



NEWSLETTER

A 'RATIONAL, COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED CHILD SAFEGUARDING SYSTEM'

The report on the Review of Safeguarding Practice in the Archdiocese of Dublin by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI).

This report was published on 12 May following a visit by four reviewers to the diocesan Child Safeguarding and Protection Service (CSPS) in January. Over a four day period the reviewers read files, examined policies and practices and met with a wide range of people, including Archbishop Martin, members of the CSPS team, Parish Safeguarding Representatives and others. All of us involved were anxious about the process and about the outcome. On both counts our expectations were exceeded. The review was carried out in a relaxed, respectful and constructive manner. While we were confident that practice in the Diocese is good, there was an underlying worry that the reviewers might focus on some area of weakness which would colour their overall perception. Such worries proved groundless. The reviewers were fair and generous in their

assessment of the work of the Diocese.

The report considers the history of child protection in Dublin Diocese, with particular reference to the work of the Murphy Commission. It quotes the Murphy Report's conclusion that the Diocese's priorities in dealing with such matters up until the mid 1990s "were the maintenance of secrecy, the avoidance of scandal, the protection of the reputation of the Church, and the preservation of its assets. All other considerations, including the welfare of children and justice for victims, were subordinated to these priorities". Five years after the publication of the Murphy Report in 2009, the review carried out by NBSCCCI praised those working in the Dublin Diocese, stating that: "their combined achievement in turning around a shocking and grievous situation is remarkable".

The Report highlighted the work that is being done in parishes and praised the "enthusiasm and commitment...at local level".

The review measured the Diocese's compliance with the seven standards that make up Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland.

These seven safeguarding standards are broken down into 48 criteria. Dublin Diocese was found to be fully compliant with 43 criteria and partially compliant with 5 criteria. Aspects of practice were singled out for particular praise. The Diocese's *Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Child Abuse against Priests of the Diocese* is described as "an excellent document" and "an exemplar of its type". The Priest Delegate Role, described in the last issue of the Newsletter, "is unique in the experience of the reviewers". The arrangements for the supervision and monitoring of priests out of ministry due to child protection concerns were commended.

The Report highlighted the work that is being done in parishes and praised the "enthusiasm and commitment... at local level". Last November, in his homily for the Mass to mark 10 years of the CSPS, 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 for your ecclesial service. Your work has rendered the Church a safer place for children." Archbishop Martin himself has given inspirational leadership on this issue without

Continued over...

which the achievements referred to in the NBSCCCI report could not have come about. Archbishop Martin issued a call to which the people of Dublin Diocese responded with determination and generosity.

It is good that we take a moment to reflect on progress made and to give thanks to God and to each other. We express our gratitude, in a special way, to those courageous people who spoke up about their own experiences of childhood abuse and forced up to peer into the darkness and to face up to our responsibilities. This moment of thanksgiving is food for the journey. We have not arrived at our destination. The conviction this year of a Dublin priest for the abuse of a child in the recent past reminds us that our work is not done.

The report contains six recommendations for improvements in the safeguarding practice of the

Diocese. These are aimed at improving communication in the diocese, getting better information about what is happening in the parishes, providing training for those with particular responsibilities, enhancing the supervision of offenders, providing advice and guidance to parishes on a number of key issues and making sure that safeguarding materials are available in a variety of languages. Work on the implementation of these recommendations is already underway.

The report of the *Review of Safeguarding Practice in the Archdiocese of Dublin* by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland is available on the website of the NBSCCCI, www.safeguarding.ie and the CSPS website, www.csp.s.dublindiocese.ie.

CHANGES TO GARDA VETTING

In March of this year the Minister for Justice and Equality implemented an administrative filter to be applied to all Garda Vetting applications. This means that, henceforth, the Garda Vetting Office will exercise some discretion about what information is disclosed through the vetting process. Account will be taken of the nature of the person's offences (where applicable), when these offences were committed and the post for which the applicant is applying. This is a sensible reform. It means, for example, that minor motoring offences from a long time ago will not necessarily be disclosed through Garda vetting.

While we welcome this change, it means that we have to adjust our practice. New forms have been issued and the old ones can no longer be used. People are required to describe the position for which they are applying, rather than using the generic term 'volunteer'. This is to allow the officials in the Garda Vetting Office to determine what information should be disclosed as relevant to the position in question.

As with all such changes, there is bound to be some initial uncertainty and confusion. We would ask for your patience and understanding. As always, Vivienne Knight, Garda Vetting Administrator (01 808 7593) is available to help you with whatever queries you may have.

APPOINTMENT OF MARIE COLLINS

TO VATICAN CHILD PROTECTION COMMISSION



One of those to whom Dublin Diocese owes a particular debt of gratitude is Marie Collins. Marie has campaigned with great courage and tenacity both for the rights of those who were abused as children by priests and religious and for the implementation of proper policies, procedures and practices to ensure that the risks of such abuse occurring are minimised.

In March Pope Francis appointed Marie, along with seven others, to the Commission which has been established to improve measures to protect children against abuse within the Catholic Church. The membership of the Commission is significant in a number of respects. Apart from Marie's position as someone with direct personal experience of clerical abuse, three other members of the Commission are women and five of the eight are lay people.

We offer Marie our congratulations and assure her of our support.

Departure of Sinead McDonnell



In May, Sinead left the Diocese after six years working with CSPA as the Child Protection Officer. Her work involved meeting with people who had been abused by priests, providing them with an opportunity to tell their stories and offering follow up support. Sinead was also responsible for ensuring the proper procedures were followed in terms of liaising with the civil authorities and with NBSCCCI.

Sinead joined the CSPA in 2008 not long before the publication of the Murphy Report. When Phil Garland left his post as Director of the service the following year, Sinead became acting Director during the difficult period leading up to and immediately following the publication of the Report. Her former colleagues remember with gratitude her calm and reassuring presence during that challenging time.

Sinead was respected by colleagues working with the civil authorities and the various advocacy and support services with whom CSPA works in close cooperation. This respect enhanced the reputation of the service. The auditors who carried out the review of the service on behalf of NBSCCCI recognised her contribution and referred to her 'superb' work. Perhaps most significant of all was the work Sinead did with those who were abused as children. Many have spoken of her kind and gentle presence to them as they began the work of unburdening themselves of hurts they had carried since childhood.

Sinead has embarked on a new life with her young family in Wexford, from where she comes. We wish her well.

TOWARDS PEACE

Towards Peace is a new spiritual support service that has been set up to assist those who were abused by Church personnel. It is aimed at those whose faith has been damaged by abuse and who wish to continue their search for meaning and for God. Each person who avails of the service is assisted to travel his or her own spiritual journey at their own pace, with no predetermined destination. The service is open to all who experienced abuse in a Church context, including former residents of Church run institutions, and their families.

The service involves an opportunity to talk to a trained spiritual companion for up to nine sessions. The conversations are intended to allow the person to explore his or her relationship with God and to get in touch with God's presence in his or her life. Other supports such as retreats and group events may be suggested. The service is free. The cost of the service is borne by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, the Conference of Religious in Ireland and the Irish Missionary Union.

Sister Mary White is the Coordinator of Towards Peace and can be contacted at 01 5053028 from Monday to Thursday between 10am and 1pm and 2pm to 4pm. Contact can also be made by email at: towardspeace@iecon.ie and there is a website with further information: www.towardspeace.ie

Towards Peace is separate from and additional to the range of support services provided by Towards Healing (1800 303416, coordinator@towardshealing.ie).

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.