

Winter Newsletter

Dear Colleagues

As it comes to the close of another year, we wanted to update you on some of the events/developments from Safeguarding. It also provides an opportunity to reflect on the past number of months in terms of what has been extraordinary times. COVID-19 a cruel virus has impacted on us all and it has changed life for many significantly. We know for some; in these unprecedented times it has been particularly challenging not only in health terms and sadly the loss of loved ones but also there are those affected by the economic hardship of the pandemic.

We have all found new ways of working and connecting with each other whether through phone calls, WhatsApp, Zoom and MS Teams.

Thank you for all that you do to help the church to be safer for every person of all ages and we hope that you have a safe and peaceful Christmas.

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The Safeguarding Office and Northern Vetting Office will close on:

Friday 18th December at 5pm and will re-open on Monday 4th January 2021 at 9am

The Safeguarding office number 028 90492798, email office@soddc.org and the Duty phone 075 3499 2124 will not be manned during this time.

The Northern Vetting Office number 028 9049 2783 and email vetting@soddc.org will not be manned during this time.



Recent Events

A fond Farewell to Philip O'Hara

A fond farewell to our colleague and friend, Philip O'Hara, who is leaving the Diocese in his role as Safeguarding Designated Liaison Person. We wish him all the very best in his future endeavours.

Virtual Meeting with PSC Chairs

The Safeguarding Office and Parish Safeguarding Committee Chairs recently held a successful virtual meeting via zoom which more than 30 of you attended. Feedback from the meeting was really encouraging and given the current public health advice, this platform for connecting works well as a way to continue to engage with Parishes and hear about developments in safeguarding. We hope to arrange more of these virtual meetings in the new year.

Remember

The Safeguarding Office continues to operate (although closed over the Christmas period)

Please do not hesitate to contact us by email or phone if you have any questions or need any kind of safeguarding advice and support.

We are conscious, however, that arrangements may alter pending public health advice.

Introducing our New Chair

Amanda Stewart was appointed Chairperson of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee in July this year for a period of three years.

Amanda is also Chairperson of the Carrickfergus Parish Safeguarding Committee.

Amanda is the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Policing Board and has worked for the Board since it's inception in 2001 taking forward many of the reforms to policing in Northern Ireland. Beginning her career as a Youth Worker with the Belfast Education and Library Board, Amanda holds a BSC (Hons) Degree in Community Youth Work from the Ulster University and a Masters in Education and Contemporary Society.

Our sincere thanks to Father Michael McGinnity who stepped down as Chairperson of the Committee, but we are glad we are not losing him from the Committee as Father Michael has taken on the role as Deputy Chairperson.



Diocesan Safeguarding Committee

The focus of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee for 2021 will include looking at areas such as:

- **The development of the next Three-Year Strategic Plan.** A working group has been formed to take this forward. The intention is to consult internally and externally with key stakeholders including yourselves to help identify what we want to achieve for safeguarding in the period ahead and what areas we should focus on. Moving forward and building on our work to date.
- **ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences).** This method of safeguarding will be about informing/transforming all our work in the Diocese, so we undertake our interactions and how things are done in a more trauma informed approach. This will include increasing our awareness of the signs of trauma, how ACEs may impact on children/young people if not mitigated against and building on our existing skills. More information regarding ACEs is available at <https://www.safeguardingni.org/aces>
- **A working group** has also been established to consider the lessons to be learnt from the recent Independent Review of Safeguarding Structures and Arrangements in the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

Policies Update

New Parish Safeguarding Committee Handbook

You will all hopefully have received the New Parish Safeguarding Committee Handbook which has been developed. It provides a 'go to' guide offering 'at a glance' practical advice for Parish Safeguarding Committees in their role of promoting a culture of safeguarding into the life of Parishes. It can be accessed in the Resources Section of the website. This will be of particular help when you have new members of PSC's. Please click to access [PSC-HANDBOOK.pdf](#)

Parish Retention Document

This will hopefully assist with record keeping. Please email the Office any questions that you have regarding the document so that we can address these going forward. If you did not receive a copy of this document, please contact the office.

Training Update

Opportunity for training from ONUS

The Safe Place Webinar is a 65-minute information session that combines information on the Safe Place Initiative along with Domestic Violence and Abuse Awareness Raising.

You may like to attend a session to refresh your knowledge or you may like to invite others from your organisation to attend, especially those who have not attended training previously. There will also be the opportunity to replenish your Safe Place resources by attending the webinar, resources will be covered by the funding.

I have provided links to the webinars currently on offer below, our full programme of webinars can be found on our website: <https://onustraining.co.uk/webinars/>



Mental Health and Well-being

As a result of COVID-19, more families are suffering from stress and anxiety which can lead to mental-ill health and/or increased alcohol/substance usage. Understanding Mental Ill-health and Support Service Pathways can help practitioners identify mental health issues and enhance their confidence to offer support and signpost to other services.

This training is available virtually and is free. It focuses on the Family Focused Practice (FFP), (Think Family) approach which acknowledges that individuals living with mental illness are members of family systems, and that recognition of parents, parenting, and children/young people is a vital part of assessment, support, and recovery.

Places are limited. The next training is taking place on 12th Jan. Please click on the link for more information and to book a place <http://www.ci-ni.org.uk/think-family-training-5>
Further dates are planned

Additional information can be obtained from www.ci-ni.org.uk

Listening Initiative

As you know we had started a “listening exercise” around Parishes prior to “lockdown.” Thank you for your involvement with this and we are now trying to look at ways to take this forward so that this important work is continued.

Online Interactive Engagement with Children & Young People

Early in the New Year the Safeguarding Office will be launching a pilot scheme to offer advice, support and training for those Leaders offering online interactive engagement with children and young people to ensure that all those involved understand the level of best practice needed to keep everyone safe online.

The Safeguarding Office will be contacting PSC chairs and those leaders in parishes who have been selected as part of the pilot scheme.

Remember

Please do not engage with online activities, unless you have been selected as part of the pilot scheme.

Useful Resources

The NSPCC has produced some **helpful advice** about keeping children/young people safe from harm during the COVID-19 restrictions, including what to look out for and questions to ask. This is available at:



<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/coronavirus-advice-support-children-families-parents/>

The current pandemic can be really worrying and can impact on your mental wellbeing below are some links that may be of interest: <https://covidwellbeingni.info/>

Looking after your mental health during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic Take 5 Steps to wellbeing:

https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/2020-07/Coronavirus%20Take%205%20A5%204pp%20final%2007_20.pdf