

Audit of Safeguarding Practice in Parishes of the Diocese of Ardagh&Clonmacnois 2013

41 Parishes were asked to complete the parish self-audit. By the end of Dec. there was an 83 percent response rate. Following further encouragement all parish audits were completed.

Section 1: Promoting a Culture of Safety

- There is a Safeguarding Representative in place in all parishes.
- All parishes have the Safeguarding Poster displayed.
- Codes of Behaviour are being adopted in most parishes. Three parishes need to put their codes in writing and 2 parishes are reviewing their existing codes.
- While parishes have adopted codes of behaviour, eight parishes need to get signed agreement to the code.
- Adequate supervision is in place in all except one parish where they are in the process of recruiting more supervisors.
- Guidance regarding altar servers is being observed. All parishes have a sign in book in the sacristy. One parish reported that they need more supervisors and they are working on recruiting these.
- Responses indicated that Health and Safety Standards are being met.
- Proper procedures regarding recruitment and vetting are being followed in most parishes. Five parishes responded that this is ongoing while three parishes indicated a need to review their procedures in this area.
- Non-parish groups using parish facilities have Safeguarding Policies and adequate insurance while three parishes are currently working on this in relation to certain groups.
- Responses indicated that relevant personnel and participants were aware of policies relating to child protection and good behaviour. Some parishes were organizing information sessions to update volunteers.
- Parishes reported that records are up to date.
- Most responded in the affirmative to the question re visiting priests providing evidence of being in good standing. It was mentioned that the introduction of the new poster in sacristies requesting visiting priests to present their celebret card has heightened awareness in this regard.

Section 2: Responding to Concerns

- Staff and volunteers are familiar with procedures for reporting concerns and allegations of abuse. Three parishes were in the process of planning updates for volunteers. Responses from two other parishes pointed to the need for same.
- No allegations or disclosures of abuse were reported by staff or volunteers

Section 3: Implementing Policy & Procedures

- Safeguarding Representatives and clergy have attended an information session in 2013 to get updates on Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- Information is available for children on where to receive help if they have a concern. Three parishes mentioned that this is under review.
- 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 three 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 four parishes where the Parish Priest or Safeguarding Representative was unavailable due to illness. In these cases it was signed by one of the relevant parties.

Feedback from Parish Self-Audits indicated that parishes are striving to implement Safeguarding Procedures in the diocese.

Issues arising

- Need for clarification on requirements re vetting. Revised policy document lays down clear guidelines which will address this matter.
- Further need for information sessions for a number of parishes. This issue will be addressed by the provision of an information session in the four deanery areas in April and May after the launch of the revised policy document.
- Need for securing written consent to adhere to Codes of Behaviour by participants and leaders of youth activities in some parishes. The template for this in new policy document will be helpful.
- The revised policy document should help in facilitating best practice in all spheres. Its launch, promotion and implementation will offer a golden opportunity for revising and updating our Child Safeguarding Policies and Procedures.