



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

**Second Review of Child Safeguarding Practice
in the Diocese of Cork and Ross
undertaken by**

**The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the
Catholic Church in Ireland (National Board)**

Date of Review Report: May 2020

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Background

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (National Board) was established in 2006 to provide advice, services and assistance in furtherance of the development of the safeguarding of children within the Roman Catholic Church on the island of Ireland; and to monitor compliance with legislation, policy and best practice and to report on these activities as is comprehensively set out in the Memorandum of Association of the Company.

Church authorities who have entered into an agreement with the National Board through signing a Memorandum of Understanding have committed to following *Safeguarding Children - Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*.

In order to assess compliance, Bishop Fintan Gavin of the Diocese of Cork and Ross invited the National Board to undertake a review of practice in 2020. The diocese was previously reviewed in 2012 under the *Safeguarding Children - Standards and Guidance for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2008*. The report of the first review can be found on the Cork and Ross Diocese website corkandross.org and on the National Board's website www.safeguarding.ie/publications

The following were the recommendations of the 2012 review:

Recommendation 1: Bishop Buckley needs to ensure that the Cork and Ross Diocesan Child Protection Committee reviews and if necessary, revises the current Safeguarding Children in the Diocese of Cork and Ross to satisfy himself that they are consistent with Children First, 2011, and with the HSE guidance document, Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook, 2011.

Recommendation 2: Bishop Buckley extends the employment period of the second Designated Person post to three years, to be reviewed at that time.

Recommendation 3: Diocesan Safeguarding Committee develop a Child Safeguarding Training Strategy which sets out the intentions of the diocese, on an annual basis, to equip people with the knowledge and skills required to undertake their roles and submit for the approval and implementation of Bishop Buckley.

Recommendation 4: The Diocese of Cork and Ross website home page have a specific Safeguarding Children icon for ease of access.

Recommendation 5: Bishop Buckley directs the diocesan Safeguarding Committee to develop a Safeguarding Children Communications Policy, with the assistance of appropriate professional communications personnel, for his endorsement and implementation.

Recommendation 6: Bishop Buckley, as a next step towards establishing a best practice regime in the Diocese of Cork and Ross, would issue a Pastoral Letter on the matter of Safeguarding Children in which he would specifically invite victims of clerical child abuse and other complainants to come forward.

Recommendation 7: Bishop Buckley direct the Diocese of Cork and Ross Safeguarding Committee to develop an action plan that indicates what steps will be taken to keep children safe, who is responsible for implementing these measures and when these will be completed for his endorsement and implementation.

The reviewers confirm that these recommendations have been met.

The purpose of this second round of reviews is to assess the practice against the Catholic Church in Ireland's current standards as detailed in *Safeguarding Children - Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016* and make statements based on evidence, which provide:

- Public confidence that the Church body is safe for children;
- Affirmation to Child Safeguarding personnel that they are doing the right things well;
- Confirmation to the Church authority that what they want to be done is in fact being done;
- Independent verification of Self-Audit – or correction and/or improvement of Self-Audit;
- Opportunities for learning.

Introduction

In the Diocese of Cork and Ross there are 68 parishes, with 220,000 Catholics. The diocese stretches from Cork City to the Southern and Western parts of the county. There are 85 diocesan priests in appointments, 19 retired priests, 4 active priests outside the diocese, 3 permanent deacons, 110 lay Religious (98 Sisters; 12 Brothers), and 1 seminarian.

Bishop Fintan Gavin was consecrated Bishop of the Diocese on June 30th, 2019. Most Reverend John Buckley Bishop Emeritus was Church Ordinary from December 1997 to the time of his retirement in April 2019.

Process of Review

The diocese placed a notice in all parish newsletters and on its website informing people of the forthcoming review, while also inviting anyone with views on safeguarding practice that they wished to share to come forward.

The on-site fieldwork was carried out on 20, 21, 22 January 2020; and the following were either met with or spoken to by telephone during this time or in the following days by the reviewers:

- Bishop Gavin
- Director of Safeguarding who also acts as DLP - for the purposes of clarity will be referred to as Director of Safeguarding in this report.
- Diocesan Secretary
- Safeguarding Committee and Chair - Reviewers attended a meeting of this Committee
- Vetting Administrator

- Administrator providing administration support to Director of Safeguarding
- Priest Advisor
- Complainant Support Person
- Two facilitators of Relapse Prevention Group
- Two Respondent Priests - One interviewed in person and one by telephone
- One Complainant by telephone
- Three trainers (one of whom is also the Director of Safeguarding)
- Two Priest leaders of the Annual Cork and Ross Diocesan Pilgrimage
- Interagency meeting –attended by reviewers.

The reviewers also visited three parishes to gauge how the safeguarding message is being communicated and put into practice. In the course of these fieldwork visits, the reviewers met with priests, parish-safeguarding representatives, parish volunteers including a youth service volunteer, adult members of mixed choir, children members of mixed choir and their parents, choir director, altar servers, altar server coordinator, parents of altar servers, sacristans, and parish secretaries. As part of the review process, case management records were examined and any clarifications required were provided by the director of safeguarding. In addition, all relevant safeguarding children material was reviewed in either soft or hard copy.

