



Diocese of Ossory Safeguarding Committee

Safeguarding Office, Waterford Road, Kilkenny

Safeguarding Committee Activities Report 2017

The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee met on five occasions during 2017

24th January 2017
14th March 2017
10th May 2017
12th September 2017
14th November 2017

During the year Committee members attended a number of workshops provided by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in Ireland:

25 th February	Train the Trainers Course
15 th March	Implementing the standards Workshop
13 th September	Vetting Legislation Briefing with Gardaí
11 th October	Self Audit Training for Safeguarding Committees & Church Authorities
12 th October	Child Safeguarding & Digital Media-Practice and Challenges for Faith Groups in Ireland
8 th November	Risk Management and Creating Risk Management Plans

Priests Conference:

As a committee it was felt that over the years the Priests of the diocese had experienced a level of trauma as a result of Child Protection issues emerging within the diocese. Consequently the committee provided an afternoon for reflection on this which took place on the 1st Feb 2017. This was facilitated by Dr. Kevin Egan lecturer in Psychology, Pastoral Theology and Chaplaincy studies and was also attended by members of the Safeguarding Committee. Feed back to this initiative from priests and committee alike was very positive. Clergy who attended expressed interest in following up on this themselves.

Safeguarding Newsletter and Policy Summary Information leaflet.

The first issue of the Diocesan Newsletter was published and widely distributed to coincide with Safeguarding Sunday. A Safeguarding Summary Pamphlet providing summary information on the new 'all church' safeguarding policy and diocesan safeguarding contact details was also provided.

Safeguarding Sunday took place over the first weekend in October

Connecting with the Parish

At a meeting in October 2016 it was decided that members of the safeguarding committee would meet with as many Parish Clergy and Parish Safeguarding Representatives as possible during 2017. The rationale for this decision was to:

- create a personal link between the Committee Members, Parish Clergy and Safeguarding Reps;
- to try to break down perceived barriers;

- to bring the message that the Safeguarding Committee was intended as a support to the Parish in its implementation of safeguarding policy and procedures.

Contact was made with all parishes to arrange meetings. Committee members met individually with 25 parishes. Other parishes were clustered to facilitate Clergy and Parish Reps and to ensure maximum coverage of the diocese. While most Parish Clergy and Safeguarding Reps welcomed the opportunity to meet with members of the committee, a small number of parishes did not engage for whatever reason.

Purpose of the meetings:

1. To meet with clergy and their Parish Safeguarding Representatives.
2. To provide new information, updates and posters
3. To inform that information regarding safeguarding was being updated on the Diocesan Safeguarding web site
4. To ascertain the status of Safeguarding Reps in all parishes.

Outcomes:

- All parishes visited were provided with display posters required under the new guidelines.
- Safeguarding reps were asked if they were happy to continue in their role. As a result some reps resigned and new people were recruited for this role.
- For those who engaged it was a considered a positive and learning experience from the perspective of committee members and the parishes.
- As a result of these meetings 15 new Parish Safeguarding Representatives attended and completed training during September and October 2017

Reflections on the process:

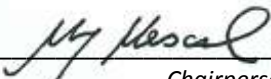
We were trying something new in order to meaningfully engage parishes in the area of safeguarding, as previous experiences– which was more of a ‘tick boxing’ exercise rather than engaging with the questions, did not appear to work. From the point of view of committee members it proved difficult to set up meetings so that all could be present i.e. clergy and parish reps. As this was not always possible we decided we would have to work with whomever presented.

In a situation where the Parish Safeguarding Representative and the Parish Clergy were understanding of their roles and working together we would be confident that Safeguarding in those parishes was in good hands. In other parishes it was felt Parish Safeguarding Representatives might be there in name only and therefore not utilised by the parish in the area of safeguarding. That is not to say that correct procedures were not being implemented in these parishes but our wish was to see Parish Clergy and Safeguarding Representatives working together thus lightening the load and the responsibility for all concerned. The Safeguarding Committee will continue to work with these parishes to bring about a clearer understanding of the role of the Parish Safeguarding Rep.

It would appear that parishes find it difficult to identify and recruit Parish Safeguarding Reps with the correct skill set or ability to carry out the role – e.g. internet skills, good communication skills. As a result of this it has proved difficult for the Safeguarding Office to organise much needed training to ensure that Safeguarding Reps know their responsibility and are supporting the implementation of Safeguarding Policies in their parish. The committee recognises that this is not just a Church problem and is aware that many clubs and organisations have similar experiences when recruiting Safeguarding Personnel.

Coming up in 2018

- Parish Audits
- Creating a Risk Management Plan
- Developing a Diocesan Safeguarding Policy for Vulnerable Adults

Signed:  Date **13th December 2017**
 Chairperson
 On behalf of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee