



## NEWSLETTER

# *Twenty years of the Child Safeguarding & Protection Service*

CSPS reaches a significant milestone in 2023. The service will be 20 years old.

Cardinal Desmond Connell established the [then] Child Protection Service in 2003. He did so in response to a recommendation of the diocesan Advisory Panel on Child Protection. The Panel had been advising on the management of cases involving allegations of child sexual abuse against priests of the Diocese since the mid-1990s. Panel members recognised that it was difficult for some people to disclose their abuse by priests to other priests and recommended that lay professionals would be employed to undertake this work.

In the early days of the service, the emphasis was on dealing with allegations of abuse against priests of the Diocese and on providing support for those who had been abused. The first lay person appointed to the service was Joseph McDonagh whose job title was Victim Support Coordinator. Joseph was joined by other lay colleagues and the team grew over the years. Following Covid, there was a contraction in team numbers. The current team is

made up of five members, pictured above, who are based in Arran Quay, and Fr Richard Shannon, who works with the respondent priests, and who divides his time between work with CSPS and parish work in Dollymount.

Management of cases and support for those who experienced abuse in a Church context continue to be central to the work of CSPS. The remit of the service has expanded, most significantly into the area of the creation and maintenance of safe environments for



*The current staff members of the Child Safeguarding & Protection Service – Katherine Ward, Deirdre Donnelly, Andrew Fagan, Garry Kehoe and Vivienne Knight*

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# Archbishop Dermot Farrell has asked that we support the work of 'Towards Healing' and 'Towards Peace'

REACHING out to and supporting those who experienced abuse by priests in a Church context is a central part of the work of CSPS, as described above. Archbishop Dermot Farrell has asked us to give priority to this work, both in terms of the support we provide ourselves and in promoting the support provided by Towards Healing and Towards Peace.

Both Towards Healing and Towards Peace are funded by the dioceses and religious orders and provide services that are free to those who wish to avail of them.

Towards Healing provides counselling and related services to all those people who experienced abuse in a Church context on the island of Ireland. Towards Healing operates by contracting with qualified and accredited counsellors and therapists to provide counselling, for which it pays. Thousands of people have availed of the services provided by Towards Healing. This includes people now living outside Ireland for whom funding has been made available allowing them to avail of services locally.

A downloadable poster, pictured here, for Towards Healing is available at [www.towardshealing.ie](http://www.towardshealing.ie).

Towards Peace is a newer organisation. It is a response to the needs of those whose spirituality has been damaged through abuse in a Church context. Those who avail of the service meet with a spiritual director or companion who helps them to explore their sense of themselves and their relationship with God. The spiritual companions are also trained and accredited. Towards Peace also has a downloadable poster available at [www.towardspeace.ie](http://www.towardspeace.ie). ■



**Free & Confidential Helpline & Counselling Referral Service**

*Towards Healing is a Support Service, funded by the Catholic Church for Survivors of Institutional, Clerical and Religious abuse and provides the following:*

- Helpline Support • Counselling

**FREEPHONE**  
(IRE) 1800 303416  
(UK & Northern Ireland) 0800 0963315  
Mobile Number for Hearing-Impaired Users: 085 8022859  
[www.towardshealing.ie](http://www.towardshealing.ie)  
The service is provided by lay, independent and fully accredited therapists  
CHY No. 20741

## Towards Peace Spiritual Support Service



**Safe spaces to connect with your own spirituality, with your sense of God, and your journey Towards Peace.**

**Towards Peace is a spiritual support service for survivors of physical, emotional, sexual and spiritual abuse.**

Tel: +353 1 505 3028  
or + 353 86 771 0533  
Email: [towardspeace@iecon.ie](mailto:towardspeace@iecon.ie)  
[www.towardspeace.ie](http://www.towardspeace.ie)



 Find us on Facebook as:  
Towards Peace Spiritual Support Service

*Parish clergy and/or parish safeguarding representatives are asked to print off these posters and display them in a prominent position in the parish church or churches. You are also asked to ensure that they are not covered by other posters or notices. If they are taken down, please replace them*

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children and vulnerable persons in the parishes and agencies of the Diocese.

