



THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

**Review of Safeguarding Practice
In the Religious Congregation of**

The Sisters of the Holy Faith

undertaken by

**The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the
Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI)**

Date: December 2014

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Background

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) was asked by the Sponsoring Bodies, namely the Irish Episcopal Conference, the Conference of Religious of Ireland and the Irish Missionary Union, to undertake a comprehensive review of safeguarding practice within and across all the Church authorities on the island of Ireland.

The NBSCCCI is aware that some religious congregations have ministries that involve direct contact with children while others do not. In religious congregations that have direct involvement with children, reviews of child safeguarding have been undertaken by measuring their practice compliance against all seven Church standards. Where a religious congregation no longer has, or never had ministry involving children and has not received any allegation of sexual abuse, the NBSCCCI reviews are conducted using a shorter procedure. The size, age and activity profiles of religious congregations can vary significantly and the NBSCCCI accepts that it is rational that the form of review be tailored to the profile of each Church Authority, where the ministry with children is limited or non-existent. The procedure for assessment of safeguarding practice with such congregations is set out in the terms of reference, appended to this report. The NBSCCCI welcomes that in order to have full openness, transparency and accountability, religious congregations that do not have ministry with children, have made requests to have their safeguarding practice examined and commented upon.

The Sisters of the Holy Faith have currently a very limited role with children, relating to one primary school in North Dublin, where the schools policy and procedures are observed. In addition there have been no recorded allegations of child sexual abuse against any member of this congregation, and for these reasons, a limited review is appropriate.

The purpose of this review remains the same and it is to confirm that current safeguarding practice complies with the standards set down within the guidance issued by the Sponsoring Bodies in February 2009 *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland* and that all known allegations and concerns had been appropriately dealt with. To achieve this task, safeguarding practice in each of these Church authorities is reviewed through an examination of policy and procedures and through interviews with key personnel involved both within and external to the religious congregation.

This report contains the findings of the *Review of Safeguarding Practice within the Religious Congregation of the Holy Faith Sisters* undertaken by the NBSCCCI in line with the request made to it by the Sponsoring Bodies. The findings of the review have been shared with a reference group before being submitted to the Regional Leader along with any recommendations arising from the findings. The review is not based on a review of case material as during the relevant time period there were no allegations made against members of the congregation that were within the Terms of Reference. It should be noted that the review has taken into account some case material which has not been assessed as meeting the threshold for definition as allegation, as well as a list of concerns/allegations which do not refer to child sexual abuse. The review is primarily based on policies and procedures made available plus interviews with key personnel involved in the safeguarding process within the congregation.

1. Introduction

The Congregation of the Holy Faith was founded by Margaret Aylward for the preservation of the Faith. It is a religious institute of pontifical right dedicated to the works of the apostolate. The congregation was established and received pontifical approval in 1867. Founded in the period after the Irish famine, it has sought historically to address the impacts of poverty and destitution mainly through the provision of education, establishing a network of Catholic schools prior to the formation of the state in 1921, which remained in place until relatively recently. It also ran an orphanage, pioneering the use of foster families rather than residential care to meet the needs of children who could not be cared for by their own families, which ceased in 1997. The congregation undertook its first mission abroad in the 1940s, establishing a presence in Trinidad, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Samoa, Peru, Southern Sudan, and Mexico. The missions in Samoa, Peru and Mexico have since closed. The Sisters use their energy to develop and support ministries and activities that make Faith relevant in the contemporary world by providing meaningful opportunities for people to connect faith and life and deepen the spiritual dimension and quality of their lives.

The congregation consists of Sisters living in communities that are grouped together in regions/areas, each having its own Regional/Area leader. Its General Leader, supported by a General Council based in Dublin, has authority in relation to all Sisters, in accordance with the constitution. The General Leadership team consists of 4 Sisters (1 of whom is based in Trinidad). The Irish Region of the Congregation mirrors this structure, with a Regional Leader and a Regional Leadership Team based in Drumcondra, Dublin. The Regional Leader is appointed for a four year term of office, for a maximum of two terms. There are a number of communities, each of which has a leader, who reports to the Regional Leader. The regional Leadership team meets twice each month, and each community is visited by the Regional Leader and members of her team. There is a system of accountability and risk management in place to ensure communication, co-ordination and planning.

