



NEWSLETTER



NEW ROLE FOR GARRY KEHOE

From February of this year, Garry Kehoe will be employed by the Diocese as a trainer with the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service (CSPS).

Many people, especially those in the southern part of the Diocese, will know Garry already. Since 2008 Garry has worked with the CSPS as a volunteer trainer. He is an accredited trainer with the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) and has delivered a variety of training courses for the Diocese over the past seven years. Taking on this new position will allow Garry to devote more of his time to his work as a safeguarding trainer.

Garry has worked as a senior executive in the building trade. A gifted musician, he conducts the youth choir in his local Church. Garry is married with two grown up daughters and lives in Wicklow.

We are very happy to have more of Garry's time and expertise and we welcome him to his new position.

THE DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE: ENSURING BEST SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE IN OUR PARISHES

The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee held its first meeting on 19 January 2013. The second anniversary of its inauguration provides a timely opportunity to reflect on its contribution to date.

At the inaugural meeting, Archbishop Martin reminded us that "child

safeguarding is not yesterday's issue but one that belongs to our today and to our tomorrow". The truth of this was brought home to us in a shocking manner when, in March of last year, a Dublin diocesan priest was sentenced to seven years in prison for offences against children that were committed between 2007 and 2011. More recently, the recent television documentary about Aras Attracta in Co Mayo reminded us that the abuse of the vulnerable is still, sadly, a feature of life in some of our institutions.

The setting up of the Safeguarding Committee followed the launch of the diocesan safeguarding policy: Archdiocese of Dublin, Child Safeguarding and Protection, Policy

and Procedures in 2011. An early and pertinent issue raised by the Committee relates to how the Diocese can be sure that diocesan policy is being implemented in each of its parishes.

On an annual basis an average of approximately 1,000 people attend training and information sessions run by CSPS. Vetting applications now stand at 42,000, an increase of 7,000 on the same time last year. There is at least one, and sometimes several, safeguarding representative in each of our 199 parishes. These are impressive and significant figures but they do not tell us the whole story. We know that safeguarding practice in many

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parishes is excellent. However, we need to determine how such excellent practices can be replicated across all of our parishes. This is an issue to which the committee has devoted considerable time and attention.

Parishes have been asked, over the past number of years, to complete an annual self audit and to submit it to CSPS. While this provides some measure by which we can gauge the implementation of diocesan policy, it does not tell about the quality of safeguarding practice in the parishes. Therefore, the committee has devoted considerable time and attention to the production of an audit tool that more comprehensively

they are required to assist parishes as they audit their own practice and make plans for improvement.

“child safeguarding is not yesterday’s issue but one that belongs to our today and to our tomorrow”.

Currently, there are five diocesan safeguarding trainers. Fr Paddy Boyle and Andrew Fagan of the CSPS are both accredited trainers. Up to now, we have been very fortunate to have three part-time voluntary trainers,

to assist in the implementation to the Strategic Plan. Garry, as reported above, will be taking up his new position in February.

We know the high quality of Garry’s work and that he will make a significantly greater contribution in the future for being able to devote more of his time to training and the development of safeguarding practice across the Diocese.

The next meeting of the diocesan Safeguarding Committee takes place on 9 February. At that meeting Andrew Fagan will present a report of progress to date in the implementation of the 2013 to 2016 Strategic Plan. This will help to frame the priorities for the Committee for the next two years. The Committee has made a major contribution in the first two years of its existence and it will continue to do so in the future.

The Safeguarding Committee is very ably chaired by Aidan Browne. Archbishop Martin is very grateful to Aidan and to the other members of the Committee for their generous and valuable contribution to the Diocese. In particular, Archbishop Martin would like to thank Loraine Byrne, formerly of Crosscare, who recently resigned from the Committee. We wish Loraine and her family well as they embark on their new life in South Africa.



gathers the information required to draw conclusions about the implementation of diocesan policy. One consequence of this is that the process has become a collaborative one, where the audit form is often completed by parish personnel assisted by one of the diocesan trainers. The audit process has, in this manner, become a means of developing and improving practice, as it allows for reflection and the development of action plans to address deficits in current practice. It has also led to greater demands on the time of the diocesan trainers as

Louise Fenelon, George Mayberry and Garry Kehoe. Louise, George and Garry have given of their time and expertise with considerable generosity over the past years.

The roll out of the Strategic Plan, developed by the Safeguarding Committee during 2013, has highlighted the mismatch between the work that is required to be done and the resources available to do it. In this context, we are delighted at the decision of Archbishop Martin to accept the proposal that Garry Kehoe should be employed by the Diocese

DIOCESAN CHILD SAFEGUARDING DAY 2015

Sunday, 19 April will be Diocesan Safeguarding Day 2015. It is the third Sunday of Easter. It is also one of the Sundays of the 'Do This in Memory' programme so there is likely to be a significant number of children and parents attending Mass that day. Thus, it provides a good opportunity to highlight the work that is being done to ensure that children are cared for safely and well in our parishes.

