

PARISH SELF AUDIT RETURNS FOR 2021

The Safeguarding team are pleased to have a positive return from our Parish Safeguarding Committees.



Your co-operation time and commitment are greatly appreciated by the safeguarding office as we collectively seek to achieve the highest level of Safeguarding practice across the Diocese.



The themes that have emerged from the Audit will be picked up during the coming year.

CREATING AND MAINTAINING SAFE ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Parishes find themselves in different places in respect of plans in relation to the safe resumption of children and young people's activities.

Face to face ministry has been impacted by the pandemic and we all look forward to children and young people's activities being fully up and running.

We would wish to encourage everyone to keep a focus on creating and maintaining a safe environment for children and adults. If you are a Safeguarding Committee who have not met for some time perhaps this would be an opportunity to meet up perhaps virtually or in person. This will help ensure that your parish are in a position to resume or continue children/young people activities that have already recommenced.

Please do not hesitate to contact the safeguarding office if you would like a Safeguarding Support Officer to attend a Parish Safeguarding Committee meeting or if you have any concerns or queries.

You will find the contact details at the end of this newsletter.

Down & Connor

Safeguarding & Vetting Office

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*UPDATE FROM PHILIP O'HARA– INTERIM
DIRECTOR AND DLP FOR DOWN AND CONNOR*

There have been significant changes in the management structure of the Diocesan Safeguarding Office over the past year.



UPDATE

Barbara McDermott (Director) has retired. Barbara was the first Director and indeed was instrumental in setting up the Diocesan Safeguarding Office. Barbara was the driving force behind developing the safeguarding service across the Diocese. We thank her for her commitment and endeavours in relation to safeguarding within our church both locally and nationally over the years and we wish her the very best in her retirement.

Margaret Burke DLP left her position in October 2021. We would like to acknowledge Margaret for her work in the Diocese during her time with us and we appreciate the skills and experience she brought to safeguarding in our Diocese. We wish her every good fortune in her future ventures.

The Diocese have examined the amalgamation of the positions of Director of Safeguarding and DLP and I have been asked to take forward the development of this new post through my position as Interim Director for Safeguarding/Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

Many of you will know Patsy Curry not only in his role as Safeguarding Support Officer, but also as the Adult Safeguarding Trainer. Patsy recently decided to retire from his position with the Diocese. His contribution to Safeguarding will be greatly missed across the Diocese. We wish him all the best in his retirement.

The Diocese and the Safeguarding Office are currently looking at the needs of Parishes as identified through the Audit process. One of the key areas is how the SSO's support the needs of the Parishes.

Philip O'Hara

DOWN AND CONNOR DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE 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.

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:

“Hi and my name is Paul McNeill. I have been recently appointed by Bishop Treanor as a member of the Down and Connor Diocesan Safeguarding Committee. This Committee is made up of clergy and lay people, all of whom have an interest and experience in the safeguarding of children, young people and adults. We all bring to the Committee our own diverse experiences of both the practicalities of safeguarding as well as the governance, management and monitoring of the policies, processes and procedures that underpin comprehensive and robust safeguarding arrangements and practices.

For the past six years I have worked for The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland as its Business Support Manager. Previously, as a social worker, I worked in a variety of practitioner, managerial and trainer roles and subsequently then as a regulator of national qualifications with Ofqual.

Safeguarding is everyone's business within society and consequently within the Diocese. We all have our part to play in ensuring our children, young people and adults are and feel safe and protected. We also need to have the confidence that when safeguarding concerns are raised, there are arrangements and structures in place to properly address these.

Therefore to support this continuum of safeguarding within Down and Connor, the role and function of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee is to ensure that the policies, procedures and standards for safeguarding are implemented across all the 86 parishes in the Diocese. A key component of our work is to develop, and ensure the implementation of, both a three-year strategic plan and subsequent annual business plans. These outline the key outcomes and objectives that govern how Down and Connor defines its safeguarding culture and implements its safeguarding commitments. We advise the Bishop on the delivery and effectiveness of these to ensure that the Diocese, its parishes and agencies provide safe, welcoming and nurturing environments for children, young people and vulnerable adults alike.

