



THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR  
**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN**  
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IRELAND

**Second Review of Child Safeguarding Practice**

**in the**

**Diocese of Killala**

**undertaken by**

**The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the**

**Catholic Church in Ireland (National Board)**

**Date of Review Report: February 2023**

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## Background

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church Ireland (National Board) was established in 2006 to provide advice, services and assistance in the ongoing development of safeguarding children within the Roman Catholic Church on the Island of Ireland; to monitor compliance with legislation, policy and best practice; and to report on these activities. This is comprehensively set out in the Memorandum of Association of the Company.

Church authorities who have entered into an agreement with the National Board through signing a Memorandum of Understanding have committed to following *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016*.

The Diocese of Killala was previously reviewed in February 2013 under the *Safeguarding Children - Standards and Guidance for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2008*. The report of the first Review can be found on the National Board's website [www.safeguarding.ie/publications](http://www.safeguarding.ie/publications). This current Review is an opportunity for the National Board to confirm that recommendations from the previous Review (2013) were implemented.

The recommendations from the previous Review (February 2013) are set out below along with the current status of implementation:

**Recommendation 1:** Bishop Fleming needs to ensure that the Killala Diocesan Safeguarding Committee considers and includes any new legislative changes under Children First, Vetting Bill and the Criminal Justice Act in their revision of the Diocesan Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures. In addition the Committee should continue to take cognizance of all the requirements identified in Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland – **fully implemented**

**Recommendation 2:** Once a decision has been made by the Director of Public Prosecutions then Bishop Fleming should set a timeframe for initiation of preliminary canonical investigations as appropriate – **fully implemented**

**Recommendation 3:** Bishop Fleming should continue to review the training needs in the diocese and develop a suitable arrangement whereby there are two trainers delivering the NBSCCCI training modules within the Diocese of Killala – **fully implemented**

**Recommendation 4:** Bishop Fleming should consult with a canon lawyer to identify if canonical action can be pursued in relation to any outstanding cases – **fully implemented**

The purpose of this second round of Reviews is to assess child-safeguarding practice against the Catholic Church in Ireland's current standards as detailed in *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016* and make statements based on evidence, which provide:

- Public confidence that the Church Body is safe for children;
- Affirmation to Child Safeguarding personnel that they are doing the right things well;
- Confirmation to the Church Authority that what they want to be done is in fact being done;
- Independent verification of Self-Audit – or correction and/or improvement of Self-Audit;
- Opportunities for learning

## Introduction

The Diocese of Killala is in the Metropolitan Province of Tuam. It serves the catholic congregation of twenty-two (22) parishes located in parts of Counties Mayo and Sligo in the West of Ireland. The Catholic population of the diocese is 38,069, out of a total population of 41,481.

Bishop John Fleming has been Bishop of Killala since the 19<sup>th</sup> February 2002.

There are 37 incardinated priests of the Diocese of Killala: twenty-six (26) active priests; one (1) not in active ministry; nine (9) retired priests; and one (1) priest working overseas.

In addition, there are two (2) visiting active priests, and two (2) retired priests resident in the diocese from elsewhere.

There are two (2) Religious Congregations located in the diocese, the Sisters of Mercy and Sisters of Jesus & Mary, as well as the Carmelite Community of Apostolic Hermits. These have a combined membership of one (1) male religious and thirty four (34) female religious.

Together with the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (the National Board), the reviewer would like to thank Bishop John Fleming for his invitation to undertake a Review of child safeguarding arrangements and practice in the Diocese of Killala. Everyone met with, including personnel from Kilmoremoy and Backs parishes were willing and open to discuss safeguarding practice arrangements in the diocese, and share their safeguarding documentation.

Ministry with children and young people includes children's Masses; altar serving; choirs; traditional music groups; Rejoice gospel choir; preparation for first communion and confirmation; the Pope John Paul II Award Scheme; and the Ballina Youth Camp (2019).