There was also contact with the Director of Safeguarding after the fieldwork phase of the review. The reviewers would like to express their sincere thanks to Bishop Gavin, his safeguarding staff and volunteers and the priests and lay faithful of the Cork and Ross Diocese for the invitation to conduct a review and for their co-operation during this process.

To support implementation of the Standards, the National Board has produced detailed Guidance, which is accessible on its website (<https://www.safeguarding.ie/guidance>). The Diocese of Cork and Ross has adopted in full the guidance of the National Board.

This review concentrates on practice through evaluating written records, interviews with Church personnel, communication with young people, parents and leaders; information from complainants; information from respondents; and from contact with external statutory personnel.

An assessment of practice under each standard is set out below.

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## **Standard 1: Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments**

*Church bodies provide an environment for children that are welcoming, nurturing and safe. They provide access to good role models whom the children can trust, who respect, protect and enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development.*

### Safe recruitment

The Diocese of Cork and Ross requires that all Church personnel and volunteers whose work brings them into contact with children undergo a vetting process in accordance with the legislation *National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Adults) Act 2012*. All priests in ministry are Garda vetted and are issued with *celebret* cards, which allow them to minister away from their home parish/diocese. This practice is in place for visiting priests who wish to minister within the diocese.

The diocesan vetting office undertakes vetting for a small number of priests from other orders/dioceses who have ministry within the diocese as part of shared vetting agreements. Vetting for a number of affiliate organisations is also undertaken, as is vetting of all volunteers and Church personnel for the annual diocesan Lourdes pilgrimage. In addition, vetting for non-teaching personnel for diocesan schools is undertaken. In the years, 2016 – 2019 a total of 12,299 people were vetted by this office. Numbers vetted for parish related activities in the last four years are as follows:

|            |            |            |            |
|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 2016 - 665 | 2017 - 396 | 2018 – 625 | 2019 – 497 |
|------------|------------|------------|------------|

Vetting takes place on a 5-year cycle within the diocese. An up-to-date database of vetting is kept by the authorised National Vetting Bureau Administrator in the diocesan offices, which was examined by the reviewers.

The reviewers noted that diocesan files held in relation to vetting were organised and the process of vetting is undertaken in a diligent and informed manner.

It is noted however that in the course of a visit to one parish, the reviewers were advised that a small number of parent supervisors of children's/young person's involvement in the annual Easter Vigil in the parish were inadvertently omitted from the vetting process; but as soon as this matter came to light, the reviewers were assured that vetting arrangements for the group of parents were put in progress. This has been verified by the diocesan director of safeguarding.

There is a comprehensive *Recruitment and Selection Checklist* designed to be used by those in the diocese engaged in the recruitment of new personnel.

### Diocese of Cork and Ross clergy ministering elsewhere

Priests of the diocese can have ministry with children in an external organisation, provided the organisation has its own child safeguarding policies and procedures in place. The host organisation must complete a document stating that the priest is fully aware of their policies and procedures and

is compliant with them. In turn, the priest must sign a document to state that he is aware of the organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures and undertakes to adhere fully to them.

### Code of Conduct

There are written codes of conduct for both adults and children/young people which all groups are required to agree and to observe. The *Code of Behaviour for Adults* is made available to all adults involved in Church related activities. *The Code of Conduct for Children/Young People in the Diocese of Cork and Ross* is signed by young people, their parents and the activity leader.

During the fieldwork visits by the reviewers, there was evidence from discussions with parents and young people and also with parish safeguarding representatives (PSRs) and activity leaders that there is full understanding of the requirement to adhere to the code of conduct in place, and of what actions to take should behaviour not be at the expected level. Children who engaged in a sacramental preparation programme spoke of the rules they made for their group activities ensuring safe participation for all within the group. At the same time, they were familiar with what actions to take and to whom they should speak should they feel unsafe or uncomfortable. Parents of altar servers interviewed were very supportive of their children in that role and were clear and confident about the safeguarding arrangements in place for their children.

### Safe Care Practices

The reviewers observed the appropriate display of the diocese safeguarding policy in the church buildings visited in the course of fieldwork. The use of languages other than English is also welcome. Child-friendly safeguarding material was also in evidence. The notice requiring the production of the *celebret* card for visiting clergy was visible in the sacristies visited during the fieldwork. The Diocese of Cork and Ross requires that registry books are signed by those in attendance in the sacristy. Adults and children attending mixed-age choirs are required to sign in a register on the day, as are altar servers required to sign in on their register. Registers were viewed by the reviewers during the fieldwork visits. Documentation in respect of signed consent and confidentiality forms along with parish vetting database were observed to be held securely in parish offices. Specific guidance for altar servers was clearly displayed.

One parish acknowledged an oversight on their part in the past in not seeking consent forms or signing in of register for a small number of children who served at a Mass, which took place on a once monthly basis. The reviewers were informed that the oversight had been corrected as soon as it was noticed. This has been independently verified by the diocesan director of safeguarding. The reviewers are satisfied that all safeguarding requirements are now in place for this group of children and acknowledge the forthrightness of the parish in coming forward with the information.

