

Newsletter

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

Contents/Highlights

- A look back at Pope Francis' work in the furtherance of child protection.
- Hopes and expectations for Pope Leo XIV's Papacy and his first meeting with the Papal Commission for the Protection of Minors.
- NBSCCCI biannual conference: *"Towards a restorative and transitional justice model of engaging with victims and survivors in the Catholic Church in Ireland"*
- A Safe and Welcoming Church Art competition coming in September 2025!

Introduction

June 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](#)

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

Dear Colleagues,
Welcome to the June edition of our Newsletter. The last few months have seen a time of change across the Church with the death of Pope Francis, a leader who worked to highlight some of the major issues of our time such as global warming, women's rights and indeed safeguarding the vulnerable. We take time in this edition to reflect on his influence in child safeguarding.

Pope Leo XIV, the 267th successor to St Peter, delivered his first mass as pontiff on the 9th of May 2025. We have great hope he will continue and indeed enhance the safeguarding work undertaken by Pope Francis.



Pope Francis greets a child on the 1st November 2024 at a gathering which featured children from 84 different countries, part of an event sponsored by the Dicastery for Culture and Education dedicated to the theme "Let Us Learn From Boys and Girls."

These last few months have been a time of reflection within the NBSCCCI with the passing of two individuals who contributed to our work across the years. We extend our sympathy to the family of Michael Ringrose, a former Board member of the NBSCCCI who retired in 2000, and whose support for child safeguarding within the Church was unwavering.

On the 25th of April we lost our dear friend Sr Colette Stevenson and we take a little time to reflect on the work and impact of Sr Colette within this Newsletter.

Details for our biannual conference are now firmly set. We welcome your support through this gathering and hope that we can all collaborate to create lasting strategies and principles of engagement with victims and survivors.

By the time this Newsletter reaches you, the NBSCCCI's Annual Report 2024/25 will have been published. The report provides details of much of the work the NBSCCCI has engaged in over the past twelve months. We have a number of roles, which include advising individual Church bodies on best child safeguarding practice, which we do through providing case management advice, training, and policy review.

This annual report brings a focus on a significant increase in the number of new allegations notified to the NBSCCCI. We look a little more at this on Page 2 of this Newsletter and also provide a link to the full report.

Take some time to read about the annual report and other safeguarding children matters within this Newsletter.

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

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 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.

NBSCCCI Annual Report 2024/25.

As a Church we strive to improve our child safeguarding practice, to learn from the mistakes of the past and ensure effective safeguarding practices and measures are in place in all Church activities. The NBSCCCI's annual report reflects the work completed each year to further this collective work and this year our annual report for the period 1st of April 2024 – 31st March 2025 was published following the AGM on the 9th of June. Read the report at this link [NBSCCCI Annual report 2024/25](#)

"There has been a significant increase in the number of new allegations notified to the NBSCCCI," said Aidan Gordon, CEO. "They rose to 385 in 2024/25 from 252 in 2023/24 and are the highest in any period since we began publishing the figures annually in 2009.

This represents an increase of over 50% in the number of new allegations notified and is the highest number of any reporting. This increase in notifications was predominantly from September of 2024 and coincided with the release of the Report of the Scoping Inquiry into ***Report of the Scoping Inquiry into Historical Sexual Abuse in Day and Boarding Schools Run by Religious Orders*** and the subsequent media coverage. These events in September 2024 appear to have given individuals renewed strength to tell of their experiences. While this is undoubtedly an extremely difficult undertaking for those who have suffered any type of abuse as a child, it is good to be able to begin to address that trauma and we are grateful for the production of such a comprehensive and far-reaching report by Mary O'Toole SC."

The Way

The Way is 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 Aidan Gordon, CEO of the NBSCCCI, takes some time with interviewer and Pod Cast presenter Wendy Grace to chat about the latest update of the Church's Safeguarding Policy, the need to avoid complacency and the vital contribution of parish volunteers. <https://theway.ie/a-safe-and-welcoming-church/>



Aidan Gordon CEO NBSCCCI talks with Wendy Grace

Pope Francis; a shepherd of the people

Two hundred and fifty thousand people from all walks of life poured into St Peter's square while millions looked on via various media platforms on the 26th of April 2025 when Pope Francis was laid to rest. His life and ministry celebrated through his funeral where he was described as "a Pope among the people". During his funeral Cardinal Giovanni Battista reflected on the many times he used his position of influence to shed light on the problems and challenges of our times.

Within the area of safeguarding Pope Francis leaves behind a legacy of actions towards enhancing the protection of those most vulnerable across the world.

