



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

**Second Review of Child Safeguarding Practice**  
  
**in the**  
  
**Diocese of Raphoe**  
  
**undertaken by**  
  
**The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the**  
  
**Catholic Church in Ireland (National Board)**

**Date of Review Report: December 2022**

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## Background

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church Ireland (National Board) was established in 2006 to provide advice, services and assistance in the ongoing development of safeguarding children within the Roman Catholic Church on the Island of Ireland; to monitor compliance with legislation, policy and best practice; and to report on these activities. This 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*.

The Diocese of Raphoe was previously reviewed in August 2010 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 National Board's website [www.safeguarding.ie/publications](http://www.safeguarding.ie/publications). This current Review is an opportunity for the National Board to confirm that recommendations from the previous Review (2010) were implemented.

The recommendations from the previous Review (August 2010) are set out below along with the current status of implementation:

1. Bishop Boyce should continue to support the Child Protection Committee and encourage them to regularly review and monitor the policies and procedures that apply within the diocese. Care should be taken to ensure that they comply fully with the requirement of Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance as well as Children First - **implemented**
2. Bishop Boyce should ensure that a written referral is made to statutory authorities when a safeguarding concern arises. He should also ensure that referrals are made to the CDF in line with current Church guidance - **implemented**
3. Bishop Boyce should build on the introduction of a qualified layperson to the role of Deputy Designated person and consider the replacement of the clerical designated person with a further qualified lay member, in line with developments nationally - **implemented**
4. As the commissioner of assessments, Bishop Boyce should ensure that a formal written contract with any Assessment Centre is used, and that should include that he owns any report produced rather than it being seen as the property of the referred - **implemented**
5. Bishop Boyce should continue to develop a sound working relationship with the Gardaí, HSE and the Probation Board with regard to the management of all current cases within the diocese - **implemented**
6. Bishop Boyce should meet on a regular basis with the chairs of committees to agree objectives and to monitor and review progress against these objectives. Each committee should have a written description of their role and function, which would include their reporting relationship with Bishop Boyce - **implemented**

7. The Designated Person should meet regularly with the Support person and Adviser to discuss and brief each other on their work. They should agree objectives, and monitor and review progress against these objectives Review of Safeguarding Practice in the Diocese of Raphoe  
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8. The Child Protection Committee should ensure that all trainers are made aware of the anxiety experienced by a number of clergy through fear of the subject of child abuse, or of being the subject of a false allegation. They should also engage with the National Board toward finding a solution to the problem – **implemented**
9. The Child Protection Committee should continue to seek and avail of appropriate skills training for those in key positions who deal directly with people associated with allegations. These should include the priest Designated person, the Advisor, Bishop Boyce and the Support Person - **implemented**
10. The Chair of the Child Protection Committee should encourage, where possible, more members receive relevant specialist and accredited training, to ensure the knowledge base in the group is spread more widely and support is available to the current trainers in the event of future change – **implemented**
11. The Child Protection Committee should prepare and publish a further Annual Report on developments in the diocese – **implemented**
12. Bishop Boyce should review the role of Support Person and ensure that it proactively engages with the complainant following an allegation to assess and respond to their support and advice needs - **implemented**
13. Bishop Boyce should consider bringing the names of the roles and groups that form part of the diocese's safeguarding framework into line with those contained in Resource 1 of Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance document – **implemented**

The purpose of this second round of Reviews is to assess child-safeguarding 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

The Diocese of Raphoe is made up of 33 parishes in County Donegal in the north west of Ireland. The diocese is within the ecclesiastical province of the metropolitan Archdiocese of Armagh. The Catholic population of the diocese is 82,505 out of a total population of 91,150. The largest towns are Ballyshannon, Donegal, Letterkenny and Stranorlar.

The Diocese is divided into six deaneries:

- Region I (Central) Conwal & Leck (Letterkenny), Aughanishin (Letterkenny), Glenswilly, Ramelton.
- Region II (Northern) Gartan & Termon, Kilmacrennan Carrigart, Tamney, Rathmullan, Dunfanaghy.
- Region III (Eastern) Stranorlar, St Johnston, Newtowncunningham & Killea, Raphoe, Drumoghill, Glenfin.
- Region IV (Southern) Ballyshannon, Ballintra, Donegal Town, Killymard, Inver.
- Region V (Western) Dungloe, Burtonport, Gweedore, Falcarragh, Gortahork, Annagry.
- Region VI (Southwestern) Glenties, Bruckless, Ardara, Killybegs, Kilcar, Carrick.

Following the retirement of Bishop Boyce, the Very Reverend Alan McGuckian SJ was appointed Bishop of Raphoe on June 9, 2017 and was ordained Bishop on August 6, 2017.