Examples of safe care for children such as appropriate adult-child ratios necessary for group activities were discussed with a group leader during the course of fieldwork, which highlighted an awareness of safe levels of care necessary to hold a group activity with a number of children.

### Use of Church property

There is clear policy provided by the diocese in this area and PSRs who met with the reviewers outlined their understanding and protocol in place in this area. The requirement for an outside group to have adequate insurance cover as well as following their own child safeguarding policy was clearly understood by those interviewed by the reviewers. In one matter, the PSRs referred to their experience of having to enforce the child- adult supervision ratio within an external group wishing to use a parish building. When the outside group could not satisfy the supervision requirements, the decision was made to terminate the arrangement for use of the Church property.

### Complaints procedure

There is a written complaints procedure in place. The director of safeguarding outlined how in practice a complaint which did not meet the threshold for an allegation of abuse was resolved. The reviewers are satisfied that the situation was dealt with correctly and according to procedure.

### Whistleblowing

There is a written whistleblowing policy in place, which is easily accessible and is outlined to Church personnel during training and information sessions. The reviewers were informed that this policy has not yet been tested to date.

### Hazard assessment

The reviewers saw documented evidence of a number of hazard assessments undertaken at parish and diocesan level. These assessments took place as a result of concerns held by Church personnel in relation to activities or physical hazards present within the Church environs. One matter dealt with the security of Church property and the safety of children attending activities. The concern was that the safety of children using the facilities could not be guaranteed because of the unregulated access of groups to meeting rooms due in part to the unknown quantity of keys issued to various groups over many years. The situation was addressed in consultation with the director of safeguarding through the hazard assessment procedure and security was enhanced ensuring proper monitoring of use of Church property. The use of glass partitions in less transparent parts of a church building used by children was a further example seen by reviewers of practical changes made as a result of safeguarding awareness and appropriate hazard assessments.

### Use of social media by Church personnel

The Diocese of Cork and Ross has published very thorough guidance document on the use of social media. This document published March 2017 is easily accessible on the diocesan website. The use of safe and responsible social media is a topic, which has featured at the annual safeguarding conferences hosted by Cork and Ross Safeguarding Committee in 2017, 2018 and 2019. The reviewers commend the Safeguarding Committee for highlighting this topic of importance in a practical and interesting format.



### Lourdes Pilgrimage

There is a clearly defined process for the recruitment, selection, and supervision of adults working with children, young people, and vulnerable adults which includes appropriate application forms and Garda vetting and induction in safeguarding procedures. Since 2017, the director of safeguarding has travelled to Lourdes as the designated liaison person to oversee/review and report on the safeguarding procedures in place on the pilgrimage.

### Safeguarding Committee

The reviewers attended a meeting of the diocesan safeguarding committee. This committee meets a minimum of every 6 weeks ensuring that safeguarding children is the main priority in any diocesan activity that involves them.

The reviewers observed the efficient chair and cooperative spirit of this committee. The members evidently bring a high level of professionalism, knowledge and commitment to the work of the committee. This was apparent to the reviewers on hearing the content of the work undertaken and reported on by the different members. A constitution for the committee will be redrawn as soon as vacant positions created by two recently retired members are filled.

The reviewers' opinion is that this standard has been met.

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Standard 2: Procedures for Responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations

The Diocese of Cork and Ross has clearly written child-safeguarding procedures as well as trained personnel to implement them. If suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations that meet the threshold for reporting to the statutory authorities are received, these are reported. The diocesan and parish websites contain up to date details of the relevant person to contact and include details of statutory authorities if someone has a safeguarding concern.

Safeguarding information posters are prominently displayed in Church buildings and other locations where Church related activities take place. Safeguarding information is made available on a rolling basis in different parish newsletters throughout the year. Safeguarding leaflets and information targeted at different age levels and groups involved in Church activities are produced by the safeguarding team and distributed on an on-going basis.

The table below displays the information on all child safeguarding concerns notified to the Diocese of Cork and Ross since the 2012 Review.

A total of twenty (20) complaints/allegations were received in relation to fourteen (14) respondents, of whom ten (10) are living and four (4) deceased.

Three (3) men are non – diocesan priests. In the non-diocesan group two (2) men are out of ministry and one (1) man is retired.

In the remaining category of seven (7) men, five (5) are in ministry; a sixth man is out of ministry; and the seventh man is laicised.

A total of five (5) men are subject to precepts/management plans under the active supervision of the Director of Safeguarding. This number includes two (2) non- diocesan men monitored in conjunction with their home diocese.

The identity of the complainant was unknown to the diocese in six (6) of the total group of 14 respondents. In most cases, this was because the information regarding an allegation was made known to the diocese by the civil authorities in Ireland and the UK.

In the cases of all respondents bar one, the allegations are historical in nature. One allegation arose from the period of time covered in this review. That matter was deemed to have not reached the threshold of abuse following a report to the civil authorities but was considered to constitute a breach of code of behaviour of the diocese, and was dealt with accordingly.

Five (5) criminal convictions in relation to retrospective child abuse allegations were secured in the time frame of this review against one man, now laicised, who continues to be monitored and supervised by the diocese.

