



Training

Lorraine Byrne thanks the mandated persons who attended training at the end of 2021. There are 120 mandated persons identified in the Diocese of Meath. Lorraine will be working in the coming weeks with those who have yet to complete this training. In addition, 79 Parish Safeguarding Representatives (PSRs) attended training which covered a number of topics including local risk assessment. There is also the need for all Church volunteers to receive the half-day updated training, given the number of years since they received the full training day.

New members of the training team

The child safeguarding training team will include four additional members who in due course will be available to assist Lorraine with the delivery of training at deanery level. Barbara Mulvihill and Clare McEntee completed the training module provided by the National Board. We thank them for their availability and look forward to working with them.

Preference for in-person training

The Safeguarding Children Committee, at the December 2021 meeting, discussed the benefits and preference for face-to-face meetings over on line meetings for training next year, subject to Covid 19 guidance on public gatherings. In principle, in-person attendance is preferred and will be pursued as far as possible.

Committee membership and roles

Joan Walshe is resigning her role as acting safeguarding coordinator and Lorraine Byrne will take over from her. Bishop Deenihan thanked Joan for her leadership and expertise over the years. Joan will stay on as a committee member.

Theology videos and national conference

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) concluded the series of Theology of Safeguarding videos which are all available to view at <https://www.safeguarding.ie/nationalconference-2022>. Here is a list of the topics:

- **Fr Hans Zollner** What areas would a comprehensive Theology of Safeguarding need to address; and how can Church safeguarding personnel contribute to its development?
- **Sr Nuala Kenny** Healing in a Wounded Church
- **Dr Ethna Regan** How can a theology of safeguarding encompass human rights, including children's rights?
- **Fr Paddy Boyle** How to put theology of safeguarding into practice?
- **Una Allen** How can (an understanding of) Pastoral Theology inform action to heal the spiritual damage caused by clerical child sexual abuse?
- **Dr Jesse Rogers** Jesus puts a child in their midst and tells the disciples to welcome children as a way of welcoming Jesus. How can the Church take that seriously today?
- **Fr Jim Corkery** Does there now need to be a reexamination of the theology of salvation, in the light of the experience of survivors of abuse who did not sin, but were sinned against?
- **Dr Marcia Bunge** Robust theologies of childhood.
- **Justin Humphrey** How is a robust theology of safeguarding a gift to the Church?

Development of a one Church approach to Vulnerable Adults

The Irish Bishops' Conference (IEC) and AMRI requested the National Board to initiate a one year programme to develop a one Church approach to vulnerable adults. Work is now well underway and the National Board will produce a Guidance and Practice Paper (GAP), a critique of existing Diocesan and Religious Order policies, develop initial guidance and conduct a series of listening meetings.

Revision of the Code of Canon Law

Pope Francis with the Apostolic Constitution "Pascite Gregem Dei" reformed Book VI of the Code of Canon Law, continuing a revision begun by Benedict XVI in 2007 and applying penal sanctions to more criminal offences.

Pope Francis said "charity requires that Pastors have recourse to the penal system as often as necessary, keeping in mind the three aims which make it necessary in the ecclesial community, namely, the restoration of the demands of justice, the amendment of the offender, and the reparation of scandals." The Holy Father notes that the new measures aim to "reduce the number of cases in which the imposition of a penalty was left to the discretion of authorities." The failure of bishops to take decisive action—even when the existing provisions of canon law gave them authority to discipline guilty clerics—compounded the severity of the sex abuse crisis.

The National Board identifies the following developments in relation to child safeguarding

- A specific article on sexual abuse committed by priests against minors or vulnerable persons, with a 20-year statute of limitations period. Among the crimes listed in the revised Book VI are the sexual abuse of vulnerable adults and the "grooming" of minors. These crimes are explicitly defined, in an obvious effort to eliminate uncertainties about when the Church's criminal law should be invoked.
- A better determination of the norms: setting out clearly the cases in which the penal system is to be applied and how offences are to be punished. Benchmarks are now also set to guide the action of the Ordinary while respecting the necessary margins for evaluating specific circumstances.
- Allows for a bishop to be removed from office if he is guilty of "culpable negligence" in his handling of abuse complaints.

Parish self audits

55 parishes have returned their 2021 audits. We thank the priests and Parish Safeguarding Representatives (PSRs) for their time and dedication in completing the annual audit. The findings of the independent assessor will be published in the next newsletter.



Synodality in the Diocese of Meath

All the baptised in the Diocese of Meath are invited to participate in the synodal process during Lent 2022.

Opportunities to engage in the process locally will be announced in February. Parish Safeguarding Representatives and parents of children taking part in Church-related activities will be welcome to participate. To learn more about synodality, see www.synod.ie.

Email addresses for Parish Safeguarding Representatives

The diocesan office is compiling a complete list of emails for PSRs in order to improve our ability to communicate directly with parishes. We are asking PSRs to share their email addresses with Loraine who can be contacted at sgtraining@dioceseofmeath.ie