Underpinning all of this is a commitment to engage and communicate with those relevant persons and bodies involved in safeguarding in the Diocese and beyond. The Committee is ably supported by the Diocesan Safeguarding Office which provides the administration, personnel and support to ensure the smooth running and delivery of our plans and objectives.

However, safeguarding in the context of the Diocese is not only about prevention and protection, plans, policies and procedures. It is equally about caring and supporting those who have been abused by those who were in positions of authority and power where the expectations of compassion, love, trust and service were exploited and misplaced. To this end, a core objective of our work is to further develop the range of pastoral services offered to those directly affected by abuse and their families who wish to avail of these.

Safeguarding is and will remain a core and vital area of diocesan and parish life alike regardless of the changes”.

Paul McNeill

TRAINING NEWS

April 2021 to March 2022

The Safeguarding Office decided to trial a “blended approach” to delivering the training this year. With that in mind, the Safeguarding Office had face to face sessions and virtual sessions on offer to participants.



Despite this however, several of our scheduled training sessions had to be cancelled this year due to lack of registered participants.

Child Level 1& 2 Safeguarding training

& Refresher training April to June 2022

New dates have been scheduled for Level 1 , Level 2 and Refresher training sessions.

Again, the office are offering a “blended approach” to the delivery of training so the sessions are a mix of face to face and virtual.

All sessions are available on the Training Calendar on our website at

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



Remember

If you would like to book onto a course for either yourself or on behalf of other volunteers in your parish, you need to complete the booking form and send it to office@soddc.org

Booking forms can be downloaded from our website at

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



TRAINING NEWS CONT'D

ASCERT Training

A number of parishes have voiced concerns around safely engaging with parishioners/members of the public who are experiencing mental health crisis/addiction issues.



The Safeguarding Office have engaged with ASCERT in terms of providing training around these issues.

An initial training session is being offered to Clergy, Sacristans, and Parish Secretaries on 25th April at 2pm via Zoom (length 3 hours) This training session is now fully booked, however the Safeguarding Office plan, with ASCERT, to deliver further training and the office will keep you updated on this.

If you would like to register your interest for future training events with ASCERT, please email: office@soddc.org

SAFEGUARDING BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (SBNI) —APP

We want to highlight the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) App which provides information on safeguarding children for use by parents/carers/professionals. The App provides information on subjects such as;



- Child sexual exploitation
- Legal highs
- Bullying
- Gaming
- Other forms of abuse and the importance of healthy relationships
- Newsfeed and updates
- Signposting to key safeguarding gateways, supported by geo location features
- Reporting information
- Advice and help including video and audio content, with immediate access to 'topic-specific' advice where and when needed.

This App is free and you can download it on **Google Play** or from the **Apple Store**.

RISK ASSESSMENTS

Risk Assessments are completed by Parish Group leaders, annually or in response to a new event or procedure. Leaders of each local activity involving children's ministry are expected to identify risks and procedures relevant to its own situation.

When we think about risk assessments we often think about health and safety. We consider preventing physical accidents happening and making sure the venue is safe. However, there are other things we need to think about.

The Safeguarding Office is currently updating the exemplar risk assessments on the website to ensure that we include the following:

- ✓ Have all the volunteers been appropriate vetted and trained?
- ✓ Does everyone know their roles and responsibilities?
- ✓ Are there correct ratio numbers of adults to children/young people for the event?
- ✓ Has a code of behaviour been agreed in respect of both leaders and the children/young people attending the activity?
- ✓ Do the children/young people know who to speak with regarding child protection concerns?
- ✓ Has guidance been provided to volunteers on responding to a child and reporting allegations or concerns where necessary?

