

DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING PLAN 2021-2024 CONSULTATION

The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee is responsible for developing a three-year Safeguarding Plan for the Diocese of Down and Connor. The Diocesan Safeguarding Plan outlines our key aims and priorities to achieve the Diocesan Safeguarding vision. It sets the direction of travel for the next three years and provides a framework for our annual work plan.

OUTCOMES

There are three overarching outcomes for the Safeguarding Plan 2021-2024:

- 1- We have a safe and welcoming Church;
- 2- We have a culture of Safeguarding integrated into the life of the Church;
- 3- We care for those directly affected by abuse and their families.

OBJECTIVES

The Safeguarding Committee has set four key objectives based on these outcomes. These will direct our work over the next three years.

- 1- To create and maintain within our Church Community safe and welcoming places for children, young people and adults, and those who work with them.
- 2- To promote and support a culture of Safeguarding within the Diocese and to remain vigilant in protecting children, young people and adults at risk of harm.
- 3- To further develop the range of pastoral services offered to those directly affected by abuse and their families.
- 4- To foster a greater awareness of the needs of those directly affected by abuse and their families within parish communities.

In creating this plan, we talk to a range of internal and external partners, volunteers, clergy and professional staff who collectively support the work of Safeguarding within our diocese. This is to make sure that the final plan considers the views of everyone including yours. To access and respond click here; [Consultation on the Development of the Diocesan Safeguarding Plan 2021-2024 \(downandconnorsafeguarding.com\)](https://www.downandconnorsafeguarding.com)

Responses collected during this process will assist in shaping the new Safeguarding Plan 2021-2024. We would appreciate receiving your response before **Monday 31 May 2021**. Please send us your views by email to office@soddc.org.uk or by post to the Safeguarding Office 120 Clintonville Road Belfast BT14 6LA.

Down & Connor

Safeguarding & Vetting Office

120 Cliftonville Road
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Contact Us:

Safeguarding: 028 9049 2798

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DOWN AND CONNOR DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE—MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Membership of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee includes the following people:

Amanda Stewart, Chair, Fr Michael McGinnity, Deputy Chair, Fr Eugene O'Hagan, Vicar General & Chancellor, Fr Peter Owens, Episcopal Vicar for Safeguarding, Caroline Brogan, and Paul McNeill.

Margaret Burke, Philip O'Hara and Susan Gordon attend these meetings as representatives of the Safeguarding Office.

One of the members of the Committee has written about being a member of the Committee – see below:

“Hello, my name is Caroline Brogan, and I am a member of the Down & Connor Diocesan Safeguarding Committee. In my day job I work as a Learning and Development Manager with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee is chaired by Amanda Stewart alongside other members of the laity and Clergy. One of the key responsibilities of the Committee is to ensure that the Church provides an environment that is welcoming, nurturing, and safe for children and adults in need of protection. The Committee works closely with the Diocesan Safeguarding Office. Margaret Burke the Designated Liaison Person and Susan Gordon Training and Parish Development Worker attend Committee Meetings and take forward a significant amount of work on behalf of the Committee.

Ireland has a ‘One Church Approach’ meaning that across Ireland all Dioceses and Religious Orders have one set of policies and standards. These are devised by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland and it is the task of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee to ensure that in Down and Connor that we follow these standards and have sound safeguarding practice in every aspect of Church Life.

Safeguarding is a continuum and can range from making sure there are no sharp scissors in the Children’s Liturgy Group, to having Codes of Behaviour for all staff and volunteers or to responding to allegations of harm. Our work to safeguard children and adults at risk in the Church will continue to evolve and respond to changes within our communities. This time last year the Church had a limited role in online ministry but with the impact of Covid-19 the Committee are exploring how safeguarding risks are managed online.

It is important that as a Church and as a Committee we maintain a culture of vigilance. Safeguarding is not a ‘one off event’, it is always going to have a central role in Church life. Indeed, an Independent Inquiry into the Catholic Church in England and Wales in 2020 is a sharp reminder that safeguarding needs to be embedded in everything we do.

