



Safeguarding Newsletter, Irish Province

Issue 3: Autumn 2024



It takes powerful faith to believe in the gestation of a positive future when all is unknown.

It takes immense trust and hope to see new life waiting beneath the frozen, barren land.

It takes compassionate patience to remain by the side of an aching seed in the silent soil.

We wait for new life, but we do not wait alone.

In challenging times, it is this One, our God, who draws us close, who breathes strength into our spiritual bones and nudges us into belief – calling us to be more than we are now.

*Adapted from: The Wintered Spirit by
Joyce Rupp*

Safeguarding Committee Members

Chairperson

Avril Halley

Committee Members

Sr. Cait O'Leary, Province Leader

Avril Halley, DLP

Sr. Evelyn Fergus, Deputy DLP

New member - Anne Fitzpatrick

The Safeguarding Committee met on seven occasions from July 2023/July 2024.

The work of the Committee continues, and several required tasks are completed, and/are ongoing as follows:

- The DLP analysed information from the Annual Self-Audit and shared conclusions with the Safeguarding Committee.
- The Committee reviewed the recommendations and the actions that were required.
- The Committee produced a Communications Plan, a Training Needs Analysis and a Safeguarding Plan for 2024/2026.
- Ongoing Training on the revised Safeguarding Policy (2024).
- Review of case files by DLP.

Training

DLP, Safeguarding Officer and Trainer, Avril attended several Safeguarding Training events hosted by the National Board between May 2023 and April 2024 and also conducted two full sessions of 'Safeguarding Training on Children and Adults at Risk of Harm' to staff who had completed refresher sessions the previous year.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, every day.

"If we journey together, young and old, we can be firmly rooted in the present, and from here, revisit the past and look to the future.

Revisit the past in order to learn from history and heal old wounds that at times still trouble us.

Look to the future in order to nourish our enthusiasm, cause dreams to emerge, awaken prophecies and enable hope to blossom.

Together, we can learn from one another, warm hearts, inspire minds inspire minds with the light of the Gospel, and lend new strength to our hands."

Pope Frances, Christus Vivit – 'Christ is Alive' – No. 199 (March 2019)

The Congregational Reporting Requirements

- ❖ All Child and Adult Protection Concerns within the Province will be dealt with by Sr. Cait O'Leary with the assistance of Avril Halley DLP (Designated Liaison Person).
- ❖ As part of the Congregational Policy the Congregational Director of Safeguarding; Michael Walker, will be notified of all reports by the Province Leader or the DLP.
- ❖ Michael will communicate this report to the Congregational Safeguarding Committee and the Congregational Leader.

News from The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland

The Revised Policy – 'A Safe and Welcoming Church – Safeguarding Children and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2024

- ❖ This revised Child Safeguarding Policy builds on the foundations of past learning and experiences. It provides a new focus on Leadership and Governance to embed a culture of Safeguarding where:
 - The Church has an important role to play in creating and maintaining an environment in which children and young people can grow and flourish in their humanity and come to experience the dignity that Jesus proclaimed.
 - Children will be welcomed and safe.
 - Church personnel will uphold the rights of children, in line with Gospel values.

The full Policy is available on the 'News' section on www.safeguarding.ie.

New appointments

- ❖ Mr. Aidan Gordon was appointed Chief Executive Officer of the National Board in April 2024.
Aidan is a qualified Social Worker with over 30 years' experience in Safeguarding Practice and Management, and from 2015-2024 was the Director of Safeguarding in the Archdiocese of Armagh.
- ❖ Ms. Lyn McDermott was appointed as Director of Training and Support in March 2024.
- ❖ Mr. Michael Walker began his position as the full-time Congregational Director of Safeguarding in Rome in November 2024, following the resignation of Sandra Neville.

We wish both Aidan, Lyn and Michael many fruitful years in their new roles.

Report from Sr Cait O'Leary – Province Leader

In July of 2023, the Safeguarding Team, following some reflection, decided to make a request to the National Board that we, as a Province, would like to review our Safeguarding Policies and Practices. Our last review took place in 2016 and since then many new developments had taken place within our safeguarding structure and to comply with new legislation.

Sandra Neville, our former Co-Ordinator, resigned as she took up a position in our International Safeguarding Team in Rome and Tony Murphy ceased as our Designated Liaison Officer. The decision was made, as we no longer have any work with children, that one person could fill both roles. We welcomed Avril Halley to our team in March 2022 as our new DLP and Co-Ordinator.

On undertaking the review, we did not estimate the amount of work that it would entail. The Reviewer appointed by the National Board required to see documentation in relation to our Meetings, Training, Safeguarding Literature compiled by us, Safeguarding issues that may have arisen since our last review, and meeting in person, the Safeguarding Team.

However, we are glad that we did it as it enabled us to sharpen our focus and to keep Safeguarding as an upmost priority in our province.

Report from Avril Halley – DLP, Safeguarding Officer and Trainer

The second review of Child Safeguarding Practice within our Congregation took place in February 2024 which was undertaken by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

The Safeguarding Committee invested a lot of time in producing an in-depth review of the seven Standards. Each Standard is self-contained and supported by indicators to evidence if safeguarding practices meet the required standard.

While there were two recommendations for further improvements, which are being addressed, I was personally heartened to learn that "the reviewer acknowledged the significant work that was undertaken since the last review and commended the working arrangement between the DLP and the Province Leader".

We will continue to remain vigilant and strive to ensure that our safeguarding practices are robust, and this review acknowledged that we are observing best practice in maintaining safe environments for all.

Supports for Survivors / Complainants



Contact their office on 01 5053028 or 086 7710533.
Opening hours: Monday and Tuesday, 9.00am – 4.00pm
Wednesday, 9.00am – 12.00 noon
Website: www.towardspeace.ie
Email: towardspeace@iecon.ie



Contact their Helpline on 1800 303416 (R o I) / 0800 0963315 (NI and UK)
Opening hours:
Tuesday to Friday, 9.00am – 5.00pm
Website: www.towardshealing.ie
Email: info@towardshealing.ie



Northern Ireland Victim and Survivors Service (VSS)

Contact Tel: 0044 28 9027 9100
Monday – Friday, 9.00am – 5.00pm
Website: www.victimsservice.org
Email: enquiries@vssni.org



If you have a child protection concern, please contact:

Avril Halley

Designated Liaison Person

Email: dlp@rgs.ie

Mobile: 086 1721736

Or

Deputy Liaison Person

Email: deputydlp@rgs.ie

You can report your concern(s) directly to:

Án Garda Síochána Helpline:

Tel: 1800 555 222

and

TUSLA (Child and Family Agency):

General Enquiries Tel: 01 7718500

Website: www.tusla.ie

Or

Tusla local Social Work Department

(Details on www.tusla.ie)