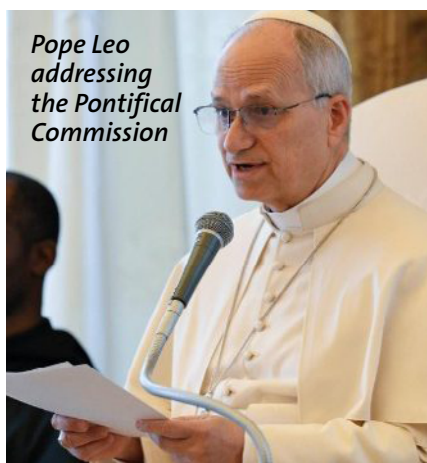




NEWSLETTER

Pope Leo: Safeguarding ‘is a natural expression of faith’

POPE LEO XIV addressed the members of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors on 16 March 2026. Assuring them that their mission is to ensure that abuse is prevented, he went on to say: “Prevention is never just a set of protocols or procedures. It is about helping to form, throughout the Church, a culture of care, in which the protection of minors and persons in vulnerable situations is not seen as an obligation imposed from outside, but as a natural expression of faith. *It calls therefore for a process of conversion where the sufferings of others are heard and move us to action. In this regard, the experiences of victims and survivors are essential reference points. While they are certainly painful and difficult to hear, these experiences powerfully bring the truth to light and teach us humility as we strive to assist victims and survivors. At the same time, it is precisely through the recognition of the pain that has occurred that*



*Pope Leo
addressing
the Pontifical
Commission*

a credible path for hope and renewal is opened.” [Emphasis added].

In the last issue of this Newsletter, Deirdre Donnelly reported on the conference hosted by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland that was held in Athlone in September 2025. The Conference brought together church leaders, survivors, safeguarding professionals and academics. Deirdre wrote that: “People who had experienced harm within the Church shared their stories – not only of pain, but of re-

silience and hope. Their testimonies highlighted the need for a Church that listens humbly, acknowledges wrongdoing, and takes concrete steps to make reparations. For many attendees, hearing directly from survivors, and their full and welcomed participation in the conference was the most impactful experience of the [conference]. The focus was not about revisiting past failures. Rather, the dialogue emphasised the importance of ongoing engagement – a relationship-based approach to justice in which the Church remains accountable, not just legally or procedurally, but personally and spiritually”. The event, Deirdre noted, was a step in the Church’s ongoing journey toward healing, justice, and reform. It is good to be able to report that this dialogue has continued since the Conference. Bishops and other Church leaders held a very constructive meeting with survivors and their representatives in Maynooth in April. ■

How we are implementing further changes to vetting

VETTING IS A key part of our safeguarding strategy. It keeps those who have been found to have offended against children from using the Church as a means of gaining access to children. It conveys to parents our determination that the Church is and will continue to be a safe and welcoming place for their children.

The procedure for processing vetting applications has changed and evolved over the years, most notably with the enactment of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Adults) Act 2012, which came into effect in 2016. Further changes were introduced last year when vetting checks were extended to the 27 members of the European

Union and to the United Kingdom. These changes impact the way that vetting applications are submitted to CSPA for processing.

The changes introduced in 2025 were outlined in the August 2025 and January 2026 editions of this Newsletter. Some of these changes have already been implemented by CSPA. The changes have made the processing of vetting applications more time-consuming. They have caused some confusion. Many applications that were submitted to CSPA since July 2025 had to be returned to the applicant organisations because they had not been completed in accordance with the new requirements. A backlog of applications built up. As part of our response to this we asked parishes to hold off on submitting applications to give us a chance to clear the backlog. Thank you to all of you who complied with this request. Happily, the backlog has now been cleared.

We are now ready to move to the next stage in the implementation of the changes to vetting introduced last year. This involves the requirement that those who check the identity of vetting subjects (those for whom vetting is being sought) undergo training (see page 3).

These changes were introduced

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



The CSPA team at the offices in Arran Quay, Dublin 7, in a photograph taken by our Finance Secretariat colleague Keava Lyons. Back: Vivienne Knight, Sarah Healy and Deirdre Donnelly. Front: Andrew Fagan and Garry Kehoe

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

by the NVB. We would have liked to have been consulted about them and to have been given some lead-in time to allow us to prepare for these changes, but this did not happen. The NVB are already carrying out checks in organisations

that process vetting applications to ensure that they are operating in accordance with the new requirements. While we are not yet fully compliant with these new requirements, we hope to be by the time the NVB come to check up on us.

Every organisation (parish,

school etc) for which CSPS processes vetting applications will be asked to sign a service level agreement (SLA) with the Diocese. This is to ensure that everyone understands the new requirements and commits to operate in accordance with them. ■

Revised vetting procedure

1. Vetting subjects, that is, those for whom vetting is being sought, are required to use a new NVB1 form. It is [available on the diocesan website](#).

