



## Annual Report for the Diocese of Meath

The Annual Report outlines the work of the Meath Diocesan Safeguarding Committee for 2025. The Committee meets four times a year: March, June, September and December. The responsibilities of the Committee include the promotion of child safeguarding by:

- Ensuring that the diocesan policies and procedures are in place and implemented;
- Conducting an audit of all parishes;
- Playing a supportive role in the recruitment and selection of volunteers;
- Ensuring that all information relating to safeguarding is posted in all Church buildings, and is relevant and up to date;
- Providing information to all staff and volunteers, as and when required;
- Ensuring active communication with Church personnel and lay faithful;
- Upholding the three standards in practice and behaviour.

The Annual Report provides an overview of the work undertaken by the Committee and all parish staff involved in safeguarding children in the Diocese of Meath.

The Annual Report 2025 is available at [www.meathsafeguarding.ie](http://www.meathsafeguarding.ie).

The following points relate to the parish audits, which form part of the Annual Report.

### Training dates for the coming months

Maura Seabrooke, the safeguarding coordinator, is arranging training for parish staff and volunteers. We are grateful to Clare McEntee and Ronan Farrell for providing the training sessions on the following dates:

- 28 April Kingscourt 7 - 9 pm** (Refresher course)
- 12 May Mullingar 6 - 9 pm** (Full training for new volunteers)
- 19 May Navan 6 - 8 pm** (Refresher course)
- 6 October Mullingar 6 - 8 pm** (Refresher course)
- 13 October Navan 6 - 9 pm** (Full training for new volunteers)

Participants need to book a place on these training sessions. Booking forms are available by sending an email to

[sgtraining@dioceseofmeath.ie](mailto:sgtraining@dioceseofmeath.ie).

Activities for children	Number of children
Altar Servers	620
Choir	204
Sacramental	149
Confirmation	143
Cathedral choir	131
Youth Group	126
First Communion Group	115
Religion Class	80
All saints party	80
Liturgy Group	64
Musical Band	17
Lenten Breakfast	15
Legion of Mary	10
Pilgrimage	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1760*</b>

*\*Not all parishes provided the number of children involved in church activities in the audits.*

- 77% (51) parishes made no indication of further safeguarding training required.
- 23% (15) parishes indicated a need for training.

### Follow up actions arising from the Parish Audits

- Have a register of all groups that are working with children
- Ensure all personnel sign an agreement form
- Record Mandated Persons
- Record follow-up actions.

### Reminder note for sacristies

Clergy and sacristans are reminded of the following requirements:

- All adults and children are required to sign the sacristy register at all ceremonies; if children are not present, this should be noted in the sacristy register
- Visiting clergy are required to present their *celebret* card before celebrating a sacrament or concelebrating in all parish churches.

# NATIONAL UPDATES

## **Towards Healing** (Freephone 1800 303416)

Towards Healing is the counselling and support service funded by the Catholic Church to support the needs of survivors of religious, institutional and clerical abuse and their families. Towards Healing offers a range of services including face-to-face counselling and family support. Towards Healing is staffed by professional, lay people. The clinical team are all therapists with experience working with survivors. It is an entirely independent agency. Towards Healing provided a total of 10,520 sessions of counselling to 623 clients in 2025. An additional 74 late sessions from 2023 and 2024 were invoiced in 2025. The Helpline at Towards Healing is open Tuesday to Friday 9am to 5pm. The helpline is staffed by therapists who are there to support.

## **Responding to Online Child Abuse in Ireland**

The NBSCCCI notes that a multi-faceted approach is used to ensure children's cyber safety, with the Government, online platforms, and support organisations all sharing responsibility. This strategy emphasises strengthening parent-child communication, improving digital literacy, and utilizing technical safety controls. An Garda Síochána offers specific guidance to parents, guardians, and young people concerning issues such as cyberbullying and online child exploitation. They strongly advocate for open dialogue within families and the implementation of robust parental controls.

## **Guidance on Conducting Ministry with Children Using Digital Media**

The following are deemed unacceptable behaviours, and must be avoided in every situation in accordance with guidance from the NBSCCCI:

- Visiting internet sites that contain offensive, obscene, pornographic or illegal material;
- Using a computer to perpetrate any form of fraud or piracy;
- Using the internet or email systems to send offensive and harassing material to others;
- Using obscene or racist language in computer-assisted communications;
- Publishing defamatory or otherwise false material generated by oneself or by others through social networking;
- Introducing any form of malicious software into the used network;
- Intentionally damaging any information communication technology equipment;
- Using another user's password, or giving that password to a third party.
- Further guidance on the use of technology, use of photography or CCTV and webcams is available at [www.safeguarding.ie](http://www.safeguarding.ie).

## **Day of Prayer for Survivors and Victims of Abuse**

The NBSCCCI sends a message of appreciation to all parishes and religious congregations who marked the National Day of Prayer for Survivors and Victims of Abuse in March “with such quiet compassion, gentle presence, reflective prayer, and willingness to hold space for those who carry deep wounds speak to the very best of our shared mission. By gathering in humility and hope, you honour survivors and victims with dignity and you help the Church continue its journey toward truth, safety, and healing for all.”

# Recognising abuse

Safeguarding training reminds us that recognising child abuse involves paying attention to patterns of behaviour or physical signs that suggest a child may not be safe or properly cared for. Children experiencing abuse might show unexplained injuries, sudden changes in behaviour, fearfulness around certain adults, or withdrawal from friends and activities they once enjoyed. Emotional signs can include low self-esteem, excessive secrecy, or extreme reactions to normal situations. Neglect may appear as poor hygiene, persistent hunger, or untreated medical needs. Because no single sign proves abuse, it is important to consider the overall picture and trust your instincts—if something feels wrong, it's always better to seek safeguarding guidance from a professional.

# INTERNATIONAL UPDATES

## **Pope Leo XIV meets the Pontifical Commission for Safeguarding Children**

Teresa Devlin, the Irish member of the Pontifical Commission for Safeguarding Children, has shared her recollection of meeting Pope Leo XIV on 16 March last.

In her reflection, she says that the Holy Father returned repeatedly to one essential truth: safeguarding begins with conversion of heart. It requires the willingness to let the suffering of others disturb complacency, the humility to learn from past failures, and the resolve to build communities—both physical and digital—where kindness, attentiveness, and safety are woven into the fabric of daily life.

In this sense, the Holy Father said, safeguarding is nothing less than a work of hope: the hopeful conviction that the Church can and must be a place where trust is honoured, wounds are taken seriously, and every person, especially the vulnerable, is treated with the dignity they deserve.

### **Contacts**

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[www.meathsafeguarding.ie](http://www.meathsafeguarding.ie)

#### **Designated Liaison Persons**

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Marie Willoughby DLP

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✉ [dlp@dioceseofmeath.ie](mailto:dlp@dioceseofmeath.ie)

#### **Garda National Protective**

**Services Bureau**

☎ 01 666 3430 or

☎ 01 666 3435

#### **TUSLA**

☎ 046 909 7870 (Meath)

☎ 044 938 4450 (Westmeath)

☎ 057 869 2567 (Offaly)