

Newsletter

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

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Introduction

December 2024 National Office Staff

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

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Dear Colleagues,
Welcome to the final Newsletter of 2024. It is a bumper edition; one which, we hope, is helpful to you in your ongoing work with children.



Representative of 25 European Nations present at the Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Europe conference 2024

Reflecting upon our work over the past year, the key activity in the National Office has been to support the implementation *A Safe and Welcoming Church; Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024*.

We have had the great pleasure to meet and engage with many of you at the induction sessions held between April and December and we continue to be refreshed hearing about the welcoming and safe ministries that are being run with children at the centre across the country.

On a sobering note, this year also saw the publication of the O'Toole report: The Scoping Inquiry into historical sexual abuse in day and boarding schools run by religious orders. The report, although devastating in its detailing of sexual and physical abuse perpetrated on the survivors, has given many more individuals the confidence and courage to tell their story.

In the NBSCCCI, we have been hearing directly from complainants about their experience in engaging with the Church. Some of that feedback in recent months has been less positive and some individuals have advised that when they are ready to speak they can find it hard to locate information on who within a church body to speak to. This reminds us again of the importance of communicating the Church's commitment to safeguarding through the provision of easily-accessible information. For this reason we have focused on reminding all of our guidance on communication plans in this edition of the newsletter.

November saw the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors conference in Rome, which looked at Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Europe. This conference drew together delegates representing 25 European countries sharing their experience and thoughts on safeguarding. You will find an article on my experience at the conference along with some of the content below in the following pages.

- Changes to Church authorities and dates for Safeguarding Training for New Church Authorities
- Tutela Minorum Conference 'Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Europe', Rome, 13-15 November 2024
- A review of Child Safeguarding Policies and Practices within Faith Organisations in NI

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Changes to Church Authorities

The National Board 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.

The induction session for 2025 will take place on the **20th of February 2025 in Maynooth**. The session is a full day starting at 10.00 and running to 16:00. The day is organised specifically for leaders of Church bodies across Ireland to induct them into their leadership role in relation to child safeguarding.

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

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

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

To book your place please visit <https://www.safeguarding.ie/news-events/events>

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.

A Safe and Welcoming Church; Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church In Ireland, 2024

It is now almost 6 months since the release of the revised Church policy on child safeguarding. It is to be expected by this point that the policy is well on the way to being embedded within each Church body.

The posters displayed in your locations should reflect the updated policy statement.

Within the ROI and where ministry with children is underway, the Child Safeguarding Statement should be updated to reflect the new template and policy.

Your Church Authority should have forwarded a signed copy of the commitment to the new policy to ourselves in the NBSCCI.

Updates to Guidance

Over recent months, we have made some further updates to our guidance based on queries and suggestions from some of you as follows:

- Updates to Guidance on the Delivery of Basic Safeguarding Awareness following a revision of the training;
- Updates to Guidance on the annual self-audit.

For any updated guidance, please go to

<https://www.safeguarding.ie/policy-guidance/view-latest-updates-to-the-guidance>

Practice Focus - Leadership, Governance and Accountability

1. A Guidance on Developing a Communications Plan

Step 1: Reviewing current policies, procedures and practice

Communicating what child safeguarding policies, procedures and practice are in place is a core element of the Church's strategy to safeguard children. Policies and procedures are only effective if everyone, including children, understands their purpose and knows how to use them. To successfully implement the Church standards, effective communication systems must be in place.

Church personnel who are appropriately trained must be available to listen to and communicate with children, their parents/guardians and the lay faithful regarding the Church's safeguarding message.

There must be a range of methods to communicate what the Church is doing to create safe environments for children, and how it is responding appropriately to allegations of child abuse.

It is helpful to identify what current communication practices are in place. The following checklist suggests some ideas for the safeguarding committee to consider.

Does your Church body:

- Have a written communications plan, stating what you wish to communicate, to whom, by whom, and how often?
- Display the name and contact details of the designated liaison person (DLP) on your website and in other communications?
- Place information on your website about safeguarding children including whom to contact if an individual wishes to make a complaint?
- Ensure that communications between the Church body and parents/guardians/carers/children/community leaders take account of language or communication differences?
- Ensure that parents/guardians, children and relevant others know about your child safeguarding and child protection policies and reporting procedures?
- Have a process for enabling people, including children, to make a complaint and ensure that this process is publicised so that everyone knows about it?
- Involve parents/guardians, as well as children, in developing codes of behaviour, e.g. about anti-bullying?
- Devise ways of obtaining feedback from parents/guardians/carers/children/the Church community to find out what you are doing well, and what is not working?
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To review the guidance on this topic of creating a communication plan in full and for other ideas on ensuring accessible information please go to <https://www.safeguarding.ie/communications-plan>



The Tutela Minorum Conference ‘Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Europe’, Rome, 13-15 November 2024

The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors (Tutela Minorum) held its first European Conference in Rome on 13-15 November. The purpose of the Conference was to initiate the establishment of a European ‘network’ of Catholic Safeguarding personnel. That network will then facilitate the sharing of best practice, learning and support across the continent and perhaps further to the universal church. Ireland was well represented with Archbishop Eamon Martin attending on behalf of the European Bishops’ Conferences and Bishop Fintan Gavin there as the IEC representative. Fr John Harris OP attended together with a number of DLPs and Una Allen, Co-ordinator of Towards Peace. All of the delegates heard presentations from a variety of European countries.