In addition to my role on the Committee I also provide Safeguarding Training in the Diocese. In this role I have met hundreds of volunteers who give their time freely and who are committed to providing an environment where everyone is valued and safe. The tremendous contribution of these individuals cannot be underestimated. Essentially these volunteers and staff who are providing respectful and compassionate care, is the bedrock of a Church where all feel welcomed and safe”.

Caroline Brogan

ENGAGING IN ONLINE MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Given the current pandemic and its impact on opportunities to meet face to face with children and young people, the need to explore other ways of 'reaching out' and maintaining a connection has been an important aspect for parishes to consider. Children and young people need to know that although they are not physically in a building they have not been forgotten about. One of the ways that some parishes wanted to connect with their children and young people was through interactive online ministry.

While online ministry with children and young people requires the same rigorous levels of safeguarding as face to face, there are some additional challenges that need to be managed. Given the safeguarding issues that online interactive ministry presents, the Diocese endeavoured to ensure that appropriate safeguarding arrangements were in place.



The Diocese therefore undertook the following:

A. Availed of training offered by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI). This covered:

- ◆ Understanding risks to children and young people online
- ◆ Preparing a plan to manage and mitigate the risks
- ◆ Monitoring how good safeguarding practice can be maintained online.

This 3-hour training was attended by several people from the Diocese including, Bishop Treanor, Trustees, Chief Operating Officer, Diocesan Safeguarding Committee Members, Living Youth, Living Church and Safeguarding Office Staff.

B. Developed and circulated a 'Top Tips' document regarding online ministry with children and young people.

C. Established a Pilot project with coordination by a Pilot group to:

- ◆ Develop relevant administrative documentation
- ◆ Develop and deliver Training for Best Practice in Online Ministry with Children and Young People
- ◆ Develop a process for application and review
- ◆ Undertake appropriate assessments i.e., Diocesan Risk Assessment and Data Protection Impact Assessment
- ◆ Establish an appropriate Governance and Approval Process as per the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) guidance.

CONT'D- ENGAGING IN ONLINE MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE—PILOT UPDATE

Applications to participate in the Pilot have been made by several parishes prior to the closing date of 1 April 2021. Those involved in the Pilot are at different stages of the process. The Diocese acknowledges and thanks those parishes involved in this Pilot and looks forward to hearing their feedback on the benefits and challenges this new medium presents for engaging with children and young people.

Going forward this medium of engagement may be something that could be continued even when current health restrictions are removed.

The learning from the Pilot will be shared.

Susan Gordon and Margaret Burke

UPDATE FROM PHILIP O'HARA

Hi everyone, well my resignation did not last long!!!

I was asked in March 2021 if I could come back and provide support and direction to the Diocesan Safeguarding Office and to support the safeguarding team to prioritise the tasks that the team was facing.

I must say I am delighted to have accepted this invitation and I am very happy to be back working with such a skilled and experienced team and to engage with such dedicated and committed safeguarding volunteers and personnel in our Parishes.

This is a short-term appointment, and I will be working part-time. Margaret remains our Designated Liaison Person, she will manage all safeguarding referrals, my temporary work, will not encroach on Margaret's role.

The ethos of safeguarding is embedded in our Parishes, you are the safeguarding frontline, it is your work along with our Parish Priests that make our parishes and the variety of pastoral ministries not only spiritually enriching our faith but also safe and nurturing environments for us all to live out our catholic faith.

As someone recently said to me when I returned to work ...It's like the Eagles song Hotel California "you can check out ... but you can never leave" .

Great to be back!!

Philip O'Hara



UPDATE FROM SAFEGUARDING SUPPORT OFFICERS (SSOs)

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" the opening words of *A Tale of Two Cities* reflect our experiences of the last eighteen months. The pandemic has impacted on all our lives in all sorts of ways. For those of you who have lost loved ones or whose health or well-being has been negatively affected we offer you our sympathy and prayers.

