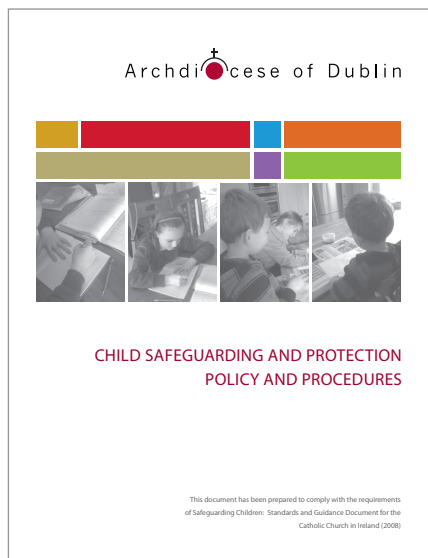


NEWSLETTER

This is the first of a series of regular reports on the work of the service that we will be producing on a quarterly basis. It will bring you news of what we have been doing as well as dealing with, and attempting to throw some light on, current issues and controversies.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Policy Launch



On 14 April last Archbishop Diarmuid Martin launched Archdiocese of Dublin: Child Safeguarding and Protection, Policy and Procedures. Over four evening meetings for the various pastoral areas of the diocese, the Archbishop and the CSPS team introduced the policy. These meetings were exceptionally well attended, with over 100 people at each one. They provided an important opportunity for discussion and dialogue.

An information leaflet explaining the work of the CSPS has also been produced as well as one specifically aimed at young people.

A detailed procedural guide on dealing with allegations of child abuse against priests of the diocese will be published shortly. It was originally intended to include this as part of the diocesan policy document. Feedback received on the draft policy document, however, suggested that it was too detailed and technical for inclusion in the general policy document and that it would be better produced as a separate publication.

Thanks are due to the many individuals and organisations who gave feedback and useful suggestions on the policy document during the drafting of it.

Diocesan Safeguarding Committee

A diocesan committee is in the process of being established to support the work of the parishes and diocesan agencies. It will have a particular brief in relation to training and assisting parishes in the implementation of best

practice. The aim is to provide a network of support and assistance and to coordinate the work of the parishes and agencies. Representatives will be selected from different parts of the diocese and they will meet together on a regular basis. The CSPS will support the work of the Diocesan

Safeguarding Committee in much the same way as it supports the work of the Diocesan Advisory Panel on Child Protection, that is, by providing reports, secretarial back up and ensuring that decisions made by the committee are implemented.

New Training Initiative

Over the past two years the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) together with Child Safeguarding and Protection Trainers from across the Church in Ireland have been engaged in the development of Training Modules and Support Materials for safeguarding and protecting children in the Catholic Church in Ireland. The Training Modules, based on the Standards and Guidance document published by the NBSCCCI in 2009, will provide those who assist in parish and church life with the knowledge and skills to keep children safe. Up to recently a number of training programmes have been used in different dioceses and Church groups.

THE IDEA IS TO HAVE A 'ONE CHURCH' APPROACH SO THAT THE SAME TRAINING AND STANDARDS ARE DELIVERED TO CHURCH PERSONNEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE COUNTRY.

In addition, the training provided aims to relate child safeguarding and protection to the specific requirements and circumstances of Church, parish and diocesan activities.

Since the beginning of September 2011 the new training has been delivered to deaneries throughout the diocese. That process should be

completed by the 11th of February 2012. Training sessions have been very well attended by priests, Child Safeguarding Representatives, Parish Pastoral Workers and church volunteers. Separate training days have been arranged for deacons and other church groups. There has also been quite a number of information sessions with parish pastoral councils and groups of parish volunteers. The feed back has been very positive and encouraging. Sincere thanks to all who participated in the training and information sessions and for the constructive critiques of the training programme.

