

NEWSLETTER

ANNUAL CHILD PROTECTION UPDATE

For the past eight years Dublin Diocese has released information relating to child safeguarding and protection matters on an annual basis. This year the information was issued in a press release that went out on 30 May. For the first time we were able to report that there was no increase in the number of diocesan priests against whom allegations of child sexual abuse have been made.

CSPS continues to meet with people who disclose that they were abused by priests already known to have abused children. Multiple complaints were received in relation to a number of prolific abusers, all of whom have been out of ministry for many years.

We can be happy that we received no complaints about priests not previously known to have abused children. However, this must not lead to complacency or a sense that the scandal of the abuse of children in the Catholic Church in Ireland is behind us now. The suffering of those who were abused by priests continues.

Commenting on the recent publication of Chapter 20 of the Murphy Report, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin said: "My concern today is with the victims of Patrick McCabe, those who have come forward to tell their stories and those for whom the pain of telling their story is still too raw. I think of the parents and the spouses and the children of the victims whose lives have been damaged by what happened".



Archbishop Diarmuid Martin

Archbishop Martin drew attention to the enormous change in the structure and the attitude of the Church to the safeguarding of children which, he said, "is a tribute to the courage and strength of those survivors who came forward to tell the truth of what happened to them in the past". He also paid tribute to the hundreds of dedicated and trained safeguarding representatives who are working in our parishes and diocesan agencies to make sure they are as safe as they can possibly be for children involved in Church life.

Each of the Diocese's 199 parishes has a Safeguarding Representative. There are 381 Safeguarding Representatives in all. Seventy five parishes have one Representative and the remainder have two or more. We want to move to having at least two in every parish. This allows for the sharing of the burden, which should not be underestimated, and will help to minimise the risk that a parish could be without any Safeguarding Representative were one to step down.

There were 25 six hour training sessions and 31 three hour information sessions delivered throughout the Diocese during the year. The attendees, numbering in the region of 1000, included Priests, Safeguarding Representatives, Parish Pastoral Workers and Deacons as well as parish and Diocesan volunteers. Great credit is due to Fr Paddy Boyle, our Training and Development Coordinator, and to Gary Keogh and George Maybury, our Diocesan Trainers.

One of the most significant developments over the past year has been the establishment of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee. The Committee has met twice to date and will be meeting again in September. The first two meetings mapped out areas of work. The importance of establishing a baseline and knowing about the standard of safeguarding practice in each parish in the Diocese was accepted and this has led to agreement to refine the approach to auditing safeguarding practice in parishes. Currently, a strategic plan is being developed to identify key objectives and set out how they are to be achieved. The overall aim is to embed safeguarding practice in the life and work of the Diocese so that it is understood as intrinsic, rather than additional, to good ministry.

The CSPS will be 10 years in existence later this year and the Committee is planning a suitable way to mark this milestone. It is also planned to have a Diocesan Child Safeguarding Day to highlight the work being done in the Diocese to ensure the safety of children.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Louise Fenelon (Safeguarding Representative, Greystones and member of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee) and Andrew Fagan (CSPS) are currently undergoing training with the NBSCCCI. When they have completed their training Louise and Andrew will be accredited with NBSCCCI and qualified to deliver safeguarding training. This will increase the pool of Diocesan trainers and (hopefully!) will come as good news to Paddy, Gary and George.

The training has been coordinated by Niall Moore who recently joined NBSCCCI as Training Officer. Niall has been delivering the training with a number of other trainers including Teresa Devlin, Louise Monaghan and Sandra Neville. There have been inputs from the Gardai and the HSE. The training has been of a very high standard.

As with all such experiences one of the joys of the course has been the opportunity to meet with the other trainees. There are in the region of 20 in all. We have already started exploring options for working together so that, for example, a trainer from Dublin Diocese might partner a trainer from a neighbouring Diocese or from a Religious Order to deliver training either to a Dublin group or to a group from the other Diocese or the Religious Order.

RETIREMENT OF IAN ELLIOT



Ian Elliott has retired as Chief Executive Officer of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) after six years. In his address to the Fordham Centre of Religion and Culture in New York in April, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin

said that the Irish Church is now a much safer place for children than in the past. He paid tribute to the work of the NBSCCCI and to Ian Elliott in particular.

Ian Elliott is a social worker by profession. He was appointed Director of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in 2001 and in 2005 he was seconded to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland to become a government advisor on child protection. His role was later

expanded to the design and implementation of a major reform programme for child protection services. He was appointed as the inaugural chief executive of the NBSCCCI in 2007 and retired at the end of June this year.

Ian Elliott helped to establish the credibility of the NBSCCCI with his report in December 2008 on "inadequate and in some respects dangerous" child protection practices in the Diocese of Cloyne. This led to the extension of the Murphy Commission's remit to Cloyne Diocese and the report that was published in December 2010.

The work of the NBSCCCI and, in particular, the audits of dioceses and religious orders, has done much to convince a sceptical public and media that the Church takes its child protection responsibilities seriously. Writing in the Irish Times on 25 April, Patsy McGarry stated that: "where child protection is concerned, the Catholic Church in Ireland has finally "got it". There could be no finer tribute to Ian Elliott".

We are grateful to Ian for his immense contribution and wish him well for the future.

ONLINE RESOURCE

Roshni is a Scottish organisation that works with minority ethnic communities across Scotland. They have developed an e-Learning programme on child sexual abuse. It is free and can be accessed through their website www.roshni.org.uk/csa

The programme has been developed for people working in positions where people may disclose sexual abuse. However, there is a lot of basic information likely to be useful to anyone interested in this area. It is particularly good on the impact of abuse on men and on members of minority communities and on the barriers to disclosing abuse. Anyone who has worked with members of the Travelling Community, for example, will recognise many of the issues raised by some of those whose voices are heard on the programme.

The programme can be completed in 60 to 90 minutes and is well worth the time. It is well to bear in mind that the material is difficult and emotionally draining. For this reason it is important to choose an appropriate time and place to do the programme.

TOPICS FOR FORTHCOMING REPORTS

If there is a topic or issue that you would like to see discussed in forthcoming reports please email your suggestions to: andrew.fagan@dublindiocese.ie.