These challenging times have also allowed us to experience and see at first hand the best of human nature. Those who continued to support and care for our sick and vulnerable, those who went the extra mile to ensure our neighbours and communities had some semblance of normality and consistency, those in our faith communities who prayed with and for us and our priests who continued to celebrate the Eucharist and provide sustenance and guidance in our need.

We would also like to acknowledge the work of our PSCs and especially the chairs who remained faithful to their safeguarding role at a time when everything around us was changing and we wondered where we fitted in and what were we supposed to do now!

At times like this it is always helpful to go back to basics. What is the role of the PSC? Put simply it is to help create a safe environment in our parishes where our children and young people and adults can worship, play and have fun and grow in faith and maturity and where parents and guardians can happily encourage their children to get involved because they have confidence that their parish is safe and welcoming. This is what you do. Safeguarding is central to the work of the parish, the preaching and living of the Gospel within the community. It is not an add-on that we can take or leave. So the next time you pin a notice to the notice board in your church or process a volunteer's application form or meet with a group leader know that all of this adds value to your parish and we thank you for it.



Pastoral Community Safeguarding Support Virtual Meetings

Over the month of March we held 9 zoom meetings for the different Pastoral Communities. 47 PSCs out of a possible 74 were represented with some Pastoral Communities well attended and others less so. As well as sharing information from the Office a number of issues were raised by PSCs. Here is a summary of the issues raised:

Zoom Meetings

While there are positives in having zoom meetings, convenience etc. all agreed that meeting physically is much more beneficial. We hope that attendances at the Pastoral Community Meetings will improve as it is a source of encouragement and support and your absence does impact on us all.

PSC Membership

Committees hadn't met in over a year and there was some concern that members may wish to step down. On the back of this very real concern can we draw your attention to the PSC Handbook which you can access on the Safeguarding Website <https://downandconnorsafeguarding.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/04.09.20-2020PSC-HANDBOOK.pdf>

We highly recommend this resource and suggest each PSC share and discuss it among you as a way of re-establishing yourselves as a PSC. We know of at least one parish which did this via a zoom meeting with very positive outcomes – members were clearer on their roles and responsibilities and therefore more prepared to take on work. That's an outcome many PSC chairs would like to see. Don't forget you can contact us for support or queries should you wish to do so.

SAFEGUARDING SUPPORT OFFICERS UPDATE CONT'D

Vulnerability of clergy and volunteers in some parishes because of the actions of individuals who are themselves vulnerable and at risk.

We have been advised there is an initiative by PSNI who have agreed to gather Church representatives from all denominations in and around the Belfast city centre to discuss how pastors and clergy could deal with a host of issues ranging across mental health and drug / alcohol abuse and the challenges people so affected pose. Information and advice has been issued to clergy by the Diocese.

Online Ministry

In the absence of face to face ministry a few parishes were providing interactive online ministry. A Pilot is ongoing, the learning from which, will be disseminated.

Finally, we would like to wish you every blessing and hope that the easing of restrictions and the new life we see all around at this time will be a source of encouragement to you in your Safeguarding roles and again remember we are available should you wish to contact us.

Mary.wylie@ssoddc.org

Patsy.curry@ssoddc.org

Patsy Curry and Mary Wylie

Summary for Attendance at the Pastoral Community Meetings

SUMMARY	STATS
Number of Parishes in Down and Connor	86
Number of PSC Chairpersons representing Parishes in Down and Connor (including those parishes who have joined together)	74
Number of Attendees at these sessions (includes representatives from Queens Chaplaincy (1) and Clonard (1))	54
Total Parishes represented at these sessions	47
Total Clergy in Attendance	16
Total religious Sisters in Attendance	3

TRAINING NEWS

Since our last newsletter the following training has taken place online:



Zoom Training

This training was aimed at the New Facilitators in preparation for delivering Level 1 Safeguarding Training on a virtual platform. 14 Facilitators completed this training in March 2021.