2 Role Profile (past and present role with children):

As already stated, the Holy Faith Sisters made a significant investment in primary and secondary level education in Ireland for well over a century. They transferred the management of most of their 17 primary schools to the Saint Laurence O'Toole Trust in the late 1990s; and later 5 second level schools, and 5 Voluntary Catholic secondary Schools to the Le Chéile Trust. They are joint Trustees of two community schools, one with the Co. Dublin ETB (*formerly VEC*) and the Marist Brothers and the other with the Co. Kildare ETB (*formerly VEC*) and the Dublin Archdiocese. The Sisters continue to have input into a number of these schools, but have no direct management role, with the exception of one primary school in North Dublin. They continue to serve in some instances as board members and are also involved as school volunteers, providing additional services such as classroom assistants, literacy inputs, 'out of school' support and crafts. One Sister continues to work as a primary school principal. Two Sisters from the Irish region provide educational inputs to schools and training in the mission in South Sudan

The contemporary activities of the Holy Faith Sisters in Ireland are those of a) education (as outlined above), social, health, pastoral work, care of the earth, chaplaincy, administration and faith development b) collaboration with the Holy Faith Network c) Residential care, assisted living and ongoing care of all Sisters. Roles currently carried out include

environmental work, pastoral work in parishes, social justice, retreats, counselling, facilitation of liturgy and worship, adult literacy, advocacy. Sisters are also involved with adults in the areas of addiction, disability and the travelling community, and provide a music ministry in one of the prisons.

3 Profile of Members:

There is a total of 123 Sisters in the Irish region, who are mostly located in 10 communities (there are additional small clusters). Their average age is 76 years. The largest single community is in Glasnevin, where some 40-45 Sisters are located, 25 of whom are elderly and infirm and live in a nursing care facility. The other communities, which are of different sizes in the range of 4 -12 Sisters, are in the greater Dublin/ Kildare/ Wicklow areas. There have been no new members in the last 15 years.

4 Policy and Procedures Document:

Safeguarding practice is governed by the *Irish Region's Safeguarding Children policy*, dated 22.10.2014. This document has been reviewed regularly, and was preceded by policy documents in 2008 and 2011. The safeguarding children policy 2014 is a very comprehensive document. It states in the opening paragraph that the Sisters are committed to the Gospel values that cherish and safeguard children, as well as protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional harm or neglect. It immediately summarizes the paramount importance of the welfare of children, the need to report all allegations or suspicions without delay, the importance of awareness and communication in relation to safeguarding, and the importance of the support needs of victims/ survivors. It contains a comprehensive list of contacts, definitions of child abuse, and is fully signed off and mandated by the Leadership team. The policy is structured according to the seven NBSCCCI safeguarding standards, with each section describing how each standard has been addressed. There is a total of 26 appendices, providing a range of detailed guidance. The extensive history of involvement in schools and education has led to a heightened awareness within the Sisters of the Holy Faith of child safeguarding issues, which is reflected in the comprehensive nature of the policy and in the active commitment to training and prevention.

The congregation's safeguarding children policy 2014 states that it applies to all of the congregation's ministries, save where Government Department Child Protection guidelines apply. This is the case in the one primary school, in Ballygall, Dublin, still managed by the Holy Faith Sisters, where the Department of Education and Skills child protection procedures for primary and post primary schools would take precedence in the initial phases of any investigation, with the congregational policy applied later in the case management phase if required. It is also the case in those schools where Sisters continue to work in a voluntary capacity. Apart from school based activity Holy Faith Sisters have relatively little direct contact with children, young people or families and their activity in the various other ministries is primarily adult based.

