



THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IRELAND

Second Review of Child Safeguarding Practice

In the

Diocese of Dromore

undertaken by

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the

Catholic Church in Ireland (National Board)

Date of Review Report: April 2023

CONTENTS

	Page
Background:	3
Introduction:	5
Process of Review:	7
Standard 1: Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments:	9
Standard 2: Procedures for Responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations:	15
Standard 3: Care and Support for the Complainant:	17
Standard 4: Care and Management of the Respondent:	20
Standard 5: Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe:	25
Standard 6: Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message:	28
Standard 7: Quality Assuring Compliance with the Standards:	30
Conclusion:	33

Background

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church Ireland (National Board) was established in 2006 to provide advice, services and assistance in the ongoing development of safeguarding children within the Roman Catholic Church on the island of Ireland; to monitor compliance with legislation, policy and best practice; and to report on these activities. This is comprehensively set out in the Memorandum of Association of the Company (Coimirce).

Church authorities who have entered into an agreement with the National Board through signing a Memorandum of Understanding have committed to following *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016*.

In order to assess compliance, the Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Dromore, Archbishop Eamon Martin invited the National Board to undertake a Review of safeguarding children practice in this diocese, which took place in March 2023.

The Diocese of Dromore was previously reviewed in June 2011, under the *Safeguarding Children Standards and Guidance for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2008*. The recommendations from the 2011 Review are listed below.

Recommendations from 2011 review

1. The Safeguarding Co-ordinator and Committee are to be commended for the very comprehensive preparatory work in policy development and should seek to bring it to conclusion as soon as possible so that it can be implemented in the Diocese - **Implemented**.
2. NBSCCC recommends that the pastoral open approach demonstrated by the current designated person continues, and that this good practice is built upon - **Implemented**.
3. We would recommend that Bishop McAreavey and his Designated Person convene a meeting annually with Social Services and the Police, to ensure the continued development of positive working relationships in the interest of safeguarding children - **Implemented**.
4. The Diocese should appoint a Support Person and introduce an arrangement whereby that person would attend all initial interviews with the Designated Person. This approach would allow the complainant to meet the Support Person and enable future contact - **Implemented**.
5. Bishop McAreavey should consider writing to all complainants upon receipt of an allegation offering them support and counselling, inviting them to meet with the Designated Person to share their complaint and enable a referral to statutory authorities - **Implemented**.
6. We recommend that following removal from ministry of a priest, the Bishop set down in writing the restrictions imposed on the respondent and the supervision, management and reporting arrangements relating to him - **Implemented**.

7. Consideration should be given to recruiting personnel to the Advisory Panel who can advise on victim impact and on risk management. Review of Safeguarding Practice in the Diocese of Dromore – **Implemented.** (The diocese currently makes use of the National Case Management Committee).
8. To support him further in his work we recommend that Bishop McAreavey engage with another Bishop in whom he has confidence in an ongoing dialogue on safeguarding issues that would enable him to get personal support and share his own knowledge and experience. Such a dialogue, involving their Designated Persons, would be a useful help for all concerned - **Implemented.**
9. Bishop McAreavey in consultation with his Safeguarding Committee should source appropriate training for Priests and safeguarding personnel on the impact of abuse on children - **Implemented.**
10. Bishop McAreavey in consultation with his Designated Person should identify support people, ensure they are offered training and supported so that they, in turn, can offer the necessary guidance to victims of abuse - **Implemented.**
11. The Diocese may wish to consider having a number of Priest Advisers and ensuring they are trained and supported in their role - **Implemented.**
12. The Safeguarding Committee should ensure annual audits are completed and forwarded to NBSCCC - **Implemented.**

The reviewers have seen evidence that all the recommendations have been implemented.

This current Review is to assess child-safeguarding practice in the Diocese against the current *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*, and to gather evidence which:

- (a) Provides assurance to the Church Authority that the standards are being met.
- (b) Demonstrates good child safeguarding practices.
- (c) Enhances public confidence in child safeguarding within the Diocese.
- (d) Looks at the governance arrangements for child safeguarding.
- (e) Provides opportunities for learning and development.

Introduction

The Diocese of Dromore is within the Archdiocese of Armagh Metropolitan Area. It covers parts of Counties Antrim, Down and Armagh, with an estimated Catholic population of 65,000. The Diocese is divided into 22 parishes (previously 23), with 48 churches. The parishes are sub-divided further into five Pastoral Areas - St Bridget's, St Colman's, St Bronagh's (A and B), St Patrick's, and St Ronan's.

There are twenty-eight (28) priests ministering within the diocese. Included in this number are twelve (12) priests who are from abroad, or are members of Religious Orders. The Religious Orders that provide priests to minister within the diocese are the Missionary Society of St Paul (MSP), the male Dominican Order, and the Society of African Missions (SMA). The Diocese also has fourteen (14) retired priests, three (3) of whom are out of ministry. There are four (4) Permanent Deacons in the Diocese.

In April 2019, Archbishop Eamon Martin was appointed by Pope Francis to take over the role of Apostolic Administrator for Dromore from Bishop Philip Boyce, who held the role from March 2018. Bishop John McAreevey had resigned in 2018, following intense media coverage surrounding allegations of historical abuse against a deceased priest who had been a Parish Priest and principal of St Colman's College, Newry. Bishop McAreevey issued a public statement accepting that the abuse perpetrated by the priest was abhorrent, inexcusable and indefensible. He issued an apology to victims of clerical child sexual abuse perpetrated by priests of the diocese.

The PSNI conducted an investigation during 2018/19 into complaints of abuse by clergy in Newry and in St Colman's College, Newry that had been received. The aims of the PSNI investigation were reported to be as follows:

1. To determine proactively the facts of the case based on information presently available and information disclosed in the future.
2. To identify offences, suspected offenders, and to take action against those who are still living.
3. To ascertain when the Catholic Church, or any other authority, first became aware of Fr. Finnegan's offending behaviour; what action was taken to ensure adequate safeguarding was implemented; and what information, if any, about his offending was reported to the police service at that time.
4. To ensure a responsive service to complainants who contact the Police Service, that their vulnerability is considered, and they are appropriately signposted to relevant services.
5. To identify any current child safeguarding risks. Where a current safeguarding risk is identified, activity must be focussed on managing the risk at the earliest opportunity.
6. To facilitate contact, and involvement with other relevant organisations that may assist in the process of gathering evidence.
7. To establish whether there are any lessons to be learned from the way in which the Police Service, the Diocese of Dromore, the Council for Catholic Maintained Grammar Schools (CCMS), the Education Authority for Northern Ireland (EANI) or any other agency acted to safeguard children, whether collectively or individually.
8. To maintain and enhance public confidence in the Police Service of Northern Ireland, particularly from those who have been subject to physical or sexual abuse whether recently or in the past.

