



Raphoe Diocesan Safeguarding Committee ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 2024

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A Safe and
Welcoming Church



FOREWORD - MGR. KEVIN GILLESPIE



Safeguarding is a term that has become commonplace within the life of the Church in Ireland, ensuring not only the need to address Reports of abuse and concerns relating to behaviour and practices, but also fostering a general culture of wellbeing for children involved in the activities of our diocese and its parishes. From year to year, this culture becomes more and more imbedded, and yet it also requires ongoing attention to keep all interested parties and 'stakeholders' engaged and attentive to this important aspect of our mission in the service of Christ. The role of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee is therefore important in overseeing all of the good work that is taking place and in supporting Margaret Northage as our hard-working Director of Safeguarding. We are all extremely grateful to her for her dedication and commitment.

Of note in the Annual Report for the year 2023-2024 is that parish and diocesan activities have been fully re-engaged after the disruption of the pandemic and its aftermath. Ongoing training of parish groups and volunteers, the resuming of the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes with both assisted pilgrims and the Youth, and the ongoing work of Garda Vetting. I am particularly grateful for the excellent work undertaken in reviewing and updating the *Child and Vulnerable Adult Policy and Procedures Handbook for the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes*. Its implementation has added to the excellent work being done in bringing assisted pilgrims and youth to Lourdes and providing them with a safe environment for an extremely enriching experience. Well done to all involved.

I continue to be grateful to Bríd Carlin and the other members of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee for their regular commitment to meeting and undertaking various tasks. We remember with affection and gratitude and we pray for the late John Kennedy of Coocholly, Ballyshannon, who, along with Sr. Mary O'Donovan, spearheaded the safeguarding of children in the Diocese of Raphoe. It is a great legacy. May God grant him eternal peace in His presence. Pope Francis reminded us in the theme of this Jubilee Year: *Spes non confundit* - Hope does not disappoint - that hope is a virtue forged by sacrifice and determination, and it draws the heart

ever onward to what is good. Let all of us involved in diocesan and parish life never flag in our commitments and our concern for the good and the wellbeing of the young and the vulnerable who are placed in our care.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Gillespie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'K' and a distinct 'G'.

Mgr. Kevin Gillespie

CHAIR'S ADDRESS - BRÍD CARLIN



I am happy to commend to you the Annual General Report for 2023/2024. This document outlines the work of the Raphoe Diocesan Safeguarding Committee through these 2 years. The Committee meets every 2 months to guide Parish and Religious groups on their responsibilities in safeguarding and is itself guided by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

As Chair I would like to thank those who attend committee meetings and give so freely of their knowledge and experience. The Diocese is supremely fortunate to have someone of the calibre and integrity of Margaret Northage as Director of Safeguarding. Margaret's work is comprehensive, informed and efficient and we are blessed to have her.

In Ireland, the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope, themed "Pilgrims of Hope," is a time for spiritual renewal. The Jubilee emphasizes the importance of safeguarding children, with ongoing efforts to address past issues and promote a safe environment. I believe that the Diocese of Raphoe is fully participating in this commendable work.

NEWS & UPDATES

A Safe and Welcoming Church – Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2024.



The National Board has a responsibility to advise the Catholic Church in Ireland on Child Safeguarding Policy and Practice. Since its foundation, the National Board has developed three iterations of a child safeguarding policy, the most recent in 2024. Since the publication of the previous document in 2016, there have been significant changes in canon law, some changes in civil law, and much increased awareness about effective practice in the area of child safeguarding, particularly within a faith-based setting.

In January 2022 an extensive process begun involving listening meetings and consultation across all Dioceses and Religious Orders. The revised policy was launched in June 2024 is entitled: *'A Safe and Welcoming Church - Child Safeguarding Policy and Standards for the catholic Church in Ireland 2024'* and can be accessed on the Diocesan website - www.raphoediocese/safeguarding.ie

There are three core standards to the Church's Safeguarding Children Policy (the three standards are linked, and no standard is more important than another):

1. Leadership, Governance and Accountability
2. Nurturing a Culture of Safeguarding
3. Responding Pastorally and Reporting according to Civil and Canon Law.

Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me. (Mark 9:37)

“The participation of children and young people in the life of the Church is essential to our mission. This policy, designed by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (the National Board) and informed by and embedded in Gospel values and in the rights of children, presents the most up-to-date, best-practice opportunity for all members of the Catholic Church in Ireland to ensure that all ministry with children is safe, and that children can remain central to the mission of living the Gospel here in Ireland.”

Archbishop Eamon Martin
President, IEC

Father Time Lehane
President, AMRI

The importance of encouraging the participation of children in the Church is emphasized in the above extract from the new Policy & Standards document. Please contact the Safeguarding Office for advice & guidance on safeguarding if you wish to set up activities involving children in your parish.

NEW POLICY POSTER

In line with changes to the Church's Policy & Procedures for Safeguarding Children, the Policy Poster has been updated. New A3 Policy Posters are available for collection from: Bishop's House or Diocesan Pastoral Centre and can be downloaded in various languages from the diocesan website:

www.raphoediocese.ie/safeguarding-children/.

Please ensure that you have the current copy on display at church entrances/exits and parish halls.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY STATEMENT
Diocese of Raphoe

The Gospel teaches the importance of ensuring that the Catholic Church community is a warm, welcoming and safe place for children. Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. (Mark 10:14-15)

Children are gifts from God, to be cherished and recognised for the joyful contribution they make as valued members of the Church. Our challenge is to follow the example of Jesus in cherishing them. Safeguarding is key to this important task and should be seen, not as a burden, but as an opportunity to embrace and encourage children's ministry, following the example of Jesus Christ. The Diocese of Raphoe pledges to safeguard children and young people from harm and to support them in their development as valued and integral members of the Catholic Church in Ireland. The Church's ministry will be inclusive and will uphold their rights. Consistent with Gospel values, and with civil and criminal law, those who minister will do so with dignity and integrity, honouring their calling to ensure that children and young people are welcomed, cherished and protected, following the example set by Jesus. This Safeguarding Children Policy will be honoured and complied with by all ordained clerics, by vowed female and male religious, and by all lay staff and volunteers in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN ABOUT THE WELFARE AND SAFETY OF A CHILD, PLEASE CONTACT:
Designated Liaison Person:
Margaret Northage: 086 2183 011
TÚSLA - Child & Family Agency:
Letterkenny: 074 91 02233
GARDÁI: Gardai National Protective Services:
Bureau: Telephone: 01 6663430 or 01 6663435
IN AN EMERGENCY, please contact:
Letterkenny Garda Station: 074 91 67100

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN OFFICE, DIOCESAN PASTORAL CENTRE, MONASTERY AVENUE, LETTERKENNY, CO. DONEGAL.
PHONE: 074 9125449 E-MAIL: SAFEGUARDING@RAPHOEDIocese.ie
GARDÁ VETTING ENQUIRIES: E-MAIL: GARDAVETTING@RAPHOEDIocese.ie

CHANGES OF PERSONNEL



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

Teresa Devlin, C.E.O. National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church retired in April 2024. Teresa has worked with the National Board since 2009 and took up the post as CEO in February 2014. During this time, she has made a significant contribution to ensuring that the Church is a safe place for all children by putting in place robust child safeguarding measures. With the history of abuse in the Diocese of Raphoe, we would like to acknowledge Teresa for the advice and support given to both Bishop Boyce and Bishop Mc Guckian along with their DLPs. Teresa has been appointed by Pope Francis to the Catholic Church's Commission for the Protection of Children, we wish her well on this new appointment and have no doubt that she will continue to enrich the Church with her care and compassion for this work.

Aidan Gordon, the former Director of Safeguarding for the Archdiocese of Armagh, has been appointed as the new Chief Executive of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church. **Dr. Niall Moore** has taken up a new position with the Church of Ireland and has been succeeded as Director of Training and Support by **Ms. Lyn McDermott**. We wish them both well in their new roles and look forward to working with them both in the future.

Changes to our Safeguarding Committee

Barry Ramsay, former Principal Social Worker has been a Safeguarding Trainer & Committee Member since 2013 and has probably visited every Parish in the Diocese, more than once! Barry has now chosen to retire, and we send with him our sincere thanks for the dedicated service he offered and every good wish for his future exploits.