Archbishop Eamon Martin alongside Bishop Fintan Gavin at the conference.

Aidan Gordon joined Teresa Devlin, his predecessor and a member of the Pontifical Commission, to present on the ‘Historical Development of Safeguarding Policies in Ireland: Initial Church Responses and Policy Influences, Future Directions and Transitional Justice’. There were fascinating presentations from France on the sharing of information between Church and State authorities in pursuing justice together with a summary of ‘The Cross of the Moment’ from Dr Marcus Pound of the University of Durham. Delegates also heard how Germany had established a Survivor Consultation Group alongside outlines of developing policy and practice from Eastern European countries.

The account of personal conversion from Bishop Jose Antonio Satue of the Archdiocese of Madrid was very moving.



CEO of NBSCCCI Aidan Gordon along with Dr Marta Benyusz President of association for Children’s Rights- Hungary

Archbishop John Kennedy of the DDF assured delegates of the support of the Dicastery in ensuring that justice is served through the diligent application of Canonical norms and all those present had the opportunity to participate in various workshops and networking opportunities. Of particular impact was the workshop led by Mary Tallon and Br. Niall O’Connell OFM in which a survivor spoke of her journey since disclosing the abuse she suffered and how she has been supported in that journey by her family and the Church personnel she encountered.

The Conference has published an agreed ‘Statement of Intent’ which it is hoped will guide and inform our work over the coming years and it can be accessed at <https://www.tutelaminorum.org/church-in-europe-a-declaration-of-intent/> where you can also sign up to receive the regular newsletter from the Commission. You will also be able to view and download a copy of the first Annual Report of the Commission, which is also an important step in sharing good practice examples as well as lessons to be learned from the mistakes of the past.



The Cross-of the Moment

Dr Pat Jones, Dr Marcus Pound and Dr Catherine Sexton from the Centre for Catholic Studies in Durham University in the UK have, over the past four years, undertaken a study of the experience and impact of the clerical child sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic community in England and Wales. The research involved interviews and focus groups with a range of voices from across the Catholic community, giving priority to survivors but also including lay faithful, priests, religious and bishops. It was also a process of theological reflection and exploration, examining areas of Catholic culture, faith and understanding which might need to be re-balanced. The research has led to a report entitled *The Cross of the Moment* published earlier this year.



The Cross of the Moment

A Report from the Boundary Breaking Project



Pat Jones, Marcus Pound, Catherine Sexton

Dr Pat Jones: Post-Doctoral Research Associate, Department of Theology and Religion University of Durham hopes that the report is used as a resource to stimulate conversations that enable a deeper understanding of practical healing and restoration for all those who have, in different ways, experienced and carried the impact of the abuse crisis. Although the report focuses on the experience of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, many of its themes are relevant in other local churches across the world.

The report does reflect what some survivors and victims' describe as pain and harm akin to secondary abuse caused by the Church's response to their telling of their story.

The research urges us all to

- to explore how the issues raised point to aspects of our Catholic faith and culture which might need re-thinking
- to listen to the voices presented in the report
- to consider the issues and questions raised by their experience
- to reflect on what resonates with or challenges our experience and what we can learn from prayerful listening
- to ponder what is asked of the whole Catholic community in an ongoing response to the abuse crisis.

To read the full report [The Cross of the moment](#).

Note: Dr Jones will be presenting at the NBSCCCI National Conference which runs from 3-5 September 2025 in Athlone.

Upcoming Training Events

The following Training Events are now available to book on the website:

12/02/2025 in Maynooth: 10:00 – 16:00: *Resilience and Supervision in Leadership*- Within the revised policy 'A Safe and Welcoming Church: Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2024' a commitment is made to providing support for the sometimes challenging road leaders in the Church can find themselves on when managing safeguarding situations on a day to day basis.

With this in mind, we have created a training that looks at creating and maintaining resilience along with the benefits of robust self-care strategies such as availing of regular supervision.

The training day focuses on understanding

- Building and maintaining resilience
- Self-care and Resilience
- What supervision is and what it is not
- The benefits of supervision

This day is for Church authorities, DLPs, leaders and those involved in managing safeguarding across our Church.

Designated Liaison Person Training

Wednesday 26/02/2025 in Maynooth: 10:00-16:00: *Training for new DLP's and Deputy DLP's.*

This training is designed for people who have recently taken on the role of Designated Liaison Person or Deputy DLP, or who have never been able to attend role specific training previously. 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

Training Manual and Resources

We are pleased to advise that the training content and training manual have been revised in line with the updated Church policy along with very helpful feedback from our valuable Tutors and Trainers across the country. We are very lucky to be able to depend on 124 trainers across the country who support, in their local regions, delivering training across five areas: Full child safeguarding training and a refresher in this; Mandated person training; Information and awareness of child safeguarding; and youth leader training. Trainers can use their log in at www.safeguarding.ie to access the most up to date resources.

