

As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic it is timely for us to revisit our diocesan safeguarding policies and procedures and to recommit ourselves to keeping safe our children, young people and anyone who may be at risk of harm.

Best practice in safeguarding makes it clear that words on a page are not sufficient to protect. That is why we are grateful for a whole network of people at parish and diocesan level who are vigilant and well trained to recognise early any signs of poor practice and to react quickly if there appears to be any risk of abuse of any kind. All the policies and training in the world are of little value if people and clergy on the ground are not playing their part in together keeping all of us safe - especially our "little ones".

Jesus had a special love for children. Every Christian has a responsibility to enable young people to safely participate in prayer, faith formation, the celebration of the sacraments and all Church activities. Everyone who exercises a role in safeguarding is therefore doing the work of God. In the Diocese of Dromore we are committed to meeting regularly in order to monitor, evaluate and review our safeguarding practice against the standards set down by the National Board for Safeguarding in the Catholic church in Ireland. Given the restrictions on meeting during the pandemic, our safeguarding team felt it important to set out clearly once more the various policies and processes that are now part of the day-to-day activities in our parishes. I invite you to take this opportunity to meet together again at parish level in order to ensure that everything is working well and up to date on the ground in your parish.

I wish to express on behalf of all the people of God in this diocese our gratitude for your dedication to safeguarding and your generosity in serving the Church and the community in this way. In early 2023 the National Board will carry out a further audit and review of our practice to help us ensure that what we say we are doing is actually happening in practice. In particular I acknowledge the work of our diocesan safeguarding team which continues to guide and direct us on behalf of the children young people and all who are vulnerable among us.