



NEWSLETTER

NEW TEAM MEMBERS

On 15 September, Julie McCullough joined the staff of the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service.



Julie is a professionally qualified social worker with 14 years experience, most of which was gained in Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children where she worked with Sinead McDonnell, her predecessor. Julie will continue Sinead's work of providing support to those who come to our service to tell us that they or a loved one suffered abuse as a child. She will be involved in the management of cases involving allegations of abuse against diocesan clergy. Julie will also be delivering training and providing advice to parishes and diocesan agencies on the creation and maintenance of safe environments for children involved in Church activities. This reflects our evolving priorities and our hope that we will be able to devote more of our time to prevention of abuse.

In our Spring 2014 edition we reported that Fr Richard Shannon



had replaced Fr Des Doyle as the Priest Delegate. Richard has quickly established himself as a valued colleague. Prior to his ordination in 2008, Richard worked for many years as Director of the Simon Community. He brings a wealth of professional expertise and insight into his role as Priest Delegate, which involves assisting in the diocesan response to priests against whom complaints of child abuse have been made. An important part of Richard's role is to ensure that such priests understand their rights and have access to the advice of a civil and/or canon lawyer. Richard is also a curate in Finglas West parish and, like all of the priests of the Diocese, has many demands on his time. This, however, does not prevent him making himself available when required by CSPS.

We are very pleased to welcome Julie and Richard to the team.

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE

Men over 50 who were sexually abused as children are three times more likely to be sick or disabled than their peers who were not abused. They are twice as likely to be living alone and to be living in households whose income is 34% lower than the average for men of their age. These are the key findings of research carried out by researchers from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Trinity College Dublin.

The research focused on the economic consequences of child sexual abuse and the authors note that researchers in other fields have reported on the impact such abuse has on the health and psychological well being of adult survivors. The reported results are much clearer about the economic impact on the lives of male, as compared with female, survivors. However, the researchers suggest that this may be explained by the much weaker labour force involvement of the women who were the subject of the study.

These women, aged 50 to 64, were less likely than younger women to have been in, or seeking, full time employment.

Continued over...



Continued from page 1

The data was collected as part of the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing. Between 2009 and 2011, 8,500 people aged 50 and over and living in Ireland were interviewed about a range of issues such as income, wealth, labour force status and health. They were also asked to complete a questionnaire which contained questions about sexual abuse suffered before the age of 18.

Those who abuse children often deny or minimise the impact of their abusive activities.

An interesting finding concerns the incidence of abuse. Of the men surveyed, 5.6% reported childhood sexual abuse. The figure for women was 6.7%. These figures, which are substantially lower than those quoted in other studies, could well understate the true incidence of child sexual abuse according to the researchers.

It is important to be clear about what these findings tell us. It is likely that many, perhaps most, people who were abused as children go on to lead happy and fulfilled

lives. Despite this, there is now a weight of research evidence, from a variety of sources, which tells us that the negative consequences of childhood sexual abuse are considerable and last a lifetime.

Those who abuse children often deny or minimise the impact of their abusive activities as a means of dealing with the guilt that their behaviour would otherwise generate. It is helpful to keep the findings of research like this in mind when we encounter such denial and minimisation. Another important implication of the research concerns the issue of compensation for survivors. The researchers state that: "The results here provide a quantification of the economic impacts on individuals of having experienced CSA. While compensation should cover factors other than economic, it seems that the economic impacts are real and substantial".

The Long-Term Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse on Incomes and Labour Force Status by Alan Barrett, Yumiko Kamiya and Vincent O'Sullivan, ESRI Research Bulletin, available on www.esri.ie/bulletin.

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.

TRAINING DATES FOR NOVEMBER & DECEMBER

Four one-day Child Safeguarding and Protection Awareness training courses are scheduled for November and December 2014, in addition to those already provided during September and October. These courses are for priests, parish personnel and child safeguarding representatives. In particular we would ask parishes which only have one parish safeguarding representative at present to nominate at least one other person as a parish safeguarding representative and have them avail of this training.

15 November for the South Inner City, North Inner City and Cullenswood Deaneries.
Venue: Holy Cross Diocesan Centre
Time: 10am to 4pm

29 November for the South Dublin, Tallaght and Blessington Deaneries.
Venue: Dominican Retreat and Pastoral Centre, St Mary's Priory, Tallaght, Dublin 24 (to be confirmed)
Time: 10am to 4pm

6 December for the Fingal North, Finglas and Maynooth Deaneries.
Venue: Holy Cross Diocesan Centre
Time: 10am to 4pm

13 December for the Fingal South East, Fingal South West and Howth Deaneries.
Venue: Holy Cross Diocesan Centre
Time: 10am to 4pm

Please contact Geraldine Tierney (01 8360314) for further information and to book a place. Fr Paddy Boyle (086 1011415) is also available to deal with any queries.