We will advise Parish Safeguarding Committee Chairs when this update on the website is complete.

However, you can read more about risk assessment in the Resource Pack on our website at:

<https://downandconnorsafeguarding.com/parish-resource-pack/>



**6: Parish
Resource
Pack**

OTHER NEWS - HOURGLASS

Veronica Gray, Deputy CEO Director of Policy has provided the following narrative by way of introducing Hourglass.

Hourglass is the only UK-wide charity dedicated to calling time on the harm, abuse, and exploitation of older people and promoting safer ageing for all.



Having re-branded from Action on Elder Abuse in 2020, the charity continues to work to end the horrific abuse experienced by older people, while seeking to create the environment where each one of us can age safely, without fear of abuse.

We deal with the very worst elements of physical, sexual, financial, psychological abuse and neglect and we stand alone in this field. Our mission is simple, no older person should be harmed or abused. There has never been a more vital time for Hourglass to exist as we estimate 1 in 5 older people in Northern Ireland will suffer abuse this year.

Our services ensure that we deliver lasting impact that saves and changes lives. In Northern Ireland our services include:

- A fully staffed 24/7/365 helpline that is free to call and entirely confidential
- A team of caseworkers to provide ongoing support and advice
- Instant Messenger, text message, email advice and a chatbot
- Europe's only Knowledge Bank with advice, guides, research and support

Safer ageing calls for people of all ages to work together to tackle the physical and attitudinal barriers faced by older people that create circumstances of actual or presumed vulnerability – an environment which puts older adults at risk. It is a project for all of society to remove these barriers to empower older people to age securely and live free from abuse. And we need your help and support to make this a reality. Find out more at www.wearehourglass.org

Re-Vetting of Parish Volunteers

As we all are too painfully aware, the pandemic has impacted greatly on our lives in many ways. One of those was the cessation of invaluable parish activities, which centred around the unsupervised provision of certain services to children and/or vulnerable adults – defined in law as “Regulated Activities”. Some parishes are beginning to recommence those activities, so we are taking the opportunity to remind all PSCs that if you have volunteers who were stood down from a “Regulated Activity” for a period of one year or more because the activity could not be carried out due to the pandemic, volunteers should be re-vetted as and when the parish has decided that it is safe to recommence the relevant activities.

- ⇒ Each application will require an Identity Verification Form, a Confidential Declaration Form and an online Access NI application.
- ⇒ Current vetting forms and associated guidance can be downloaded from the Diocesan Safeguarding Website <https://downandconnorsafeguarding.com/vetting> or they can be emailed on request from the Vetting Office.
- ⇒ Please pay attention to the Acceptable Documents List which forms Page 2 of the Identity Verification Form – **only documents listed there can be accepted as evidence of identity.**
- ⇒ Only submit vetting applications when you have a specific start date in mind. We recommend that you allow a couple of weeks for applications to be processed.
- ◆ A Vetting Confirmation Request Form is not suitable for individuals in this situation.

Remember, an individual can only carry out a Regulated Activity when the Vetting Office has issued a Free to Appoint letter to the Parish.



Eucharistic Ministers to Residential Care/Nursing Homes

You may recall previous correspondence on this matter, but we wish to remind you that the law prevents us from vetting an individual who is taking Holy Communion to a parishioner's private residence.

The **only** occasion where a Eucharistic Minister can be vetted is where they visit parishioners in a Residential Care or Nursing Home and distribute Holy Communion on behalf of the Catholic Church. This is because different legislation applies in these circumstances.

If you are submitting a vetting application for someone in this role, please make it clear in the role description on the Identity Verification Form that it is for a Residential/Nursing Home.

If you have any queries about vetting matters, please telephone the Vetting Office directly on 028 90 492 783 or send an email to vetting@soddc.org

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
 028 3756 7100

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

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

Philip O'Hara: **075 3499 2124**

Email: Philip.ohara@soddc.org