



DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING PLAN 2021-2024 AND  
ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2021-2022

## CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD</b> .....	3
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	5
<b>KEY CHALLENGES FOR SAFEGUARDING</b> .....	6
<b>SAFEGUARDING PLAN 2021-2024</b> .....	8
<b>OUTCOMES</b> .....	8
<b>OBJECTIVES</b> .....	8
<b>REVIEWING AND REPORTING PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE PLAN</b> .....	15
<b>DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING PLAN 2021-2024 AND ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2021-2022</b> .....	16

## FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Diocesan Safeguarding Plan for 2021-2024. This Plan outlines the objectives and priorities to achieve the Diocesan Safeguarding vision and sets the direction of travel for the next three years. The Plan has been shaped by feedback from Parish Safeguarding Committees, colleagues within the diocese and external partners that we engage with in ministry of Safeguarding.

Within the Safeguarding Plan 2021-2024 there are three stated outcomes for Safeguarding in the Diocese:

- that we have a safe and welcoming Church,
- we have a culture of Safeguarding integrated into the life of the Church,
- and that we care for those directly affected by abuse and their families.

Working towards these outcomes with support from Parish Safeguarding Committees and key partners will help us to further develop the ministry of Safeguarding within the Diocese and wider society.

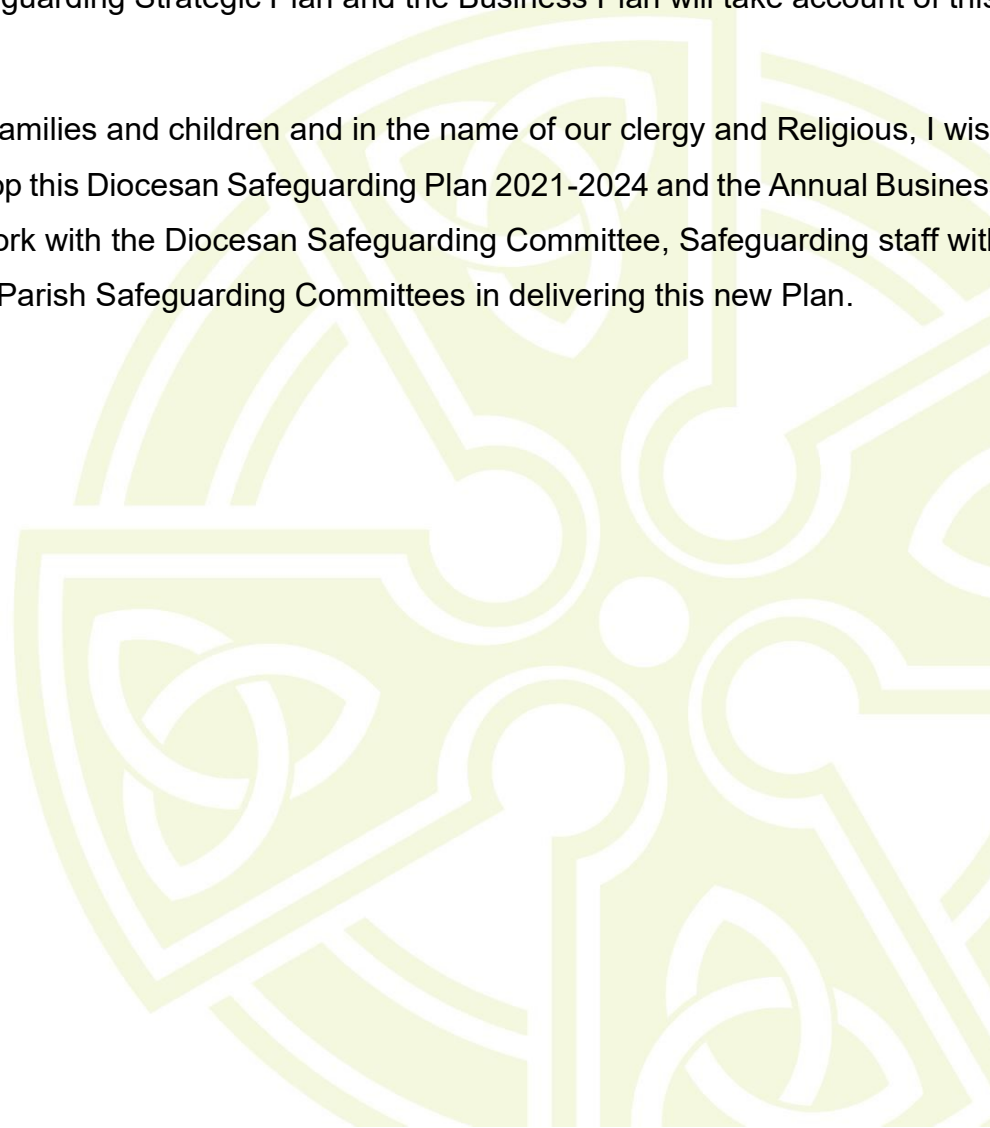
In the near future, the pastoral services of the Diocese and the collaboration between parishes with Pastoral Communities will undergo significant change. A range of factors will influence the pace of this change, including the number of priests available in each pastoral community, the number of paid and voluntary staff needed to sustain essential pastoral ministry and securing the level of financial support required to support the mission of the Church across the Diocese.