During 2020 and 2021, a range of activities involving children and young people were ceased to comply with government guidelines on Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. However, gradual steps are being taken by parishes to encourage the resumption of activity with children and young people.

### **Process of Review**

The Review of compliance was measured against the National Board's seven standards, contained in *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*, which is accessible at <https://www.safeguarding.ie/policy-guidance/policy-document>. The Review concentrated on safeguarding arrangements and practice through evaluating written records and meetings with Church personnel.

In order to assess compliance, Bishop John Fleming, of the Diocese of Killala invited the National Board to undertake a review of practice, which took place in February 2023.

A Memorandum of Understanding and Data Processing Deed Agreement were signed prior to the Review taking place.

The Diocese of Killala Review fieldwork was undertaken during the period February 13 and 14, 2023. The following is a list of those with whom the reviewer met or spoke with during the fieldwork of this Review:

- Bishop John Fleming
- The Safeguarding Director (including training and vetting)/DLP
- The Diocesan Secretary
- A Priest Advisor
- The Chairperson and members of the Diocesan Child Safeguarding Committee
- Parish Priests
- Local Safeguarding Representatives
- Sacristans
- The Diocesan Director of Sacred Music
- Choir leaders
- A Children's Mass Leader
- A Traditional Music Group Leader
- Pope John Paul II Award Scheme Leaders
- The Ballina Summer Camp Leader
- Tusla
- An Garda Síochána

Despite an invitation having been issued to them, it was not possible for the reviewer to meet or communicate with a complainant or with a respondent.

## **STANDARDS**

The Standards are a level of practice required to ensure good child safeguarding arrangements. Each standard is self-contained and supported by indicators to evidence if safeguarding arrangements and practice meet the required standard. The National Board has produced detailed Guidance, which is accessible on its website (<https://www.safeguarding.ie/guidance>).

The seven Standards are:

Standard 1: Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments

Standard 2: Procedures for responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations

Standard 3: Care and Support for the Complainant

Standard 4: Care and Management of the Respondent

Standard 5: Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe

Standard 6: Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

Standard 7: Quality-Assuring Compliance with the Standards

This Review concentrates on practice through evaluating written records, interviews with Church personnel; and information from complainants and respondents.

An assessment of practice under each standard is set out below:

## Standard 1 - Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments

*Church bodies provide an environment for children that is welcoming, nurturing and safe. They provide access to good role models whom children can trust, who respect, protect and enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development.*

The Parish Safeguarding Children Handbook, 2017 developed jointly and issued by the Western Province Dioceses is comprehensive and reflects the requirements of the *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016*. The Handbook and all relevant application and consent forms are available in each church sacristy. A copy is provided to all Parish Priests and Local Safeguarding Representatives (LSRs). The Handbook can be accessed on the safeguarding section of the diocesan website.

Vetting for all relevant personnel including volunteers is up to date. The vetting process is well organised by the Director of Safeguarding/DLP, the Diocesan Secretary and LSRs. The vetting of diocesan personnel is supported by the Western Dioceses Vetting office in Galway. The reviewer had access to vetting documentation which was securely stored.

**Table 1.**

Vetting figures (2016 to 2023):

Year	Clergy / Diocesan personnel
2016	16
2017	119
2018	34
2019	85
2020	11
2021	40
2022	122
2023	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>437</b>

The variance in annual figures is due to the number of personnel who require to be re-vetted in any given year. The Ballina summer camp in 2019 required personnel involved to be vetted. Guidance is in place for clerics /religious who have ministry with children in an external organisation / Church Body. This information is collated and held securely by the Diocesan Secretary.

The reviewer was provided with information about the status of incardinated diocesan priests, where they were working including those who were working and resident outside of the diocese.

There is up to date guidance in place on the use of technology, internet, texting/email, photography and CCTV / webcams. The use of technology is included in the Children's Code of Behaviour poster / leaflet.

A standardised Safeguarding Children General Register was developed and printed in Booklet form for completion. The Booklet provides evidence of leaders / adults and children present during activities / groups, and that supervision ratios for children and young people have been adhered to.

There is guidance in place for external organisations / groups using diocesan premises. The reviewer visited a parish where three external groups use Church premises, and he was provided with the completed documentation to confirm that these groups had their child protection policy and insurance in place.

Guidance on Whistleblowing is included in the Parish Safeguarding Children Handbook; there were no whistleblowing reports since the last National Board Review in 2013.

A Complaints Procedure for Safeguarding Concerns that are not Allegations of Abuse is included in the Parish Safeguarding Children Handbook; there were no complaints reported since the last National Board Review in 2013.

As part of the Review, the reviewer met with Bishop John Fleming, the Diocesan Safeguarding Director/DLP (who has responsibility for vetting and training co-ordination as well), the Diocesan Secretary, Parish Priests, the Safeguarding Committee, and LSRs. He also met with children and young people's choir leaders, with sacristans, with the leader of the Ballina Youth Camp (2019), and with leaders of the Pope John Paul II Award Scheme. All were clear about their roles and responsibilities within their remit to safeguard children and young people. Children's activity leaders talked to the reviewer about the good team work in parishes and strong partnerships established with schools. They were very positive about the support they received from the Safeguarding Director/DLP, the LSRs, Parish Priests and Bishop Fleming. They were able to articulate their knowledge of safe care and the arrangements needed to achieve this; for example, through safe recruitment; volunteer application screening; vetting; training; obtaining parental consent; adherence to required adult supervision ratios to number of children involved in activities; completion of hazard risk assessments; sign-in registers; codes of behaviour for adults and children; display of safeguarding information in Church premises; and how to respond to, and report a concern. The reviewer was shown evidence of these examples on parish visits, for example in sacristies, sign in/out registers, child friendly poster/leaflet, completed hazard risk assessments, safeguarding children general register, *celebret* notices, and external organisation use of premises documentation.



Parish Priests advised me that all documentation was completed for visiting priests, and sacristans confirmed that they were confident to ask visiting priests to show them their *celebret* card. The reviewer had an opportunity to meet with two leaders from the Pope John Paul II Award Scheme. The Scheme is school based, in partnership with the diocese for young people aged 16/17 in their Transition Year. They have an opportunity to be involved in community activities, for example in a nursing home, with St. Vincent de Paul, and in a special needs school. They participate in parish choirs, readings and prayers at Mass, and Morning Prayer at school. During Covid-19 restrictions, young people made recordings of songs and prayers to be shared with families via social media. The young people have an opportunity to reflect on their experience and on their faith, and on what it meant to them to be involved in the Scheme. An award ceremony for the young people and their families is held at the end of the year in the Cathedral. The leaders confirmed that parental consent forms are completed and all staff are vetted, and had completed safeguarding training.

A Faith Camp in Ballina was held in the summer of 2019 for children and young people aged 5 years to 13 years for a week of faith, friendship and activities including art, music, drama and support. The preparation for the Camp included training and vetting of volunteers, the completion of registration forms / parental consent forms, including medical information and any special needs of children and young people. A parents' evening was held. A code of behaviour was drawn up, and a hazard risk assessment was completed. There was guidance provided on the use of technology, including mobile phones and the taking and posting of photographs on social media. Adult to children supervision ratios were agreed and attendance registers were developed. It is hoped that in the future the Camp will take place again as part of the ongoing resumption of activities post Covid-19.

The reviewer commends the work and commitment of all the above personnel who work together to safeguarding children and young people.

He was satisfied that arrangements are in place to create and maintain a safe environment for children and young people in the diocese, based on review of documentation and meetings with safeguarding personnel and leaders of children's activities.