There are sixty-seven (67) incardinated priests in the Diocese of Raphoe: forty-five (45) active priests in the diocese; three (3) priests working elsewhere; five (5) priests on loan from elsewhere; two (2) priests on leave; and sixteen (16) retired priests.

There are five (5) Religious Orders/Congregations located in the diocese, which include the Capuchins, Franciscans, Sisters of Mercy, The Spiritual Family of the Work of Christ, and the Sisters of the Merciful Jesus. These have a combined membership of five (5) religious priests, four (4) male religious and twenty-eight (28) female religious.

The reviewers, on behalf of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (the National Board), would like to thank Bishop Alan McGuckian for his invitation to undertake a Review of child safeguarding arrangements and practice in the Diocese of Raphoe. We appreciated everyone's willingness to engage openly with us during our visits to the Diocesan and Safeguarding Offices, and the parishes of Conwal & Leck and Aughanishin in Letterkenny

Ministry with children and young people in the diocese includes altar server ministry, youth choirs, Net Ministries, Children's Liturgy, preparation for first communion and confirmation, Letterkenny Youth Group, Pope John Paul II Award Scheme and Lourdes Pilgrimages.

During 2020 and 2021, a range of activities involving children and young people were ceased to comply with government guidelines on pandemic restrictions.

## Process of Review

The Review of compliance was measured against the National Board's seven standards, contained in *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*, which is accessible at <https://www.safeguarding.ie/policy-guidance/policy-document>. The Review concentrated on safeguarding arrangements and practice through evaluating written records and meetings with Church personnel.

In order to assess compliance, Bishop Alan McGuckian, of the Diocese of Raphoe invited the National Board to undertake a review of practice, which took place in December 2022.

A Memorandum of Understanding and Data Processing Deed Agreement were signed prior to the Review taking place.

The Diocese of Raphoe Review fieldwork was undertaken during the period 5th to 7th December 2022. The following is a list of those with whom the reviewers met or spoke with during the fieldwork of this Review:

- Bishop Alan McGuckian
- Safeguarding Lead (including training and vetting) / DLP
- Diocesan Secretary
- One Priest Advisor
- One Complainant
- Two Accredited Trainers
- Chairperson and members of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee
- Parish Priests / Local Safeguarding Representatives / Sacristans/ Parish office secretary
- Little Rays of the Merciful Jesus Liturgy group – Sisters / Parents / Children
- Pastoral Care Centre Manager / Co-ordinator Pope John Paul II Award Scheme Co-ordinator
- Children of the Eucharist Leader
- Rainbows Counselling Service Co-ordinator
- Lourdes Pilgrimage Leader
- Net Ministries DLP / Assistant DLP / and a volunteer
- Tusla
- An Garda Síochána

## **STANDARDS**

The Standards are a level of practice required to ensure good child safeguarding arrangements. Each standard is self-contained and supported by indicators to evidence if safeguarding arrangements and practice meet the required standard. The National Board has produced detailed Guidance, which is accessible on its website (<https://www.safeguarding.ie/guidance>).

The seven Standards are:

Standard 1: Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments

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

Standard 3: Care and Support for the Complainant

Standard 4: Care and Management of the Respondent

Standard 5: Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe

Standard 6: Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

Standard 7: Quality-Assuring Compliance with the Standards

This Review concentrates on practice through evaluating written records, interviews with Church personnel and young people; information from complainants and respondents.

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

## Standard 1 - Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments

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

Parish safeguarding guidance is comprehensive and reflects the requirements of the *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016*. All parishes currently working with children have had up to date packs issued, which include safeguarding policies, guidance, leaflets, posters and forms.

These include arrangements for safe recruitment for paid staff and volunteers. The Safeguarding Lead provided the reviewers with evidence of all documentation related to safeguarding, which is referenced below and is available in electronic and hard copy formats.

Vetting for all relevant personnel including volunteers is up to date. The vetting process is meticulously organised and kept up to date by the Safeguarding Lead, supported by Local Safeguarding Representatives (LSRs) and/or Parish Secretaries.

Reviewers had access to vetting documentation, which is securely stored.

Garda vetting figures (2018 to 2022 – online vetting portal):

| Year         | Parishes                            |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2017         | 308                                 |
| 2018         | 273 (online vetting portal)         |
| 2019         | 397                                 |
| 2020         | 245                                 |
| 2021         | 71 (reduced figure due to Covid-19) |
| 2022         | 95 (reduced figure due to Covid-19) |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>1,389</b>                        |

Guidance is in place for clerics/religious who have ministry with children in an external organisation/Church body. This information is collated and held by the Diocesan Secretary.

There is up to date guidance in place on the use of technology, internet, texting/email, photography and CCTV/webcams.

