

Safeguarding Newsletter

Diocese of Kerry
Issue 4, May, 2020



Message from Bishop Ray

These are amazing weeks: the wonderful weather, the marvellous Spring growth and the sweetest of birdsong, and then the serious threat of the Covid-19 virus.

Courage, resilience, and community spirit is bringing us through. It is wonderful to see so many signs of this in parish after parish; the way so many in need, the living alone and advanced in years are being helped; the dedication of front-line workers at the risk of catching the virus themselves.

In England there was controversy over changing from the phrase 'Stay Home' to 'Stay Alert'. In Ireland, as restrictions are eased, maybe we can balance the two, 'Stay Home and Stay Alert'. It applies to Covid-19 and it applies equally to Safeguarding. Safeguarding children involves constant vigilance. In the current context one important safeguarding area to keep in mind is the internet and all social media.

I thank sincerely all involved in Safeguarding in the diocese, especially Jacklyn, Jim, Parish Safeguarding Representatives, Parish Secretaries and the Priests. God bless us all and keep us safe in the months ahead.

Bishop Ray.

2019 Parish Self-Audit

Thank you to all Priests and Parish Safeguarding Representatives for completing the 2019 self-audit.

The information gathered has been analysed, presented to the Safeguarding Committee and has informed the working plan for 2020.

We ended 2019 with an increase in the number of Parish Safeguarding Representatives, we now have 140 Reps across the diocese. We wish to extend a welcome to new Reps! If you would like assistance in your role please contact our Director of Safeguarding jacklynmccarthy@dioceseofkerry.org.

Safeguarding training was offered in 6 locations across the diocese and 114 people attended. There was an increase in attendance at training from Parish Reps and Priests. Lower attendance was recorded for Sacristans, Choir Leaders and Children Liturgy Leaders. It is important for these groups to update their training once new dates become available.

It is very positive that vetting for all our Parish Priests is up-to-date. Vetting is due for renewal for a number of Sacristans, Parish Reps, Co-ordinators of altar servers and Choir Leaders. We would like to ask all Parish Reps to review vetting records for the parish and update vetting if required.

It was evident from the audit that some parishes have put great efforts into ensuring their files and practices are up-to-date. We need to see this level of commitment across all parishes. If you know that safeguarding in your parish needs attention please contact our Director of Safeguarding.

Safeguarding Audit

We were due to welcome auditors from the National Board this month to conduct a safeguarding audit across the diocese. All parishes have been informed that due to current restrictions with Covid-19 the audit has been postponed until further notice.

In February each parish received a letter highlighting areas to focus on following the results of our annual self-audit. We would like to acknowledge all the hard work undertaken by Parish Reps, Priests and Group Leaders across the diocese. All of this work will go a long way in preparing for the audit.

We will inform parishes of a new audit date once we receive it from the National Board.

Diocesan Pilgrimages Abroad

Each year young people look forward to taking part in diocesan trips to Lourdes and Taizé. Unfortunately these trips have been cancelled this year. All going well we hope to welcome pilgrims on these trips in 2021.

Safeguarding Training

Safeguarding training days planned for this year are currently on hold. We will schedule new dates once it is safe to do so.

Trips away involving one overnight with under 18s

Overnight trips away with young people, including pilgrimages, now need to obtain approval prior to the trip from the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee.

The Co-ordinator of the trip must complete a risk assessment 6 months prior to the travel date. The Committee will review the risk assessment, as well as all documentation produced for parents / young people. The Committee will liaise with the Co-ordinator following the review.

Engaging online with young people

Given the current circumstances and our inability to meet and engage in face to face communication we are all utilising electronic communication more and more.

Some parishes are looking at different online platforms as a way of staying connected with young people. If your parish is linking with young people online please contact our Director of Safeguarding in order to review practice and mitigate any risks involved.

Vetting updates

All parishes received notification in March regarding two administrative changes to our vetting system.

- 1. We now have a New Vetting Invitation Form** which is available on the diocesan website.

Parishes were informed that the Diocesan Office would accept and process the old vetting forms until Friday 3rd April.

The Diocesan Office will now only accept new Vetting Invitation Forms. Any old Vetting Invitation Forms received will be returned to parishes.

- 2. In line with GDPR regulations** parishes can no longer store photocopies of ID documents.

Photocopies of ID documents must now be attached to the Vetting Invitation Form and sent into the Diocesan Office.

Parishes must retain all ID documents that are associated with old applications but going forward must send in ID documents with new applications.

The Diocesan Office can no longer accept or process Vetting Invitation Forms that do not have the accompanying photocopies of ID documents.