The majority of the criteria underpinning Standard 1 *Written Policy on Keeping Children Safe* and Standard 2 *How to Respond to Child Protection Allegations and Suspicions* are assessed as fully met. As well as specific guidance in relation to allegations or concerns about abuse, there is a clear statement about how individuals who pose a risk to children will be managed, and also about a general complaints procedure. Whilst the policy states that it applies to all aspects of the congregation's ministries, it should be strengthened by referring to a process

for validating, from a safeguarding perspective, Sisters who move from one regional setting to another, or return from abroad. The reviewer was assured that in practice all Sisters in transit are fully assessed through the Regional Leadership team, and that there are training/induction requirements for returning Sisters. There should be a statement about this practice in section 1.5 of the policy.

Standard 3 *Preventing Harm to Children* has sub-sections relating to safe recruitment and vetting, codes of behaviour and operating safe activities for children. All of these areas, with the one exception (3.8), are fully addressed in the 2014 policy. Garda vetting for all Sisters, employees and volunteers is co-ordinated by a designated/approved member of the regional leadership team, and policy and practice meet the NBSCCCI criteria, with detailed guidance provided in the policy. The policy also gives full guidance on an adult to child code of behaviour, child to child anti-bullying procedure, whistleblowing and raising a concern, dealing with unacceptable behaviour, and intimate care of children with disabilities. The policy fully addresses risk assessment for activities involving children, supervision and the use of information technology. The section on information technology is very good.

The requirements of Standard 4 *Training and Education for Keeping Children Safe* are substantially met. All Holy Faith Sisters, employees and volunteers are inducted into the safeguarding policy, using NBSCCCI approved programmes. Records of those trained, feedback information from training sessions and information on updated training needs, are available. Basic induction and awareness training is well covered in the congregation's training needs assessment, but this needs to be supplemented with reference to planning for those with additional responsibilities (Standard 4.3).

It is evident that the Sisters of the Holy Faith work hard to promote and disseminate the safeguarding policy and that this is seen as an active project. Most of the requirements of Standard 5 *Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message* are fully met. The Sisters do not have a formal communications policy, they maintain that their relatively small homogeneous structure facilitates easy and clear internal communication, and point out that the safeguarding agenda is a set item on all of their leadership meetings. It is recommended, for completeness, that a short policy statement on communication is drafted and included in the safeguarding plan.

Standard 6 *Access to Advice and Support* is met fully in terms of the safeguarding policy. There has not been a need in practice to implement its requirements in relation to victim/survivor support or support for those who have perpetrated abuse, although Sisters have been identified to undertake these roles if required, and there is ready access to a range of additional support services. As already noted the congregation has now formally joined the NBSCCCI's National Case Management Review Group (NCMRG), for access to specialist advice. There are established contacts at national and local level in relation to safeguarding. The policy sets out clear guidance on how to respond and support a child who is suspected of being abused.

The requirements of Standard 7 *Implementing and Monitoring the Standards* are addressed through the Regional Leadership team, and it is evident that these are substantially addressed in practice. For the full implementation of Standard 7.1, the Regional Leader needs to develop a strategic safeguarding plan, with a 3 year horizon, identifying strengths and weaknesses and including an action plan to be reviewed yearly. There should be an annual

report to the Regional Leader from the Regional Leadership team (which is the Safeguarding Committee), which records and evaluates progress and issues in relation to safeguarding within the congregation, updates on any actions that needed to be taken, on the policy, on training needs assessment, on communication, on vetting activity. It is noted that, where Holy Faith Sisters have direct contact with parishioners, the policy encourages their feedback on safeguarding.

5 Structures:

Accountability for the safeguarding of children and young people in the Irish region rests with the Regional Leader. The Sisters have pointed out that they have extended the scope of the policy to include vulnerable adults. The congregation has in place a Designated Safeguarding Person (who has been in post since 2008), and a Deputy Safeguarding Person, who report to the Regional Leader through the Regional Leadership Team. It also has a Safeguarding Trainer, and responsibility for vetting rests with a member of the Leadership Team. Each of the communities has an identified Sister who reports on safeguarding. Safeguarding is a set part of the Regional Leadership team agenda, and also a set part of the agenda for the regular visits of the Regional Leader and her team to the communities. The developmental and preventative function of a Safeguarding Committee is undertaken by the Regional Leadership team in this model, which takes into account the relatively small scale of direct contact with children and families, and the homogeneous structure. In 2014 the congregation formally joined the NBSCCCI National Case Management Reference Group, for access to specialist advice if required. There had previously been an 'in house' advisory panel, but their input was minimal owing to the lack of allegations and it was discontinued.