This information is presented in tabular form overleaf.

Table 1 - Incidents or notifications of child safeguarding concerns/allegations received by Diocese of Cork and Ross since the 2012 review.

Child Safeguarding concerns relating to living diocesan priests received by Cork and Ross Diocese since 2012 Review						
Cleric	Current Status	Number of allegations	Gardai notified	TUSLA notified	National Board notified	Appropriate and timely canonical action taken
1	Out of ministry	1	Yes, within 1 week	Yes, within 1 week	Yes, within 1 week	Yes
2	Laicised	7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	In ministry	1	Yes, within 1 week	Yes, within 1 week	Yes, within 2 weeks	N/A
4	In ministry	1	Gardai notified by Tusla	Diocese informed by Tusla	Yes within 1 week	N/A
5	In ministry	1	Notified by another diocese	Notified by another diocese	Yes, within 1 week	Yes
6	In ministry	1	Yes, within 1 week	Yes, within 1 week	Yes, within 1 week	Yes
7	In ministry	1	Gardai notified by another police force	Diocese informed by Tusla	Yes, within 1 month	N/A
Child safeguarding concerns relating to deceased diocesan priests received by Cork and Ross Diocese since 2012 Review						
8	Deceased	1	Yes, within 1 day	N/A (RIP)	N/A (RIP)	N/A
9	Deceased	1	Yes, within 1 week	Yes, within 1 week	Yes, within 1 week	N/A
10	Deceased	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
11	Deceased	Unknown	Reported to Gardai by Tusla	Reported to diocese by Tusla	No details on file	N/A
Child safeguarding concerns relating to non-diocesan priests received by Cork and Ross Diocese since 2012 Review						
12	Retired	1	Yes, within 1 week	Yes, within 1 week	Yes, within 1 week	N/A
13	Out of Ministry	1	Yes, within 2 weeks	Yes, within 2 weeks	Yes, within 4 weeks	N/A
14	Out of Ministry	1	Yes, within 2 weeks	Yes, within 2 weeks	N/A	N/A

In all case where the responsibility remained with the diocese to report new allegations to the civil authorities, this took place in a timely manner and was clearly documented within case files. In a total of nine (9) cases the civil authorities informed the diocese that a complaint had been made.

Dioceses need to report all allegations to the National Board, even if the respondent priest is deceased, as this assists the National Board to maintain accurate statistics; and it also helps in relation to the National Board's responsibility to check the adequacy of support provided to complainants.

In addition to the case files in relation to the above respondents, the reviewers also examined the case files of seven (7) men who were known to the diocese before the last Review in 2012. These case files were looked at because significant activity in varying degrees took place in these cases since the time of the last review to the present, One (1) of these seven men is deceased but significant support was provided to a complainant in his case. In five (5) cases there continues to be active monitoring and supervision in place by the Director of Safeguarding because the men continue to be subject to precepts/management plans. A seventh case was dealt with canonically since 2012.

The case files are structured and managed to a high standard. Procedures for managing an allegation and actions taken are systematically recorded, providing good chronology and narrative. Effective use of the National Case Management Committee is evidenced within the files. Where there are precepts, management plans or codes of behaviour in place these are evidenced and updated where relevant.

Interagency Liaison Meetings between the diocese, An Garda Síochána and Tusla have been in operation since 2009 and took place intermittently since then, except for much of 2019 while there was a change of bishop. This forum was reconvened in January 2020; and the reviewers attended the first meeting and saw at first-hand how these agencies cooperate. Case discussions at these meetings are recorded in the relevant case files.

In cases where the identity of the complainant was known to the diocese, or where there was a point of contact with the complainant, appropriate efforts were seen to be made in reaching out to them with the offer of pastoral support. The offer of priest advisors and canon lawyers was made to respondent priests according to procedural guidelines.

The reviewers note that the Director of Safeguarding also holds the post of designated liaison person within the diocese and carries out her extensive range of activities and duties on a part-time basis in a highly professional and committed manner. Her capacity to do so without the assistance of a deputy DLP should be reviewed.

Case files were observed to be confidentially and securely stored.

The reviewers are of the opinion that this standard has been met.

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### **Standard 3: Care and Support for the Complainant**

*Complainants who have suffered abuse as children receive a compassionate response when they disclose their abuse. They, and their families, are offered appropriate support, advice and pastoral care.*

In advance of this Review, the diocese posted a notice on its website inviting people to come forward with their views on any aspect of safeguarding within the diocese.

#### Assessment of complainant support from case file

The files indicate that complainant support is offered in cases where the identity of the complainant is known to the diocese. This is provided by letter from the bishop offering pastoral support, or by direct contact through the director of safeguarding. The diocese has sought to inform a small number of complainants through their lawyers that pastoral support is available for them should they wish to use it. Counselling such as that offered by *Towards Healing* is referenced in several files, and the reviewers are aware that a number of complainants have availed of this service. There is evidence in the files that the Bishop Emeritus has had meetings with some complainants. Complainant contact is generally undertaken by the director of safeguarding/DLP; and evidence in some files indicated that great efforts had been expended in reaching out to complainants.

