



NEWSLETTER

THANK YOU

On 24 November we marked ten years of the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service with Mass in the Pro-Cathedral and a reception afterwards in Holy Cross Diocesan Centre. This provided an opportunity to say thank you to all of those who have worked together to make the diocese a safer place for children.

At the last count, we had 381 parish safeguarding representatives in the Archdiocese of Dublin. That does not include the priests, parish sisters, deacons and parish volunteers who help them in their work. It is not easy work. If we want the future to be different from the past, we have to accept that changes have to be made. Change is never easy. It has been hard, for example, for some to accept the need for Garda vetting of parish volunteers, especially for those who have occupied positions in the parish for many years.

Sometimes safeguarding work is presented it as though it is a form of political correctness gone mad. So we need to remind ourselves of the importance of following procedures and good practice guidelines. Nobody seriously argues that they should not be



Archbishop Martin speaking at the Mass in the Pro-Cathedral to mark 10 years of the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service. (Photograph by John McElroy)

expected to get a driving licence, tax and insure their cars before taking them out on the road. Why should anyone imagine that they should be permitted access to children through the Church without the Church first insisting of some essential safety measures?

Some of what we do is about reducing the opportunities for abuse. That is why, for example, we try to ensure adequate supervision for children involved in Church activities. This so-called 'situational approach' to the protection of children is sometimes criticised by those who argue that much more fundamental reform of Church structures is required in order to

make the Church a safe place for children. Whatever the rights and wrongs of that argument, such reform is a long term project. Childhood, on the other hand, is short. We must do what we can now to make sure that the Church is as safe as we can make it for children and the research tells that such situational approaches to child protection are effective.

The research on abuse of children that was carried out for the American Bishops 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 an absence of a 'capable guardian', that is, someone looking out for

the child and willing to step in to ensure that she or he comes to no harm.

Over the past number of years our diocesan trainers have delivered training to hundreds of people in parishes and diocesan agencies. It is doubtful whether all of these trainees remember all of the content of the training they received. Such training is effective, however, if trainees take away a number of key messages. One thing that people certainly get from diocesan safeguarding training is the vital message that the safety and protection of children is everyone's responsibility. We know from all of the enquiries into deaths and serious injuries to children through abuse that often people knew that something was going wrong in these children's lives but did not do anything about it. Sometimes this was a reluctance to get involved, sometimes an assumption that someone else was doing whatever needed to be done.

Procedures and good practice guidelines are necessary but they are not sufficient. They guide and inform our practice but they depend on our willingness to implement them. This implementation has to amount to more than ticking the box marked 'compliance'. It has to be about assuming responsibility for the safety and protection of the children who come to our churches. One way of understanding the safeguarding work that we do is to describe it in terms of all of us accepting the responsibility of being 'capable guardians' to the children in our diocese.

At the mass in the Pro Cathedral we acknowledged the contribution of the parish safeguarding representatives, those who support their work and the many others who have contributed to the development of the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service. We remembered the courage of those who experienced abuse and spoke out so that

others would not suffer as they did. We acknowledged with gratitude those who journey with and support the survivors of abuse. We spoke of the contribution of the members of our committees, the past and current members of the diocesan Advisory Panel on Child Protection and the current members of the Safeguarding Committee.

During his homily Archbishop Martin said: "The fact that so many members of our parish communities committed themselves to tackle a scandal, for which they bore no responsibility, is a true sign of their genuine love of the Church. The entire people of God in this diocese give thanks to God for your ecclesial service. Your work has rendered the Church a safer place for children. Your work is an immense support for priests in their daily work with young people and has helped to restore a climate of confidence which will enable the work of evangelization to flourish."

DIOCESAN CHILD SAFEGUARDING DAY

On 15 December 2013 we had our first Diocesan Child Safeguarding Day. This was an initiative of the Safeguarding Committee and a lot of preparation went into it. A new logo was commissioned for the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service. Homily notes, prayers of the faithful and a template presentation for delivery by parish safeguarding representatives were sent out to each parish. Each parish also received a number of 'z cards' with information on child safeguarding. These are intended for distribution to families in our parishes. There are a considerable number available for further distribution and we will be examining how best to do this over the next while.

There was a glitch in the distribution of materials to the parishes. They were posted out to arrive before the

Sunday that preceded Diocesan Child Safeguarding Day. The intention was to allow each parish announce on 8 December that the following Sunday would be Diocesan Child Safeguarding Day. On Friday 6 December we received a call from An Post to say that all of our packages were in a warehouse in Portlaois and would not be delivered unless we paid extra postage (there had been an error in the franking). The extra postage was paid and the packages delivered but we understand that some were not received until late the following week. This left insufficient time for parishes to do the necessary preparation.

We have received mixed feedback on Diocesan Child Safeguarding Day. Some people said that it was too near Christmas and that there was a lot else going on that

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Sunday. Others welcomed the fact that it coincided with one of the 'Do this in Memory' Sundays because there were a lot of parents on hand to hear of all that is being done in the diocese to ensure the safety of children.

We welcome your comments and observations on Diocesan Child Safeguarding Day. We will bring them to the next meeting of the Safeguarding Committee in March and decide how best to proceed. It was important to establish the principle of such a day. Next year, there will be more time to plan and we can give further consideration to the most appropriate time to hold it.

AUDIT OF CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The diocese is about to be audited by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church. The auditors will be visiting the diocese in the last week in January. Anyone who

feels that they would like to contribute to the audit is invited to make direct contact with Teresa Devlin, CEO of the National Board, at 5053124.

NEW SAFEGUARDING MATERIALS

Regular readers of the Newsletter may have noticed a change to its appearance. In preparation for Diocesan Child Safeguarding Day (see page 2), CSPA prepared some new materials. The idea is to have a range of materials that convey the diocese's safeguarding message in an attractive and user friendly way.

The new logo can be seen at the top of this newsletter. We have also acquired banners which we will use during training and other safeguarding events. There are badges with the CSPA logo on them, which we will be giving out to the diocesan Safeguarding Trainers to wear when delivering training and to the parish Safeguarding

Representatives to wear when they are providing information about safeguarding in their own parishes.

The 'Z cards', referred to earlier, are a very neat way of providing a lot of important information about safeguarding that people can easily carry around with them. The Z cards contain a message from Archbishop Martin, a diocesan Safeguarding Statement and information about the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee, including key aspects of the Committee's strategic plan for the years 2013 to 2015. Also included are a description of the role of the parish Safeguarding Representative, advice on how to report a child protection concern and a Code of Conduct for adults who work with children and young people in a parish context.

There are plenty of Z cards available for parishes and they can be obtained by contacting the office.

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.

ADDITIONAL SAFEGUARDING GUIDANCE

When 'Archdiocese of Dublin: Child Safeguarding and Protection, Policy and Procedures' was launched in 2011, a commitment was given to review and update it to take account of changes to Church and national child protection guidelines. The policy will be reviewed and updated during 2014. That will allow the review to take account of the audit that is about to be carried out of the diocese's child safeguarding policies and practices by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church and any recommendations arising from it.

In advance of the review of the diocesan policy, some additional guidance has been put up on the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service website: www.cspa.dublindiocese.ie.



This deals with the following issues: whistle blowing, complaints, dealing with challenging behaviour, intimate care, bullying and communicating with children and young people. These policies will be incorporated into the new diocesan policy which will be published later this year.