6 Management of Allegations and liaison with the statutory authorities:

The reviewer read the files relating to 2 concerns about sexual abuse which identify persons who were not members of the religious congregation as possible perpetrators, one refers to a former, now deceased, lay employee and one to former foster parents used by the congregation to place a child. The reviewer also read a file relating to an allegation made in 2012 concerning an elderly Sister which was not followed up by the complainant. In this case the complainant was contacted by the Designated Safeguarding Person and given the opportunity to meet to confirm the allegation, which she decided not to do. This was not designated as an allegation. In all 3 cases the referral information was shared with An Garda Síochána and the HSE. The reviewer was also shown a list of references to safeguarding concerns/allegations, many of them historical, which did not refer to child sexual abuse. The HSE audit of the Holy Faith Sisters concluded on 04.07.13 that the congregation was exempted from a review meeting on the basis that no allegation had been made against any member.

7. Conclusion:

Overall, this review has concluded that the safeguarding policy and practice of the Holy Faith Sisters has been well developed and is substantially in line with the requirements of the NBSCCCI guidelines. The commitment and application of the Regional Leader, the Designated Safeguarding Person and the Regional Leadership team is commended. There are two recommendations, one of which refers to some small interim amendments to the policy and the other, which identifies the need for existing good practice to be reflected in a formal

annual report to strengthen accountability and in a three year strategic safeguarding plan to strengthen planning and review.

RECOMMENDATION 1; The Regional Leader should ensure that the following areas in the safeguarding policy are strengthened on an interim basis, pending the introduction of a common Church safeguarding policy a) policy for Sisters in transit (1.5) b) anti-discriminatory statement (3.8).

RECOMMENDATION 2; The Regional Leader should ensure that the Regional Leadership team develops a) a three year strategic plan based on its assessment of strengths and weaknesses and containing an action plan, to guide the development of safeguarding; b) completes an annual safeguarding report, which monitors progress of actions identified relating to policy, training, communication and practice.

Review of Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Ireland

Terms of Reference

Small Religious Congregations

(which should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Notes)

Introduction

In order for the NBSCCCI to be able to state that all Church Authorities on the island of Ireland have been evaluated in respect of their child safeguarding policies and practices, both historical and current, then some form of appropriate assessment has to be conducted of every one of these. It is rational however that the form of assessment is tailored to the profile of each Church Authority, and that needless expenditure of resources and unnecessary interference in the life of religious orders and communities that have no children-specific ministry would be avoided.

This Review seeks to examine the current arrangements for safeguarding children across small Religious Congregations /Orders, and Missionary Societies in Ireland who have limited or no direct contact with children as part of the Congregations ministry.

It would also scrutinize practice within all known cases to ensure that they have been responded to appropriately.

The review's methodology is an adaptation of the methodology developed for all Dioceses and large religious congregations and missionary societies, where the ministry involves regular contact with children.

The proposed Review would consider the following:-

- (a) Former role with children
- (b) Allegations of child abuse against members and how these have been responded to
- (c) Existing relationships with statutory authorities such as the HSE, Gardai in the Republic and the HSCT or PSNI in Northern Ireland.
- (d) Policies in place and being applied for safeguarding children
- (e) Roles and responsibilities and where they exist the operation of Advisory Panels, and Safeguarding Committees

The objective of the Review would be to confirm if there have been any allegations and how known allegations have been responded to; in addition the review seeks to confirm what the current arrangements for safeguarding children are. In particular, emphasis will be placed on establishing how policies and practice match up to the standards set down in the Safeguarding Children Guidance published by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland launched in February 2009. Priority, at all times, will be given to how policy and practice can be improved and strengthened. If policies and/or practices are identified that are concerning, inadequate, or dangerous, they will be addressed through the provision of guidance and support, and through the reporting of these situations to the

appropriate statutory authorities, if this has not already happened. Similarly, those that are good examples will be highlighted with a view to them being adopted comprehensively across all parts of the Church. All cases that relate to alleged or known offenders that are alive will be read and included in the Review. In cases where the alleged or known offender is deceased, these will be sampled in an attempt to gather learning from them that will be used to inform the framing of recommendations.