In 2013, just months into his Papacy, he amended Vatican City State's penal code to include explicit definitions of sexual crimes and aligned it with international standards. In 2014, he established the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors (PCPM), a body of experts tasked with advising the Holy Father on effective policies for the protection of minors and vulnerable adults and educational programmes for all. Read all about the work of the commission to date at this link [Mission - Tutela Minorum](#). In 2022 Pope Francis ensured that the PCPM became formally integrated into the Roman Curia under the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

In May of 2019 the motu proprio, "Vos Estis Lux Mundi" ("You are the light of the world"), which spelled out procedures for holding bishops accountable not only for committing abuse, but also for covering up or failing to address abuse allegations, was published. You can read more about this document here through the NBSCCCI's gap paper on the topic [GAP Paper 6- Shedding Light on Vos estis lux mundi.pdf](#)

On the 28th March this year Pope Francis called for a proactive approach to child protection urging that child protection and safeguarding become embedded as a fundamental part of Church culture. You can read the full details of this communication [Message of the Holy Father to the participants at the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors \[24-28 March 2025\] \(20 March 2025\) | Francis](#).

Pope Francis saw and called for a world where human dignity is cherished and prioritised. In October 2020 he wrote his encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti* in which he asked us to contribute to building a just and peaceful world where we would commit to an emphatic 'NO' to not just war but the crime of indifference. [Fratelli tutti \(3 October 2020\) | Francis](#)

In February of this year Pope Francis held the inaugural International Summit on Children's Rights within the Vatican. He brought together experts from all around the world to collaborate on the global crisis of millions of children without basic human rights. [To the World Leaders participating in the Summit on Children's Rights \(3 February 2025\) | Francis](#).

Pope Francis spoke about and advocated for a zero tolerance approach to abuse and he called this approach non-negotiable and irreversible.

We give thanks for Pope Francis, for his work on safeguarding, his understanding and commitment to those who might otherwise have been forgotten and lost.

In this Jubilee year of Hope we continue to walk his path of zero tolerance for abuse of any kind and indeed a zero tolerance approach to complacency in child protection.

Pope Leo XIV

As Pope Leo XIV begins his Papacy, we hope and pray that his approach to safeguarding will be one of strong leadership, accountability and most of all transparency. Here Teresa Devlin former CEO of the NBSCCCI and current member of the Pontifical Commission tells us about the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minor's (PCPM) first meeting with Pope Leo.



06.06.25 Founding President (PCPM) Cardinal O Malley, and Adjunct secretary Teresa Kettelkamp with among other Teresa Devlin at the first meeting between Pope Leo XIV and the Papal Commission for the Protection of Minors.

"It was an honour and privilege to meet with Pope Leo so early in his Pontificate, a sign of his commitment to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Members provided an update on the work in relation to developing guidelines (Teresa Devlin); on the Memorare Initiative (Patricia Espinoza; and on the Annual Report (Maud de Boer-Buquicchio). There was also an opportunity for Archbishop Thibault Verny to share some insights into his visits to the Ivory Coast and for Juan Carlos Cruz, a survivor of abuse to give personal testimony about the impacts of abuse by a priest on his life and faith. Pope Leo listened attentively and demonstrated his support for the work of the PCPM and for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults in the Catholic Church world-wide."

Sr Colette Stevenson; A life well lived.

Presentation Sister / Former Director of Professional Standards and member of the National Case Management Committee

On the 25th April our dear friend and colleague Sr Colette Stevenson passed away peacefully in the Mater Hospital.



Colette, originally from Turners Cross in Cork, had a passion for understanding but most of all for doing. A teacher for a number of years before moving on to work in a retreat centre, Sr Colette observed a lack of support provided to families after a tragedy. Ever the pragmatist Colette completed a masters in Family and Marriage Therapy in the USA so that she could offer support to those she met through her work. By 1995 the extent and awfulness of the knowledge of abuse of children within the Catholic Church in Ireland was reaching its peak and it was in this year that Colette became the Director of the C.O.R.I Child Protection Office.

In 2006, Colette moved to the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland as Director of Professional Standards. It was here that Colette supported and guided, along with her colleagues and a willing Church, the pathway of policy and procedure in child safeguarding across the Church in Ireland.

In 2012, Colette "retired" from her role but as we all know, she did not ever step back. She continued to serve on the Board of the NBSCCCI and co-facilitated training regularly. Sr Colette was also a highly respected and valued member of the National Case Management Committee (NCMC) where she lent her vast experience and compassionate approach to supporting in complex cases.

Colette was known for her quick wit and sense of humour, her kindness and compassion and was always a listening ear.