Safeguarding as a vital area of parish ministry will need to take account of the evolving pastoral landscape. This will necessitate the adaption of our Safeguarding Structures and procedures within parishes to ensure that Best Practice is maintained in the delivery of services to children, young people and vulnerable adults. The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee will help to facilitate this process

by engaging with other Diocesan agencies and the National Board for Safeguarding (NBSCCI) in meeting the needs of parishes and Pastoral Communities. Our Safeguarding Strategic Plan and the Business Plan will take account of this integrated approach.

On behalf of parishioners, their families and children and in the name of our clergy and Religious, I wish to thank all who have given their time and expertise to develop this Diocesan Safeguarding Plan 2021-2024 and the Annual Business Plan 2021-2022. As Bishop, I look forward to continuing to work with the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee, Safeguarding staff within the Diocese, the Regional Vetting Office, our partners and Parish Safeguarding Committees in delivering this new Plan.

+ Noël Treanor  
Bishop of Down and Connor



## INTRODUCTION

The practice of Safeguarding within the Diocese of Down and Connor refers to the wide range of services, plans and activities that are put in place to protect children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable to abuse from being exploited or harmed. The Diocese is directed in its Safeguarding practice by statutory and legal requirements. Likewise, it must also demonstrate its Safeguarding compliance with the guidelines and standards, set by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI).

The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee advises the Bishop on the creation and maintenance of safe environments in the parishes and diocesan groups. The Committee do not have responsibility for oversight of the case management – this is the role specifically of the Diocesan Advisory Panel. The Committee comprises lay members and clerics and has a particular focus on ensuring that the Church policy and standards for Safeguarding are implemented across all of the 86 parishes in the diocese.

## KEY CHALLENGES FOR SAFEGUARDING

### **Re-engaging and Renewing Parish Safeguarding Committees.**

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted liturgical celebrations of the Church worldwide. Across most of the 86 parishes in the diocese, the full range of parish activities has not yet fully resumed. Even with the easing of lockdown there is a reluctance to re-engage in the traditional parish activities and some parish groups have engaged in the pilot for online ministry. As parishes seek to re-build the full range of activities, a focus for the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee will be in re-engaging and renewing the work of Parish Safeguarding Committees and supporting the work to create safe online ministry.

### **Caring for those directly affected by abuse and their families**

A key commitment in the NBSCCCI Policy and Standards 2016 is 'caring pastorally for complainants and respondents, and other affected persons.' To this end, The Safeguarding Committee has been progressing work to develop a Pastoral Strategy. The annual Day of Prayer for Survivors and Victims of Sexual Abuse, the development of trauma informed practice in all areas of Pastoral Ministry and the approach to a designated 'Safeguarding Sunday' for the diocese are an important contribution to this commitment.