Level One Child Safeguarding

16th February	17 volunteers completed
24th April	11 volunteers completed
28th April	17 volunteers completed

Adult Safeguarding Training - Keeping Adults Safe Training for Staff and Volunteers

14 of mostly SPRED volunteers, undertook this bespoke training which was delivered by Volunteer Now on 23rd February 2021.

Best Practice for Online Ministry with Children and Young People for parishes involved in the Pilot

There were 6 training sessions delivered via Zoom between January – March 2021. In total 84 volunteers completed these sessions.

Child Level 2 Safeguarding training

As this training can now be delivered online, dates will be advertised in due course on our website training calendar.

<https://downandconnorsafeguarding.com/available-training/>



TRAINING NEWS CONT'D

Parish Safeguarding Committee Retention of Records information Meetings

There have been two meetings held via Zoom in relation to Record Keeping for Parish Safeguarding Committees. 19 parishes attended these sessions.

This was an opportunity to learn more about matters relating to record keeping and to discuss issues arising for Parish Safeguarding Committees .



In terms of progressing this, the Safeguarding Office are collating the questions/matters raised by the Parish Safeguarding Committees and along with the Diocesan Data Protection Officer, will review and update existing documentation regarding record keeping.

Once this is complete, the Safeguarding Office will distribute a final version of the relevant documentation.

The link for GDPR top tips can be found here:

<http://www.downandconnorsafeguarding.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/GDPR-TOP-TIPS.pdf>

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES UPDATE

The following have been developed and circulated as appropriate:

- ✓ Safeguarding Leaflet for Contractors
- ✓ Safeguarding Leaflet for staff
- ✓ Whistle-blowing guidance section in the Parish Resource Pack updated [Parish Resource Pack \(downandconnorsafeguarding.com\)](http://www.downandconnorsafeguarding.com).



OTHER SAFEGUARDING NEWS

ONUS INITIATIVE



SAFE CHURCH

ONUS “don’t provide direct support services to anyone living with domestic abuse, we aim to raise awareness and build capacity, to ensure anyone affected by domestic abuse is directed to support services, hence the name of our range of initiatives ‘Pathways for Participation” (ONUS).

Many parishes in Down and Connor are aware of the work of ONUS. For those who are not so familiar with their work they offer a bespoke accreditation scheme, to enable organisations, businesses, churches, and communities, to be recognised for their support to anyone affected by domestic violence and abuse. They have a range of supported pathways and empower communities to recognise and respond to anyone affected by domestic violence and abuse or sexual violence.

One of the pathways is called *Safe Place* and ONUS have sought to develop partnerships with churches to roll out Safe Place awareness raising sessions.

In Down and Connor, the Safeguarding Office would like to offer Safe Place awareness raising sessions to parishes via a Webinar.

What is “Safe Place”? Safe Place is the first pathway offered by ONUS. It is an initiative offering information on the wide range of services available to anyone affected by domestic violence and abuse.

What would our Parishes have to do? To become a Safe Place, parishes must attend a mandatory 90 minutes Safe Place Awareness Raising session and display Safe Place resources on their premises. Displaying the Safe Place logo indicates that information on services for anyone affected by domestic violence and abuse is available on the premises.

*****Signing up to the scheme does not mean that the parish has to do anything beyond signposting people to the appropriate services.***

By signing up to the scheme it means you will:

- ✓ Support the Safe Place Campaign Pledge: never to commit, condone or stay silent about domestic violence and abuse.
- ✓ Acknowledge domestic violence and abuse are problems that impact on all of us as a society and be prepared to play your part in supporting anyone affected.
- ✓ Provide a Safe Place for anyone affected by domestic violence and abuse to confidentially access information and make it clear that abuse of any kind will not be tolerated.

This is a great opportunity for our Church to be a voice that speaks out against domestic violence and abuse.