Training Returns

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' behalves.

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

Annual Self Audit

The self-audit provides an opportunity for a Church authority to review what is working well and what needs to improve in child safeguarding within the Church body. For those who have ministry with children or are managing cases the annual self-audits should be completed and the NBSCCCI notified of its completion by the end of March 2025. Those Church Bodies who were previously exempt and who have been notified of a complaint against a deceased member by An Garda Síochána or Tusla remain exempt, as they are not currently managing cases. Managing Cases in this context refers to managing a current case in respect of a respondent who is alive.

If you have received confirmation from the National Board that you are exempt from the self-audit process and you believe this is still the case there is no need to send in a report to the NBSCCCI. If you are unsure, please contact imeldaashe@safeguarding.ie to check whether a self-audit for your Church body is required.

'Childhood and Contemporary Catholicism'

Childhood and Contemporary Catholicism is a book written by Gerard Lemos that looks at the challenging world and the benefits of having a faith basis through which to engage with that world. Through interviews with children and young people about their experience of Catholicism Lemos argues that growing up today is greatly enhanced by encounters with Catholic faith and practice in education, parish life, youth work, pilgrimages, retreats and religious art and music. The book is available at <https://lemosandcrane.co.uk/>

Day of Prayer for Survivors and Victims of Abuse 2025

First held in 2017, the Day of Prayer for Survivors and Victims of abuse is a prayer initiative of the IEC to be held across Ireland to pray for the recovery of all who have been impacted by abuse in our Church. All parishes and religious communities are encouraged to light a candle of atonement and to organise a service or moment of prayer on the first Friday of Lent. In 2025 this day will fall on the Friday 7th of March. Resources for liturgies are available at

<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/2024/02/16/day-of-prayer-for-survivors-of-abuse-2024/>

A review of Child Safeguarding Policies and Practices within Faith Organisations in NI

The Inter-Departmental Working group (IDWG) have commissioned three interrelated pieces of research on behalf of the Executive Office to explore child abuse across faith organisations in Northern Ireland (NI). The collective goal of the three pieces is to help understand the nature and prevalence of child abuse in non-residential settings across faith organisations and the impact it has on victims and survivors.

The research covers all faith organisations in the NI, and includes a range of people who have been employed by, volunteered with or otherwise worked with or alongside faith organisations. The term 'abuse' includes neglect, exploitation, and physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse. "Child" refers to those under 18 years old. Trilateral Research has been commissioned by The Executive Office to conduct a review of safeguarding policies and practices across faith organisations in NI, with a particular focus on how organisations prevent and respond to child abuse in non-residential faith-based settings as well as the support that is provided to survivors.

The aim of this study is to assess the effectiveness of current policies, learn from best practice and provide recommendations for overall policy improvement, where necessary.

The study includes a survey to be sent to all places of worship (parish, church, temple, mosque...), followed by some further interviews with a sample of places of worship (to be sampled from the survey responses). The survey will allow us to compile a child safeguarding policy landscape across faith organisations in NI.

Some more information about the survey:

- The survey should be completed by the leader of the place of worship or the safeguarding lead of the place of worship if one is available.
- The survey should take no longer than 20 minutes and should be easy to complete, i.e.; it should not require any consultation with others or the need to look up information.
- The survey covers topics such as: 1) availability and content of child safeguarding policy; 2) recruitment and training of personnel and volunteers; 3) safeguarding procedures and; 4) information about safeguarding audits, evaluation, reviews.
- **The survey will be shared by email in the week commencing 6th of January and will remain open until the 20th January, however responses will be analysed on a rolling basis so the Researchers do encourage early participation.**
- All survey responses will be kept strictly confidential.





Transitional Justice.

The NBSCCCI biannual conference in 2025 plans to explore and create principles for a model of transitional Justice for Victims/Survivors of Abuse. Transitional justice is often described as a victim/survivor centred approach and has four key pillars, truth-telling, accountability, redress and reparation, and guarantees of non-recurrence.

Through the conference we aim to bring you together with academics/specialists in transitional justice in order to foster collaboration between Church leaders, survivors, and experts with the aim of creating an accountable response to abuse that meets the needs of survivors and victims and helps to achieve reconciliation.

In order to build our knowledge on transitional justice we have looked to some of the papers and articles written by academics on the topic and we plan to use our website to expand on this topic over coming months.

David M. Smolin is a professor of law at Cumberland School of Law in Birmingham, Alabama where he is the Harwell G. Davis Chair in Constitutional Law, director for The Center for Children, Law, and Ethics, former director of the Center for Biotechnology, Law, and Ethics, and faculty advisor for the Law, Science and Technology Society.

David has granted permission for NBSCCCI to share two papers he presented on at the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. You can find these on our website at the links below

[HOW AND WHY THE CHURCH SHOULD ADOPT TRANSITIONAL.pdf](#)

[Transitional Justice and the Church: Pontifical commission presentation](#)

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Good Wishes from all in the NBSCCCI

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