### **Resourcing the work of Safeguarding**

Embedding a culture of safeguarding remains a priority and going forward the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee will need to secure the resources required to deliver against the commitments in the next 3 year plan. Consideration will also need to be given to the structures for Safeguarding at Diocesan and parish community level.

## THE SAFEGUARDING PLAN

The Diocesan Safeguarding Plan outlines our key aims and priorities to achieve the Diocesan Safeguarding Vision [Child Safeguarding Statement \(downandconnorsafeguarding.com\)](#). It sets the direction of travel for the next three years and provides a framework for our annual work plan. The Safeguarding Plan embraces our core principles and incorporates the seven standards set by the NBSCCCI.

<https://www.safeguarding.ie/images/Pdfs/Standards/Safeguarding%20Children%20Policy.pdf>

The Safeguarding Plan 2021-2024 outlines the key areas of work for the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee over the next three-year period to further develop the ministry of Safeguarding throughout the diocese.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee is responsible for developing a three-year Safeguarding Plan for the Diocese of Down and Connor. The Committee is also required to communicate and monitor progress regarding implementation of the plan and to advise the Bishop with respect to the resources needed for full delivery of the plan.

In creating this plan, we engaged with a range of internal and external partners, volunteers, clergy and professional staff who collectively support the work of Safeguarding within our diocese.

## SAFEGUARDING PLAN 2021-2024

### 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.

The Safeguarding Committee has developed an annual Business Plan (at pages 16-18) to support achievement of the outcomes and objectives and reports annually to the Bishop and the Diocesan Board of Trustees on performance against the Safeguarding Plan.



## **OUTCOME 1**

### **WE HAVE A SAFE AND WELCOMING CHURCH**

#### **Objective:**

1.1 Within our Church Community we will create and maintain safe and welcoming places for children, young people, and adults and those who work with them.

#### **Key priorities for the period of this plan include:**

#### **Over the next 3 years the Committee will:**

- Develop consistent advice, messaging, support and training for those who engage, interact and work with children and young people in the online world.
- Further develop Safeguarding training and models of delivery.
- Continue to avail of training and good practice guidance provided by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI).
- Further develop engagement with Parish Safeguarding Committees.
- Prepare for an external independent review of safeguarding practice within the diocese.
- Promote understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and develop trauma sensitive approaches to practice.
- Further develop structures for Safeguarding at diocesan and parish/pastoral community level and consider linkages to Pastoral Councils.

- Explore how children, young people, adults and families feel safe and understood in the Church.
- Consider creating a Reference Group of individual's representative of different areas of expertise to support the work of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee in the implementation of the Strategic Plan.
- Expand the remit of the Education and Learning subgroup of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee to enable different types of learning by staff, volunteers and clergy to be facilitated.
- Consider creating a forum to engage with key partners/statutory agencies involved in Safeguarding to raise awareness of the Safeguarding practice within the Diocese and develop strategic relationships.

### **How will we know we have a safe and welcoming Church?**

- Children, young people and adults involved in parish life feel safe.
- Policies/procedures for Safeguarding are in place and implemented.
- The delivery of and participation in effective and regular Safeguarding training.
- Participation in NBSCCCI training.
- Engagement between Diocesan Safeguarding Committee and Parish Safeguarding Committees.
- Annual Parish self-audits are completed across all parishes.
- Regular/external/independent audit of Safeguarding in the diocese is commissioned.
- Internal audits are being undertaken by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland.
- Effective structures for promotion of Safeguarding across the Diocese are in place.
- A range of teaching and learning methodologies are employed in the training of clergy, staff, and volunteers.
- Engagement with key partners/statutory agencies involved in Safeguarding.

## **OUTCOME 2**

### **WE HAVE A CULTURE OF SAFEGUARDING INTEGRATED INTO THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

#### **Objective:**

2.1 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.