Guidance Documents

The Review will be guided by the following:-

- (a) *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland*
- (b) *Children First* Guidance in ROI; and Regional Child Protection Guidelines in Northern Ireland;
- (c) Legislation that exists in each jurisdiction which contributes to safeguarding children and young people.

The Review will be undertaken by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in Ireland through their National Office and led by the Chief Executive Officer.

The Review process will be overseen by a Reference Group to whom the CEO will report on a regular basis. The membership of this Reference Group has been drawn from each of the statutory child protection agencies in both jurisdictions, along with eminent individuals in the field from academia. The current Reference Group consists of : Dr Helen Buckley (TCD); Mr Paul Harrison (Tusla), and John Toner (SBNI).

It is important to confirm that the value of the Review is dependent upon full and complete access to all relevant documentation and information relating to the abuse of children known to the individual Church authorities. The Review will proceed on the basis that willingness exists on the part of each of the subjects of the Review to provide full access to the fieldwork team, subject, where relevant, to the terms of the Data Processing Deed agreed between the Sponsoring Bodies and entered into between the parties hereto.

Step Guide to the Review Process

Step 1.

A letter of invitation to review is sent by the Provincial/Regional Superior or other person responsible for the Congregation/ Order or Missionary Society (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Ordinary’).

Step 2.

The CEO will forward a survey to the provincial which will identify:

- Current number of members
- Past role with children
- Current role with children
- Total number of allegations received up to 2014
- Number of living members against whom there are allegations

Step 3.

For any Order where there have been allegations a full review will proceed, as per step 4 - 23. For those Orders where there have been no known allegations a desk top examination of policies and procedures will take place followed by a site visit to interview all relevant personnel within the safeguarding structure. For these orders step 5 and 13-23 will apply.

Step 4.

The CEO and Ordinary will confirm the dates for the fieldwork for the Review, and names of the fieldwork team.

Step 5.

The Church Authority will be asked to make available all of the case files and related documentation in respect of any safeguarding concerns that have been identified within the diocese. The Church Authority will make available a room with wireless internet access for the reviewers to conduct their review of files, so that any records made by the reviewers can be directly typed and stored onto a secure server which is only accessed by the reviewers. In the absence of internet access the reviewers will type their notes onto a secure encrypted usb stick for later uploading onto the secure server.

Step 6.

The Church Authority will be requested to sign the revised Data Processing Deed prior to the arrival of the team.

Step 7.

The Church Authority will arrange a schedule of interviews with all who hold safeguarding roles within its functional area. The designated person and the Church Authority will be available to the reviewers throughout the period of fieldwork.

Step 8.

The fieldwork team when they arrive on site will firstly confirm that they have a suitable place to work in and that all the required documentation has been provided to them for their Review. In the event that the fieldwork team forms the opinion that the Church Authority has not provided access to all such documents, the Board shall give notice in writing to the Church Authority of the opinion of the fieldwork team and such notice shall specify the reasons for same. Thereupon, the Church Authority shall respond in detail to the Notice. Each party shall use its best endeavours to resolve any differences of opinion which shall arise and, in the event that resolution is not arrived at, the parties will attempt to resolve the dispute by recourse to the services of a mediator agreed between them or nominated for the purpose at the request of any of them without prejudice to the Board's entitlement to terminate the Review. In the event that resolution has not been arrived at following mediation, either party shall be at liberty to terminate forthwith the Review.

Step 9.

On arrival, the fieldwork team should be supplied with a single case file index that lists all the cases that have been created within the diocese. These may be divided into two groups. The first group will contain all allegations that relate to living alleged or known perpetrators. The second will contain any that are deceased.

Step 10.

Depending on the volume involved a decision should be made as to whether all or a random sample of the "deceased group" should be reviewed. Care should be taken to include all prominent cases in the sample.