There is guidance in place for external organisations/groups using diocesan premises. A reviewer had the opportunity to meet with the Co-ordinator of the local Rainbows service, which provides support to children experiencing bereavement, parental separation and relationship breakdown. The Rainbows group has a safeguarding policy and insurance in place, and had recently completed a group work programme for children.



Guidance on Whistleblowing is included in the Safeguarding Guidance for Parishes; there have been no whistleblowing reports since the last National Board review in 2010.

A Complaints Procedure for Safeguarding Concerns that are not Allegations of Abuse is included in the Safeguarding Guidance for Parishes; there was one complaint reported since the last Review. The reviewers had access to documentation related to this, and were satisfied that the complaint was fully investigated within timescales, involved all relevant parties, who were informed about the outcome of the investigation. The complaint was satisfactorily resolved. Records of the investigation were completed.

As part of the Review, there was an opportunity for reviewers to meet with the following people - Bishop McGuckian, the Diocesan Safeguarding lead (with responsibility for vetting and training co-ordination) and DLP, the Diocesan Secretary, Parish Priests, a Parish Secretary, and the diocesan Safeguarding Committee. We also met with the Rainbows Co-ordinator, the Lourdes Pilgrimage Leader, the Pastoral Care Centre Manager and Pope John Paul II Award Programme (pilot) Co-ordinator, and the Letterkenny Youth Group Lead. All were clear about their roles and responsibilities within their remit to safeguard children and young people. All advised that there were good working relationships in the Diocesan Pastoral Centre / Safeguarding Office and with local parishes. Everyone was very positive about the support that she/he received from the Diocesan Safeguarding Lead / DLP. They were able to articulate their knowledge of safe care and the arrangements needed to achieve this; for example, through safe recruitment, volunteer application screening, vetting, and training.

Other means of safeguarding children identified by interviewees were obtaining parental consents, ensuring adequate adult supervision ratios, completing hazard risk assessments, having sign-in/out registers filled in, using codes of behaviour for adults and children, displaying safeguarding information in Church premises, and being clear about how to respond to and report a concern. During site visits, the reviewers were provided evidence of the implementation of all of these.

Reviewers met with Sacristans who talked about the safeguarding arrangements they had in place. The reviewers viewed the following in the sacristy – completed sign in/out registers, a *celebret* notice poster, a general safeguarding poster, and altar server's posters in English, Irish and Polish, which were at eye level for children, and a Towards Healing service poster. The Sacristans provided copies of procedures for vetting, complaints, whistleblowing, a completed hazard risk assessment and consent forms for altar serving. They had a roster for altar servers, and they showed us where parents leave their children with them before they prepare for Mass. The Sacristans advised that they were confident to ask for *celebret* certificates from visiting clergy.

The Sacristans had a very positive and inclusive attitude to children. They spoke about supporting children in their role, always being present for them when they were serving, and providing them with a space to reflect before serving. They ensured that the roles were shared between the servers, e.g. bell ringing etc. They talked about how excited the children get to serve and how it is beneficial to them from a spiritual perspective, but also for their confidence.

A Sacristan had written a booklet for altar servers which outlined their role around different services, i.e. funerals, weddings etc. After Church services, a Sacristan would often phone parents and servers to check in, particularly around difficult funerals. They outlined that they were confident that children would speak to them about any concerns they had about themselves or others. Two Sacristans discussed how aware they were of people who may come into the church who may need refuge, and they would talk and listen to them. The Sacristans are to be commended for their care and support to children involved in Altar Service ministry.

A Parish Priest visited by reviewers advised that the children's choir had resumed, with children participating from local schools. Consent forms had been completed and children are accompanied by their teachers.

Net Ministries are to be commended for reaching out online to children and young people during Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, through music and liturgy readings. It is planned that in 2023, the Net Ministry team will provide their full range of youth ministry activities in the diocese.

The reviewers were kindly invited to attend the Little Rays of the Merciful Jesus Liturgy Group (Sisters of the Merciful Jesus Religious Order). On arrival at the group, children were accompanied by a parent/grandparent (who could stay with their child), and the sign in/out register was signed. The Sisters were able to engage the children in prayer, song and discussion about scripture easily, in which the children happily participated.

The Diocesan Director of Counselling recognised the need for and importance of community counselling supports. They have created a model of community counselling, developed governance for it, and established services that cover most of Co. Donegal.

Counselling is provided for adults and children from the age of five upwards through the Diocesan Pastoral Centre, as well as six outreach centres throughout Co Donegal. The service has eighteen trained, experienced counsellors who are all vetted. Art therapy and play therapy are also provided for children of all ages, depending on developmental need. Funding for children's participation is provided mainly by Tusla, and some other agencies. This is a separate service to the Towards Healing and Towards Peace Services available to complainants.