2. Parishes and organisations submitting applications must verify the identity and the current address of the vetting subject. *These checks have to be carried out in the presence of the vetting subject.* This is not a new requirement, but the NVB are now insisting that it is strictly enforced.

3. Those carrying out identity checks (referred to as ‘validators’) are required to undergo training.

4. The training, which is online, can be accessed on [acornlearnhub.ie](https://acornlearnhub.ie/register?client=pzmlxq45). It takes about 45 minutes to complete. You can register and complete the training at this link: <https://acornlearnhub.ie/register?client=pzmlxq45>

5. Once completed the successful trainee must download and print off a certificate of completion. These certificates need to be retained by the organisation submitting vetting applications. A copy must be sent to CSPS so that we can issue an NVB5 form. This confirms that the person is authorised by the NVB to carry out identity checks.

6. CSPS will only be able to accept vetting applications where the identity of the vetting subject has been verified by a trained vali-

dator, once the new procedure is fully operational.

7. Organisations, such as parishes, for whom CSPS processes vetting applications will, over the next few months, receive a copy of a service level agreement which they will be asked to sign and return to CSPS. This agreement will commit the organisation to operating in accordance with the conditions established by the NVB.

There are also changes to how information is to be retained by applicant organisations. This is to facilitate compliance checks by the NVB.

8. The original NVB1 form submitted by the vetting subject must be retained by the organisation applying for vetting for an initial period of six months. After six months a soft copy is retained. A soft copy is a document that has been scanned and retained as a computer record.

9. Soft copies of proof of identity and proof of address must be retained.

10. These documents are to be retained for as long as the vetting subject is engaged in relevant work or activities with the organisation.

11. The documents have to be safely disposed of within 12 months of the vetting subject ending their involvement with the organisation.

12. A record that the person was vetted must be retained, for example, in the parish volunteer register. ■

Number attending diocesan training reached 1,900 last year

GARRY KEHOE, Training and Compliance Manager for CSPS, keeps a record of all the training he and his colleagues deliver. At the February meeting of the diocesan Safeguarding Committee, Garry presented his report for 2025.

During 2025, 1,900 people attended safeguarding training delivered by Garry and his team of four volunteer trainers. The volunteer trainers – Ronan Ormsby, Frances Stephenson, Máire Ní Shiodhail and George Maybury – have worked with CSPS for many years. Like Garry, they were trained as trainers and are accredited with the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI).

Approximately twice as many people attended training in 2025 as attended ten years previously. The numbers have steadily climbed, apart from a temporary reduction due to the lockdowns that accompanied Covid. As a consequence of Covid, online training programmes were introduced. About one third of all training was delivered over Zoom last year. There is, however, still a place for in-person training. The trainers have mainly been

delivering training at parish partnership level, and bringing people from the parishes that comprise a partnership together has a team-building impact.

It would not be reasonable to expect that the numbers attending training will continue to grow year on year. There were 400 more in 2025 than in 2024 and it is unlikely that the numbers for 2026 will be 400 up on the 2025 figure. We expect the figures to plateau and they may even decline somewhat.

Considering the numbers in isolation conceals an important truth, one that we should highlight and celebrate. We have just under 200 parishes in Dublin diocese. With 1,900 attending safeguarding training in 2025, that means that each parish sent, on average, between four and five for safeguarding training. That is a fairly significant figure, but more so when you consider that it is for just one year.

The theme of co-responsibility has been very much to the fore in the deliberations of the Irish Synodal Pathway and also in the diocesan *Building Hope* pastoral strategy. It is about clerics and lay people working together in the building of the kingdom. It is sometimes difficult to give up ingrained habits where the clergy lead and the laity follow. However, the challenge posed by revelations of the abuse of children by clerics galvanised all of the people in our parishes to come together for the sake of our children and our Church. The lay faithful have been very much to the fore in leading out on the safeguarding project. This is further evidenced by the fact that in 2025 we had over 330 parish safeguarding representatives, all volunteers, all giving generously of their time. ■

How to get in touch with the CSPS team

Andrew Fagan

Director

andrew.fagan@dublindiocese.ie

Deirdre Donnelly

Safeguarding and Support Officer

deirdre.donnelly@dublindiocese.ie

Garry Kehoe

Training and Compliance Manager

garry.kehoe@dublindiocese.ie / 086 0841734

Vivienne Knight

Garda Vetting Co-ordinator

vivienne.knight@dublindiocese.ie / 086 0679428

Sarah Healy

Administrator

sarah.healy@dublindiocese.ie

You can call the CSPS team at 01 8360314

Vetting enquiries and applications should be submitted to garda.vetting@dublindiocese.ie