If you are interested in your Parish participating in the scheme, please email: office@soddc.org

For further information regarding ONUS please click on the link: <https://onustraining.co.uk/> or

Telephone: 028 2568 9450.

Extra-Ordinary Eucharistic Ministers of Holy Communion Vetting Requirements Update

In order for vetting to be carried out on any role within the Church that involves children or vulnerable adults, we must first consider whether the role can be defined as a “Regulated Activity” within the relevant legislation.

AccessNI is the government body charged with the responsibility for overseeing the vetting process and ensuring that all applications meet the terms of the legislation. After lengthy debate and consultation with AccessNI, the following, final decision has been taken regarding the following three likely scenarios where Holy Communion is distributed to parishioners.

Private Residences

AccessNI have indicated that distributing Holy Communion to the Sick & Housebound in their own home, is **NOT a “Regulated Activity”**.

Vetting for this role can therefore no longer be carried out.

Mass Setting

As before, a Minister of Holy Communion, assisting a priest in the Church during Mass does not require to be vetted as this is **NOT a “Regulated Activity.”**

Vetting for this role will not be carried out.

Residential Care/Nursing Homes

Visiting individuals in a Residential Care or Nursing Home, on behalf of the Catholic Church, regardless of the role (which may include distributing Holy Communion), will continue to be vetted under AccessNI’s pre 2012 legislation, as Residential Care and Nursing Homes are defined as “Specified Establishments” within the legislation.

It is therefore only in these circumstances that an Extra-Ordinary Minister of Holy Communion can be vetted.

REMEMBER

Please disregard any previous information on Extra-Ordinary Eucharistic Ministers of Holy Communion. The Diocese is currently considering the implications arising from this change and intends to issue best practice guidance in the very near future.

To assist this process, the Diocese, through the Safeguarding Office, is issuing a short questionnaire regarding how the process of recruitment and training for this role is managed within parishes.

This information will help inform best practice for Extra-Ordinary Ministers of Holy Communion going forward.



Return to Parish Activities—Break in Role during Covid 19

Parish activities have been drastically affected and curtailed by the Covid-19 pandemic but hopefully we will soon see a return to activities which enrich the lives of our parishioners.

Parishes must, of course, ensure that any activities are carried out in accordance with any existing, relevant Government Guidelines.

Ordinarily, a 3-month break in carrying out a vetted role would necessitate vetting to be undertaken again.

Re-vetting all those whose role was interrupted by Covid-19 is unnecessary.

Therefore, all staff and volunteers, who were carrying out their roles pre-pandemic and are now available to recommence the roles for which they were vetted, **can do so without the need for a new application.**

Parish Activities

REMEMBER

Information and forms regarding new applications and changes in roles can be found at:

<https://downandconnorsafeguarding.com/vetting/>



USEFUL CONTACTS

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SERVICES GATEWAY TEAM

During normal working hours (Mon-Fri: 9.00am-5.00pm)

Belfast HSC Trust Tel: 028 9050 7000;
South Eastern HSC Trust Tel: 0300 1000 300;
Northern HSC Trust Tel: 0300 1234 333;
Southern HSC Trust Tel: 0800 7837 745
/ Freephone: 028 3741 5285;

Outside normal working hours

(Friday 5.00pm – Monday 9.00am, including Bank holidays):

Regional Emergency Social Work Service
Tel: 028 9504 9999

ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES GATEWAY TEAM

During normal working hours (Mon-Fri: 9.00am-5.00pm)

Belfast HSC Trust Tel: 028 9504 1744;
South Eastern HSC Trust Tel: 028 9250 1227;
Northern HSC Trust Tel: 028 9441 3659;
Southern HSC Trust Tel: 028 3756 4423.

Outside normal working hours (Friday 5.00pm – Monday 9.00am, including Bank Holidays):

Regional Emergency Social Work Service
Tel: 028 9504 9999 Email: resws1@belfasttrust.hscni.net

Down and Connor Designated Liaison Person

Margaret Burke: **075 3499 2124**

Email: Margaret.burke@soddc.org