In August 2019, the PSNI concluded the investigation, and it was subsequently reported that nine files were submitted to the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) for consideration. The PPS determined that the Test for Prosecution was not met in relation to those files.

In 2021, the Diocese of Dromore implemented a Redress Scheme, inviting those victims and survivors who wished to avail of it to come forward. The diocese explained that the Redress Scheme was being established as a means by which those who suffered child sexual abuse perpetrated by members of the clergy and other Church representatives acting under the diocese's authority would be able to obtain recognition and reasonable compensation without the need for lengthy investigation and litigation.

The reviewers took cognisance of the residual and ongoing impact, from the PSNI 2018/19 investigation into child abuse. This investigation has affected individuals, parishes, communities, and those involved in safeguarding within the diocese. In addition to the Redress Scheme, the Diocese of Dromore continues to process various civil legal proceedings issued against it. The Diocese aims to support victims and survivors pastorally, and it refers them to the Towards Healing Counselling and Support Service. Victims and survivors are also invited to have pastoral meetings with the Apostolic Administrator.

The diocese has issued public apologies on several occasions for the abuse perpetrated in St Colman's College and elsewhere.

The reviewers have taken into account the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on parishes, and in particular the restrictions that were imposed on face-to-face ministries with and activities for children and young people within the Church. In this regard, the personnel of the diocese are to be commended for providing safe tailored alternative online programmes and support to young people and their families.

In the lead up to this Review, the Diocese of Dromore published a notice on its website and announced in all parishes that the Review would be taking place.

On behalf of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church (the National Board), the reviewers want to thank Archbishop Martin for his invitation to undertake this Review. They are grateful for everyone's engagement and contribution, including those in the parishes they visited, the young people, parents and the Youth Leaders they met, and the members of the Safeguarding team who generously made themselves available. They wish to make special mention of the Director of Safeguarding/Designated Liaison Person (DLP), the Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator (CSC), and the Diocesan Secretary for their professionalism, dedication and commitment in facilitating this Review.

Process of Review

This Review examines compliance with the seven Standards contained in *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*. It has considered changes and developments in the diocese since the last Review in 2011. Child safeguarding practices and safeguarding arrangements, including strategic plans and operational policies and guidance, have been examined. Written records have been reviewed, and the reviewers had meetings with parents, young people, and safeguarding personnel within the diocese.

A Memorandum of Understanding and Data Processing Deed were signed by Archbishop Martin and the National Board, prior to the Review taking place. The Review fieldwork for the Dromore Diocese took place between March 26th and 30th, 2023.

Below is a list of the people that the reviewers spoke with or met during the fieldwork for this Review: -

- Archbishop Martin, Apostolic Administrator.
- The Safeguarding Director/DLP
- The Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator
- The Diocesan Secretary
- A complainant
- A Support Person
- A respondent
- A Priest Advisor
- The Dominican Religious Order Designated Liaison Person
- The Chairperson and members of the Diocesan Child Safeguarding Committee
- Parish Priests
- Local Safeguarding Representatives (LSRs)
- The Director of Youth Ministry
- A Children's Liturgy Leader, and parent volunteers and children
- The Pope John Paul II Award Scheme Co-ordinator, and leaders and young people
- A representative of the PSNI
- A representative of Southern Health and Social Services.
- Representatives of a survivors' group

STANDARDS

Each Standard contains a list of indicators, which ensure that the standards are met. To support implementation of the Standards, the National Board has produced detailed guidance. The Diocese of Dromore has adopted the guidance of the National Board.

The seven Standards are:

Standard 1: Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments

Standard 2: Procedures for responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations.

Standard 3: Care and Support for the Complainant.

Standard 4: Care and Management of the Respondent.

Standard 5: Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe.

Standard 6: Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message.

Standard 7: Quality-Assuring Compliance with the Standards.

This Review concentrates on practice through evaluating written records, interviews with Church personnel and young people, and information from complainants and respondents.

An assessment of practice under each standard is set out below:

Standard 1: Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments

Church bodies provide an environment for children that is welcoming, nurturing and safe. They provide access to good role models whom children can trust, who respect, protect and enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development.

As part of the Review, visits were undertaken to two parishes. The reviewers also attended a Children's Liturgy Group, a Pope John Paul II Award group, and they met with the Diocesan Youth Director.

The Children's Liturgy Group had fifteen (15) young people aged 6-7 years in attendance, with four (4) parents, who are all trained and vetted volunteers, and the liturgy leader. The group meets once a month to prepare for participation in Sunday Mass the following week. There is a rota for volunteers to ensure an appropriate adult to child ratio. A sign-in register is completed at the start of each session, and the children are reminded about the code of behaviour. The programme was tailored to the age group, was well led, and was delivered in a fun and engaging way. The session attended was preparing for the Palm Sunday Mass.

It was evident that the children were happy, relaxed, and participated actively. In discussion, the parents indicated they were satisfied with the safeguarding arrangements and with the quality of the programme. If they had any issues or concerns, they said that they would share these with the leader. Parents praised the work of the leader in creating a safe and happy environment for their children.

During the visit, the reviewers examined documentation, which included consent forms, registers, rotas, and signed volunteer safeguarding agreements. The reviewers examined a risk assessment for children's ministry, covering issues of ensuring a safe environment and positive behaviour, engaging children with special needs, codes of behaviour for adults, the use of technology, and an accident report form.

During a visit to the Pope John Paul II Award group, the reviewers met and spoke with the leaders and young people. The John Paul II Co-ordinator is a member of the Youth Commission for the diocese and works closely with the Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator. All leaders in this awards scheme are vetted and complete safeguarding training, and there are specific codes of conduct for them. Seven post primary schools are involved in the award scheme, which while parish focused, is delivered in partnership with the schools and a number of community based services (such as the YMCA). It is encouraging that some of the young people who have completed the Pope John Paul II Award have later returned as leaders of the scheme.

Documentation relating to the programme and associated activities was reviewed, showing evidence of young people's involvement in a range of faith ceremonies and events, including 'Gift of Light', a 'Living Crib', liturgy ministries, including doing readings, and youth camps.

There were also opportunities for the young people to demonstrate their faith through community service, by volunteering with the YMCA, or by taking part in 'Stay Awake Overnight' to highlight homelessness. All participating young people sign a Safeguarding Agreement when working in the parishes or with voluntary groups.

Within the award programme, there are clear guidelines and boundaries with regard to the use of mobile phones and social media. To comply with data protection legislation, the Co-ordinator maintains a separate file for young people's personal information, which is securely stored.

Prior to the start of any new award scheme group, there is a presentation to parents, in which the codes of conduct are outlined. There is a code of behaviour for adults, which parents sign. The Co-ordinator also shared a completed hazard risk assessment for the group visited, which group had begun in January 2023.