Step 11.

Each case file will be reviewed by each fieldworker independently in the first instance. They will create a written summary with chronological information of the case. In certain cases a second reader may be required, this will be discussed and agreed between the fieldworkers.

Step 12.

Following the reading of the case and the creation of a summary, the fieldworkers will analyse and assess the actions taken in the case. They will assess compliance with agreed Church policy that was extant at that time. They will also indicate whether any current risk

exists in respect of the information contained within the file and advise the church Authority of necessary safeguarding action to reduce the risk.

Step 13.

When all the case files have been read, the fieldwork team will then examine and review any procedures or protocols that exist within the diocese to confirm that they are in compliance with the *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance* document issued by the NBSCCCI in February of 2009.

Step 14.

To complete the Review, the fieldwork team will then seek to speak to those directly involved in the safeguarding structure in the diocese. This should include the Advisory Panel, a sample of parish safeguarding representatives, the designated person, the safeguarding committee, victim support and advisors and the Bishop/Provincial. The purpose of these interviews is to form a view of the competence and effectiveness of the safeguarding structure that exists within the Church Authority.

Step 15.

The fieldwork team will also seek to speak to representatives of the key statutory agencies to provide them with an opportunity to express their views on the quality of the working relationships that exist between them and the Church Authority.

Step 16.

A verbal feedback session on initial key findings will be given to the Church Authority.

Step 17.

Upon completion of the field work, the team may request to take materials – other than casework records to review off-site; this alongside all materials gathered by the reviewers, including written notes on cases and meetings, will be analysed and will form the basis of the draft assessment review report.

Step 18.

The draft will be forwarded to the Church Authority for factual accuracy checking.

Step 19.

Alongside all other reports under review, the report will be presented in draft to the Reference Group for their critique and comment. If further work is required at the direction of the Reference group the CEO will ensure this work is completed and advise the Church Authority accordingly.

Step 20.

The report will be legally proofed by NBSCCCI lawyer.

Step 21.

The report will be forwarded to the National Board for approval

Step 22

A final draft report will then be submitted to the Church Authority. The expectation would be that the Report will be published by the Church Authority at an agreed time in the future.

Step 23.

All case material written, including summaries, as part of the review, which are for the reviewers use only, will be stored on a secure server.

Guide for Reviewers

In terms of small (female religious orders) reference should be made to the following:

1. Has the Order provided alternative care to children in an orphanage, industrial school or children's residential home, but no longer is engaged in running such services;
2. Has the order provided education to children, in both or either boarding schools and day schools, but no longer does so ;
3. Has the order provided medical and/or nursing services to children, but no longer does so;
4. Has the order provided any other services to children, in community services centres, youth clubs etc., and no longer does so;
5. Does the order currently provide any sort of service to children and families that brings them into regular contact with children;
6. Has the order never provided any service to children (e.g. contemplative orders).

In relation to category 1 above;

1. The reviewers will establish whether any service they provided is included in the list of children's residential services produced by the Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB);
2. If this is the case, reference should be made to this.
3. If complaints have been referred to the Redress Board or Ryan Commission, this review cannot access these records and that will be stated in the report.

4. If the order has received complaints which have not been processed through Redress or Ryan these cases will be thoroughly examined as detailed above.

Review of Policy and Procedures

1. It is recognised that not all Orders will have any ministry with children and therefore their policies and procedures should reflect the work that they do with children.
2. If the Order only works through other organisations, example in Diocesan work or in schools, they are required to follow the policies of those organisations.
3. If there are gaps in the policy document an assessment should be made as to whether the ministry engaged in requires full compliance with all criteria attached to the seven standards
4. Where it is clear that the criteria do not apply a reference should be made at the beginning of the review report that the Order's ministry is not directly with children and therefore adherence to particular criteria do not apply.
5. If the Order is a contemplative Order, there is no expectation that they will have detailed policies and procedures, but reference should be made to their ministry and that they have no contact with children.
6. In all cases, contact will be made with the civil authorities to identify if they have any child safeguarding concerns in relation to the order.