**This standard is met.**

## Standard 2 - Procedures for responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations

*Church bodies have clear procedures and guidance on what to do when suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations arise regarding a child's safety or welfare that will ensure there is a prompt response. They also enable the Church to meet all national and international legal and practice requirements and guidance.*

An audit of new notifications of alleged abuse received by the diocese since the last National Board Review in 2013 was completed. There were two (2) cases regarding incardinated priests from the diocese. Both cases had timely notifications to the statutory authorities and to the National Board.

Reports of abuse received regarding diocesan incardinated priests since the previous Review in 2013 up to March 2023 are outlined in the table below:

**Table 2**

Cleric	Current Status	Number of Complainants	Gardai notified within	Tusla notified within	National Board notified within	Canonical Action taken
<b>Out of Ministry</b>						
A.	Out of Ministry	1	1 day	1 day	1 day	Preliminary canonical investigations were completed.
		2	8 days	10 days	8 days	
<b>Deceased Prior to Report</b>						
B.	Deceased	1	4 days	34 days for No requirement to report but Diocese did so for information only	9 days	CDF was notified of complaint.

There were also two (2) cases received by the diocese regarding clergy from other Church bodies in the period being reviewed. The reviewer examined documentation relating to both these cases and was satisfied that these were immediately referred to the other Church bodies to follow up, and that notifications had been made to the civil authorities. The diocese received confirmation of receipt of the information from the other Church bodies.

There were five (5) cases regarding adults who were not involved in the Church. The reviewer examined these cases and was satisfied that the diocese made notifications to the civil authorities as required, and advised those who made a report about support services available.

The reviewer was satisfied that the Designated Liaison Person was widely identified, so that everyone knows who to go to if they have safeguarding concerns. This is achieved through display of DLP contact details on the diocesan website, in entrances TO all Church premises, and in the Diocesan Vineyard Magazine and weekly parish bulletins.

The reporting procedures for allegations/disclosures of child protection concerns are provided to all diocesan staff/personnel, volunteers and clergy, through training and information in the Safeguarding Parish Handbook.

The DLPs, past and present were proactive in maintaining contact with civil authorities about the progress of investigations. The reviewer had an opportunity to meet with a Garda Superintendent, who was the named contact with the diocese until March 2022. He reported good working relationships with the bishop and with previous and current DLPs, and he confirmed that timely notifications of reports of abuse, full disclosure of quality information, and co-operation with Gardaí investigations were features of these relationships. The reviewer also spoke to the diocese's named contact in Tusla who also confirmed a good working relationship with the diocese, timely notification of reports of alleged abuse, and the sharing of information.

At the end of 2022, the bishop corresponded with the HSE, Gardaí and Tusla requesting the resumption of inter-agency meetings, and these statutory agencies have confirmed their willingness to participate in these meetings.

The case files audited were well organised, information was accessible and up to date. All files were securely stored and retained in compliance with GDPR requirements.

A case-management file review (2022) was completed by the DLP, and the outcome of this was notified to the National Board.

The reviewer was satisfied that procedures are in place for responding to child protection suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations. This was based on audit and analysis of case files, and discussions with the bishop and Director of Safeguarding/DLP, and representatives from the Gardaí and Tusla.

**This standard is met.**

### **Standard 3 - Care and Support for the Complainant**

*Complainants who have suffered abuse as children receive a compassionate response when they disclose their abuse. They, and their families, are offered appropriate support, advice and pastoral care.*

There was evidence on case management files including correspondence from complainants, and from discussions with the bishop and the Director of Safeguarding/DLP, that complainants are listened to, treated with respect and offered counselling support from Towards Healing and Towards Peace.

The bishop and Director of Safeguarding/DLP proactively reached out to meet with, and provide advice, support and care to complainants, and to maintain ongoing contact as appropriate. It was evident from reading case files that there was a sensitive and compassionate response to complainants.

A named Support Person from the diocese is available as and when required. Complainants were kept up to date about progress with the case, and advised about how to access legal representation.