The young people developed their own codes of behaviour. They devised a 'Graffiti Wall', the content of which covered 'what is safeguarding?', 'the rights and responsibilities of young people', and 'what a safe organisation looks like'. This was very impressive, and it is commended. The young people also started a podcast on gambling; and funding was secured from the local Health Trust for PIPS¹ to run a mental health first-aid course on managing stress.

In discussions with the young people, they were aware of the safeguarding arrangements in place, and of to whom they could speak if they had any concerns. The young people were positive about the award scheme and the opportunities it provided to meet new people and to be involved in their Church and community.

From both of these visits it was evident that all relevant procedures, guidelines and associated documentation are well embedded in practice. Everyone spoken with was clear on their respective roles and responsibilities in creating and maintaining a safe and nurturing environment for children and adults.

As already stated, the reviewers visited two parishes, one rural, and the other urban.

In the rural parish, the reviewer met the Parish Priest, a Local Safeguarding Representative (LSR) and a children's liturgy leader. They are rebuilding their youth ministries following the harmful effects of the pandemic restrictions. More recently, they have started to have altar servers again, having recruited children through the local schools. In the sacristy, the reviewer inspected all documentation pertaining to safeguarding, including sign-in books, vetting forms, consent forms, and codes of conduct. Safeguarding posters were prominently displayed in the church, along with contact details for the DLP and the statutory authorities.

¹ PIPS is a suicide prevention charity in Northern Ireland – see <https://pipscharity.com/>

A Children's Liturgy group has been in place since September 2022, and it serves both ends of the parish. The reviewer examined the programme, which was age appropriate and adaptable, given the age range of 3 - 11 years that it caters for. There are two (2) leaders and eight (8) volunteers involved in delivering the programme. Some of the volunteers have completed the Pope John Paul II Award, and others are teachers. On average, between 6 and 12 children attend. The group is growing, although space is limited.

The Children's Liturgy Group is promoted in the parish bulletin, as well as at Sunday Mass, to encourage more parents to get involved as supervisors. The work completed by the children is displayed during Mass, which has been well received by those attending.

From discussions with the LSRs, they work closely with local schools and local sports groups, to promote and raise awareness about the Children's Liturgy Group and about the Church's work with regard to child safeguarding. A diocesan safeguarding briefing, which was read out at Masses on the weekend of the 18th and 19th of February 2023 was well received and welcomed by the parish.

In the urban parish visited, the reviewers met the Parish Priest and LSRs. They viewed very comprehensive and detailed records relating to all aspects of child safeguarding, including policies and procedures, communications, training, complaints, bullying, and vetting. There was a real sense of teamwork evident, and the support from the diocesan safeguarding team was clearly valued. In the church, sacristy and church hall, the reviewers viewed a range of safeguarding posters, information leaflets, including some about Towards Healing, and webcam / CCTV notices. Some of these posters and leaflets were in Polish. *Celebret* notices and a sign-in/sign-out register were reviewed in the sacristy, along with a copy of the Policy and Procedure developed by the Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator and issued to every parish during Covid-19.

Children's activities in this parish include a weekly Children's Mass, altar servers, and a children's choir. For the latter, a hazard risk assessment has been completed and reviewed by the choir leader each time it is planned to perform outside the diocese. The parish also provides the *Do this in memory of me* sacramental preparation for first Holy Communion.

Currently, two external organisations, namely *Surestart* and *Sign, Rhyme & Shine* use the parish hall. The reviewers saw confirmation that both organisations had their own Child Protection Policy and proof of insurance, with signed copies on file.

The LSRs are members of the Parish Pastoral Council, which ensures good information sharing, and that safeguarding is kept on the agenda. The LSRs stated how they valued the quarterly meetings with the safeguarding team, and the annual meeting with other parish LSRs in preparation for completing the parish self-audits. They gave positive feedback on the recent diocesan Safeguarding Briefing.

The reviewers also met with the Diocesan Youth Director, and they were impressed by the collaborative working relationship that they have developed with the Director of Safeguarding/ DLP and the Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator. These relationships support robust governance arrangements around keeping young people, volunteers and leaders safe during organised events and activities. This is all overseen by the Diocese Youth Commission, which is currently chaired by Archbishop Martin.

Documentation provided to the reviewers included the Dromore Diocese Youth Commission Report for the Diocesan Priest Conference in March 2023, and the Youth Director's Report for this safeguarding Review. Both documents demonstrated the wide range of youth ministries that operate within parishes and elsewhere, examples of which are:

- A 2022 Summer Camp, with 66 participants.
- A Youth Pilgrimage to Knock, with 25 participants.
- A Youth Pilgrimage to Lisbon, with 10 participants.
- GIFT (Growing in Faith Together), with 30 participants aged 11 to 14 years.
- ALPHA / NUA Programmes for the 16 to 18 years age group, which is a resource for the Pope John Paul II Awards scheme.
- The Pope John Paul II Award scheme, with 140 participants in 2021/22, and 120 in 2022/23.

For all of this to be delivered safely and effectively, detailed planning and organisation at all levels is needed. The reviewers established that the Youth Director works in partnership with parishes to promote activities, recruit volunteers and provide training, including in safeguarding awareness, team building, programme planning, and peer mentoring.

The reviewers note that the Youth Director and leaders meet and regularly communicate with parents to ensure the young people's social, emotional and spiritual needs are met within a safe environment. All activities are risk assessed. The reviewers were provided with a copy of a completed risk assessment, and they saw completed registration and consent forms for a recent trip to Knock Shrine. If any young people have worries or concerns, they can bring these to the leaders. They are also provided with details of how to contact the DLP. If any of the leaders or volunteers have concerns, they can talk to the Youth Director.

A policy was drawn up in consultation with the Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator to keep young people safe online, and to assist training on Zoom. A Digital Media Policy had been developed and was given out to every parish, and this is available on the diocesan website as well. Having examined this policy, the reviewers are satisfied that it meets current Church standards.

During Covid-19, the Youth Director and leaders continued the Pope John Paul II Award scheme online, with a focus on home and neighbourhood, for example, enabling an elderly neighbour to watch Mass online, praying with the family, or being recognised as a carer. The diocese put in place safeguards to ensure children were safe online.

Everyone involved in Youth Ministry is commended for the range and diversity of activities and events offered to young people of all ages, including those with special needs. Through their visits and discussions, the reviewers met creative and adaptable people who were totally committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment for all involved in Youth Ministry.

The diocese has a comprehensive, up-to-date digital system for vetting all staff, clergy and volunteers in association with Access NI. This is managed and maintained by the Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator, who works closely with the parishes, the DLP, and the Diocesan Secretary. The Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator also retains hard copies of documentation regarding references and Access NI in a secure cabinet. When everything is in order, the parish receives an Access NI clearance letter, copies of which were viewed during a parish visit.

Guidance is in place for clerics/religious who have ministry with children in an external organisation or Church body. This information is collated and held securely at the diocesan office in compliance with the Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016.

