



## DIOCESAN NEWS

### Annual Parish Audit

**Audits have been received from all parishes. The purpose of the annual audit is to review and celebrate all of the safeguarding work which takes place in parishes. It is a way for each parish to ensure that ministry is underpinned by best safeguarding practice.**

- 75% of parishes report one or more activities involving children.
- Some parishes noted a slow return of previous activities involving children and young people but hoped that these activities would resume in 2023.
- A number of parishes received follow-up contact regarding their audit and support to resolve any outstanding matters.
- A waiting list for training has been developed which will inform training provision from September.
- A database of parish audit information has been developed which can be updated with training and other relevant information.
- The majority of parishes report their DLP poster being correctly posted in all parish premises. It is important that this is checked regularly to ensure the details are correct and up to date.

The issue of full-day training usually being held on Saturdays was mentioned as a barrier for some parish personnel. If there is a demand for full-day training on different days or organised in a different way this can be considered and anyone with particular training needs should contact Loraine Byrne ([sgtraining@dioceseofmeath.ie](mailto:sgtraining@dioceseofmeath.ie)).

### Annual Report

The annual report for 2022 is available on [www.meathsafeguarding.ie](http://www.meathsafeguarding.ie). This report is a quality control measure to strengthen the accountability process.

### Training

In the year ended 30 April 2023, 396 people have undertaken diocesan safeguarding training. Training is facilitated by one of the 4 diocesan trainers registered with the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI).

From September further training will be available. Any parish or group of parishes with training needs is encouraged to contact Loraine Byrne ([sgtraining@dioceseofmeath.ie](mailto:sgtraining@dioceseofmeath.ie)) as soon as possible.

Both full-day sessions and information (evening) sessions are currently provided. Refresher sessions for those who have completed full-day training within the past 3 years are also available. It is important that all Parish Safeguarding Representatives, in addition to all leaders of activities involving children and parish personnel (clergy and employees) attend a full day of training in addition to an information session. Training requirements are set out by the NBSCCCI.

## Data Protection

Data protection and privacy matters (GDPR) are an ongoing concern in all activities of the Church. This is especially important with regard to safeguarding. It is important to remember that the safety of children and vulnerable adults is the top priority. However appropriate GDPR procedures and practices is a necessary component of an effective safeguarding framework.

GDPR applies electronic records and most of the cases that have hit the headlines relate to information held on computers. However, GDPR also applies to 'manual filing systems' this would include sacramental sacristan registers.

It is reasonable to commemorate an event like First Holy Communion by recording it but a notice should be displayed saying in advance that photos will be taken and how they will be used (e.g. posted on a website or social media) and how long they will be posted for. Opportunities should be given for people to 'step out of the photograph' if they wish. For parents or families, this is covered by the personal exemption of GDPR, particularly when done in a purely personal capacity and not used in any commercial context or published online: however consideration should be given to the wishes of others.

### Some examples of good GDPR practices:

- Only collect information necessary for the activity in question
- Do not keep information any longer than necessary
- Keep information securely (e.g. sacristy registers recording priests and servers should not be left unattended)
- Be aware of the 'need to know' - only authorised individuals should have access to Church information (e.g. Baptism Registers)

If you have any queries or concerns on any aspects of GDPR please feel free to contact the

Diocesan DPO,  
**David O'Brien**  
[dpo@dioceseofmeath.com](mailto:dpo@dioceseofmeath.com) or  
**044 934 8841.**

## NATIONAL NEWS

### Review of Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland

In light of changes to state legislation, canon law, and practice since the policy was reviewed in 2016, the NBSCCCI has been charged with undertaking a review of the policy and standards and making proposals to the sponsoring bodies. This work has been in progress since mid-2022, resulting in a draft policy document which will be submitted to the sponsoring bodies in June.

Further consultation has taken place over the summer months with a redraft and submission to IEC and AMRI by October. Following sign off and design, it is expected that induction and training should begin in January 2024.

**The Steering Group has formulated the core elements of the revised policy as:**

- A statement of commitment to safeguarding children by all members who minister and engage in children's ministry.
- Key governance requirements, bearing in mind the additional responsibilities of Church leaders.
- (This is an expanded version of Standard 7 - Section 3: Quality Assurance, in our existing Operational Guidelines).
- Practices that promote good child safeguarding, including systems to create a safe environment and embed a culture of safeguarding, as well as training and communication. (Updated version of Standards 1, 5 and 6 - Section 1: Creating a Culture of Safety).
- An approach to responding to allegations and concerns that recognises legislative requirements, as well as the pastoral care needs of complainants and their families, and the rights of respondents to a fair inquiry process. (This is an updated version of Standards 2, 3 and 4 – Section 2: Recognising, Responding, Reporting).

These elements are essentially those covered by the existing Standards, updated to reflect developments in civil and canon law and in practice, and with a greater emphasis on leadership and governance.

## Contact Details

Queries regarding training and any general queries regarding safeguarding, should be directed to

### Lorraine Byrne

☎ (044) 934 8841 or ✉ [sgtraining@dioceseofmeath.ie](mailto:sgtraining@dioceseofmeath.ie)

Reports of any safeguarding concerns or allegations should be made to

### Marie O'Sullivan DLP or Marie Willoughby DLP

☎ (083) 317 5742 or ✉ [dlp@dioceseofmeath.ie](mailto:dlp@dioceseofmeath.ie)

## PARISH NEWS

### Children taking part in parish activities:

#### Altar Servers

Altar servers play an important role in the celebration of the Sacraments. Parishes are encouraged to welcome altar servers and to promote their participation in the liturgy.

#### *Prayer before Mass*

Go before us O Lord,  
in this our sacrifice of Prayer and Praise,  
and grant that what we say and sing  
with our lips we may believe in our hearts,  
and practise and show forth in our daily lives.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### *Prayer after Mass*

Bless, O Lord, our hearts and minds,  
and grant that as we leave Your house,  
we may continue to be aware of Your presence.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Sacristy ledgers

Parishes are reminded that it is necessary to have the Veritas sign-in book available in all sacristies.

- All priests, sacristans, altar servers and others in the sacristy must sign the sacristy ledger book even when there are no altar servers present.
- These ledgers, when filled, should be kept with the parish archives.
- Visiting priests must show a valid celebret and a letter of good standing from their Ordinary (such as Bishop or Provincial).

### Safeguarding Sunday on 8 October

Resources for Safeguarding Sunday are now available in the Resources area of [www.dioceseofmeath.ie](http://www.dioceseofmeath.ie). It is a useful opportunity for parishes to raise awareness of safeguarding, highlight and celebrate the good work that is being done by so many to safeguard vulnerable people. We can acknowledge the children and young people who take part in parish activities and hope they will continue to be part of our parish life. We express thanks also to our parish volunteers and to the parents who support our young people. Their enthusiasm, care and welcome plays a huge part in ensuring that children and young people have a positive experience in our parishes.