Earlier this year, we also said farewell to **Fr. Gerard Cunningham**, PP, Glenties who served on our Committee since 2012 and stepped down due to parish commitments. Fr. Gerard's insights at parish level made a valuable contribution to Safeguarding. The Committee have recently welcomed **Fr. Ciaran Harkin**, PP, Irish Martyrs on board and look forward to working with him in the future.

Sadly, former Trainer & Committee Member, **John Kennedy**, Coolcholly, Ballyshannon passed away last September. John along with Sr. Mary O'Donovan were pioneers of Safeguarding Children in the Diocese of Raphoe. John's many years as a member of an Garda Síochána enriched his role as a Safeguarding Trainer along with his sense of humour. We are indebted to John for his outstanding service and contribution to safeguarding.

Deputy DLP - Derry Diocese

The Dioceses of Derry and Raphoe have established an agreed arrangement to provide cover for DLPs during periods of annual leave. Ms. Marie Gormley will provide cover for Margaret Northage and vice versa. We are very thankful to the Derry Diocese for this support.

GARDA VETTING – 2023 & 2024 APPLICATIONS PROCESSED

Year	Schools	Parishes	Total
2023	1184	258	1442
2024	1401	283	1684

Description of Roles Being Vetting For	
Schools	Parishes
SNAs	Diocesan Clergy
Bus Escorts	Visiting Clergy
TY Placements	Religious Sisters
Teaching Placements	Religious Brothers
Sporting Coaches	Youth Choir Leaders
Workshop Facilitators	Diocesan Pilgrimage Staff & Volunteers
Children of the Eucharist Leaders	NET Ministries (2023 only)
School Visitations	Local Safeguarding Reps
Play Therapists	Pastoral Centre Staff & Counsellors
Swimming Supervision	Confirmation & First Holy Communion Programmes
School Lunches Providers	Overseas Missionaries
Board of Management Members with supervision duties	Parish Council, Sacristans, Altar Servers & Children's Choir Leaders

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO THE NVB1 – VETTING INVITATION FORM

The National Vetting Bureau has established a Compliance Unit who regularly conducts audits of garda vetting applications. A requirement of the Vetting Bureau is that applicants applying for garda vetting must have their identification items validated by their Parish Priest/Curate/Parish Secretary. Identification must include photographic ID and Proof of current address dated within the last 6 months. Please refer to **Section 3** of the NVB1 Form.

On average, 1 in 5 applications is incomplete, please make sure you read the instructions provided carefully to avoid delays in processing applications.

The revised NVB1 Form is available to download at:

www.raphoediocese.ie/safeguarding-children/forms-policies/ or by

email: gardavetting@raphoediocese.ie

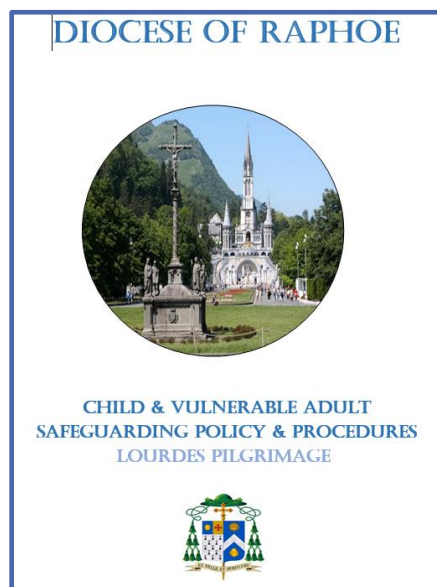
SAFEGUARDING TRAINING DELIVERED

DATE 2023	LOCATION/GROUP/TRAINERS	NO. OF CLERGY/ RELIGIOUS	NO. OF LAY PEOPLE
12/01/2023	Diocesan Pastoral Centre Information Session Trainer: Margaret Northage	0	6
02/02/2023	Parish Hall, Kilbarron House, Ballyshannon Refresher Session Trainers: Margaret Northage & Patricia Slevin	3	22
08/02/2023	Parish Hall, Frosses Refresher Session Trainers: Margaret Northage & Barry Ramsay	4	26
21/03/2024	Parish Hall, Newtowncunningham Refresher Session Trainers: Margaret Northage & Barry Ramsay	2	20
18/04/2023	Pastoral Centre, Letterkenny Refresher Session Trainers: Margaret Northage & Barry Ramsay	3	14
17/05/2023	Pastoral Centre, Letterkenny Refresher Session Trainers: Margaret Northage & Barry Ramsay	2	7
14/08/2023	Ards Retreat Centre Refresher Session Trainer: Margaret Northage	0	9
30/08/2023	Pastoral Centre, Letterkenny Full Day Training - NET Ministries Trainer: Margaret Northage	0	35
14/09/2023	Pastoral Centre, Letterkenny Refresher Session Trainer: Margaret Northage	0	10
23/09/2023	Parish Hall, Falcarragh Refresher Session Trainer: Margaret Northage	1	8
25/09/2023	Pastoral Centre, Letterkenny Refresher Session Trainer: Margaret Northage	2	11
02/10/2023	Pastoral Centre, Letterkenny Refresher Session - Ukrainian Group Trainer: Margaret Northage	1	3

DATE 2023	LOCATION/GROUP/TRAINERS	NO. OF CLERGY/ RELIGIOUS	NO. OF LAY PEOPLE
29/11/2023	Pastoral Centre, Letterkenny Refresher Session Trainer: Margaret Northage	1	15
04/12/2023	Parish Hall, Stranorlar Refresher Session Trainer: Margaret Northage	2	18
	2024		
30/01/2024	Parish Hall, Donegal Town Refresher Session Trainer: Patricia Slevin	1	24
15/04/2024	Sliver Tassie Hotel - Lourdes Pilgrimage Group Refresher Session Trainers; Margaret Northage & Barry Ramsay	1	39
17/04/2024	Parish Hall, Killymard Refresher Session Trainer: Margaret Northage	2	7
01/06/2024	Pastoral Centre, Letterkenny - Canadian Missionaries Full Day Session Trainer: Margaret Northage	0	23
27/06/2024	Pastoral Centre, Letterkenny Refresher Session Trainer: Margaret Northage	0	14
29/08/2024	Pastoral Centre, Letterkenny - Knights of Columbanus Refresher Session Trainer: Margaret Northage	2	12
15/10/2024	Pastoral Centre, Letterkenny Refresher Session Trainer: Margaret Northage	6	4

Training Returns for 2023 & 2024 have been registered with the National Board for
Safeguarding Children via their on-line portal.

DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES - HANDBOOK



The Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage - Child & Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy & Procedures Handbook was updated last year and includes the following items:

The document covers the following areas in safeguarding:

1. Policy Statement of the Diocese of Raphoe
2. Guidance on Trips Away with Young People
3. Guidance on Participation of Children with Specific Needs
4. Code of Conduct for Adults Working with Children
5. Code of Conduct for those who minister to Vulnerable Adults
6. Responding to a Concern, Complaint or Suspicion of Abuse
7. How to deal with Allegations Made Against Volunteer or Staff
8. Record Keeping & Confidentiality
9. Data Protection
10. Useful Contact Details.

In line with Children First 2015 legislation, the Child Safeguarding Statement was also updated. Risk Assessments were carried out for both Young Persons and Assisted Pilgrims. The Director of Safeguarding and the Lourdes Leadership Team worked together on establishing a comprehensive Risk Assessment. Our thanks to Ger Growley, Director of Safeguarding Limerick who generously shared their Risk Assessment Template.