As part of the parish self-audit returns, local vetting requirements are updated. All local vetting documentation is securely stored and retained in compliance with GDPR, as evidenced during parish visits, when copies of these were reviewed.

An important responsibility of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee and the Safeguarding team is to ensure that all volunteers working directly with children and young people under 18 years of age are vetted. Below is a table showing the number of volunteers vetted from 2016 to 2022.

Year	Number
2016	63
2017	54
2018	59
2019	23
2020	2
2021	13
2022	55

The impact of Covid-19 on church ministries is clearly reflected in the vetting figures for 2020 and 2021.

The Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator also furnished the reviewers with a list of all diocesan clergy, with details of when they were vetted. The issue of vetting was discussed at the Safeguarding Committee meeting that the reviewers attended on the March 28, 2023, and it was recommended by the Committee to have all clergy re-vetted, along with other specified groups.

The diocesan website contains all relevant policies, guidance and pro-forma documents to support parishes, leaders and volunteers in their safeguarding work. It is comprehensive and easy to navigate. Contained within the Safeguarding section is information on

- The Diocese's Redress Scheme
- Safeguarding Guidance for Parishes.
- A Safeguarding Children section, including information on recognising, responding to and reporting abuse, the Safeguarding message being to Promote-Prevent-Protect.
- Guidance on Bullying.

The website also contains a Complaints Procedure and a Whistleblowing Policy. The DLP was able to confirm that since the last Review in 2011, there were no whistleblowing notifications and no complaints, outside of notifications of child abuse.

The reviewers are satisfied that **this Standard is met.**

Standard 2: Procedures for responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations

Church bodies have clear procedures and guidance on what to do when suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations arise regarding a child's safety or welfare that will ensure there is a prompt response. They also enable the Church to meet all national and international legal and practice requirements and guidance.

Reports of alleged abuse received by Dromore Diocese since the previous Review in 2011 are outlined in Table 1 below:

Table 1:

Clerics' Current Status	Number of Complainants	PSNI Notified	Social Services Notified	National Board Notified	Appropriate Canonical action taken
Cleric 1 – in ministry	1	Received from PSNI	Same Day	Next Day	Yes
Cleric 2 - in ministry	1	Towards Healing informed PSNI	Towards Healing informed Social Services	17 Days	N/A ²
Cleric 3 – had left priestly ministry	1	9 days	9 days	8 days	In process
Cleric 4 - out of ministry	1	16 days	16 days	2 days	Yes
Cleric 5 - laicised	1	Same day	Same day	Same day	Yes
Cleric 6 - out of ministry	3	a. 8 days b. 5 days c. 5 days	8 days 5 days 5 days	Next day 5 days 5 days	Yes
Cleric 7 - deceased	39	Notified within timeframe of between same day to 17 days	N/A	Refer to footnote ³	N/A deceased
Cleric 8 - deceased	9	Notified within timeframe of between same day to 5 weeks.	N/A	Refer to footnote ⁴	N/A deceased

² Third party allegation, complainant did not engage

³ Following consultation with the National Board in 2018 and again in 2023, the diocese submitted notifications of various claims for compensation made by solicitors on behalf of complainants. Those that had not been notified to the National Board previously were submitted by the DLP en bloc for recording purposes. In these cases, since the respondent was deceased at the time of the civil claims, the requirement to report to Social Services did not pertain.

⁴ As the respondent was deceased, at the time of the complaints/compensation claims, there was no risk to children or vulnerable adults, so no requirement to notify Social Services in Northern Ireland

The DLP is to be commended for the work undertaken to improve the layout, structure and organisation of the case management files. In the files examined, the reviewers saw evidence of notifications, reaching out to complainants, and working with respondents. The files also contained details pertaining to legal processes (both civil and canonical), and partnership working around risk management and case management.

As part of the Review, the reviewers met with a representative of the PSNI and with the Public Protection Officer for the Southern Health and Social Services (SH & SCT). Both agencies reported good, open, and transparent working relationships with the diocesan DLP. They were satisfied that notifications were made and information was shared in a timely manner. The case management files examined contained evidence of collaborative working, in terms of risk assessment and risk management.

In November 2019, Archbishop Martin and the DLP met with senior personnel in the PSNI to receive feedback on the PSNI investigation, following the large number of allegations against Cleric 7. At that meeting, the PSNI confirmed that there were no outstanding safeguarding issues regarding clergy who had been interviewed as part of the investigation. The reviewers were advised that following completion of the PSNI investigation, there were no prosecutions, and this was confirmed by the Public Prosecution Service (PPS).

Overall, notifications since the last Review were made in a timely manner to the PSNI and, where relevant to Social Services. In a few cases, there was a delay in setting a date to meet and discuss a case.

During parish visits, the reviewers saw documented proof of child safeguarding procedures and guidance, which is accessible on the diocesan website as well. The reviewers also inspected a folder developed by the Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator, which contained all relevant procedures and guidelines. During Covid-19, the Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator visited every parish in the diocese and stepped them through this folder, a commendable initiative.

The diocese has produced a detailed and easy-to-read booklet entitled *Safeguarding Information Session Booklet*, which among other things provides advice and guidance in relation to forms of child abuse, and on how to respond to a disclosure.

The reviewers established on their parish visits that everyone was clear about the role of the DLP, and about how to contact her if they had any safeguarding concerns. The DLP contact details were widely publicised, on posters in the churches, in parish bulletins, on the diocesan website, in the above-mentioned booklet, and on a bookmark that had been developed, which also contained the safeguarding prayer.

The reviewers are satisfied that **this Standard is met.**

Standard 3: Care and Support for the Complainant

Complainants who have suffered abuse as children receive a compassionate response when they disclose their abuse. They, and their families, are offered appropriate support, advice and pastoral care.

One complainant agreed to meet with a reviewer to share their experience of what happened when they made their disclosure of abuse to the diocese.

This complainant felt that the former bishop responded quickly to their complaint. He expressed his sorrow for the abuse caused, and he offered support through the DLP. The reviewers were advised that the complainant felt believed and supported by the DLP and their allocated Support Person from the outset. The complainant spoke of the DLP's and Support Person's warmth, empathy and sensitivity in helping them deal with the authorities, courts and canonical processes.

The complainant spoke about how the DLP was the link for formal meetings with the authorities, and kept them updated on developments. From the outset, the DLP reassured them, and offered the services of Towards Healing to the complainant and to other members of their family.

The complainant met their Support Person early on in the process and there was good communication between them and with the DLP. The complainant spoke of how they got very distressed and anxious when they had to attend court, or meet Church or PSNI personnel with regard to the allegations. The Support Person was available to them throughout the case, and accompanied the complainant to court or to meetings. The Support Person remains involved, which has been critical for the complainant's emotional health on their journey of recovery.