Further training courses will be provided in the New Year.

LESSONS FROM ROTHERHAM

Between 1997 and 2013 an estimated 1,400 girls were sexually abused and exploited by gangs of men, mainly of Pakistani origin, in Rotherham, a town in South Yorkshire with a population of about a quarter of a million people. Originally, it seems that the girls were passed around the men for their own sexual gratification. Later, however, it developed into a business where the girls were being used in prostitution. The nature and the scale of the abuse ensured that the story became a national scandal in the UK. Many senior figures in the local authority, police and social services have resigned in the wake of the scandal, some only after political and/or media pressure.



Andrew Norfolk, the journalist who uncovered the scale of the abuse of young girls in Rotherham. (Guardian Newspaper)

As with similar scandals closer to home, what has shocked and dismayed members of the public is that the activities of these men were known to people in authority and they failed to take the appropriate actions. In 2010 five men were convicted and imprisoned for offences against young girls. A journalist from The Times, Andrew Norfolk, began investigating the story. He reported that the abuse was much more widespread than had been acknowledged up to that point.

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (social services in the UK are delivered by local councils) set up an independent inquiry and the report of the inquiry was published in August of this year. It gave a "conservative estimate" of 1,400 children, some as young as eleven who were "raped by

multiple perpetrators, abducted, trafficked to other cities in England, beaten and intimidated". It also found that three previous inquiries that were held in 2002, 2003 and 2006 had made similar findings but these findings had been "effectively suppressed" because officials "did not believe the data".

There are many reasons for the failure to take appropriate action to protect the children. In a hard hitting leading article The Observer criticised: "a disgusting prejudice against white, working class girls" on the part of the police, who treated many of the girls as criminals rather than as vulnerable children. Social services failed the children. While social workers working directly with the girls raised concerns, these were ignored by senior managers.

Those who tried to raise the issue were criticised and penalised. A researcher who brought the matter to the attention of senior police officers in 2002 was told not to do so again and was subsequently suspended from her post. When Andrew Norfolk's articles first appeared, he was criticised by those who claimed he was unfairly targeting a minority community. Others critics from the far right accused him of not writing enough about anti-white racism and two of them wrote to tell him that they wished him dead. Ann Cryer, a prominent Labour politician who had earlier raised concerns about the activities of Asian men in another part of England, had to be given police protection.

All of this is familiar to those who have followed stories like this over the years: victims who were not heard; officials who could not or would not accept the awful truth that children were being abused; and the attempts to silence those who insisted on speaking out. We hear all of this and we know it is wrong. There is, however, another theme that runs through stories such as this. It is the story of well meaning people making disastrous decisions.

Racism is a cancer that eats at the heart of societies where people from different ethnic groups, faiths and cultures live side by side. In certain parts of the world social harmony, or just the avoidance of outright conflict,

requires a very careful balance of societal forces. When this balance is lost the consequences are often horrifying as we can see in various parts of the world including, most recently, Syria and Iraq. Civic leaders have a responsibility to maintain a balance of societal forces. It is clear that in Rotherham many responsible civic leaders were concerned that stories about organised groups of men of Pakistani origin systematically abusing white girls could have a devastating impact on the relations between the various ethnic groups within the town. While there is no evidence that men of Pakistani origin have any greater propensity to abuse children than men from any other ethnic group, such a story could have been used by unscrupulous individuals to stir up racial hatred and provoke violence against members of the Asian community in Rotherham.

It is relatively easy to understand that things go wrong when people act out of callousness or indifference, like the police officers who treated the victims of abuse as though they were criminals. It is a greater challenge to call people to account when they are doing the wrong things for apparently laudable reasons. Those who denied the truth of the abuse of children by Asian men in Rotherham may have done so in the misguided belief that they were serving a greater good of avoiding outbreaks of racially motivated violence. Those who denied or minimised abuse by priests may have done so because they wanted to defend the Church they love. In both case, the consequences were disastrous for the children who were abused and, indeed, for the institutions they sought to defend.

We have to listen to children. We have to listen to adults who were abused as children. No matter how hard it is to face up to the truth, the consequences of not doing so are infinitely worse.

A footnote: the media often come in for criticism of their coverage of child abuse issues. This case demonstrates that responsible and courageous journalists have a key role to play in the protection of children.