

ARCHDIOCESE OF ARMAGH



The Seven Standards of Best Practice in Safeguarding Children within the Catholic Church

Best Practice as Developed by The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church

Contact Details:

Diocesan Safeguarding Office, Cathedral Road, Armagh BT61 7QY
Telephone: 028 37525592 (NI) 048 37525592 (ROI)
Email address: pfox@archdioceseofarmagh.com

National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland
Telephone: 01505 3124 (ROI) 00353 1505 3124 (NI)
Email address: ian.elliott@safeguarding.ie

The full document which contains the seven standards is entitled
*“Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church
in Ireland”* can be accessed via the National Board’s website at: www.safeguarding.ie

Introduction

This leaflet provides a brief overview of the Seven Standards of Best Practice which have been developed by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church.

The National Board was established in 2006 to provide advice on best practice in safeguarding children and to monitor the implementation of safeguarding policy in the Church across both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland.

The Seven Standards of Best Practice were approved in 2009 by the following sponsoring bodies, namely, The Irish Bishop's Conference; The Conference of Religious of Ireland; and The Missionary Union.

The Archdiocese of Armagh, along with other Church organisations needs to develop a common understanding of how to safeguard, develop good practice across the diverse and complex areas in which they operate and increase accountability in this crucial aspect of their work. The standards contained in this leaflet are designed to help Church organisations keep all who use Church facilities, but especially the more vulnerable members of our community, safe.

Who are the Standards for?

The Standards should be used by all Church organisations (e.g. diocese, parishes, religious, institutions, seminaries) and personnel (e.g. clergy, religious, lay employees or volunteers). They have been designed recognising the differences in legislation and protection systems that exist in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and some of the particular issues that arise in relation to missionaries who work overseas. Therefore, those using these Standards will need to think creatively about how to apply them in the contexts in which they are operating. If necessary, assistance should be sought initially from the Diocesan Safeguarding Office or directly from the National Office for Safeguarding Children – contact details are included in this leaflet.

Why use Standards?

The Standards described in this leaflet represent the expected level of performance that all parts of the Church should reach. Meeting the Standards will protect:

- The more Vulnerable - by ensuring they are in a good, safe environment and minimising risk of abuse to them if allegations and suspicions of further abuse do arise;
- Church personnel - by clarifying how they are expected to behave and what to do if there are allegations and suspicions about the safety of an individual or child;
- The integrity of the Church and its missions - by making clear its commitment to keeping everyone safe and by modelling best practice.

Founding principles

All children have a fundamental right to be respected, nurtured, cared for and protected. This right is embedded in Gospel values, best practice guidelines and international and domestic laws. In the light of the teaching of the Church, civil legislation and guidance, every part of the Church must be committed to taking the necessary steps to:

- Demonstrate that the right of the child to protection from harm is paramount;
- Cherish and safeguard children and young people;
- Foster best practice;
- Demonstrate accountability through establishing effective structures;
- Support Church organisations and personnel in safeguarding children;
- Establish safe recruitment and vetting practices - aimed at preventing those who pose a risk to children from holding positions of trust;
- Maintain codes of behaviour - having clear guidelines that set out what is and is not acceptable behaviour as an essential part of keeping children safe;
- Operate safe activities for children - helping ensure they can play and learn in a safe environment.

What are the Seven Standards?

The Seven Standards are outlined below along with some suggestions to guide and help Church groups in understanding and implementing the standards in practical terms.

Standard 1: A written policy on keeping children safe – *Ways of providing evidence within parishes*

- Ensuring that a copy of the policy is always available for those who wish to view or take a copy away i.e. via the parish office, the parish bulletin, displayed in the church porch, on the parish website;
- Copy of the minutes of the meeting where the policy was agreed and signed off by the Archbishop;
- Ensuring that all clergy, staff and volunteers working within the parish are aware of and understand the Diocesan Safeguarding Policies and Procedures and their role and responsibilities in implementing these policies and procedures;
- Ensuring that all parishioners, parents/carers, children/young people and vulnerable individuals are made aware of the policies and procedures and how to make a complaint or raise a concern about a safeguarding issue.