The issues presented to counsellors have become more complex over the years. These include anxiety, depression, gender issues, domestic violence, relationship breakdown, emotional and sexual abuse, addictions, bereavements through suicide, and loss of loved ones through accidents and illness.

The reviewers were impressed with the arrangements in place to create and maintain a safe environment for children and young people.

**This standard is met.**

## Standard 2 - Procedures for responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations

*Church bodies have clear procedures and guidance on what to do when suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations arise regarding a child's safety or welfare that will ensure there is a prompt response. They also enable the Church to meet all national and international legal and practice requirements and guidance.*

Reports of abuse received since the previous review in 2010 up to December 2022 are outlined below:

**Table 1:**

| Cleric                          | Current Status  | Number of Complainants | Gardai notified within                | Tusla notified within         | National Board notified within | Canonical Action taken |
|---------------------------------|---|------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>In Ministry</b>              |   |                        |                                       |                               |                                |                        |
| 1                               | In ministry   | 1                      | 6 days                                | 1 day                         | 4 days                         | PI completed           |
|                                 | In good standing  | 2                      | 1 day                                 | 1 day                         | 1 day                          |                        |
| <b>Not involved in Ministry</b> |   |                        |                                       |                               |                                |                        |
| 2.                              | Not involved in ministry – resides outside of diocese<br><br>In good standing | 1                      | 1 day                                 | 1 day                         | 1 day                          | n/a                    |
| <b>Out of Ministry</b>          |   |                        |                                       |                               |                                |                        |
| 3.                              | Out of Ministry   | 1                      | 1 day                                 | 1 day                         | 1 day                          | PI completed           |
|                                 |   | 2                      | 1 day                                 | 1 day                         | 1 day                          | PI completed           |
| <b>Laicised</b>                 |   |                        |                                       |                               |                                |                        |
| 4.                              | Laicised  | 1                      | 4 days                                | 4                             | 4 days                         | Laicised               |
|                                 |   | 2                      | 1 day                                 | 1                             | 1 day                          |                        |
|                                 |   | 3                      | 4 days                                | N/A- resident outside Ireland | 4 days                         |                        |
| 5.                              | Laicised  | 1                      | Gardai informed diocese of complaints | Report made by complainant    | 9 days                         | Laicised               |
|                                 |   | 2                      |                                       |                               |                                |                        |
|                                 |   | 3                      |                                       |                               |                                |                        |
| 6.                              | Laicised  | 1                      | 8 days                                | 8 days                        | 8 days                         | Laicised               |
|                                 |   | 2                      | 17 days                               | 17 days                       | 17days                         |                        |

**Diocese of Raphoe 2022**

|                          |  |   |         |         |         |   |
|--------------------------|--|---|---------|---------|---------|---|
|                          |  | 3 | 1 day   | 1 day   | 3 days  |   |
|                          |  | 4 | 1 day   | 1 day   | 1 day   |   |
|                          |  | 5 | 1 day   | N/A     | 6 days  |   |
| 7.                       | Laicised<br>(Deceased)   | 1 | 5 days  | 5 days  | 3 days  | Laicised  |
|                          |  | 2 | 3 days  | 3 days  | 3 days  |   |
|                          |  | 3 | 77 days | 89 days | 78 days |   |
|                          |  | 4 | 25 days | N/A     | 25 days |   |
|                          |  | 5 | 3 days  | N/A     | N/A     |   |
|                          |  | 6 | N/A     | N/A     | N/A     |   |
| 8.                       | Laicised   | 1 | 1 day   | 1 day   | 19 days | Laicised  |
|                          |  | 2 | 1 day   |         |         |   |
| <b>Deceased</b>          |  |   |         |         |         |   |
| 9.                       | Deceased prior<br>to report being<br>received  | 1 | 3 days  | 3 days  | 15 days | N/A   |
| 10.                      | Deceased prior<br>to report being<br>received  | 1 | 3 days  | 3 days  | 3 days  | N/A   |
| <b>Other Church Body</b> |  |   |         |         |         |   |
| 11.                      | Other Church<br>Body<br>Laicised 2010  | 1 | 23 days | 23 days | 23 days | Canon law<br>process<br>completed<br><br>Laicised |
| 12.                      | Other Church<br>Body<br>Out of Ministry<br>Moved to live<br>in diocese                           | 1 | N/A     | N/A     | N/A     | Canon law<br>process<br>completed                 |
| 13.                      | Other Church<br>Body   | 1 | 2 days  | 2 days  | 8 days  | N/A   |
| 14.                      | Other Church<br>Body<br>Out of Ministry<br>Deceased<br>subsequent to<br>report being<br>received | 1 | 1 day   | 1 day   | 1 day   | N/A   |

All reports received were retrospective complaints of abuse, and the required notifications were made to the Gardaí, Tusla and the National Board.

