



Safeguarding Office, Irish Region

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Safeguarding Newsletter, Irish Region

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Welcome



In early June one of the national dailies had a screaming headline “sharp rise in allegations of child sex abuse to church watchdog” and it took my breath away. It was an article on the Annual Report of the National Safeguarding Board. The headline got my attention so with a sickening heart I read it. In reality one was a “recent” case and the rest were historical but the fact that one allegations was recent does make us aware of the need to keep up with awareness education, training and updates.

This is where awareness raising continually remains to be vitally important as it helps to reach out to those whose lives have been so terribly affected for years and avoids complacency. A purpose of our modest Safeguarding Newsletter is also to make awareness of what is currently happening and where to find information. In our recent Assembly we looked at the area of mandated persons from the Children First Act by Tusla. This Act meant having to revise and prepare a new (more lengthy) Children Safeguarding Statement.

This newsletter will give links for you to follow up and build further on your awareness so you can in turn assist people to make our Church environment one of the safest places for children that they can respond to the call of Jesus who said “Let the children come to me and don’t stop them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” (Mark 10,13-14) May you find the Newsletter useful and lead you to more information through its links as we try to build that Kingdom of God.

Philip O’Halloran mhm
Regional Representative

NBSCCCI Annual Report 2017

In 2017, 135 allegations were reported to the NBSCCCI (up 86 from the previous year). 104 related to child sexual abuse. The alleged abuse involved 35 Diocesan clerics and 63 members of religious orders or congregations. Link: www.safeguarding.ie/news/264-annual-report-2017.

NBSCCCI Mandated Persons (Republic of Ireland only)

Mandated persons are people who have contact with children and/or families and who, because of their qualifications, training and/or employment role, are in a key position to help protect children from harm. The full list of people who are classified as mandated persons under the Act is in Schedule 2.

Within a Church context a mandated person is a member of clergy and a pastoral care worker, or someone involved in child safeguarding

Mandated persons have two main legal obligations under the Children First Act 2015.

These are:

1. To report to Tusla harm to children that is above a defined threshold; and
2. If requested, to assist Tusla in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report.

Section 14(1) of the Children First Act 2015 states: *...where a mandated person knows, believes or has reasonable grounds to suspect, on the basis of information that he or she has received, acquired or becomes aware of in the course of his or her employment or profession as such a mandated person, that a child – (a) has been harmed, (b) is being harmed, or (c) is at risk of being harmed, he or she shall, as soon as practicable, report that knowledge, belief or suspicion, as the case may be, to the Agency.*

Section 14(2) of the Children First Act 2015 also places obligations on mandated persons to report any disclosures made by a child:

Where a child believes that he or she – (a) has been harmed, (b) is being harmed, or (c) is at risk of being harmed, and discloses this belief to a mandated person in the course of a mandated person's employment or profession as such a person, the mandated person shall, ... as soon as practicable, report that disclosure to the Agency.

Section 2 of the Children First Act 2015 defines harm as follows *...harm means in relation to a child – (a) assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects, or is likely to seriously affect the child's health, development or welfare, or, (b) sexual abuse of the child.*

Under the legislation a mandated person is required to report any knowledge, belief or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed. The Act defines harm as ‘assault, ill-treatment, neglect or sexual abuse’, and covers single and multiple instances.

The approach agreed between the National Board and both the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Tusla, is that allegations received by mandated persons within the Catholic Church (about Church personnel) can be jointly notified with the relevant DLP. This allows the DLP to assist in assessing whether the threshold for reporting has been reached. This does not prevent the mandated person from reporting directly.

All allegations made against clerics and religious will continue to be processed through the DLP in line with Standard 2 - Procedures for Responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations.

Please note: All priests in ministry are mandated persons.

Garda Vetting

All members have now completed the Garda Vetting process. Sandra Neville (Garda Vetting Liaison Person) will contact you when your vetting is due for renewal.



DEPARTMENT OF
JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Celebret Letter

The Celebret Letter is issued by Fr Philip O’Halloran each year to those who are Garda Vetted and who are in any form of ministry. For those coming from overseas you are required to bring a recent letter of good standing (written within the last 12 months) from the Diocese or from their local Society leader.



“If we act like children of God, knowing that he loves us, our lives will be made new, filled with serenity and joy.” Pope Francis