The complainant believes that there was learning for the Church, in terms of providing a suitable venue when discussing canonical matters linked to the case. With the assistance of the DLP and their Support Person, a community venue was arranged for one of their meetings. This contributed greatly to the complainant feeling more at ease, relaxed and able to engage more meaningfully.

The reviewers also met with a Support Person, who demonstrated a great understanding of their role, as well as insight and empathy about how to meet the needs of the individual and their family. They demonstrated that they have the experience and relevant skills required to undertake the role.

The Support Person confirmed that they had been vetted, and had completed role-specific training. They had good support from the DLP, and meet with them for updates and information sharing. All records of contact with a complainant are completed and placed on the case management file.

The reviewers also discussed the personal impact on the Support Person of their work. They indicated that they would welcome the opportunity to meet with other Support Persons from the northern dioceses for reflection, support and shared learning. The reviewers believe that there is merit in the northern dioceses exploring the potential for Support Persons coming together, at least annually.

Case management files reviewed showed that other complainants had been offered the services of a Support Person, alongside contact and support from the DLP. Information was shared appropriately with complainants, and they were kept updated on developments throughout the investigation of their complaint. Complainants were also offered, directly or via third parties acting on their behalf, access to Towards Healing or other counselling services.

The Diocese of Dromore established a Redress Scheme in September 2021, which involved consultation with plaintiffs' solicitors known to the diocese at that time. It has been well advertised and information concerning it is available through the diocesan website at <https://www.dromoredress.org/>. The scheme is scheduled to continue until September 2023.

Through this Redress Scheme, the diocese has put in place a process, which it hopes will meet the on-going concerns and needs of victims and survivors of abuse. The diocese is committed to ensuring that the process is victim-centred. The scheme is open to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse suffered at the hands of any priest or Church representative of the diocese.

The Redress scheme provides an alternative to civil compensation legal proceedings, and it gives an opportunity for those complainants who wish to avail of it, to receive redress without the need for lengthy litigation processes.

All complainants who avail of the scheme are offered the opportunity to have a pastoral meeting with the Apostolic Administrator. Outside of the scheme, the Archbishop continues to reach out to and meet pastorally with complainants who would welcome such an opportunity. To date, at least twenty-five (25) individuals have availed of the scheme.

As part of the Review, and at their request, the reviewers had a video meeting via Zoom with two (2) members of a group known as the 'Dromore Survivors Group' on July 25th 2023. July 25, 2023. During discussions, the members of the Survivors Group raised two concerns. The reviewers subsequently advised the National Board, who referred the matters to the Diocese for follow-up.

One of the men advised that he currently receives excellent support from Towards Healing. The reviewers confirmed that Towards Healing and Towards Peace Services remain available to them and other members of the Dromore Survivors Group.

The two members of the Survivors Group also raised some issues in relation to the Review methodology and governance. This is detailed under Standard 7.

In an Overview of the Redress Scheme, available at <https://www.dromoredress.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Dromore-Redress-Scheme-Overviewx.pdf>, it is stated that

The Diocese of Dromore apologises unreservedly for the hurt and damage caused to victims and survivors of any priest or church representative acting on its authority. The Diocese of Dromore finds such behaviour towards children and vulnerable people abhorrent, inexcusable and indefensible, and is fully committed to achieving and maintaining best practice in the area of safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults.

The reviewers are satisfied that **this Standard is met.**

Standard 4: Care and Management of the Respondent

The Church authority has in place a fair process for investigating and managing child safeguarding concerns. When the threshold for reporting has been reached, a system of support and monitoring for respondents (cleric or religious) is provided.

Respondent priests were made aware of the National Board Review and were given the opportunity to complete a questionnaire about their experiences of the care and management they received from the diocese, and/or to meet with a reviewer. No completed questionnaires were submitted, but one respondent did agree to meet with a reviewer.

This respondent confirmed that he had been informed of the allegations by the then bishop, and was advised about civil and canonical legal representation, which he availed of. He was offered the services of a Priest Advisor, but he declined this, having identified a priest to advise and support him (who had completed appropriate training for this role).

On being advised of the allegations made against him, the priest prepared a public statement regarding his removal from public ministry, which he read out at Mass. He was informed by the bishop about the restrictions on his ministry, and he signed and received a copy of a safeguarding agreement. The respondent advised that he has received pastoral support from the current Apostolic Administrator, who has had regular contact with him.

In terms of learning, the respondent believes that the diocese should extend its support to the immediate family of a respondent priest, because of the impact of the allegations on them.

The respondent had one interview with the PSNI and no further contact thereafter. He received a letter from the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) confirming that there would be no prosecution. There followed a canonical inquiry, which concluded that the case against him was unsubstantiated. The Apostolic Administrator informed him of the outcome of the canon law process, and that he was able to return to ministry.

In examining the files, the reviewers found evidence of canon law investigations following the conclusions of statutory law investigations. During such times, there was evidence on file of risk assessments being completed, and of appropriate management plans and monitoring arrangements put in place.

There was evidence that respondents were offered the services of a Priest Advisor. Some respondents availed of this service, and others identified alternative supports.

Management Plans were reviewed; and the DLP advised that she discussed ongoing cases on a regular basis with the Apostolic Administrator. There was also evidence on case management files that the DLP has sought advice and guidance from the diocese's Advisory Panel, which operated until 2017, after which the diocese joined the National Case Management Committee (NCMC). Any proposals or advice offered by the Advisory Panel or later by the NCMC were actioned.

Table 1 under Standard 2 above gives details on eight (8) of the nine (9) case management files examined by the reviewers. There was evidence of good management and monitoring by the DLP, of those clerics who were out of ministry and subject to a formal Management Plan. Below is a summary of each case management file.

Cleric 1: This case is linked to the PSNI investigation into St Colman's College. Following receipt of an allegation, the respondent was placed on restricted ministry and a preliminary canonical investigation was commenced by the diocese, which was suspended until the statutory authorities completed their investigation. The respondent received support from a Priest Advisor. The outcome of the preliminary canonical investigation was sent to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in Rome, and established that the case against him was unsubstantiated. The Apostolic Administrator restored the priest to ministry in good standing.

Cleric 2: This case is also linked to the PSNI investigation into St. Coleman's College. There was not sufficient detail in the allegation reported for the diocese to undertake a preliminary canonical investigation. A risk assessment was undertaken, and the respondent followed the guidelines developed from this until all investigations concluded. The diocese sought advice from the National Board, and it held a meeting with the statutory authorities. There was no prosecution by the Public Prosecution Service. Following this decision, the priest returned to full ministry.

Cleric 3: This allegation related to a man living outside the jurisdiction who had for some time chosen to cease ministry as a priest. It was investigated by the PSNI in conjunction with other authorities outside the jurisdiction. The diocese consulted the National Board, and it co-operated fully with the PSNI investigation. There was no criminal conviction and the case was risk managed by the statutory authorities.