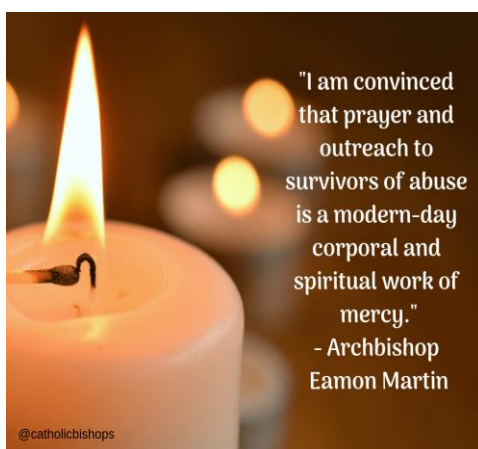
COMMUNICATION

Newsletters produced: Autumn 2023 Newsletter
Autumn 2024 Newsletter

Most recent Newsletters are available at www.raphoediocese.ie/safeguarding-children/

Communication Plan 2024 - 2026 has been completed by our Safeguarding Committee and is available to view on the diocesan website at: www.raphoediocese.ie/safeguarding-children/

Day of Prayer for Survivors and Victims of Sexual Abuse



Pope Francis has dedicated an annual "Worldwide Day of Prayer for Survivors and Victims of Sexual Abuse". This falls on the First Friday in Lent and the day that the Irish Bishops' Conference has chosen to mark the annual day of prayer.

Parishes are notified of this Mass through the Diocesan Office and are reminded that it is an opportunity in light of the history of abuse within this Diocese, to acknowledge the suffering and provide hope of healing for the many victims and survivors. Parishes are provided with liturgical resources along with details of Towards Peace and Towards Healing to add to their parish website/Facebook.

The Mass of Atonement for 2023 & 2024 took place on:

Friday 7th March 2023, celebrated by Bishop Alan McGuckian at St. Eunan's Cathedral Letterkenny

Friday 7th February 2024, celebrated by Mgr. Kevin Gillespie at St. Eunan's Cathedral, Letterkenny.

PARISH SELF-AUDITS

Parish Self Audits are carried out on an annual basis. The format of the Audit form is based on the Seven Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland together with National Guidelines. The completion of the Audit is a requirement of the National Board for all parishes throughout Ireland, North and South. The self-audit tool is a way of measuring how close your parish is to meeting the Seven Standards for keeping children safe.

Audit Returns for this period:

YEAR	NUMBERS RETURNED	%
2023	24	74%
2024	22 returned to date	66%

We wish to thank you all, our clergy and parish representative for your help and cooperation in implementing good practice in your parish. If you require any assistance or clarification in completing your Parish Audit, please contact the Safeguarding Office, Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Letterkenny on 074 91 25669.

Even if your parish has no ministry with children, please return your Parish Self-Audit completing the relevant sections. Children & Vulnerable Adults are still part of the congregation.

The National Board for Safeguarding Children is notified of the annual completion of Parish Self-Audits along with the Designated Liaison Person's report of cases reported and managed within each year.

Safeguarding Committee:

Bríd Carlin, *Chairperson*

Ciaran Maguire, *Vice Chair*

Margaret Northage, *Secretary*

Patricia Slevin

Fr. Ciaran Harkin

Cathal Quinn

Alfie McHale

Barry Ramsay

Diocesan Safeguarding Trainers:

Margaret Northage

Patricia Slevin

Barry Ramsay

Diocesan Designated Person:

Margaret Northage: 086 218 3011

Deputy DLP

Marie Gormley, Derry Diocese

447596 500 793

Garda Vetting Liaison Person & Clerk:

Margaret Northage & Bridget Conway

Diocesan Support Person:

Fr. Kieran McAteer: 087349 6172

Agencies offering advice and support:

National Board for Safeguarding Children

New House,

Saint Patrick's College,

Maynooth,

Co. Kildare.

Phone no: 01 505 3124

Fax: 01 505 3026

Website: www.safeguarding.ie

Childline 1800 666666 www.childline.ie

Provides a 24-hour listening service for children.

Towards Healing - 1800303416

www.towardshealing.ie

Provides telephone counselling and psychotherapy referral service for people who have been abused by priests or religious.

Towards Peace www.towardspeace.ie. Offers spiritual support and guidance to survivors of abuse by Church personnel.

National Counselling Service (NCS)

1800 235234

This service is for adults who were abused in childhood and offers confidential face to face counselling.

Child Protection Unit in the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)- www.childprotection.ie

ISPCC - www.ispcc.ie

Barnardos - www.barnardos.ie

Rape Crisis Network of Ireland - www.rcni.ie

One in Four - www.oneinfour.ie

Tüsle: www.Tüsle.ie

Tel: 074 91 23672/91 23770