#### **Key priorities for the period of this plan include:**

#### **Over the next 3 years the Committee will:**

- Ensure that children and young people are invited to contribute to the development of a Safeguarding culture.
- Ensure that those directly affected by abuse and their families are invited to contribute to the development of a Safeguarding culture.
- Further develop engagement with the clergy to promote awareness of Safeguarding.
- Further develop linkages at Diocesan and parish level between Safeguarding Committees and Pastoral Councils.
- Further develop relationships externally with colleagues in the Northern Dioceses, other Churches and external agencies involved in Safeguarding.
- Promote an awareness within the wider parish and church community of our shared responsibility to remain vigilant in safeguarding children, young people, and adults at risk of harm.
- Develop further the links with the PSCs to ensure the Safeguarding Office and the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee remain cognisant of any concerns at parish level.

- Review and develop the Safeguarding Communications Strategy and action plan to communicate the Church's Safeguarding message including consideration of social media platforms.

### **How will we know we have a culture of safeguarding integrated into the life of the Church?**

- Parish Safeguarding Committees are constituted, active and engaged.
- Linkages between Parish Safeguarding Committees and Parish Pastoral Councils (PPCs) established.
- PPCs having Safeguarding feature on their agenda on occasion throughout the year, including discussion on the annual parish Safeguarding audit.
- Uptake of Safeguarding Sunday within parishes.
- Safeguarding protocols inform the work of all parish activities.
- Clergy support and promote the ministry of Safeguarding within their parishes.
- Areas of learning and improvement in Safeguarding practice are identified.
- Clergy, Parish Safeguarding Committees and other interest groups have increased awareness of the Church's ministry of Safeguarding.
- Communication systems and protocols have been updated.
- Messaging to people who have turned away from the Church.

## **SAFEGUARDING PLAN OUTCOME 3**

### **WE CARE FOR THOSE DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY ABUSE AND THEIR FAMILIES**

#### **Objectives:**

- 3.1 To further develop the range of pastoral services offered to those directly affected by abuse and their families.
- 3.2 To foster a greater awareness of the needs of those directly affected by abuse and their families within parish communities.

#### **Key priorities for the period of this plan include:**

#### **Over the next 3 years the Committee will:**

- To develop and promote the role of the 'Support Person'.<sup>1</sup>
- To provide opportunities for all who engage in pastoral ministry on behalf of the Church to learn about effective pastoral responses towards those who are affected by abuse/trauma /loss.
- Explore how the experience of those who have been directly affected by abuse and of their families can be included in training of clergy, staff and volunteers.
- Develop and deliver a pastoral strategy to provide care and support for those who have been directly affected by abuse and their families.

---

<sup>1</sup> The main embodiment of support for those who have been directly affected by abuse and their families within the Diocese is the provision of the services of a Support Person who is available to support a person making a complaint of abuse by Catholic Church personnel and to help in identifying and accessing support. The Diocese also signpost the services of Towards Healing and Towards Peace for those directly affected by abuse.

- Further develop the support offered to respondents and their families.
- Review learning from external and internal reports and consider best practice and other initiatives to support those directly affected by abuse and their families.
- Foster cooperation and expert advice from external organisations and other partners.
- Review the membership of key groups in the Diocesan Safeguarding arena with a view to ensuring the voices of those who have been affected by abuse and/or who have personal experience of how the complaints process are heard.

### How will we know we care for those directly affected by abuse and their families?

- Establish and maintain a Panel of people to fulfil the role of the 'Support Person'.
- Understanding and awareness of the role of the 'Support Person' within the Diocese.
- Ensure resources are committed to the implementation of the pastoral strategy.
- Those who have suffered abuse are offered appropriate advice, pastoral care, counselling and support.
- The Diocese has established working partnerships with external organisations supporting those directly affected by abuse and their families.
- The experience of those directly affected by abuse is contributing to the training of clergy, staff and volunteers.
- Respondents and their families are offered appropriate advice, pastoral care, counselling and support.
- Safeguarding structures in the diocese take account of the voices of those directly affected by abuse.

## REVIEWING AND REPORTING PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE PLAN

It is important that there is regular review of performance against the outcomes and objectives set within the Safeguarding Strategic Plan 2021-2024 and the Annual Business Plan that supports delivery. This is fully integrated into the governance arrangements with six monthly reports to the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee on progress and any associated risks.