Cleric 4: This case was reviewed as part of the first National Board Review in 2011. Following a new allegation since then, the case went before the diocesan Advisory Panel, and the CDF was updated about this development. The respondent was already removed from ministry, and a revised comprehensive safeguarding agreement was put in place, signed by the respondent. The case is kept under regular monitoring and review by the DLP, and the cleric is supported by a Priest Advisor.

Cleric 5: On receipt of allegations, the bishop and the DLP met the respondent, who stepped aside from ministry pending the outcome of investigations. Multi-agency risk management meetings were held, advice was received from the Diocesan Advisory Panel, and a Management Plan was put in place. The priest was convicted and sentenced. The canonical investigation was then concluded and the CDF was updated. This respondent has since been laicised.

Cleric 6: When allegations were received, the respondent stood down from ministry. The Diocesan Advisory Panel provided advice, and a multi-agency meeting was held to share information and assess risk. A preliminary canonical investigation was commenced, but it was suspended pending the outcome of the statutory investigation. No criminal prosecution was pursued. Following a full canonical process, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) recommended a penal trial. This cleric remains out of ministry while persistently maintaining his innocence in the face of the allegation made. The National Case Management Committee provided advice to the diocese in this case.

Cleric 7: All of the complaints and allegations against this deceased priest were part of the PSNI investigation into St Colman's College. The PSNI informed the diocese that multiple complainants came forward to the PSNI, but not all had made formal complaints. The reviewers looked at thirty-nine (39) allegations by individual complainants, thirty-three (33) of which were of sexual abuse; five (5) of which were of physical abuse; and one (1) of which was of physical and emotional abuse. The reviewers are satisfied that Dromore Diocese co-operated fully with the PSNI investigation and shared all information requested, which was confirmed by the PSNI. The priest died in 2002.

Cleric 8: This man is deceased. Of the nine (9) individual allegations reviewed, five (5) were of sexual abuse, and four (4) were of sexual and physical abuse. The DLP met directly with complainants, or communicated with them through their representatives, to ensure that they received support services. There is evidence on the case management file of good collaboration and information sharing between the diocese and the PSNI. The PSNI were notified within acceptable timescales by the DLP, except in one case, where it took approximately a month to get a mutually convenient date on which to meet.

Cleric 9: The case of this deceased priest featured in the 2011 Review, but it is not included in Table 1 under Standard 2, as there had been no new allegations made about him since that Review. The case was considered with regard to the safeguarding and Management Plans that were in place until the time of his death. The case management file showed that the diocese had presented the case to the NCMC, and had actioned the advice that it had received. The respondent was regularly reviewed and monitored, and his situation was well managed. He received support from a Priest Advisor.

The case management files reviewed had documented proof of multi-agency working and information sharing by the diocesan DLP with the PSNI and Social Services, in relation to the investigations. The PSNI were notified of allegations in a timely manner, as were Social Services.

Following the completion of civil and canon law processes, Clerics 1 and 2 were returned to full ministry. Clerics 3, 4, 5 and 6 were subject to formal Management Plans and are all out of ministry.

The other three (3) cases in Table 1, namely Clerics 7, 8 and 9, are all deceased.

In relation to Cleric 7, there were thirty-nine (39) complainants; and regarding Cleric 8, there were nine (9) allegations received by the diocese since the 2011 Review. The majority of these new allegations came to the diocese via complainants' solicitors, as civil claims for compensation. Some complainants have sought redress through the Dromore Diocese Redress Scheme.

Of the nine (9) cases reviewed, three (3) – Clerics 1, 2 and 7 – were involved in the PSNI investigation into St. Colman's College.

As part of this same investigation, the PSNI interviewed six (6) other diocesan priests. No concerns were reported back to the diocese by the PSNI in respect of any of these men. The PSNI also requested details on four (4) other priests, and the diocese provided these; all four priests were deceased, and the PSNI provided no details of concerns about any of them to the diocese.

As referenced under Standard 2, the Apostolic Administrator and the DLP met with senior PSNI personnel in November 2019 to receive feedback on the PSNI investigation. At that meeting, the PSNI confirmed that there were no outstanding safeguarding issues involving Dromore Diocese.

The diocese has three (3) Priest Advisors, and the reviewers spoke with one of them. This priest has over 30 years' experience of supporting respondents. His vetting was up to date, and he had completed an intensive five-day training course for this role. He highlighted the need for ongoing training. He was clear about his role and responsibilities. He showed a good understanding of the purpose of safeguarding agreements and of his role in confirming and monitoring their requirements with the respondent. Written records of his contact with respondents were shared with the DLP and were evident on case management files reviewed. He talked about the importance of having good communication with the Apostolic Administrator and the DLP, in terms of support and advice.

As a Priest Advisor, he demonstrated empathy and sensitivity, and striking a balance between monitoring and being supportive to the respondent and to their wider family. He also displayed compassion for complainants and their families.

As a Priest Advisor he raised a number of issues that are worthy of further consideration by the diocese, including the need for practical and emotional support for the respondent's immediate family members when the respondent is removed from ministry, which may also support the investigative process.

The Priest Advisor welcomed the diocesan initiative in setting up a support group to address the impact of trauma on priests, which is run by an independent facilitator. He had attended the group himself, and so he knows that it is well received and valued by the priests involved. This support group is considered by the reviewers to be a very positive development that other dioceses might replicate.

The northern dioceses may also want to explore the potential for Priest Advisors to come together once a year for joint training, to reflect on practice, and to share learning.

The reviewers are satisfied that **this Standard is met.**

Standard 5 - Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe

Church personnel are trained and supported in all aspects of safeguarding relevant to their role, in order to develop and maintain the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to safeguard and protect children.

The reviewers note that Training is a core objective within the Diocesan Strategic Plan, which is driven and monitored by the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee. There is an annual Training Plan in place which is informed by analysis of the parish self-audits, and by feedback from the LSRs and Youth Leaders. In reviewing the Training Plans from 2019-2023, the reviewers note that no training was provided between March 2020 and December 2020 due to Covid-19. During this period, the Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator met with the Youth Director to look at safe online practices across the diocese. Dromore Diocese then engaged with young people and youth leaders to develop policy and protocols for online engagement.

Throughout the pandemic, the safeguarding team met parish representatives online via Zoom, to review the progress of the *Alpha* and *Youth Space* programmes being delivered in parishes throughout the diocese. These meetings also contributed to the development of the Diocesan Digital Media policies and protocols.

From January 2021, there has been training through a combination of online video assisted meetings and some face-to-face meetings, with restricted numbers. Some of these sessions looked at appropriate online behaviour, as well as developing and supporting safe practice using digital platforms.

During the reviewers' attendance at the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee, there was discussion on a range of issues, including their Training Plan for 2023/24. Following analysis of feedback from the parish self-audits, it was agreed that additional training would be delivered in 2023, to include refresher training and training for leaders.

