vincent's Special National School, Navan Road, Dublin.



2nd Prize: Fiachra Caulfield, Irish Town National School, Claremorris



3rd Prize winner: Lana, St Aidan's Comprehensive School, Coolehill, Co.Cavan



Winners in the 16yr to 18yr and 13yr to 15yrs categories.

16yrs to 18yrs

Winner: Daniel Walsh from Claremorris, Co Mayo with his depiction of Pope John Paul II



13yrs to 15yrs Winners

Winners: First prize Sarah Cronin, Claregalway.



2nd prize winner: Eva Kissane, St Aidan's Secondary School, Coolehill



Winners in the 9yrs to 12yrs category.

9yrs to 12yrs category winners

1st Prize: Jessica O'Neill: St Patrick's School, Mullinahoe, Dungannon



2nd Prize: James McDevitt, Scoil Naomh Duigh, Agaire, Co.Donegal.



3rd Prize: Rosha Ní Bhaill, Scoil Naomh Duigh, Agaire, Co.Donegal.



Winners in under 8yrs category

Under 8yrs

1st Prize: Eva Barton New Row, St Patrick's, Castledawson, Magherafelt.



2nd Prize: Daithí Peoples, Magherafelt.



3rd Prize: Shared between Elise, Jessica and Amelia O'Oriscoll, Drumiceen, Co. Donegal





NBSCCCI GOOD PRACTICE CORNER

In the NBSCCCI we are aware of the excellent work that goes on across Church bodies to promote safeguarding. To support this work, we want to highlight good safeguarding practices that provide reassurance of the measures in place to keep all children and young people safe in the Church, and to inspire others.

In this edition of our Newsletter, we are highlighting the Diocese of Meath's quarterly safeguarding newsletter. In their Spring publication they are shouting out their commitment to safeguarding through education and information. To have a look at their newsletter please follow this link:

<https://www.meathsafeguarding.ie/newsletter>

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

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

On the 8th of July 2025 the Government approved the establishment of a Commission of Investigation into the Handling of Historical Child Sexual Abuse in Schools, which was the primary recommendation of [the Report of the Scoping Inquiry](#).

In contrast to the Scoping Inquiry, which investigated only schools run by Religious orders, the Commission will examine alleged abuse in all types of schools. The Commission is to submit its final report to the Minister for Education and Youth within five years of its establishment.

The Commission will not only be tasked with examining the historic handling of abuse within the schools, but also the handling of concerns of abuse within An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive (previously Health Boards) and the Department of Education.

The Commission, under its terms of reference, may consider abuse that occurred between 1927 and 2013. To read more about the Commission and its work please go to the link below

[Commission of Investigation into the Handling of Historical Child Sexual Abuse in Schools](#)

Contact Details

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