A Candle of Atonement is lighted during February each year. The next one is planned for 24th February 2023.

The reviewer is satisfied from discussion with the bishop and DLP that all complainants who have contact with the diocese are offered and have been provided support and pastoral care, and this is an ongoing commitment of the bishop and safeguarding personnel.

The reviewer was satisfied that appropriate arrangements are in place to support and provide pastoral care to complainants who approach the Diocese of Killala.

**This standard is met.**

#### **Standard 4 - Care and Management of the Respondent**

*The Church authority has in place a fair process for investigating and managing child safeguarding concerns. When the threshold for reporting has been reached, a system of support and monitoring for respondents (cleric or religious) is provided.*

Cleric A: The review of case records evidenced that the management of Cleric A was based on ongoing assessment of his circumstances, and of identified risk. He was advised about how to access civil and canon legal representation.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was notified of the reports of alleged abuse and the canon law process was initiated following completion of civil investigations.

Cleric A received support from a Priest Advisor, and his welfare was considered as part of case management. He remains subject to a canonical precept and management plan, which is kept under review.

The Priest Advisor who participated in the Review was clear about his role and responsibilities, and was aware of the circumstances of the case, including the detail of the up to date canonical precept and management plan in place. He advised that he received support from the bishop and the DLP. The reviewer suggested the need for formal meetings between a Priest Advisor and the DLP.

Cleric B (deceased): Notifications were made to the civil authorities and to the National Board, for their information.

There was evidence in case files examined of the diocese seeking advice from the National Board, and of that advice being followed. Referrals had been made to the National Case Management Committee, and all recommendations made by the Committee had been actioned. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was notified and updated about incidents of alleged abuse, and was kept up to date about the progress of an investigation and its outcome; and this was evidenced in correspondence, reports and minutes accessed in case files.

The reviewer was satisfied that arrangements are in place for the management and care of respondents.

**This standard is met.**

## Standard 5 - Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe

*Church personnel are trained and supported in all aspects of safeguarding relevant to their role, in order to develop and maintain the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to safeguard and protect children.*

The Diocesan Child Safeguarding Committee has a strategic objective to ensure that all Church personnel receive appropriate training. The objective is progressed through actions agreed and reviewed on an annual basis by the Committee.

The Safeguarding Director/DLP maintains a record of personnel who have completed safeguarding training and refresher training. Training records/certificates are also held by LSRs. The Safeguarding Committee receive updates from the Director of Safeguarding/DLP regarding all safeguarding training, and an annual training return is submitted to the National Board.

A training needs analysis is completed each year informed by completed parish self-audits, and from direct feedback from LSRs to the Director of Safeguarding/DLP, and this information informs the Training Plan for the following year. The Director of Safeguarding/DLP is an accredited trainer and has ensured that safeguarding training is up to date. In 2022, safeguarding training sessions were completed in April/May and August/September, and records of attendance were completed. Dates for training sessions have been set for 2023. The Director of Safeguarding/DLP also will facilitate additional training sessions outside the planned training schedule if requested by LSRs.

**Table 3 Training Activity**

Nov. 2017 to Mar. 2018	167
2019	39
2022	140
2023	9

The variance in annual figures is due to the number of personnel who require refresher training.

Training did not take place during 2020 and 2021 due to Covid-19 restrictions.

LSRs complete safeguarding information sessions.

Parish personnel fed back to the reviewer that they valued training including refresher sessions as these provided an opportunity for ongoing learning and to receive new information about safeguarding procedures and guidance.

The reviewer was satisfied that safeguarding training is up to date, and arrangements are in place for the delivery of ongoing safeguarding training which is kept under review by the Safeguarding Committee.

**This standard is met.**

## **Standard 6 - Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message**

*Church bodies appropriately communicate the Church's child safeguarding message.*

A notice of the National Board Review for Safeguarding Children in the diocese was promoted and placed on the diocesan website.