Currently there are no National Board accredited trainers active in the diocese, so training is provided by accredited trainers from the Armagh Archdiocese and from Down and Connor Diocese. This arrangement has worked well, and the reviewers were provided with evidence of the range and diversity of training provided. This included safeguarding awareness training and refresher training, as well as role-specific training for Priest Advisors and Support Persons.

The table overleaf shows the numbers trained from 2016 to 2022, including volunteers in a leadership role, as well as a number of clergy. The figures for 2020/21 reflects the impact of Covid-19 and reduced ministries across the parishes.

Year	Numbers
2016	138
2017	81
2018	63
2019	103
2020	0
2021	25
2022	59
Up to March 2023	64

The safeguarding team also delivered Safeguarding Awareness sessions to volunteers who are not in a leadership role. Since 2016, over 20 sessions have been delivered to more than 600 volunteers across the diocese's parishes.

The significance and importance of training was reflected in the reviewers' visits to parishes, in attending Youth Groups, and in discussions with the Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator, the DLP for the Dominican Order, and the Diocesan Youth Director.

The reviewers saw evidence of the training provided and its impact on enhancing not only the competencies, but also the confidence of the recipients, to carry out their role in providing a safe environment for young people involved in Youth Ministry. Everyone we spoke with praised the Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator for her advice and support with regard to training.

The Dominican Order DLP spoke with a reviewer about the partnership working they have developed with the diocese in terms of sharing information, and raising awareness of child safeguarding within the Dominican Order. This has also meant that priests from the Dominican Order have been able to access local safeguarding training within the diocese. More recently, the Dominicans have engaged in Youth Ministry within Dromore Diocese, and with input from the Diocesan Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator, have run joint training for Dominican priests.

As previously stated under Standard 1, the Youth Director works in partnership with the Diocesan Safeguarding Office to co-ordinate and ensure safeguarding awareness training is provided to all recruited volunteers. Volunteers are required to attend this training as a condition of volunteering.

Alongside this, the Youth Director will organise associated training on topics such as peer mentoring and team building.

Information was also provided on National Board training attended by the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator. Issues covered included risk assessment and recording.

The DLP and Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator also attend the northern dioceses' forum. This forum is seen as invaluable in terms of sharing best practice and new developments regarding training. It also fosters good collaboration between and support for trainers across the dioceses, which facilitates the delivery of safeguarding training across the region.

Dromore Diocese held an evening event in November 2022, when the Apostolic Administrator, the Safeguarding Committee, the Safeguarding Team, priests and LSRs, came together to discuss the parish self-audits and to plan their training for the year ahead. It was a very successful evening promoting partnership working and relationship building across the parishes. The diocese plan to hold this as an annual event.

The reviewers are satisfied that **this Standard is met.**

Standard 6: Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

Church bodies appropriately communicate the Church's child safeguarding message.

As part of Strategic Planning, the diocese, through its Safeguarding Committee, produce an annual Communication Plan. This was shared with the reviewers and was referred to during parish visits. The Communication Plan is also on the diocesan website.

The diocese is commended for two key communication initiatives, post Covid-19 to reach out to and reconnect with parishioners

1. In November 2022, the document, *Remaining a Safe Church* was launched. This was made available to all parishes. It provided information on the Safeguarding Team, the Safeguarding Committee and the LSRs, explaining who they were and their respective roles and responsibilities.
2. The diocesan *Safeguarding Briefing*, which was read out at all Masses within the diocese during the weekend of the 18th/19th February 2023, had the objective of raising awareness of the safeguarding work that is taking place throughout the parishes and the Diocese of Dromore. The briefing also referred to the National Board Review in March 2023.

There is also the Candle of Atonement liturgy, which takes place at masses throughout the diocese on the first Friday of Lent as part of a National Day of Prayer for Victims and Survivors of Abuse in the Church.

A range of safeguarding posters and leaflets, as well a child safeguarding statements were prominent and well displayed, as seen by the reviewers on their church and parish visits. The leaflets were in English, Irish and Polish. In some parishes, they had also developed their own child-friendly safeguarding leaflets. All of the main leaflets were also on the diocesan website – see www.dromorediocese.org/safeguarding. They can be downloaded and printed for display and distribution within the parishes.

As referenced under Standard 1, the diocesan website has a dedicated section on Safeguarding Children, with useful information on recognising, responding to and reporting child abuse. Some of this information is contained within an excellent booklet developed by the diocese, entitled *Safeguarding Information Session Booklet*.

The booklet also has information on the National Board and the seven Standards, on legislation and Safeguarding Children Policy, on the role of the DLP along with their contact details, on Codes of Behaviour, and on the Bullying Policy. These concise, easy to read booklets were distributed widely across the parishes.

Weekly parish bulletins viewed by the reviewers contained the contact details for the DLP and the statutory organisations, namely Trusts and PSNI. In 2012, a bookmark with the safeguarding prayer and the DLP contact details was developed, and this is still distributed within the diocese.

Visits to the parishes and youth groups confirmed the good working relationships and co-operation between the local schools and sports organisations (in particular the local GAA) to raise awareness about child safeguarding and to promote good practices that keep children and young people safe. This was also reaffirmed by the young people undertaking the Pope John Paul II Award, by connecting with their communities and giving of their time to those who were vulnerable.

In discussions the reviewers had with Social Services, the PSNI, and the DLP for the Dominican Order, they reported very positive relationships with the diocesan safeguarding team.

During Covid-19, the Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator put together a folder containing up to date safeguarding information and guidance. The Co-ordinator then visited every parish to give them a copy and talk through the content. The Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator has also provided follow up visits to address local issues around safeguarding.

As previously stated, the DLP and Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator meet four times a year with the LSRs via zoom. In turn, the LSRs meet with the Youth Leaders, three or four times a year. These meetings are used to share information and ideas, to receive feedback and to work collectively to promote safeguarding and provide safe and welcoming environments for young people.

There is excellent work ongoing within the diocese and across the parishes to ensure the communication and sharing of the Church's safeguarding messages.

The reviewers would suggest that the diocese consider including information periodically within parish bulletins, to highlight the good safeguarding work being undertaken. This approach would enhance public confidence, provide assurance and help keep parishioners up to date on the ongoing work of the diocese in creating a safe environment for children and adults.

The reviewers are satisfied that **this Standard is met.**

Standard 7: Quality Assuring Compliance with the Standards

The Church body develops a plan of action to quality assure compliance with the safeguarding standards. This action plan is reviewed annually. The Church body only has responsibility to monitor, evaluate and report on compliance with the indicators under each standard that apply to it, depending on its ministry.

The reviewers examined the current Strategic Plan 2021-2024, previous Strategic Plans and a number of yearly Safeguarding Plans. They also examined the following documentation: -

- Training and Communication Plans.
- The Safeguarding Committee Annual Report, and its Constitution.
- Parish Self-Audit Reports and the Diocesan Summary Report.
- The DLP Annual Report.

