



Audit of Safeguarding Practice in Parishes

Thank you for returning the parish audits. These have been received, collated and analysed by members of the Safeguarding Committee. The information on these audits will inform the training plan for 2025 and identify areas for follow up where issues have been indicated by parishes. Here are some general observations from the information received:

- The majority of parishes indicated that they have some activities involving children. These are mainly altar servers and many also have choirs. Other activities involving children included Sacramental preparation; various types of youth groups, and a small number of other groups including the Legion of Mary, Pioneers, Junior Readers. One parish mentioned their Parish Pastoral Assembly.
- Training needs were identified by 19 parishes, particularly with new personnel and with risk assessments. These will feature in the training plan for 2025.
- There was a request that training events be run on days other than Saturday.
- There are 135 parish safeguarding representatives in the Diocese of Meath.
- Some clarification may be required on who are mandated persons in parishes.
- A number of parishes requested that the diocesan coordinator should have direct contact with parish safeguarding representatives by email about upcoming training events.
- It was notable that a large number of parishes did not return their audit forms by the specified date.

Training for new Parish Safeguarding Representatives

on 28 May 2025, beginning at 6pm

The safeguarding trainers, Clare McEntee and Ronan Farrell, will provide a full training session on Wednesday 28 May at 6pm in Mullingar.

This session is aimed primarily at the large number of newly appointed Parish Safeguarding Representatives. The training may take up to three hours to complete. Any Parish Safeguarding Representatives who have not received training should take part in this session. Further details and a booking form will be circulated by the diocesan office in the coming weeks.

Implementing the revised policy – check list

Arising from the training last September, parishes are asked to check that the following actions are undertaken as part of our efforts to ensure that the revised policy is implemented:

- Have the new posters circulated last October for display in churches and other relevant buildings replaced the previous posters?
- Have you checked out the safeguarding website (www.meathsafeguarding.ie) which has been rebuilt to provide ease of access to resources (eg frequently used forms are available on the home page)?
- Are there new personnel or volunteers in your parish who will require training in the coming weeks?
- Do you have a register of all groups associated with the Church and working with children?
- Are correct recruitment procedures in place?

Introducing Maura Seabrooke Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator

Originally from Dublin, Maura Seabrooke came to Navan over 20 years ago, the home of her grandparents. She is married with five children and eight grandchildren. Maura has been a passionate and dedicated registered social worker for over 30 years, having qualified from Trinity College. She recently retired from the Health Service Executive after working as an adult safeguarding social worker for 18 years. She was part of the newly developed Elder Abuse Service covering counties Longford, Westmeath and Meath; a member of the National Elder Abuse Steering Committee; member of the team that developed the HSE Elder Abuse Policy. Maura has managed two safeguarding teams and brings to her new role the added dimension of considerable experience in caring for vulnerable adults.

What is a mandated person and what is involved?

The Children First Act 2015 places a legal obligation on certain people in relation to child safeguarding. All clergy, by virtue of their office, are mandated persons. Lay personnel employed by the Church and working with children may also be mandated persons. The NBSCCCI explains that mandated persons have two main legal obligations

- To report harm of children to Tusla
- To assist Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report.

“As a mandated person, under the legislation you are required to report any knowledge, belief or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed. The Act defines harm as assault, ill-treatment, neglect or sexual abuse, and covers single and multiple instances”.

Pope Francis:

“Protecting minors in the Church involves more than protocols”

Pope Francis has encouraged the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors to ensure that the Church is a safe place for children and vulnerable people and emphasised the critical importance of healing survivors. In his message, which he signed on 20 March before he was discharged from Gemelli Hospital, the Holy Father remarked that child protection cannot be reduced to the application of protocols but involves advocating for safeguards, integrating education, prevention, and listening to heal. He wants the care for survivors to move beyond bureaucratic procedures and instead to foster genuine healing through mercy. Acknowledging the progress made over the past decade in building a safety network within the Church, he insisted on the importance of listening to the pain of survivors, warning against “the temptation to dismiss grief instead of healing it.”

Day of Prayer for Victims and Survivors (Friday 07/03/2025)

This year the Day of Prayer occurred on the first Friday in Lent. Successive reports highlight positive initiatives that have been taken to reach out to victims and survivors and to offer them support, including spiritual support. “Towards Peace” is the first spiritual support service to be established within the Catholic Church. It provides spiritual accompaniment to those who experience abuse in a Church context in Ireland. This is to enable people to find their own spiritual path whether that is within the Church or outside it. It is a free service for both victims and survivors and for family members. For further information, call 01 505 3028 or check out www.towardspeace.ie.

Data protection

The new child safeguarding coordinator is currently undertaking a review of forms used by parishes from the point of view of data protection. She will give guidance to parishes on how long various forms (eg consent forms) should be kept in parish files, how to store them and when they should be destroyed. Several members of the Safeguarding Committee will attend an information day in May, hosted by the NBSCCCI, on complying with best practice in the sharing, storage and protection of data and sensitive data.

“Childhood and Contemporary Catholicism”

This is the title of a book written by Gerard Lemos that looks at the challenging world and the benefits of having a faith basis through which to engage with that world. Through interviews with children and young people about their experience of Catholicism, the author argues that growing up today is greatly enhanced by encounters with Catholic faith and practice in education, parish life, youth work, pilgrimages, retreats and religious art and music. The book is available at <https://lemosandcrane.co.uk/>

Diocesan Safeguarding Contact Details

If you have a child safeguarding concern or wish to report an allegation, please contact one of the following:

Designated Liaison Persons:

Marie O’Sullivan DLP or Marie Willoughby DLP - 083 317 5742 or dlp@dioceseofmeath.ie

Tusla

(Meath) 046 909 7870 (Westmeath) 044 938 4450

(Offaly) 057 869 2567

Garda National Protective Services Bureau

01 666 3430 or 01 666 3435