The Diocesan Child Safeguarding Committee has a strategic objective to ensure that the Church's safeguarding message is communicated to maintain a safe environment for children and young people. The objective is progressed through actions agreed and reviewed annually by the Committee.

A Pastoral Centre and parish churches visited had clearly displayed information about safeguarding (including child friendly versions), with current DLP and statutory authority contact details in church entrances and in the sacristies. Information about Towards Healing and Towards Peace support services were also available.

Weekly parish bulletins include contact details of the DLP and the statutory authorities. The diocesan magazine, *The Vineyard*, which is published twice yearly, has a section updating safeguarding children information.

A link to the safeguarding section on the diocesan website has been posted on the diocesan Facebook page.

Translation of safeguarding information into other languages is kept under review and informed by feedback from parishes as part of completion of self-audits.

An annual Safeguarding Sunday Mass takes place, and was last held in October 2022. The focus of the Mass is on victims of abuse and their families. It is an opportunity for the diocese to highlight the importance of safeguarding children and how it forms part of day to day life in the parishes across the diocese. There is an acknowledgement of what the Church has learned from the past; and on how to use this learning to create and uphold the highest safeguarding standards.

Information about forthcoming training programmes is communicated through parish notices and bulletins.

*Celebret* notices were clearly displayed in sacristies.

Notices concerning the use of CCTV and webcams are clearly displayed at church entrances. The diocesan website has recently been updated to improve accessibility to safeguarding information and resources.

Updated information from the National Board is made available in the safeguarding section of the diocesan website.

Parish visits were completed during the past year by the bishop and the Director of Safeguarding/DLP, and both attended the twice-yearly Deanery meetings.

The parish meetings followed a set agenda, which included review of the parish self-audit form, discussion about creating and maintaining a safe environment, vetting, training, and communicating the safeguarding message, along with any other business. Minutes of the meetings were completed. The outreach to parishes, together with Deanery visits post Covid-19 is to be commended.

The reviewer was satisfied that there are effective arrangements in place to communicate the safeguarding message across the diocese.

**This standard is met**



**Standard 7 - Quality Assuring Compliance with the Standards**

*The Church body develops a plan of action to quality assure compliance with the safeguarding standards. This action plan is reviewed annually. The Church body only has responsibility to monitor, evaluate and report on compliance with the indicators under each standard that apply to it, depending on its ministry.*

In line with the statutory requirements of the Children First Act 2015, the diocese has a Child Safeguarding Statement, which is displayed on the diocesan website. As per the requirements of section 2 of the Act, the diocese keeps a list of Mandated Persons, of which there are thirty (30) in the diocese. The bishop agreed to raise with the other dioceses in the Western Province the need to amend section 2.9, of the Parish Safeguarding Children Handbook, 2017, 'Reporting Abuse and the Sacrament of Reconciliation', to reflect the changes that were made to the generic Safeguarding Statement in December 2022. The reviewer suggested that this can be done by way of an addendum to section 2.9 and then uploaded to the website, from where it can be printed by parishes to add into downloaded copies of the Handbook. The bishop agreed to give this matter priority.

The Diocesan Child Safeguarding Committee is appropriately constituted, with a schedule of meetings in place for the year ahead.

The reviewer is satisfied that the recommendations from the last Review in 2013 were fully implemented, evidenced by a review of safeguarding guidance, case management files, safeguarding plans and annual reports, together with feedback from the bishop and Director of Safeguarding/DLP.

The reviewer would like to thank the Chairperson for the invitation to attend the Diocesan Child Safeguarding Committee meeting held on February 13, 2023. At the meeting there was clear evidence of good working relationships between members and a collegiate approach to achieve the objectives of the Committee. The Chairperson followed a circulated agenda, and enabled participation of all members. The Chairperson reviewed matters arising / actions from the previous meeting, summarised discussion, and agreed actions to be taken forward.