#### Support personnel

The diocese has appointed a complainant support person who is in role for four years. This person, who was contacted by telephone by the reviewers, is trained appropriately for the role and is well informed in relation to the requirements and expectations of the role. To date the services of the complainant support person have not been requested.

#### Interview with a complainant

The reviewers interviewed by telephone one complainant who agreed to participate in this Review. The allegation was received originally some years ago and the complainant availed of counselling support at that time. The complainant came forward more recently after receiving notification from the diocese of the respondent's death; the diocese, as a matter of procedure, informs complainants of the death of a respondent priest. The news of the respondent's death reignited a sense of pain for the complainant. He contacted the diocese and the Director of Safeguarding arranged for him to access support at short notice in another diocesan area in which he resided. He praised the director of safeguarding for putting him in contact with this support and for arranging on-going counselling appointments within a very short time frame. The complainant suggested that the decision to inform a complainant of the death of an abuser should take place on a case-by-case basis and not because protocol should be followed. He held the belief that not all complainants would wish to be informed of the death of their abuser. The reviewers consider that this is a valid suggestion and could form the basis of revising the protocol in this area.

#### Cooperation with other agencies

The reviewers are satisfied that there is cooperation with other agencies, such as evidenced in the case above. The case files contain evidence of the use of the National Case Management Committee (NCMC) by the diocese in seeking advice and guidance, and in following the recommendations of this committee. The reviewers observed at a practical level information sharing and discussion as a result of attendance at the Interagency Liaison Meeting.

The examination of the case files suggest that there is a compassionate and pastoral response to a complainant when an allegation is made. The reviewers saw many examples of the provision of support to complainants.

The reviewers are of the opinion that this standard has been met.

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Standard 4: Care and Management of the Respondent

The Church Authority has in place a fair process for investigating and managing child safeguarding concerns. When the threshold for reporting has been reached, a system of support and monitoring for respondents is provided.

Priests receiving care and support under a management plan

There are five (5) respondents of the total ten (10) living referred to in Table 1 above who are the subjects of current Management Plans. These plans are clearly documented within the case files and are agreed with the respondent priest and signed by him. Monitoring and supervision is undertaken by the Director of Safeguarding,

The Director of Safeguarding supervises five (5) other respondents against whom allegations became known to the diocese prior to the last Review in 2012. Within this number are men from dioceses from outside Ireland for whom the Cork and Ross safeguarding service provide monitoring/supervision in conjunction with the men's home diocese. The diocese's willingness to monitor men from elsewhere who reside within the diocese is commended as an example of good practice.

Procedures

The assessment of risk, and the development and implementation of a management plan in relation to living respondents are addressed in cases, where appropriate. It is noted that regularly updated management plans and canonical precepts signed by Bishop Gavin are in place. The reviewers are satisfied that risk is effectively managed through the development and implementation of management plans. Case files contained information on advice sought from the NCMC; on interagency communication; and on the services offered to each respondent, such as a priest advisor and counselling.

The diocese has guidance and established practice in relation to funeral planning for men against whom allegations of child (and vulnerable adult) abuse have been substantiated and for whom a normal clerical funeral is not permitted.

Priest advisers

Priest advisors are offered to all men against whom an allegation is made. Not all men choose to accept the services of an advisor and this is indicated in files. There are three priest advisors available to carry out this role if required in the Diocese of Cork and Ross. In some cases, a man will choose whom he wishes to have as his advisor and with the bishop's permission, he can do so; however, the man would have a meeting with the director of safeguarding in relation to his role and the expectations of him and/or receive role specific training. The reviewers met with one currently active priest advisor who was selected by the respondent priest with whom he works. He spoke with knowledge and clarity in relation to the man's situation and clearly understood his role. He received training for the role while in post and he continues to be an advocate and advisor for the man. He held the view that the diocesan procedure for informing a man that an allegation has been made against him has improved in the last number of years, leading to more trust concerning the operation of safeguarding procedure in the diocese.

Respondent questionnaires

In advance of this review, respondent questionnaires were sent to nine (9) men to ascertain their perception of how they were treated and managed by the diocese following an allegation against them. Five questionnaires - four completed and one incomplete - were returned for the attention of the reviewers. One man requested to meet with the reviewers in person to discuss his questionnaire response; and one man who had filled in the questionnaire was interviewed by telephone at his request. The overall response from the men indicated that they were listened to and respected throughout the process. One man spoke of the good support he received from the diocese. In three of the four responses, the men indicated that they were offered the services of a priest advisor and/or canon lawyer.

One man however described that he experienced the manner in which he was informed of an allegation made against him as humiliating and unfeeling. He stated that he was unprepared for what awaited him at his meeting with the bishop and that he left the meeting deeply confused and unable to think clearly. He added that this is how things remained until the current DLP contacted him and the diocesan response to him became caring and compassionate.

All responses to the questionnaires referred to the ability of the director of safeguarding in providing impartial, compassionate support, and her presence in their opinion had significantly improved their communication with the diocesan office. The response from these men was, on balance, a positive one.