We will miss her but we thank God for her enduring impact on those she met through her life and ministry. We know that Colette meant much to many people and at this sad time we remember in our prayers her colleagues and friends in the Presentation community along with her family; siblings Veronica, Sam, Pat, Brendan & Miriam, nieces, nephews, grandnieces, grandnephews, relatives and very many friends.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a h-anam dílis.

IRISH ATTITUDES TO TACKLING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

On the 1/05/2025 One in Four, along with the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality, Norma Foley TD, launched a landmark report recognising child sexual abuse as a crisis in Irish society today, but also highlighting the barriers that have prevented affective action in Ireland to date.



Aidan Gordon CEO of NBSCCCI pictured with Dr Karen Hand chief researcher and One in Four CEO Deirdre Kenny.

Shockingly the report highlighted a CSO survey on sexual violence published in 2022 that shows 41% of young adults in the age range 18yrs to 24yrs in Ireland have experienced sexual violence in childhood, in person and on-line. Statistics also tell us that the offending is committed for the most part by friends and romantic partners who are likely to be in the same age range themselves.

• The offender patterns within child sexual violence have changed markedly over time. Changes in society and culture mean that people who offend are now less likely to be authority figures, but the majority of people who offend are now themselves young people.

Image; Taking a Whole of Society approach to tackling Child Sexual Violence

This report asks us all to acknowledge, understand and discuss child sexual violence.



Taking a Whole of Society approach to tackling Child Sexual Violence

This report makes for a very sad read as it outlines that abuse is not a thing of the past; it is happening in homes, schools, sports clubs, peer to peer and increasingly, through online spaces.

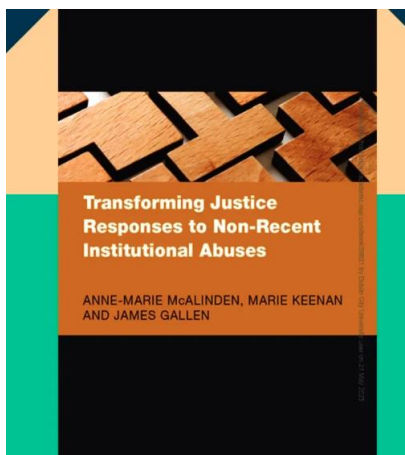
The report does however offer us a framework on which to build a collaborative whole of society approach that could improve our collective wellbeing, healthy development and respectful boundaries for all people - young and old.

To read the report in full please go to this link

<https://oneinfour.ie/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/One-in-Four-Irish-Attitudes-to-Tackling-Child-Sexual-Abuse.pdf>

Reframing Justice Responses to Non-Recent Institutional Abuses.

On Thursday 28th of May 2025 Prof Anne-Marie McAlinden from Queen's University Belfast, Prof Marie Keenan from UCD, and Dr James Gallen from DCU released their book and final policy report on Transforming Justice Responses to Non-Recent institutional Abuses. The project was part of a three-year project funded by The Higher Education Academy North-South Research Grant, with support from the British Academy and an Arts and Humanities Research Council Fellowship. The project examined justice responses to non-recent institutional abuses by church and state in both jurisdictions in a comparative, international and interdisciplinary context and explored how they can be enhanced



Transforming Justice Responses to Non-Recent institutional Abuses

For the summary of the final policy report please go to the link below. This summary document gives an overview of the project aims and methods along with a number of recommendations towards new justice approaches https://transformingjusticeproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/ReframingJusticeResponses_Final_Report_DIGITAL.pdf

Other outputs from the project can be viewed on [Project Outputs – Transforming Justice Project](#) . These include articles and pod casts that explore the topic of Justice in this context.

To download and read the full book which takes a thorough look at the topic through interviews with 74 key stakeholders, including survivors, legal professionals, and institutional (Church and State) representatives go to this link; [Transforming Justice Responses to Non-Recent Institutional Abuses | Oxford Academic](#)



Prof Anne-Marie McAlinden from Queen's University Belfast, Prof Marie Keenan from UCD, and Dr James Gallen from DCU

Training Returns

Training returns are now required for the last twelve months. The NBSCCCI report on training across the country through our annual report with the reporting period from 1st of April to the 31st of March each year. 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

Safeguarding Committee Training

As outlined in the Training Strategy, training for safeguarding committees will be delivered locally at a time and date that suits the members. We have decided to use this approach to train safeguarding committees due to the large number of volunteers who are part of the safeguarding committee structure. If you would like to avail of this training please send an email to the Director of Training and Support (lyn.mcdermott@safeguarding.ie) and outline: The training needs you have identified for your safeguarding committee. The length of time you need training for and dates that you wish the training to be delivered. Price for this training will be confirmed in discussion with the Director of Training and Support

Durham University PhD Studentship on Contextual Safeguarding in Catholic Church Contexts

The Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University is inviting applications from individuals to undertake a fully funded 3-year PhD on the topic of Contextual Safeguarding in Catholic Church Contexts.