The reviewers completed a review of new and ongoing cases since the last National Board Review in 2010. There were fourteen (14) cases that met the criteria to be reviewed. Ten (10) of these involved respondent priests from the diocese, and four (4) were clerics from other Church bodies. At the time of the Review, three (3) respondent priests from the diocese, two (2) of whom had been laicised, were subject to a management plan – and one (1) is currently living outside the diocese.

All cases had timely notifications to the statutory authorities and the National Board and to other Church bodies where relevant. The variance in timescales for notifications that can be seen in Table 1 is due to, for example, the need to gather additional information about respondents and/or complainants, and to follow up details with third parties who have reported allegations of abuse.

In relation to Cleric 7, the notifications regarding complainants 3 and 4 were not immediately made for the following reasons:

- Complainant 3 – the contact details/address of the complainant were not initially provided. Following the efforts of the Parish Priest, this information was obtained and notifications were then made to the statutory authorities and National Board, and support was offered to the complainant. The respondent was deceased at time of report and there was no risk to children.
- Complainant 4 – needed time to give full details of their complaint, prior to notifications being made. The respondent was deceased at time of report and there was no risk to children.

Additionally, in the case of Cleric 7, there was insufficient detail provided to the diocese about complainant 6 to make notifications to the statutory authorities. This complaint was made by a third party, and the complainant made no contact with the diocese. Cleric 7 was deceased at the time the report was made to the diocese.

The reviewers are satisfied that the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is widely identified, so that everyone knows who to go to if they have a safeguarding concern. This has been achieved through display of DLP contact details on the diocesan website and at all Church premises – posters, leaflets, bulletins and newsletters.

The DLP is proactive in maintaining contact with civil authorities about the progress of investigations, and reported good working relationships with named points of contact in the Gardai and Tusla. Gardai and Tusla personnel were very complimentary about the DLP, who provided full information in a timely way. They described good working relationships based on trust, and an openness to share information to progress investigations and to reduce any identified risks. They highlighted the positives of having a named point of contact and the opportunity to consult with each other about cases.

The canon law processes were initiated as appropriate following completion of civil investigations. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was updated about any change in a respondent's circumstances.

The reviewers are satisfied that procedures are in place for responding to child protection suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations and so, **this standard is met.**

### **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.*

The bishop was open in discussion with the reviewers about the legacy from the history of clerical child abuse in the diocese, and the anger that remains today. He highlighted the importance of having the Mass of Atonement each year and the acknowledgement by the Church of the continued suffering of those who have experienced abuse.

There was evidence on case records, and from discussions with the bishop and DLP that complainants were listened to, treated with respect, offered a support person, as well as counselling support from Towards Healing and Towards Peace services. This was true irrespective of the status of the priest respondent when a complainant came forward. It was also evidenced on case files that complainants were provided advice about how to access legal advice and support. The reviewers are satisfied through examination of the cases files, discussion with the bishop, DLP and a complainant that complainants are kept up to date about developments in their case, have ongoing opportunities to meet with the bishop and DLP about their circumstances, and a written record is shared with them about discussion and outcomes of a meeting which they have attended with diocesan personnel.

The complainant who participated in the Review valued the support from the DLP and bishop. They talked about their relief at being listened to and believed by the bishop and DLP, and the benefit of ongoing support services provided. They also talked of their feelings of anger and hurt about the outcome of civil and canonical investigations, and that there had been no apology forthcoming from the respondent priest.

The bishop and DLP acknowledged that complainants might not always want to, or be able to, avail of support from the diocese due to feelings of distress, hurt and anger, together with a lack of confidence and trust because of the Churches' past response to allegations of abuse. The bishop and DLP are sensitive to this and are committed to continue to reach out to complainants to offer supports suitable to them and their families.

The reviewers suggested to the DLP that even if a complainant initially declined support, it would be good practice to make another offer of support within a defined period, as appropriate. A Support Person from the diocese is available to support complainants, and they are vetted, trained and experienced.

Complainants as well as being able to access support from Towards Healing and Peace services, can also avail of support through the Diocesan Pastoral Centre counselling service referred to in Standard 1.

The DLP advised that there is discussion ongoing between the northern dioceses about establishing a pool of Support Persons – male and female. This will develop the expertise of Support Persons, facilitate suitable matching of a Support Person with a complainant, and facilitate shared specialised training and group mentoring/support. The reviewers commend this initiative.

The reviewers are satisfied that the diocese provide a sensitive and compassionate response to complainants, and appropriate arrangements are in place to care and support them.