A significant development in the evolution of the Diocese's approach to the protection of children was the establishment, in 2013, of the diocesan Safeguarding Committee. The Safeguarding Committee prepares a three year safeguarding plan. Guided by this plan, CSPA works to ensure that diocesan safeguarding policy is implemented across all of the parishes in the Diocese. Such work typically begins with providing training for parish personnel. Auditing of safeguarding practice was introduced to monitor implementation. This work was further developed with the appointment of Garry Kehoe as Training and Compliance Manager in 2015. Garry has a long history with the Diocese, having begun work as a volunteer trainer in 2008. Garry works closely with the Safeguarding Committee, which, in 2023, will be producing a new and updated strategic plan for the coming years.

To give an idea of the scale of the work being undertaken, approximately 2,000 people were attending safeguarding training on an annual basis in the years before Covid. The numbers dropped substantially during the pandemic but are now recovering. Whereas 500 people attended training in 2021, the number increased to 1,200 in 2022. This provides tangible evidence of the commitment of all those involved in the life and work of the Diocese to the care and protection of children and vulnerable persons. It also, encouragingly, tells us that parish activities are returning to their former level. This is confirmed by an increase in the number of vetting applications being submitted by parishes.

Looking forward, ensuring that our parishes and diocesan agencies provide safe environments for children and vulnerable persons is just where we want to be, twenty years after the establishment of the service. Nonetheless, the service is still required to respond to allegations of abuse, to monitor and supervise priests and former priests out of ministry due to child protection concerns, and to provide support to those who experienced abuse, and to their families. ■

## ***Case management update and figures from the past year***

DURING 2022, CSPA was made aware of five new allegations of child sexual abuse involving four priests and former priests of the Diocese. All the allegations were against priests and former priests already known to the service.

The number of new allegations reported to the Diocese has declined steadily since 2010 when there were 46 allegations against 23 priests and former priests of the Diocese. The Report into the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin (Murphy Report), which examined the response of Church and the civil authorities to allegations of child sexual abuse by clerics of the Diocese, was published in November 2009. The Report was very critical of the manner in which the Diocese had dealt with cases. The publicity this generated prompted many more people to come forward and disclose abuse. Then, as now, the allegations were primarily of abuse that had occurred many years in the past. Many of those who were alleged to have abused children had already been identified and taken out of ministry. To date, ten priests and former priests of the Diocese have been convicted in the Courts for offences against children.

Only a very small percentage of the overall number of allegations of clerical child abuse reported to the Diocese refer to events that occurred after 2000. While this is encouraging and suggests that measures taken to prevent abuse have made a positive impact, we have to treat these findings with caution. We know that it can take people many, many years before they can disclose childhood abuse. For this reason, we can never become complacent or let down our guard. Those who suffered abuse continue to suffer. The experience of abuse is not something in their past, it is very much part of their present. It is very important, therefore, that we continue to provide support to victim/ survivors of abuse and that we keep them in our thoughts and prayers. ■

## ***Day of Prayer for Survivors of Abuse, marked since 2017***

THE DAY OF PRAYER for Survivors of Abuse is an initiative of Pope Francis. It was first marked by dioceses and parishes in 2017. It has been marked at different times in different years, but the intention for the future is that it will be held on the first Friday in Lent each year.

The date this year is 24 February. It has been marked in various ways, by the saying of special prayers and the lighting of candles of atonement, for example. This year each parish is asked to mark the day and also to announce it and to include prayers for victims and survivors in the bidding prayers at Masses on the Sunday (19 February) before the Day of Prayer. We are most grateful to our colleagues in the office of Mission & Ministry for preparing resources for use on the Day of Prayer. These have been distributed to parishes through the diocesan Communications Office and Garry Kehoe has also been sending them out to parishes.

This simple and sincere prayer was sent to Archbishop Martin by a person who had experienced abuse as a child:

***Lord, we are sorry  
For what some of us did to your children;  
Treated them so cruelly,  
Especially in their hour of need.  
We have left them with a lifelong suffering.  
This was not your plan for them or us.  
Please help us to help them.  
Guide us, Lord, Amen.***

It was read out by Sinead McDonnell (then Child Protection Officer, CSPA) at the opening of the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin in 2012 and has been widely used since then. ■



*The service is located at the Dublin Diocesan Offices, 20-23 Arran Quay, Dublin 7, D07 XK85*

## ***How to get in touch with the CSPA team***

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***You can call the CSPA team at 01 8360314***

**Vetting applications should be submitted to [garda.vetting@dublindiocese.ie](mailto:garda.vetting@dublindiocese.ie)**