As Archbishop Martin pointed out when launching our Diocesan Policy last year, safeguarding in the Dublin Diocese is not about what happens in Archbishop's House or in the offices of the CSPS. It is all about the work of the safeguarding representatives, parish pastoral councils and the priests, parish and diocesan workers and volunteers. Responsibility for the safety and protection of our children is a shared responsibility.

Advice and Support

The CSPS continues to offer advice and support to parishes and diocesan agencies on all aspects of child safeguarding and protection. We welcome your queries. We are here to help, and by alerting us to the things that concern you, we gain an insight into current issues and priorities.

CURRENT ISSUES

Cloyne Report

The recent controversy in the wake of the publication of the Murphy Commission report on the Diocese of Cloyne reignited public concern about the willingness and the capacity of the Church in Ireland to address the issue of clerical child abuse.

A key finding of the report on Cloyne diocese was that there had been a failure to notify the civil authorities, that is, the Gardai and the HSE of child protection concerns that had come to the attention of the diocese.

It is important that you understand that all such concerns that come to the attention of the diocese of Dublin are notified to the HSE and the Gardai. Apart from the fact that we share information with the civil authorities, we also encourage people who come to us to make direct contact with the HSE and the Gardai.

The Cloyne report praised the efforts being made to ensure safe environments for children involved in church activities in the diocese, even as it criticised the failure to implement church and national guidelines on notification of child protection concerns.

Some people argue that because some bishops and priests failed to respond appropriately to allegations of abuse in the past, the church cannot be trusted to look after children properly now. The Cloyne report would suggest that this is not necessarily the case.

Research

The Causes and Context of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States, 1950 – 2010

This is a report that was commissioned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and carried out by the John Jays College Research Team. John Jays College is part of the City University of New York. This report follows an earlier one, referred to as The Nature and Scope study, which was published in 2004. The earlier study was about what had happened, the later one sought for reasons to explain it. The Causes and Context report was published in 2011.

These two studies found that what is referred to as the clerical child sexual abuse crisis in the US was a historical phenomenon. That is not to say that child abuse is not an issue in the church today but rather that there is an identifiable period in the recent history of the church in America, the period between the mid 1960s and the mid 1980s, during which a very high number of incidents of child

sexual abuse occurred. There are much fewer reports of abuse from before and after that period. This holds true even when allowance is made for the fact that it often takes many years for a person who has experienced abuse to report it.

IN LOOKING FOR EXPLANATIONS FOR THIS CRISIS, THE RESEARCHERS HAVE IDENTIFIED FACTORS AT MANY DIFFERENT LEVELS: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS, FACTORS TO DO WITH THE ORGANISATION OF THE CHURCH, SEMINARY EDUCATION AND FACTORS TO DO WITH THE PSYCHOLOGY AND EXPERIENCES OF THE PRIESTS WHO ABUSED.

This short introduction to the research cannot do justice to even its main findings but here are some points that are of particular interest to us as safeguarding practitioners:

It would seem that measures taken by the American bishops going back as far as the early 1990s were effective and appropriate. However they were not implemented consistently across the country.

Some of the significant changes

introduced were in the area of seminary education. There was more focus on 'human formation' as a means to assist those preparing for priesthood to understand and deal with their own sexuality.

Another key area was in relation to the creation of safe environments. Much abuse was what the researchers describe as 'opportunistic'. That is, abuse occurred in situations where opportunities arose, for example, in situations where activities involving children were not properly monitored and supervised. Eliminating such opportunities, for example, by following the sort of guidelines contained in our own policy document, has reduced the overall level of abuse.

'Capable Guardians'

The research found that for abuse to occur, three factors must converge: there must be a person motivated to commit an act of abuse, there must be a potential victim and there must be a lack of a "capable guardian". This report argues that education of potential victims, potential abusers and potential "guardians" is essential to reduce the opportunities to abuse. One way of describing our safeguarding work is to say that we are training and supporting priests and parish and diocesan workers to be "capable guardians" of children.

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.