**This standard is met.**

## 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 (cleric or religious) is provided.*

The review of case files evidenced that respondents are well managed based on assessment and identified risk. The Delegated Liaison Person had proactive involvement in all cases and respondents were monitored as per their management plan. Currently three (3) respondent priests from the diocese, two (2) of whom are laicised, have a management plan in place. These plans are kept under review by the DLP to take account of any change in the respondent's circumstances. They are offered support from a Priest Advisor, and their welfare is considered as part of case management.

There is one (1) respondent priest resident in the diocese from another Church body who is also subject to a management plan.

Advice is appropriately sought by the diocese from the National Case Management Committee as and when required.

There follows a summary of cases outlined in Table 1 in the earlier section on Standard 2. Cleric 1 had support from a Priest Advisor and from a canon lawyer. Restrictions on his ministry were removed following completion of investigations, risk assessment and advice from the National Case Management Committee. He is a priest of good standing.

Cleric 2 resides outside the diocese. The Gardaí completed an investigation and found no reason to proceed. The Cleric was supported by the diocese. He is a priest in good standing.

Following completion of a Garda investigation and a preliminary canonical investigation, Cleric 3 remains out of ministry and is subject to an up to date management plan based on an assessment of risk. His circumstances are monitored and kept under regular review by the diocese.

Cleric 4 has been out of ministry since 2000, and he was laicised in 2014. The diocese managed him appropriately until his laicisation. There has been no direct involvement with him since this date. Since the last Review in 2010, there have been three (3) new retrospective allegations of abuse, and notifications were made to the statutory authorities as appropriate for these to be investigated.

Cleric 5 has been out of ministry since 2002, and he was laicised in 2022 following further reports of retrospective abuse and investigation by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The case was thoroughly documented and the respondent priest appropriately managed. There was evidence on file of monitoring and regular review of the management plan, based on ongoing assessment of risk. Since the previous Review in 2010, there have been three separate reports of alleged retrospective abuse made by complainants directly to the Gardaí, who then informed the



diocese. Following investigations and completion of court proceedings, the respondent priest was convicted in both cases and he served two separate prison sentences. The bishop updated the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of the further reports of abuse, and was involved in the process of laicisation of the priest. The respondent priest had access to support, and legal representation from both civil and canon lawyers. The diocese worked closely with the statutory authorities and acted upon recommendations made by the National Case Management Committee. The laicised priest remains subject to an up to date management plan, monitored and reviewed by the diocese.

Cleric 6 has been out of ministry since 1998, and he was laicised in 2006. Since the last Review in 2010, there have been a further five (5) reports of alleged retrospective abuse. The laicised priest has been convicted regarding one of these reports, and he remains subject to Garda investigation. An up to date plan to manage him in the community is in place and is being kept under review. There is clear evidence of the diocese and statutory agencies working well together in this case, and recommendations from the National Case management Committee are being implemented by the diocese.

Cleric 7 is deceased. He was laicised in 2004. He received a conviction and prison sentence for abuse of children over a period of twenty-seven (27) years. Following his release from prison, the statutory authorities had a responsibility to monitor and review his arrangements up until his death. Since the last Review in 2010, six (6) further reports of alleged retrospective abuse were made to the diocese. The diocese made notifications to the appropriate statutory authorities regarding five (5) of these reports. One report received was made by a third party and the complainant did not make contact with the diocese. There was insufficient information provided for the diocese to make contact with the complainant. Five (5) of the six (6) reports were made following the respondent's death.

Cleric 8 has been out of ministry since 1993, and he was laicised in 2017. Since the last Review in 2010, two (2) further reports of alleged retrospective abuse were made to the diocese, which notified the statutory authorities for these to be investigated.

Cleric 9 was deceased at the time of the report to the diocese of alleged abuse. The complainant was not named by the third party who made the report. Notifications were made to the statutory authorities for their information.

Cleric 10 was deceased at the time of report to the diocese of the alleged abuse. The required notifications were made to the statutory authorities.

Cleric 11 is the responsibility of, and under the supervision of another Church body and statutory agency. He was laicised in 2010. A further report of alleged retrospective abuse was received by the diocese. Following gathering information from the complainant, the diocese made timely notifications to the statutory authorities and to the other Church body to investigate.

Cleric 12 moved from another diocese to reside in Raphoe Diocese. He is retired, and he has been without faculties to minister since 2003. The diocese on behalf of the other Church body monitor his circumstances, based on a plan agreed with the other Church body, which is kept up to date; and this was reviewed in 2022.

Cleric 13 is the responsibility of another Church body. The diocese immediately notified the report of alleged abuse to the statutory authorities and to the other Church body to investigate.

Cleric 14 is deceased. He was the responsibility of and under the supervision of another Church body. The diocese immediately notified the report of alleged abuse to the statutory authorities and to the other Church body.