Performance against the Safeguarding Strategic Plan and Annual Business Plan is included in the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee's Annual Report to the Bishop and the Diocesan Board of Trustees.

As a Church body, we want people to know about our work and have confidence in the Safeguarding arrangements in place within the Diocese. To assist with this, we undertake a varied programme of engagement and communications activity so that internal and external partners have confidence in the work that we do and support us in the delivery where appropriate.

The Bishop also provides assurance on safeguarding practices to the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland on an annual basis through a well-established reporting mechanism.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee will measure the success of Safeguarding Strategic Plan through a range of tools including audits, external reports and feedback from those directly involved in Safeguarding at a parish level.

## DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING PLAN 2021-2024 AND ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2021-2022

OUTCOME 1	WE HAVE A SAFE AND WELCOMING CHURCH	
<p><b>OBJECTIVE:</b></p> <p>1.1 Within our Church Community we will create and maintain safe and welcoming places for children, young people, and adults and those who work with them.</p>	<p><b>ACTIONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evaluation of the <b>Online Ministry</b> pilot and dissemination of learning to PSCs.</li> <li>▪ A programme of engagement with PSCs to support Safeguarding at parish level.</li> <li>▪ Update Level 1 &amp; 2 training to include Adverse Childhood Experiences and learning from Online Ministry pilot.</li> <li>▪ To build capacity for delivery of training through participation in NBSCCCI Train the Trainer Course.</li> <li>▪ To review the content and process for the annual parish Safeguarding audit.</li> <li>▪ To review the terms of reference and membership of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee.</li> <li>▪ To review terms of reference and membership for the Education &amp; Learning sub-group.</li> </ul>	<p><b>TIMESCALES:</b></p> <p>September 2021</p> <p>September 2021 to June 2022</p> <p>October 2021</p> <p>October 2021</p> <p>January 2022</p> <p>February 2022</p> <p>March 2022</p>



<b>OUTCOME 2</b>	<b>WE HAVE A CULTURE OF SAFEGUARDING INTEGRATED INTO THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH</b>	
<p><b>OBJECTIVE:</b></p> <p>2.1 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.</p>	<p><b>ACTIONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To establish an expert panel to provide advice and support to refresh the Safeguarding Communications Strategy and Action Plan.</li> <li>▪ To raise awareness and support for parishes to participate in a Diocesan Safeguarding Sunday.</li> <li>▪ To engage with clergy on the Safeguarding Pastoral Strategy.</li> <li>▪ Engagement with statutory agencies and other partners to raise awareness and further develop Safeguarding practice within the Diocese.</li> <li>▪ To support increased understanding of Adult Safeguarding with clergy and Parish Safeguarding Committees</li> </ul>	<p><b>TIMESCALES:</b></p> <p>March 2022</p> <p>October 2021</p> <p>January 2022 to March 2022</p> <p>September 2021 to June 2022</p> <p>January 2022 to September 2022.</p>

OUTCOME 3	WE CARE FOR THOSE DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY ABUSE AND THEIR FAMILIES	
<p><b>OBJECTIVES:</b></p> <p>3.1 To further develop the range of pastoral services offered to those directly affected by abuse and their families.</p> <p>3.2 To foster a greater awareness of the needs of those directly affected by abuse and their families within parish communities.</p>	<p><b>ACTIONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To establish and maintain a panel of people to fulfil the requirements for the ‘Support Person.’</li> <li>▪ To promote trauma informed practice in all areas of Pastoral Ministry.</li> <li>▪ To establish and develop a partnership between the Diocese and Victim Support NI.</li> <li>▪ To increase awareness in parishes about services provided by Towards Healing and Towards Peace.</li> <li>▪ To promote the role of the ‘Support Person.’</li> </ul>	<p><b>TIMESCALES:</b></p> <p>December 2021</p> <p>September 2021 to June 2022</p> <p>September 2021</p> <p>November 2021</p> <p>March 2022</p>