Relapse Prevention Group

This group is supported by the Diocese of Cork and Ross and has been in place for approximately 20 years. It is facilitated by two professional psychotherapists. The aim of the group at the time of its formation was to provide a supportive and preventative service for members of the clergy who had completed a sex offender treatment programme and who no longer had ministerial faculties; and the criteria for admission remain that to be eligible to join, a man must have been convicted of a sexual offence or has made an admission of abuse or has undergone a risk assessment. A Church authority can direct a cleric to attend by precept, while those who are laicised attend on a voluntary basis. Men from outside the diocese have been facilitated to attend this group and this has been a feature since the beginning. Meetings of three hours duration take place once monthly and men pay an attendance fee on the night. The number of those attending over recent years has gradually fallen to 4, who have all attended for many years; no one has joined since 2007.

The facilitators believe that for the men who attend the group there is a sense of belonging and of being cared for by the Church in a structured and supported way, while at the same time being accountable and afforded space for reparative insight. The group was reviewed by an external reviewer in 2015 at the request of the Cork and Ross safeguarding office and a *Memorandum of Understanding* for the group was produced in 2017 following that review. The external review found that as far as it could ascertain, no new offending was recorded in the cases of the men attending the group, and noted that the group had over the years acquired a supportive function. A summary version of the final recommendations of the review was that the group in its second stage can... *be fashioned in a way that validates the group experience to date and facilitates the growth of group member recognising their current and future life needs.*

The National Board reviewers are of the opinion that this innovative and practical support group is an invaluable resource, the future of which could be in jeopardy due to declining numbers of men attending. The current criteria for entry into the group may have to be re-evaluated in the light of the falling numbers. Rather than allowing this group to wind down by a gradually declining membership, it is recommended that external expertise be commissioned to assist the diocese to find appropriate ways of preserving and strengthening it.

The reviewers consider this standard to be met.

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## **Standard 5: Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe**

*Church personnel are trained and supported in all aspects of safeguarding relevant to their role, in order to develop and maintain the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to safeguard and protect children.*

### Trainers

The reviewers met with the three National Board-accredited trainers who provide safeguarding training for Church personnel. A member of the diocesan secretariat who provides administrative support for implementing the training programme was also interviewed.

The diocesan Training Plan for 2020 states that the:

*Diocese of Cork and Ross sees training and education as a priority. To maintain high standards and good practice it is essential that relevant Church personnel, both paid and voluntary, receive appropriate safeguarding training. To this end, all Church personnel who work with children are inducted into the diocesan Policy and Procedures on Safeguarding children when they begin to work in Church organisations.*

The trainers informed the reviewers that all clergy training is up to date. Training files relating to years 2017, 2018 and 2019 for all training undertaken by Church personnel were examined by the reviewers. These contained dates and details of training undertaken and by whom, including completed evaluation forms. There are plans in process for managing the training database electronically, and this will centralise and streamline the future management of training events and allow for training information to be more easily accessed by the director of safeguarding.

Information about upcoming training events is notified to PSRs, parish priests and parish offices by emails and letters, as well as notifications in diocesan and parish websites and newsletters.

### Training Plan

Reviewers had access to the Training Plan 2020 for the diocese. The training programme followed by the diocesan safeguarding team is that prescribed by the National Board and provides for one full day training for priests, deacons, PSRs and leaders of any group or youth ministry who have not attended full-day training. Attendance by the above group for half day refresher training is required every three years. The training plan in place for 2020 also provides for two-hour information sessions for all parish personnel/volunteers to be arranged directly with the director of safeguarding at parish or deanery level. There are also five training days with the National Board factored into the training plan for 2020, which will deliver safeguarding training for targeted Church personnel and role holders within the safeguarding structure.

### Training Needs Analysis

The annual training needs analysis is one of the key functions of the safeguarding committee who use data on training needs compiled by the parishes in the annual self-audit returns. The reviewers were shown how information gathered from self-audit returns was analysed, highlighting specific training needs for different groups. The self-audit returns for 2019 requested information on lay apostolates with ministry within parishes and the training needs for these groups will receive similar analysis, if required.

### Supports to Parishes

The director of safeguarding, who is one of the three diocesan trainers, has engaged directly with several deaneries and parishes in the past, which have had difficulty in organising attendance of their volunteers at training events thus ensuring the delivery of relevant training. She also deals with specific requests for training from parishes.

Following their discussions with children and young people, parents, leaders, clergy and members of the safeguarding team during the three fieldwork visits, the reviewers were satisfied that the importance and relevance of on-going safeguarding training is fully accepted by all and demonstrated by high levels of participation.

The Diocese of Cork and Ross compliance with this standard is considered met.

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Standard 6: Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

Church Bodies appropriately communicate the Church's child safeguarding message.

Planning

The diocese has a comprehensive three-year communication plan in place, *Cork and Ross Communication Plan 2020-2022*. This is a well-developed plan which addresses how the communication of the safeguarding message should take place, by whom, when and who is the targeted audience. The plan was developed by the safeguarding committee, and together with the training plan, forms an integral part of the executive function of the diocesan safeguarding strategy.