Standard 2: Procedures - how to respond to child protection allegations and suspicions – *Ways of providing evidence within parishes*

- Ensuring that all clergy, staff and volunteers are fully aware of how to recognise and respond to safeguarding allegations and the process for reporting concerns. This is achieved by attending appropriate training and having copies of the Diocesan policies and procedures made available within parishes;
- Ensuring that contact details of the Diocesan Designated Officers are available within parishes along with how to make contact with them;
- Ensuring that all clergy, staff and volunteers know how to record details of any safeguarding allegation, suspicion or concern; understand the importance of sharing safeguarding allegations, concerns or suspicions with the appropriate personnel;
- Ensuring that a system of storing records is established within parishes that complies with Church guidance.

Standard 3: Preventing harm to children – *Ways of providing evidence within parishes*

- Ensuring that all clergy and parish safeguarding representatives are trained in the use of forms associated with recruitment, selection and vetting of staff and volunteers;
- Ensuring that all appropriate staff and volunteers are vetted in accordance with the requirements of AccessNI and the Garda Vetting Office;
- Ensuring that all groups and individuals working with children and/or vulnerable individuals adhere to and work to a code of conduct;
- Ensuring that all clergy, staff and volunteers understand the Diocesan expectations regarding standards of practice when working with children and vulnerable individuals;
- Ensuring the needs of disabled children and/or vulnerable individuals are addressed through training, information and guidance for all clergy, staff and volunteers;
- Ensuring the appropriate supervision of children is in place in all group activities and consent from parents/carers is obtained as and when required;
- Ensuring that guidance and clear procedures are in place regarding the use of photography, digital cameras, internet and mobile telephones with respect to children and young people.

Standard 4: Training and education for keeping children safe – *Ways of providing evidence within parishes*

- Ensuring that records of course attendance are maintained and stored properly;

- Ensuring that parish safeguarding representatives and training facilitators meet twice yearly to share best practice and learning;
- Ensure that the Diocesan training plan is updated and training documentation such as course evaluation documents are stored appropriately.

Standard 5: Communicating the Church's safeguarding message – *Ways of providing evidence within parishes*

- Ensure that the Diocesan safeguarding policies and procedures are displayed and available to all;
- Ensuring that children, young people and vulnerable individuals are made aware of their right to be safe from abuse and who to speak to if they have a concern;
- Ensuring that everyone knows who the Diocesan Designated Officers are and how to contact them;
- Ensuring that everyone knows the safeguarding structures within the Diocese, who the members of the Safeguarding Committee are and what the role of the Parish Safeguarding Representative and Diocesan Safeguarding Office is;
- Ensure posters, leaflets and any safeguarding information resources are adequately displayed within the parish and easily accessible to all.

Standard 6: Access to advice and support – *Ways of providing evidence within parishes*

- Ensuring that children, young people and vulnerable individuals have access to information about sources of support;
- Ensuring that all leaflets, posters and publications about training, advice and support for Church personnel, adults outside the Church and children, young people and vulnerable individuals are distributed appropriately;
- Ensuring information about specialist advice services are made available if required;
- Ensuring that all clergy, staff and volunteers are made aware of the role of the Support Person (support for the alleged victim) and the role of the Adviser (support for the alleged perpetrator of abuse) and how this is managed.

Standard 7: Implementing and monitoring the Standards – *Ways of providing evidence within parishes*

- Ensuring that parishes complete an annual self-audit and return findings to the Diocesan Safeguarding Office;
- Ensuring that parishes cooperate fully with any external review/audit of safeguarding, making all the necessary information and evidence available as and when required.

What does this mean for the Archdiocese of Armagh?

The Safeguarding Office of the Archdiocese of Armagh will help to support, guide and advise parishes in implementing the Seven Standards and will develop best practice and systems in safeguarding and protecting children, young people and vulnerable individuals. The Diocesan Safeguarding Office will work to ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures within the Archdiocese are robust and transparent.

Everyone has a shared responsibility to work in partnership within and across parishes and Pastoral Areas to ensure that the Seven Standards are visible in our practice at all times.

An annual self-audit of the Seven Standards will be undertaken within all parishes and returned to the Diocesan Safeguarding Office who will summarise the findings and forward to the National Safeguarding Office in Maynooth. Details of the self-audit will also play an important role in developing future training requirements.