One respondent completed a questionnaire giving his experience of the care and management received.

The respondent stated that he had been informed about the allegations by the bishop, and notifications made to the civil authorities. He reported that he was consulted and listened to, and received good support from his Priest Advisor. He was advised about his right to access legal representation from a civil and canon lawyer. He was kept up to date about civil and canon investigations, and about the outcomes of these.

There were no requests from respondents to meet with the reviewers.

The Priest Advisor, who participated in the Review, was clear about his role and responsibilities. He said that he received support from both the bishop and DLP. The reviewers suggested that it would be useful for the DLP to have planned meetings with the Priest Advisor to discuss and provide support regarding a current case.

The bishop demonstrated knowledge and oversight of all cases. The DLP valued the support provided by the bishop, and his accessibility to discuss cases and agree actions.

The DLP reported that the northern dioceses are discussing the potential of establishing a pool of Priest Advisors. This will allow for the development of experience and expertise; shared specialised training; group mentoring/support; and a choice of advisor who is not involved in the management of the case to be matched with the respondent. This approach is supported by the reviewers.

The reviewers are satisfied that suitable and effective arrangements are in place for the management and care of respondents.

**This standard is met.**

## 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.*

The Safeguarding Coordinator maintains a centralised training record / matrix of clergy, co-workers and volunteers who have completed one-day safeguarding training and refresher training. The Safeguarding Committee receive updates from the Safeguarding Lead regarding mandatory safeguarding training, and an annual training return is submitted to the National Board, including evaluation and feedback data.

All training needs at parish level are identified during analysis of self-audits completed by Local Safeguarding Representatives (LSRs). This information informs training required for the following year. Since pandemic restrictions were removed, mandatory training is delivered based on requests from parishes, together with training needs identified from self-audits. The Training Plan is a separate section within the Children's Safeguarding Three Year Strategic Plan, which is reviewed annually, and the outcome included in the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee's Annual Reports, which were seen by the reviewers.

There are three (3) accredited Trainers including the Safeguarding Lead. The Safeguarding Lead sets dates based on the availability of participants in order to maximize attendance. Two accredited Trainers deliver mandatory training sessions together.

Mandatory training is up to date.

Safeguarding Training Figures 2016 to 2022:

| Year | Clergy | Staff/Volunteers | Total | Comment               |
|------|--------|------------------|-------|-----------------------|
| 2016 | 61     | 198              | 259   | New training roll out |
| 2017 | 15     | 231              | 246   |                       |
| 2018 | 7      | 35               | 42    |                       |
| 2019 | 23     | 178              | 201   |                       |
| 2020 | 42     | 42               | 84    | Covid-19              |
| 2021 | 5      | 18               | 23    | Covid-19              |
| 2022 | 3      | 81               | 84    | Covid-19              |

The Safeguarding Lead has developed an excellent training pack based on the requirements of the National Board standards.

The reviewers are satisfied that training is a priority for the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee and a plan/actions are in place for the effective delivery of mandatory training and other training to meet the needs of Church personnel. This has been clearly evidenced within the Safeguarding Committee Annual Reports from the last Review, which were examined by the reviewers.

**This standard is met.**

## **Standard 6 - Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message**

*Church bodies appropriately communicate the Church's child safeguarding message.*

The National Board Review for Safeguarding Children was promoted on the diocesan website and in the autumn Safeguarding Newsletter 2022.

The Diocese of Raphoe has a Safeguarding Statement (updated 23/12/2021) on its website, which is compliant with Children First, 2015.

Diocesan centres and parish churches visited had clearly displayed information in entrances and in the sacristies about safeguarding (including child friendly versions), with current DLP and statutory authority contact details. Information about Towards Healing and Towards Peace support services were also on display. Safeguarding information exhibited included translations into Ukrainian. There are specific child friendly safeguarding posters for Altar Servers, Children's Choir, and Children's Liturgy, which are accessible on the diocesan website. A *Smart Ways to Keep Yourself Safe* poster is also available for display.

Informative Children's Safeguarding Newsletters are issued in the spring and autumn of each year.

Copies of these from 2016 were provided to the reviewers.

*Celebret* notices were clearly displayed in sacristies.

Safeguarding Children information leaflets for parents and young people are available. Notices concerning the use of CCTV and webcams are clearly displayed in Church entrances. The diocesan website has accessible information to support communication in the diocese about all aspects of children's safeguarding, and to access safeguarding policy, guidance and resources. It is planned that the new diocesan communications/ website worker will be utilized to develop and enhance the safeguarding section of the website, which will include ongoing promotion of children's safeguarding and the work of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee. Putting up profiles of the committee members on the website was seen by the Committee as a way to highlight their work.