Means of Communication

The diocesan website contains a *Safeguarding* section in a drop down box which is well presented, easy to understand, updated regularly and contains the forms and information necessary for use by diocesan personnel. Diocesan safeguarding newsletters, along with a sample number of individual parish newsletters containing safeguarding messages were viewed by the reviewers. The diocese safeguarding team have designated October as 'Safeguarding Month' when PSRs are asked to especially promote the message of safeguarding within their parishes on each Sunday during the month.

The reviewers saw a list of suggestions sent from the safeguarding team to the PSRs illustrating how this could be effectively achieved. ‘Safeguarding Month’ is specially designed to promote and distribute child and adult friendly safeguarding leaflets produced by the diocese and compiled by young people.

The diocese also hosts an evening Safeguarding Conference designed to coincide with Safeguarding Month to which guest speakers are invited. The topics chosen for the past two years centred on child trafficking and the dangers of social media and the challenges posed for those working with children.

Reviewers saw safeguarding policy statements and information displayed in English and Polish alongside child-friendly posters in each of the parishes visited. Safeguarding material in the Irish language is on display in parishes in Gaeltacht areas of West Cork.

Interagency Communication

The reviewers are satisfied from their observation of the workings of the Interagency Liaison group, that the safeguarding personnel, including Bishop Gavin, have a policy of engaging appropriately and proactively with the civil authorities in relation to safeguarding children.

It was evident to reviewers who met with children, parents, leaders and Church personnel during fieldwork visits that the child-safeguarding message is being communicated systematically and effectively at each level. In this respect, the reviewers consider that this standard is met.

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### **Standard 7: Quality Assuring Compliance with the Standards**

*The Church body develops a plan of action to quality assure compliance with the safeguarding standards. This action plan is reviewed annually. The Church body only has responsibility to monitor, evaluate and report on compliance with the indicators under each standard that apply to it, depending on its ministry.*

The reviewers are satisfied that there is a strong child safeguarding structure in the Diocese of Cork and Ross under the direction of Bishop Gavin and the Safeguarding Committee. The Safeguarding Report 2019 checked by the reviewers is a comprehensive document clearly detailing the areas of work undertaken for that year. The almost 100% completion and analysis of the 2019 parish self-audit is a very significant piece of work and the reviewers have seen evidence of how it informs further safeguarding planning. The reviewers were impressed by the ethos of the safeguarding committee, and the desire of all members to constantly improve and enhance child safeguarding within the diocese.

Three-year safeguarding plan

There is a comprehensive three-year safeguarding plan in place, which governs the safeguarding structures, safeguarding policies and procedures and the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of these procedures. The plan covers the period 2020/22, but states that *all strategies and plans must be dynamic* and so it will review its strategy and plan on an on-going basis.

The Reviewers are satisfied that Standard 7 is met.

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Conclusion

In the course of this review the reviewers have examined the safeguarding structure in place within the Diocese of Cork and Ross and deem it to be robust and effective. They were provided with a broad vision of how safeguarding policies and procedures are put into practice. All of this, along with the examination of case management, leads to the view that there is full compliance with *Safeguarding Children - Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016* within the Diocese of Cork and Ross.

Of particular note during this review was the willingness of personnel to show their learning from mistakes, from training and from lessons from the past. The diocese has made great efforts to “think outside the box” as was evidenced in the training, for example on use of social media. Other examples of good practice are the relapse prevention programme and Safeguarding Month. The practice of informing complainants when a respondent has died is a potentially positive one. However, notice has to also be taken of the view expressed by a complainant who did not welcome receiving this information; and his suggestion that this action should be considered on a careful case-by-case basis is well founded.

The Diocese has a very competent director of safeguarding who presented as knowledgeable, able, kind and keen to ensure maintenance of best practice.

The reviewers commend the leadership shown by Most Reverend John Buckley Bishop Emeritus and have confidence in Bishop Gavin’s commitment to safeguarding children and moving practice forward as new initiatives emerge.

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## Appendix

### Standards and Indicators

Each standard contains a list of indicators, by compliance with which the standard is met.

| <b>Standard 1: <i>Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments</i></b>                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1                                                                                                                    | The Church body follows effective practice guidelines and legislative requirements in the recruitment of all Church personnel and in assessing their suitability to work with children.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 1.2                                                                                                                    | The Church body implements effective practice on the expected standards of adults' behaviour towards children.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 1.3                                                                                                                    | The Church body implements effective practice in encouraging children's positive behaviour.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 1.4                                                                                                                    | The Church body implements effective practice in safe care for all children, including those with specific needs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 1.5                                                                                                                    | The Church body ensures that the safe use of Church property by external groups complies with effective child safeguarding practice.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 1.6                                                                                                                    | The Church body has in place clearly written whistle-blowing procedures to support and assist Church personnel to raise concerns about possible dangerous or unethical conduct by others towards children involved in Church activities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 1.7                                                                                                                    | The Church body has a clearly written complaints procedure regarding safeguarding concerns that are not allegations of abuse.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 1.8                                                                                                                    | The Church body implements effective practice for Church personnel on assessment of hazards when working with children.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 1.9                                                                                                                    | The Church body implements effective practice for the appropriate use of information technology, including social media by Church personnel and by children.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 1.10                                                                                                                   | The Church authority has responsibility for ensuring that all clerics/religious, who are members of the Church body and are ministering with children in an external organisation/Church body agree to follow effective safeguarding practice.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Standard 2: <i>Procedures for responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations</i></b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 2.1                                                                                                                    | The Church body has clearly written child safeguarding procedures and access to the personnel to implement them if suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations are received about the abuse of a child. These procedures specify that all suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations that meet the threshold for reporting to the statutory authorities (apart from those received in the Sacrament of Reconciliation) will be reported. In addition to reporting to the statutory authorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if the allegation relates to a Church authority, the National Board must also be informed;</li> <li>• if the allegation relates to a cleric or religious, the National Board and the Church authority must also be informed;</li> <li>• if the allegation relates to a lay member of Church personnel, the Church authority must be informed.</li> </ul> |
| 2.2                                                                                                                    | The Church body records all suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations and action taken which complies with relevant data protection legislation, statutory guidance on confidentiality and storage of information.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 2.3                                                                                                                    | The Church authority shares information about child protection suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations with those who need to know, in order to keep children safe.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