The reviewers discussed these reports with the Safeguarding Committee, the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator. During the parish visits, LSRs demonstrated a good understanding of these reports as they applied to their work in the parishes. The reviewers saw proof during their fieldwork visits of how these reports were translated into practice on the ground.

The Safeguarding Committee has a Constitution in place, together with terms of reference. Meetings are scheduled in advance for the year. The Committee continued to meet online throughout Covid-19.

The reviewers attended the Safeguarding Committee meeting on March 28, 2023. There was a clear agenda, with good contributions and discussions on all items, ably facilitated by the chairperson. This included Year 2 of their Strategic Plan, the Training Plan, and agreeing the key priorities up to December 2023. Refresher and full day training needs were identified for the next 3 to 6 months. Under the item, Post-Covid, a number of actions were agreed: -

- Re-vetting of clergy, deacons and leaders. A letter to promote and support this will be issued by the apostolic administrator.
- Renewal of *celebret* cards
- Supporting parishes to restart Children's Ministries, with a focus on getting more parents on-board.

Under Year 2 of the Strategic Plan (2023/24), there was a healthy discussion on enhancing communication with young people. The Committee were considering an online platform that is used within the GAA. It was agreed to have draft guidance on this development for the next Committee meeting.

There was evidence of good governance within the 3-year Strategic Plan, as measured against the National Board's seven Safeguarding Standards, and within the Training and Communication Plans reviewed. There were also clear objectives, with associated actions, review points, and identified persons responsible, along with target dates for completion.

Parish Self-Audits were reviewed along with the Diocesan Summary report. At the time of writing, 21 of the 22 parishes had submitted their self-audit returns; the outstanding one is being followed up by the Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

The Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator collates and analyses the self-audit returns. A report is then completed and shared with the Safeguarding Committee. Following a review by the Safeguarding Committee, a written response goes out to each parish, with proposed actions and advice, to help strengthen their governance arrangements and safeguarding practices. Follow up support is arranged and carried out by the chair of the Safeguarding Committee and the Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator, either via Zoom or face-to-face meetings.

In terms of case management, the DLP and Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator have established good partnership working relationships with the PSNI and Social Services. From discussions with both organisations, they have confirmed that open communications are operational, and that information is shared in a timely manner.

In terms of consistency around child safeguarding, the DLP and Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator have forged good working relationships with a range of bodies, which include schools, sporting organisations, and the voluntary sector. In addition, they ensure that the Pastoral Council are kept updated on all aspects of child safeguarding.

There are meetings between the DLP and the Apostolic Administrator, and between the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator. The reviewers suggest that these meetings should be scheduled to take place three or four times a year, to include looking at the impact of the work on the safeguarding staff.

As referred to under Standard 3, the two members of the group known as the 'Dromore Survivors Group' made suggestions to the reviewers...that they believe would improve the Review process, in terms of openness and transparency, and would strengthen the safeguarding arrangements within the Diocese of Dromore.

1. The two members advised that they do not consider that the National Board Review of the diocese was publicised widely enough, as not everyone would access the diocesan website or parish bulletins. They suggested that the diocese should be proactive by directly inviting known victim / survivor groups to participate in a Review, and that their engagement could be achieved through using a focus group format.

2. They believe that all reports should be published to build confidence in the diocese's safeguarding arrangements, together with progress reports on the implementation of any recommendations made.
3. They also highlighted that diocesan safeguarding consultations, reports, audits, plans and strategies should not be inward looking and for diocesan personnel only. When the diocese is making plans, they believe that it should consult with victims/survivors regarding good practice, as well as about what is not working well, together with plans to address gaps in safeguarding arrangements identified in diocesan reports. These should be accessible on the diocesan website in an easy to read format, for external stakeholders / members of the public.
4. They shared that from their experiences and those of other members of the Dromore Survivors Group, there is still significant work to be done by the diocese to build confidence and to provide assurance to victims that they will be treated with compassion, shown empathy, listened to and provided support. Both said that they currently did not feel that they could approach the diocese with concerns, be listened to, and receive support. They remain open to engage with the diocese to share learning to improve services for victims/survivors and overall safeguarding arrangements.

The reviewers appreciated the time given by both members of the Dromore Survivors Group to share their experience and knowledge of safeguarding arrangements, and commend their willingness to continue to engage with the diocese.

The diocese has arrangements in place at all levels that allow it to monitor and evaluate its compliance with the National Board's Safeguarding Standards. There are a range of internal forums within the diocese to facilitate information sharing, learning and good practice in all aspects of Child Safeguarding.

The reviewers are satisfied that **this Standard is met.**

Conclusion

Since the last review in 2011, the diocese has engaged with the PSNI investigation of 2018/19 into allegations of abuse in St Colman's College. The situation was compounded by a number of leadership changes within the diocese at that time. Bishop McAreavey resigned in 2018, and he was replaced by Bishop Boyce from March 2018, until Archbishop Martin's appointment in April 2019, both acting as Apostolic Administrator.

From the documentation read, and from discussions with a wide range of people, the profound impact the PSNI investigation into child abuse had and continues to have on victims, their families, parishes, the community, the diocese and the Church is obvious.

Against this background, the reviewers saw evidence that the diocese had co-operated fully with the PSNI investigation. The diocese has apologised unreservedly and publically for the hurt and damage caused to victims and survivors. It has established the Redress Scheme, which focuses on the needs of victims. Archbishop Martin as Apostolic Administrator continues to reach out and offer support to complainants.

Despite this background, and the impacts of the pandemic restrictions, Archbishop Martin and his safeguarding team are to be commended for a number of initiatives taken:

- (1) Reaching out to and offering support to complainants and their families.
- (2) Giving assurance around the child safeguarding arrangements within the diocese.
- (3) Reaffirming and publicising the Dromore Diocese's commitment "to ensure children and young people are kept safe as they participate in the life of the Church".
- (4) Reconnecting with parishes and young people, post Covid-19.

The reviewers are satisfied with and assured by the safeguarding arrangements within the diocese. This is based on evidence from documentation examined, supplemented by engagement with Archbishop Martin, his safeguarding team, Local Safeguarding Representatives, Youth Ministry leaders, parents, young people, and the Safeguarding Committee.

Based on their meeting with two survivors and the suggestions made by them, the reviewers believe that there is scope for further diocesan consultation with this constituency.

Through parish visits, the reviewers observed commitment at all levels to providing and supporting a safe environment for all young people involved in Church ministry. In discussions with the parishes, it was evident that there is good teamwork, collaboration and support from the safeguarding team.

The DLP and Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator are committed to providing good governance around standards of practice, and to having policy, procedures, and guidelines in place across the parishes.

Everyone who engaged with the reviewers demonstrated a good awareness of their role and responsibilities in safeguarding children. They are dedicated to keeping young people safe, whilst providing an environment that nurtures and supports them in their social, emotional and spiritual development.