- Do you believe that safeguarding in faith contexts needs to privilege the voices, experiences, and wisdom of children and young people?
- Do you want to contribute to creating safe and healthy relationships and life-giving environments in Catholic Church contexts?
- Do you hold a good Master's degree (or equivalent)?

If you answered yes to these three questions, this could be a perfect post-graduate opportunity for you.

The Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University is inviting applications from individuals to undertake a fully funded 3-year PhD on the topic of Contextual Safeguarding in Catholic Church Contexts. The post is jointly hosted between the Centre for Catholic Studies and the new Global Centre for Contextual Safeguarding (Department of Sociology), both based at Durham University. The post is funded by Porticus UK.

The successful candidate will undertake a PhD program related closely to the work being carried out in the Conversations, Culture and Communion project based at the Centre for Catholic Studies.

For more information on this innovative opportunity: <https://www.durham.ac.uk/research/institutes-and-centres/catholic-studies/about-us/news/durham-university-phd-studentship-on-contextual-safeguarding-in-catholic-church-contexts/>

Safeguarding children through their involvement

Organisations and individuals working with children have responsibilities under the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and the Children First Act, 2015 to safeguard children and should have child safeguarding procedures and practices in place.

By promoting the voice and involvement of children we are ensuring the inherent, inviolable and inalienable right of each child to be listened to as required by the

[Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#)

Tusla through their Children First Information and Advice Service (CFIAS) have released a booklet that aims to support any organisation to engage and involve parents and children. You can find access to the booklet here [CFIAS Safeguarding Children Through Their Involvement.pdf](#)



A Safe and Welcoming Church; Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2024 published by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI), is informed by and embedded in Gospel values and in the rights of children. It presents the most up-to-date, best-practice guidance that all members of the Catholic Church in Ireland should adhere to in order to ensure that all ministry with children is safe.

The NBSCCCI is asking what the revision of the child safeguarding policy has really meant for children and young people, how has it impacted their feelings of safety within the Church.

With the above in mind the NBSCCCI is running an art competition!

Through this art competition we are calling on categories of children from any age up to 18 years to have an artistic say in what a safe and welcoming Church means to them.

The Competition will invite art including written submissions, paintings, sculptures or photography from age categories of children and young people up to the age of 18 years.

Category 1: 8 years and younger

Category 2: 9 years to 12 years

Category 3: 13 years to 15 years

Category 4: 16 years to 18 years

Dates: The competition opens on the 1st of September 2025 and closes on the 30th of September 2025. Any entries received after this time cannot be considered and will be returned with apologies.

Original art work must be submitted (no photocopies or scanned images can be accepted).

Original artwork must be delivered by hand or by post to NBSCCCI, New House, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, Co Kildare.

To read all about the competition and see the rules please go to [National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland - A Safe and Welcoming Church Art Competition 2025](#)

NBSCCCI's Biannual Conference

We are nearing the date for the NBSCCCI's child safeguarding conference for 2025. This event will take place in the Sheraton Hotel, Athlone, Co. Westmeath across the 3rd, 4th and 5th of September. The event will commence at 2pm on Wednesday the 3rd with an opening address moving into an afternoon of presentations before Mass in St. Peter & Pauls Church, Forthill House, the Batteries, Athlone (a four minute walk from the hotel) The first day will close with dinner at 7pm.

A full day's conference will take place the following day, Thursday 4th of September with an informal dinner in the evening.

The conference will conclude following lunch on Friday 5th of September.

The theme of the conference is ***"Towards a restorative and transitional justice model of engaging with victims and survivors in the Catholic Church in Ireland"***

The registration fee for the conference is €200 and includes meals and breaks but does not include accommodation.

NOTE: the registration fee is a flat rate of €200 whether you attend 1, 2, or all 3 days of the conference. We encourage attendees to join for the full three days to maximise the experience, but the fee remains the same for shorter attendance. To book your place on the conference please use this link

[National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland - NBSCCCI National Safeguarding Conference 2025-Training Events](#)

Rooms are available for you to book *on a first come – first served basis* through the Sheraton Hotel directly.

If you wish to book/pay for a room and to avail of the special rates above, please contact the Sheraton Hotel directly and state you are attending the conference. There is also a range of Bed and Breakfasts close by and the hotel can give you details of these. The NBSCCCI is not in a position to reserve any rooms on your behalf.

[Sheraton Athlone Hotel - 4-Star Stay Near River Shannon With Spa](#)

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