| <b>Standard 3: Care and Support for the Complainant</b>            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1                                                                | The Church authority offers appropriate pastoral care and support to the complainant, which recognises their unique needs.                                                                                                                                                            |
| 3.2                                                                | The Church authority has access to appropriately trained personnel – lay, religious or clergy – whose clearly defined roles are to listen to and represent the pastoral needs of the complainant.                                                                                     |
| 3.3                                                                | The Church body works in cooperation with relevant organisations and seeks specialist advice from the statutory child protection services when necessary.                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Standard 4: Care and Management of the Respondent</b>           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 4.1                                                                | The Church authority has access to appropriately trained personnel – lay, religious or clergy – whose clearly defined roles are to listen to and represent the pastoral needs of the respondent. This is done in consultation with the respondent.                                    |
| 4.2                                                                | The Church authority has arrangements in place to inform the respondent that an allegation has been received about them, and has a procedure for deciding whether an interim management plan needs to be put in place for the respondent.                                             |
| 4.3                                                                | When statutory authority investigations and assessments have been completed, the Church authority resumes the preliminary investigation/collecting the proofs as provided for in Canon 1717 (1)-(3) (cleric) and Canon 695 (non-ordained religious).                                  |
| 4.4                                                                | The Church authority has in place suitable arrangements for the monitoring of a respondent, where there is a case to answer, until (and if) the Church authority no longer has responsibility for monitoring the respondent.                                                          |
| <b>Standard 5: Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe</b>  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 5.1                                                                | The Church authority takes responsibility to ensure that the induction of all personnel – lay, religious or clergy – includes training in the Church’s child safeguarding policy and procedures.                                                                                      |
| 5.2                                                                | The Church body conducts an annual training-needs analysis that identifies all Church personnel who require training and develops a training plan based on this.                                                                                                                      |
| 5.3                                                                | The Church body ensures delivery at a local level of basic training programmes that are identified and approved by the National Board, as outlined in the National Board’s Training Strategy, where this has been identified as necessary through the annual training-needs analysis. |
| 5.4                                                                | The Church body ensures that Church personnel who have specific child safeguarding responsibilities have appropriate, role-specific training that is identified and approved by the National Board, as outlined in the National Board’s Training Strategy.                            |
| 5.5                                                                | The Church body provides children who access Church-related activities and their parents/guardians with information, advice and support on keeping children safe, and involves them in Church child safeguarding training initiatives wherever possible and appropriate.              |
| 5.6                                                                | The Church body facilitates the provision of an appropriate level of support to all involved with the Church in relation to their responsibilities to safeguard children.                                                                                                             |
| <b>Standard 6: Communicating the Church’s Safeguarding Message</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 6.1                                                                | The Church body has a written plan, which details how the Church’s child safeguarding message will be communicated.                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 6.2                                                                | The Church body makes information regarding how to safeguard children available to all.                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 6.3                                                                | The Church body ensures that it communicates the Church’s child safeguarding message to people whose first language is not English, as well as to people who have specific needs.                                                                                                     |

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6.4                                                                      | The Church body establishes links with other local organisations in order to promote a safe and caring community for children and to share best child safeguarding practice.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Standard 7: <i>Quality Assuring Compliance with the Standards</i></b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 7.1                                                                      | <p>The Church authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• puts in place arrangements to ensure and evaluate its compliance with the safeguarding standards at a local level;</li> <li>• produces a report on the level of compliance established through this audit exercise;</li> <li>• notifies the National Board in writing of the completion of this annual audit report.</li> </ul>                                 |
| 7.2                                                                      | <p>The Church body produces a three-year child safeguarding plan that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outlines the actions that will be taken to keep children safe;</li> <li>• identifies who is responsible for implementing these actions;</li> <li>• specifies the time frame within which actions are completed;</li> <li>• identifies the resources to ensure that the plan’s objectives are realised.</li> </ul> |
| 7.3                                                                      | The Church authority invites the National Board to carry out an independent review of its safeguarding practice in relation to the applicable indicators of the seven safeguarding standards, in accordance with standard terms of reference at a frequency agreed with the National Board.                                                                                                                                           |