

Report on Self-Audits of Safeguarding Practice in Parishes of the Diocese of Ardagh & Clonmacnois 2014

Section 1: Promoting a Culture of Safety

- A Safeguarding Representative is in place in all parishes.
- All parishes have the Safeguarding Poster displayed.
- Codes of Behaviour are being adopted in all parishes and some parishes need to get signed agreement to the codes.
- Audits indicated that adequate supervision is in place in most parishes. One parish reported that they were working on recruiting more supervisors.
- Guidance regarding altar servers is being observed. All parishes have a sign in book in the sacristy.
- Health and Safety Standards are being met.
- Proper procedures regarding recruitment and vetting are being followed in most parishes. Responses indicated that there is an ongoing need to attend to the documentation. In one of the bigger parishes it is a challenge to get all the relevant forms returned by the volunteers.
- Parents and young people have been made aware of safeguarding procedures in most parishes. Three parishes are in the process of updating parents and young people on the policy. Two parishes are organizing altar server training as there is a need for this at present.
- Non-parish groups using parish facilities have Safeguarding Policies and adequate insurance. Four parishes are working on getting this in order for certain groups that wish to use their premises.
- Responses indicated that relevant personnel and participants were aware of policies relating to child protection and good behaviour. Some parishes are currently organizing information sessions to update volunteers.
- Parishes reported that records are up-to-date while two parishes reported that they are attending to this matter.
- Most responded in the affirmative to the question regarding visiting priests providing evidence of being in good standing. Reports from four parishes indicated a need to improve practice in this area.

Section 2: Responding to Concerns

- Staff and volunteers have had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with procedures for reporting concerns and allegations of abuse

Section 3: Implementing Policy & Procedures

- Safeguarding Representatives and clergy have attended an information session in 2014 to get updates on Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- Information is available for children on where to receive help if they have a concern. One parish needs to attend to this matter.
- All parishes reported that they are publicising the names of Designated Persons.
- Parish Safeguarding Representatives are providing support to leaders and volunteers on Safeguarding Procedures in most parishes. Responses from two parishes reflected the need for Safeguarding Representatives to be more active in this supportive role.
- All audits were signed by both the Parish Priest and Parish Safeguarding Representative except in one parish where the Safeguarding Representative was not available.

41 Parishes were asked to complete the parish self-audit. In one instance, where two parishes are served by the one Parish Priest, one audit was submitted.

Issues arising

- There is a need to secure written consent to adhere to Codes of Behaviour by participants and leaders of youth activities in some parishes. The revised template for Codes with clear guidelines for signing may help to address this issue.
- The new Information Leaflets for Parents and Volunteers will help parishes that need to familiarize parents and volunteers with policy and procedures. Copies of the Child Friendly leaflet will be sent to the parish that indicated a need for information for young people.
- Trainers will provide support to any Safeguarding Representative that needs help in delivering Parish Information Sessions.
- The challenge of getting the relevant recruitment forms completed is ongoing. The introduction of E-vetting may help.
- The practice by clergy of presenting evidence that they are in good standing is becoming more widespread and will be enhanced as clergy of this diocese continue the practice of displaying their celebret card/letter when visiting churches in other dioceses.
- The upcoming presentation on the Revised Parish Self-Audit at the Diocesan Safeguarding Conference should assist parishes in identifying areas that need further attention.

Feedback from Parish Self-Audits indicated that parishes made a very genuine effort to complete the audit in a thorough manner. Parishes are making progress in their efforts to implement Safeguarding Procedures in the diocese.