The first Diocesan Safeguarding Day was held on 15 December 2013. The feedback from that one was mixed. There was a problem with the distribution of materials to parishes so that they arrived either too close to the day to allow for adequate preparation or they did not arrive until after 15 December. In addition, many priests and safeguarding representatives told us that the day was too close to Christmas, that there were too many other things happening at that time and that the parishes had too little time to prepare. For these reasons, it was decided to hold Safeguarding Day over until the spring, to allow parishes adequate preparation time.

The 'Z cards' that were produced for Diocesan Safeguarding Day in 2013 have proved very popular and these and other materials will be distributed to parishes well before 19 April. Further information on Diocesan Safeguarding Day will be sent out nearer the time. However, parishes are asked to make a note of the date now and to be aware that it will be coming up shortly.

OUR DUTY TO CARE FOR CHILDREN: applying guidelines in an intelligent and informed manner

Recently a woman remarked that 'safeguarding rules' made it impossible to work with children. She gave the example of organising an overnight activity in a scout hall. The adults, she said, are not supposed to sleep in the same room as the children but the scout hall consisted of just one big room, apart from a kitchen and bathrooms, neither of which would be suitable for the adults to sleep in. When asked how this problem had been addressed, she said that the leaders had erected dividers in the hall, thus separating the sleeping areas of the children and adults. This, it was suggested to the woman, represented an intelligent and informed application of guidelines. Such guidelines were never intended to assume the status of inflexible rules.

There are certain things we must never do, such as hit a child or humiliate him or her. Guidelines relating to matters such as supervision ratios and not being alone with a child have to be applied with discrimination, taking account of the particular

circumstances of the situation to which they are being applied. There will be times when it is appropriate and, indeed, necessary to his or her safety to speak to a child alone. If we allow guidelines to become inflexible rules we risk bringing about a situation in which we end up doing things that are not in children's interests. It can never be right not to offer to assist a child who is obviously in distress because, for example, there is no other person around and we fear that our intentions could be misconstrued. There are always ways to overcome such challenges if we really want to do so. Most people carry mobile phones so contacting a third party relatively quickly is never that difficult.

Our contact with children should be informed by two fundamental principles: transparency and accountability. Transparency is about being open about what we are doing in our contacts with children and, wherever possible, being visible to others when we are with them.

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In this context, the opposite of transparency is secrecy. Secrecy is not the same thing as confidentiality. We can be transparent in our contacts with children, even as we hold confidential information about them. We cannot, however, have secret contact with children.

The other key principle is accountability. We ought to be able to give an account of our contacts with children, including the reasons why we do things in the way that we do. Another part of the conversation about scouting referred to a situation where a scout leader took a child in to his tent during a scout trip. His daughter was also present and the reason for his action was that very heavy rain caused some of the tents to become flooded. He took the decision that he could better look after the child in question by having her in his tent with his daughter, rather than by leaving her in a wet tent. It was a reasonable decision and the man was somewhat taken aback when the child's parent asked him about it. He felt that the parent ought to have assumed he was acting in the child's best interests. Parents, however, do not protect their children by making assumptions about the intentions of other adults. It is right that they should ask questions.

We should only depart from accepted safeguarding practice when there are very clear reasons for doing so and we should always be ready to give an account of ourselves when we do so. Good safeguarding practice, it is often said, is protective of adults as well as children. This is true but we must bear in mind that the priority is the protection of children, not the protection of ourselves. Our responsibility as adults is to care for and protect children. That is our duty.

TRAINING IN JANUARY

Full Day Sessions

- Fr Paddy Boyle will deliver training to a group from the Irish Missionary Union on 15 January in Clonliffe College
- Fr Paddy Boyle and Garry Kehoe will deliver training to a group of parishes in Meadowbrook Parish Centre on 17 January.

Information Sessions

Information Sessions will be provided by Fr Paddy Boyle on:

- Wednesday, 28 January for priests, volunteers etc. in Bohernabreena Parish
- Saturday, 31 January for priests, volunteers etc. in Crumlin Parish.

PARISH AUDITS

Those who have been working on their Parish Audit are urged to complete and return them to this office as soon as possible. If anyone requires assistance they can give Fr Paddy Boyle a call on 086 1011415.

CONTACT DETAILS

Child Safeguarding and Protection Service

Holy Cross Diocesan Centre,
Clonliffe Road, Dublin 3.
Tel: 01 8360314 / Fax: 01 8842599
cps@dublindiocese.ie

Director

Andrew Fagan
Tel: 01 8360314
Email: andrew.fagan@dublindiocese.ie

Child Protection Officer

Julie McCullough
Tel: 01 8360314
Email: cps@dublindiocese.ie

Training and Development Co-ordinator

Rev. Patrick Boyle
Tel: 01 8360314
Email: p.boyle@dublindiocese.ie

Priest Support Co-ordinator

Gerry Deegan
Tel: 01 8360314
Email: g.deegan@dublindiocese.ie

Priest Delegate

Rev. Richard Shannon
Tel: 01 8360314 / Email: cps@dublindiocese.ie
(*Please note Rev. Shannon is based offsite but please forward any queries to the CSPS Office)

Administration

Aileen Byrne and Geraldine Tierney
Tel: 01 8360314 / Fax: 01 8842599
Email: cps@dublindiocese.ie

Garda Vetting Administrator

Vivienne Knight
Tel: 01 8087593
Email: vivienne.knight@dublindiocese.ie