The reviewers are satisfied that an effective plan and actions for communicating the Churches' safeguarding children message are incorporated into the Children's Safeguarding Three-Year Strategic Plan and kept under review by the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee. Review of the Communication Plan by the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee was evidenced in their Annual Reports from the time of the last Review, which were examined by the reviewers.

**This standard is met.**

## **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 recommendations from the last Review in 2010 were fully implemented, as outlined in the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee Annual Report, 2012.

The Diocesan Children's Safeguarding Committee has a constitution in place, together with terms of reference. Membership of the Committee meets the requirements of the constitution. The bishop is a member of the Committee, and the Chairperson reported that he is very involved and supportive of the Committee's work.

There are scheduled meetings arranged for the year ahead.

An up to date Mandated Person's list of clergy and pastoral care staff is kept. There are currently forty-five active incardinated clergy in the diocese, along with fourteen pastoral care personnel. The reviewers were able to attend the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee meeting. It was evident that there were good working relationships between the committee members. There was a mix of new and experienced members. Committee membership is kept under review, to assess whether there are skills that the committee may benefit from by taking on new members. The Chairperson followed the agenda, and enabled the participation of members. All views were listened to and valued. The Chairperson reviewed matters arising/actions from the previous meeting, summarised the discussion, and sought agreement on the actions to be taken forward.

Encouraging children and youth participation in Church activities was discussed as being an important role for the committee.

Parish self-audit returns for 2021 were completed and discussed at the Safeguarding Committee. The Children's Safeguarding Annual Report for 2021 is being completed and will be issued in the New Year. Annual Reports from the time of the last Review were provided to the reviewers. Evidence was provided to reviewers that self-audits, annual reports and plans were completed in preceding years from 2016 (with the exception of 2020 due to the impact of Covid-19).

A Children's Safeguarding Three-Year Strategy, 2022 to 2025 is in place (including separate sections and actions for training and communication). The reviewers are satisfied that this will be implemented and kept under review. This has been evidenced regarding previous plans, where progress with actions and achievements were included in the Safeguarding Committee's Annual Reports from the last review, which were seen by the reviewers.

The Committee had started the process of assessing diocesan safeguarding practices against the National Board seven Standards, which is included as an action in the Safeguarding Strategy 2022 to 2025. This was an agreed priority for 2023, and it will involve engagement with LSRs. The Committee advised that the outcome of this current Review would assist with this process.

The reviewers commend the planned engagement with parishes about building capacity for Youth Ministry as part of the Pastoral Plan, 2022 to 2024. The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee is committed to strengthen communication links between local Parish Pastoral Councils and LSRs, and to take a 'working together' approach at diocesan and local levels.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Lead / DLP is to be commended for their work, despite the challenges presented by Covid-19 and lockdown.

The bishop and Safeguarding Lead / DLP reported that they meet regularly to review progress with cases and to agree actions to manage these. Their discussions include exchange of information about support to complainants, and the care and management of respondents. The reviewers suggested that it would be helpful that planned meeting dates between the bishop and DLP should be scheduled, and that once a year the professional development and training needs of the DLP would be discussed.

The reviewers also suggested that it would be helpful that a professional case management supervisor should be available to the DLP, given the complexity of case management work. The reviewers discussed with the bishop and Safeguarding Lead / DLP that it would be helpful to review the Safeguarding Lead / DLP job description to ensure that it accurately reflects the breadth of their role and responsibilities for safeguarding arrangements. As well as being Designated Liaison Person, they have responsibilities for training and vetting co-ordination. Consideration of changing the job title to reflect the full role could be given; and if done, the new job title could be used in safeguarding leaflets, posters etc.

The reviewers are satisfied that arrangements are in place to quality assure compliance in each of the seven standards. The above are suggestions to enhance existing good practice.

**This standard is met.**

## Conclusion

The reviewers were assured regarding the Diocese of Raphoe's compliance with the *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016*.

There have been significant improvements in safeguarding practice since the last Review, including the response to allegations of abuse, support provided to complainants, together with embedded preventative safeguarding arrangements to minimise further abuse, evidenced under the seven Standards above.

Policy, procedures and guidance together with safeguarding arrangements are in place to promote the safety of children in the diocese. This is based on evidence from the range of documentation examined and feedback from clergy, staff and volunteers engaged with during the Review.

Everyone spoken with during the Review had a clear understanding of their safeguarding role and responsibilities, and were committed to work together to safeguard children. There was an openness and motivation to learn and improve services to safeguard children in the diocese. Reviewers were also encouraged about the restart of children's activities post Covid-19 restrictions being lifted.

There is a collaborative and caring approach led by Bishop McGuckian and his safeguarding personnel to keep children and young people safe when involved in Church activities.