A Strategic Child Safeguarding Plan, 2021 to 2024 is in place, which is based on the seven standards of *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016*. The Strategy includes specific objectives and actions across the seven standards, including objectives and actions for communication and training (communicating the safeguarding message and training activity is included in standards five and six above). Strategic objectives and actions are part of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee's meeting agenda, and an annual review of progress with objectives and actions is completed.

The reviewer was impressed with the model of using time-limited subgroups to progress actions of the Strategic Children's Safeguarding Plan, 2021 to 2024. Members of the Committee willingly agree to participate in the subgroups, based on their knowledge and experience. Work undertaken by subgroups has included an update of the diocesan website, a review and update of the whistleblowing policy, improvement to the quality of the parish self-audit booklet, and update of the hazard/risk assessment form. At the committee meeting on February 13 2023, a subgroup was established to review the bullying guidance.

The Committee developed a printed Self-Audit booklet, based on feedback from Parish Priests and LSRs. A meeting was held in December 2022 for all Parish Priests and LSRs, about parish self-audit forms, and it involved a question and answer session. Parishes were also provided a leaflet. This has facilitated full completion of audit questions. All parish self-audit returns for 2022 have been completed, and have been completed in all preceding years from 2016, including during Covid-19.

The parish self-audits are collated and analysed by the Director of Safeguarding/DLP and the outcome is presented in spreadsheet format and shared with the Safeguarding Committee. All support needs of individual parishes identified in the self-audit returns are included in plans to be taken forward in the following year. This was evidenced by the reviewer's examination of completed self-audits, Diocesan Child Safeguarding Committee minutes, and annual Safeguarding Review Reports.

The Director of Safeguarding/DLP, together with all Committee members are to be commended for their voluntary contribution to the work of the Safeguarding Committee.

The current Safeguarding Director/DLP commenced in the post of Safeguarding Director in February 2018 and in the DLP role in December 2021. The Safeguarding Director/DLP confirmed that a handover for both roles had been completed. She also had completed Designated Liaison Person training. She advised that the bishop was accessible and supportive. The Safeguarding Director/DLP also confirmed that there was shared responsibility and a team approach with the Safeguarding Committee to progress action plans.

Bishop Fleming and the Director of Safeguarding/DLP have regular meetings to review safeguarding arrangements and to provide updates about progress with case management. The reviewer suggested to the bishop that planned meeting dates should be scheduled with the Director of Safeguarding/DLP, and that one meeting a year should be dedicated to discuss her professional development, training and support needs. The bishop agreed to progress this with the Director of Safeguarding/DLP.

The reviewer also suggested a review of the Director of Safeguarding/DLP's job description to ensure it reflects the breadth of their role and responsibilities for safeguarding arrangements, Designated Liaison Person, training and vetting co-ordination which the bishop agreed to action.

The reviewer was satisfied that arrangements are in place to quality assure compliance with the seven standards.

**This standard is met.**

## Conclusion

The reviewer was assured regarding compliance with the *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016* following completion of the fieldwork visit to the diocese.

The reviewer was also satisfied that policy, procedures and guidance together with safeguarding arrangements are in place for children and young people in the diocese. This is based on evidence from documentation examined and feedback from clergy, staff and volunteers.

All relevant Church personnel had been Garda vetted, had received training, and those interviewed demonstrated a clear understanding of their safeguarding role and responsibilities. They shared that the Safeguarding Director/DLP was accessible, supportive and followed up any queries they had.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee members have a range of experience and skills; are willing to work together; and to be involved in sub-groups to progress actions of the Child Safeguarding Three Year Strategic Plan, 2021 to 2024.

The bishop's visible leadership, his direct contact to support safeguarding personnel and children's leaders in parishes, and his attendance at the Diocesan Child Safeguarding Committee meetings was valued by everyone the reviewer met during the Review.

Everyone involved in safeguarding is to be commended for their care and commitment to work together, and give generously of their time to keep children and young people safe and happy while involved in Church activities.