

inform people as to how the Diocese of Kerry has dealt with this issue. The reporting practice within the Diocese is very clear; all allegations of child abuse are reported to the Gardaí and to TUSLA - the Child and Family Agency. It is the responsibility of the Gardaí and TUSLA to carry out any investigations and to take whatever action deemed necessary to protect children.

In 2018 the law in Ireland makes it mandatory for people working with children to report all allegations of child abuse to the civil authorities. Within the Diocese of Kerry, it has been the practice to report all allegations since 1995 when Bishop Bill Murphy was appointed.

## Audits of our files by the National Board for Safeguarding Children and Government Agencies

In 2013 the Diocese's safeguarding files were audited by staff from the National Board for Safeguarding Children. Its report was published online and remains publicly available on the NBSCCCI website. In 2010 our diocesan records were also reviewed nationally by the HSE Social Work Department and were found to be in order. It is clear that the Diocese has co-operated with the civil authorities and shares its information with the authorities in order to seek to protect children.

## Child abuse can be a dark secret

Today the Diocese works closely with TUSLA and the Gardaí to ensure the safety of children. We also do what we can to support any person making the allegation, to help them deal with the hurt and to move forward in their lives in a positive manner. All the reports of abuse to the Diocese have been made by adults who were abused as children. Sadly, all too often child abuse becomes a dark secret that many can only speak of many years later while others bring it with them to the grave.

## Can we help you?

Since 2012 many Dioceses and Religious Orders have employed lay people to manage allegations of abuse on their behalf. Should you wish to talk to us in the Diocese about past abuse or a current concern you have please contact us in confidence. Our role is to ensure people who report an allegation of abuse are supported in a real way and to ensure their allegation is properly reported to the authorities. Feel free to call me on 087-6362780. There is no need to continue to suffer in silence.

**Jim Sheehy, DLP**

# Safeguarding Sunday

## Diocese of Kerry

Sunday 14th October 2018



## Message from Bishop of Kerry and Chairperson of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee

We welcome this initiative to have an annual Safeguarding Sunday in the Diocese. Each year it will remind us all that the key to safeguarding is good public awareness of the potential danger to children and the importance of good practice across the Diocese.

Safeguarding Sunday this year gives us an opportunity to remember and say thanks to all who have voluntarily worked for the cause in the Diocese, at diocesan or parish level over the past twenty years and more. Special thanks to those who continue to serve at this time.

The week of his visit to Ireland Pope Francis wrote a letter to the People of God, to the whole Church worldwide. Two sentences from that letter reminds us why Safeguarding is so important: *“Even though it can be said that most of these cases belong to the past, nonetheless as time goes on we have come to know the pain of many of the victims. We have realised that these wounds never disappear and that they require us forcefully to condemn these atrocities.”*

**Bishop Ray Browne, Rosarii O'Connor**

## Safeguarding in the Diocese of Kerry

The Diocese of Kerry works in partnership with the statutory authorities and the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI).

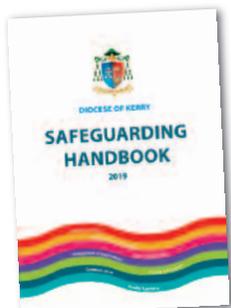
- 1996 The Kerry Diocesan Safeguarding Committee was formed
- 2009 National Policy for Safeguarding Children was adopted by the Diocese of Kerry
- 2016 National Board published updated Policy for Safeguarding Children
- 2016 Bishop Ray Browne adopted the Policy for the Diocese

## Our safeguarding structure



## Where to find local information

[www.dioceseofkerry.ie/safeguarding/](http://www.dioceseofkerry.ie/safeguarding/)



Our *Diocesan Safeguarding Handbook* is available in all churches and parish offices. This Handbook is a practical tool to help with the day to day aspects of safeguarding. The Handbook and all forms referenced within it are available from the diocesan website.

A *Child Safeguarding Policy Statement* is displayed in all churches throughout the Diocese. In addition, a detailed *Child Safeguarding Statement* in line with Children First Act 2015 is available from the diocesan website.

## Key changes for 2018

As of December 2017, The Children First Act places a legal obligation on Priests and Deacons to report child protection concerns to Tusla - Child and Family Agency.



The Diocese has responded to these changes by informing Priests and Deacons at meetings, in bulletins and through our Safeguarding Newsletter. Significant time will continue to be given to these developments in our Safeguarding Training Programme.

## Reviewing our practice



Parish Safeguarding Representatives alongside the Parish Priests report on their safeguarding practice annually in the form of an audit. The audit as well as regular parish visits conducted by the Safeguarding Co-ordinator and the Safeguarding Committee, allow parishes the opportunity to reflect on their safeguarding procedures and get advice on areas that may require improvement. Each year the audits are reviewed and action areas are addressed in the safeguarding plan for the coming year.

## Safeguarding training

Over the last year, 182 Priests, volunteers and staff attended training which was offered in 7 locations throughout the Diocese. Training evaluations have reported high levels of satisfaction with the content and relevance of the training programme. Training is updated on a regular basis in line with local feedback and national requirements. The Diocesan Safeguarding Training Programme is accredited by the National Board for Safeguarding Children.



## The pain of child abuse

The issue of child abuse by priests is a regrettable and sad part of our church's history. We should never forget the hurt and damage caused to many people who were abused as children and the enormous impact this has on their lives. The Diocese of Kerry fully acknowledges the devastation caused by abuse and takes the role of establishing a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults within the church very seriously.

## Cooperating with the Civil Authorities

When the subject of abuse by priests is highlighted in the media, as it was during Pope Francis' visit, one could be forgiven for thinking that the church continues to hide perpetrators and not cooperate with the law of the land. I hope this article will