



THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Review of Child Safeguarding Practice

in the religious congregation of

The Religious Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary

undertaken by

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the

Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI)

April 2015

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Background

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) was asked by the Sponsoring Bodies, namely the Irish Episcopal Conference, the Conference of Religious of Ireland and the Irish Missionary Union, to undertake a comprehensive review of safeguarding practice within and across all the Church authorities on the island of Ireland.

The NBSCCCI is aware that some religious congregations have ministries that involve direct contact with children while others do not. In religious congregations that have direct involvement with children, reviews of Child Safeguarding have been undertaken by measuring their practice compliance against all seven Church Standards. Where a religious congregation no longer has, or never had ministry involving children, and has not received any allegation of sexual abuse the NBSCCCI reviews are conducted using a shorter procedure. The size, age and activity profiles of religious congregations can vary significantly, and the NBSCCCI accepts that it is rational that the form of review be tailored to the profile of each Church Authority, where the ministry with children is limited or non-existent. The procedure for assessment of safeguarding practice with such congregations is set out in the contents page of this report. The NBSCCCI welcomes that in order to have full openness, transparency and accountability, religious congregations that do not have ministry with children have made requests to have their safeguarding practice examined and commented upon.

The purpose of this review remains the same and it is to confirm that current safeguarding practice complies with the standards set down within the guidance issued by the Sponsoring Bodies in February 2009 *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland* and that all known allegations and concerns had been appropriately dealt with. To achieve this task, safeguarding practice in each of these Church Authorities is reviewed through an examination of policy and procedures, and through interviews with key personnel involved both within and external to the Religious Congregation.

This report contains the findings of the *Review of Child Safeguarding Practice within the religious congregation of the Religious Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary* undertaken by the NBSCCCI in line with the request made to it by the Sponsoring Bodies.

The findings of the review have been shared with a reference group before being submitted to Sr. Ursula Canavan, Provincial Superior of the Northern European Province, which comprises Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales and France, of the Religious Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary, along with any recommendations arising from the findings.

The review is not based on a review of case material as during the relevant time period there were no allegations made against members of the congregation that were within the Terms of Reference. There also were no allegations in respect of other forms of abuse within the time period, in respect of deceased and living members of the Congregation. The review therefore is primarily based on policies and procedures made available plus interviews with key personnel involved in the safeguarding process within the Congregation, particularly in the services run by the Congregation.

Introduction

The Institute of the Religious (Sisters) of the Sacred Heart of Mary was founded in 1849 by a priest, Fr. Jean Gailhac in Beziers in the south of France. He had wanted to develop outreach to women of that city who had become engaged in prostitution. The widow of a friend told Fr. Gailhac that she wanted to devote herself and her inherited wealth towards the founding of the religious community that he had wanted to manage an orphanage and a refuge for women called the Good Shepherd which he had already opened. On February 24th 1849 this woman, Appollonie Cure, with two like-minded women moved to the Good Shepherd where another two women awaited them. These five women became the first Sisters of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary (RSHM). Appollonie became known as Mother St. Jean, and she was the first superior of the new congregation, a role she fulfilled until her death in March, 1869. Under her guidance and direction the Institute grew to a membership of 72 Sisters, of whom 60 were French and 12 were Irish. The Sisters gradually transformed the refuge into a house of preservation for young girls who were at risk and they opened a boarding school.

Fr. Gailhac wanted to extend the work of the Institute beyond France, and in 1870, 10 Sisters left Beziers to establish a new community in Lisburn in Northern Ireland, with Mother St. Thomas Hennessey as the first superior there. The Institute's website describes their early work in Northern Ireland:

In Northern Ireland, Roman Catholics were a minority and poor. RSHM were invited by the parish priest and by his bishop to establish a school for girls and young women 'of the poorest sort of people'. Within months the sisters had opened a poor school and a paying school at the convent, and were teaching religion classes on Sundays to children, young girls and women of all ages.¹

The Congregation opened its first convent in Waterford in 1879 in Ferrybank, and they are still very active in that parish, as described on their website.² On the island of Ireland the Institute has community houses in Belfast and Lisburn, in Northern Ireland; in Huntstown, Drumcondra (2) and Tallaght in Dublin, and in Waterford (3).

At present the Institute has houses in North, Central and South America, in Africa, England, Scotland, Wales, France, Portugal and Italy, as well as those in Ireland. England, Scotland, Wales, France and Ireland comprise the Northern European Province, while Portugal is a separate (Southern European) Province. The Institute has NGO status at the United Nations and is particularly involved in developing information and initiatives to protect women against being trafficked and engaged in the sex industry.

Role Profile (past and present role with children)

The Institute's Mission Statement of 1989 describes the Charism and work of the Sisters.³

Mission Statement

'That All May Have Life'

We, the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, an international apostolic institute of women religious, are called to share in the life-giving mission of Jesus Christ.

¹ <http://www.rshm-nep.org/page-10015-beginnings.html>

² <http://ferrybankparish.com/religious-organisations/shm-sisters/>

³ <http://www.rshm-nep.org/page-10007-mission-statement.html>

The challenge of the gospel and the spirit of faith and zeal which marked our founders, Jean Gailhac and Mere St. Jean, and our founding sisters, urge us to respond to the needs of our time and to work with others in action for evangelical justice. Sent to promote the life and dignity of all our sisters and brothers, at this time we place ourselves and our resources at the service of those who are most in need of justice, enabling the powerless, the deprived, the marginalized, the voiceless to work effectively for their own development and liberation.

The Sisters carry through this commitment in a variety of ways:

- One Sister teaches in a Primary School and one in a Third Level College in Dublin.
- Two Sisters work formally in Parish Ministry in Belfast and in Dublin; and the Sisters in Lisburn and in Ferrybank, Waterford, are involved in the local parishes there.
- One Sister works with the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas; and a second Sister works as a Prison Chaplain.
- One sister is Coordinator of a Community-based project in Dublin.
- Two sisters work voluntarily with the Travelling Community in Dublin.
- One sister works voluntarily in Adult Literacy in Dublin.
- One sister works as a Hospital Chaplain in Belfast and in Lisburn.
- One Sister works with Ruhama, an organisation that supports women who are involved in prostitution or at risk of such an involvement.
- One Sister works with APT Ireland, an organisation that seeks to prevent trafficking.
- Two Sisters work in supporting retired colleagues who receive special care due to diminished health at the Institute's residential care centre in Waterford.

In addition to these formal ministries, it is the nature of religious life that retired Sisters help out as they can in schools, communities and parishes. All Sisters whose work or volunteering involves regular direct contact with children and young people are police vetted for their role and the relevant Child Protection Policy and Procedure for the parish, community or agency in which they work or volunteer applies to them.

The Province had direct management responsibility for six schools in the past, one in South Belfast, one in Lisburn, one in Holywood, one in Dublin and two in Ferrybank, Waterford. Of these schools one (Holywood) amalgamated with a diocesan college, two (Lisburn and Ferrybank) came under the trusteeship of the local diocese and one (Dublin) was closed. Of the two remaining schools one (Ferrybank) amalgamated with a local VEC/ETB school to form Abbey Community College, Waterford, of which the Institute is a joint trustee and the other, Rathmore Grammar School in South Belfast, remains under the trusteeship of the Institute. One sister is a member of the Board of Governors/Management of Rathmore Grammar School and Abbey Community College and another sister is a member of the Board of Management of Good Counsel Primary School, Ferrybank. Rathmore Grammar School (<http://www.rathmoregrammarschool.org>) is a Catholic co-educational grammar school catering for 1,260 day pupils aged 11-19; and Abbey Community College (<http://www.abbeycommunitycollege.com>) is a co-educational secondary school with a student population of 790. The Child Protection Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy and Behaviour Policy of each school can be found on their websites, and these are reviewed and revised as required by the relevant management group.

Profile of Members

There are 49 Sisters of the Congregation resident in the island of Ireland in nine community houses in both Northern Ireland (7 Sisters between Belfast and Lisburn) and in the Republic of Ireland (17 sisters in Dublin, and 25 in Waterford). The age range of the Sisters is as follows:

- 40 - 60 years - 1
- 60 - 69 years - 5
- 70 - 79 years - 16
- 80 - 89 years - 20
- 90 years and over – 7

Eight Sisters live in a retirement setting, and an additional 14 Sisters who need additional supports, including nursing, live in a dedicated care centre.

Policy and Procedures Document

The relevant document is the February 2010 *Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary Child Protection Policy Ireland*. This document has been written with reference to the statutory child protection guidance and agencies in the Republic of Ireland only, which now requires attention. As the National Board is revising the all island Standards and Guidance for the Catholic Church, it is not necessary for the congregation to undertake a revision of their 2010 document. However, the following recommendation is made to cover the interim period:

Recommendation 1

That the Provincial Superior obtain the statutory child protection information for Northern Ireland, including the Area Child Protection Committees' *Regional Child Protection Policies and Procedures*, April 2005 (<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/acpcregionalstrategy.pdf>); and the *Resources for professionals* that can be accessed on the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland website, (www.safeguardingni.org/resources-professionals); and ensures that these are made available to the Designated Person, and to the designated Sisters in the congregation's Belfast and Lisburn community houses

Structures

The Northern European Province has a Council made up of four Sisters. The Provincial Superior is appointed by the Superior General in Rome following a process of consultation with the Sisters in the Province. Sr. Ursula Canavan has been the Provincial Superior since 01/09/2014. She will serve a minimum of three years, after which she may be asked to serve a second three-year term.

The Designated Person (DP) is currently on the Provincial Council for the Northern European Province. She has been DP since 2013. She received child protection training in relation to the operation of *Children First* when working in a homelessness agency in Dublin. As child safeguarding information becomes available to her she circulates this to her Sister colleagues in Ireland. One sister in each local RSHM community acts as contact person and has responsibility for circulating information, including information on Child Safeguarding, to the members of the community.

Safeguarding (including children and vulnerable adults) is a standing item on the agenda of all meetings of the Provincial Council.

Following a phone conversation with the Designated Person for this congregation, the following two recommendations are made:

Recommendation 2

That the 2010 Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures will be re-circulated to all community houses, along with the relevant updated contact details for the statutory child protection agencies.

Recommendation 3

That the Designated Person updates her child safeguarding knowledge by participating in NBSCCCI training for Designated Persons when this is next available.

Management of allegations and liaison with the statutory authorities

The Congregation has never received any concerns or allegations of child abuse by a member Sister. For this reason it has not had to develop working relationships with the statutory child protection agencies in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland.

Conclusion

This congregation is aware of its child safeguarding responsibilities, as is evidenced by the appointment of a Designated Person, the development of a Policy and Procedures, and the regular attention given to child safeguarding at Council meetings. The publication of the revised Standards and Guidance by the National Board at the end of this year will provide a good opportunity for the Religious Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary to review and revise its own child safeguarding policies and practices.

Review of Child Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Ireland

Terms of Reference

Small Religious Congregations

(which should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Notes)

Introduction

In order for the NBSCCCI to be able to state that all Church Authorities on the island of Ireland have been evaluated in respect of their child safeguarding policies and practices, both historical and current, then some form of appropriate assessment has to be conducted of every one of these. It is rational however that the form of assessment is tailored to the profile of each Church Authority, and that needless expenditure of resources and unnecessary interference in the life of religious orders and communities that have no children-specific ministry would be avoided.

This review seeks to examine the current arrangements for safeguarding children across small religious congregations /orders, and missionary societies in Ireland who have limited or no direct contact with children as part of the congregation's ministry.

It would also scrutinize practice within all known cases to ensure that they have been responded to appropriately.

The review's methodology is an adaptation of the methodology developed for all dioceses and large religious congregations and missionary societies, where the ministry involves regular contact with children.

The proposed review would consider the following:-

- (a) Former role with children
- (b) Allegations of child abuse against members and how these have been responded to
- (c) Existing relationships with statutory authorities such as the HSE, Gardai in the Republic and the HSCT or PSNI in Northern Ireland.
- (d) Policies in place and being applied for safeguarding children
- (e) Roles and responsibilities and where they exist the operation of Advisory Panels, and Safeguarding Committees

The objective of the review would be to confirm if there have been any allegations and how known allegations have been responded to; in addition the review seeks to confirm what the current arrangements for safeguarding children are. In particular, emphasis will be placed on establishing how policies and practice match up to the standards set down in *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland* published by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland and launched in February 2009. Priority, at all times, will be given to how policy and practice can be improved and strengthened. If policies and/or practices are identified that are concerning, inadequate, or dangerous, they will be addressed through the provision of guidance and support, and through the reporting of these situations to the appropriate statutory authorities, if this has not already happened. Similarly, those that are good examples will be highlighted with a view to them being adopted comprehensively across all parts of the Church. All cases that relate to alleged or known offenders that are alive will be read and included in the review. In cases where the alleged or known offender is deceased, these will be sampled in an attempt to gather learning from them that will be used to inform the framing of recommendations.

Guidance Documents

The review will be guided by the following:-

- (a) *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland*
- (b) *Children First* Guidance in ROI; and Regional Child Protection Guidelines in Northern Ireland;
- (c) Legislation that exists in each jurisdiction which contributes to safeguarding children and young people.

The review will be undertaken by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) through their National Office and led by the Chief Executive Officer.

The review process will be overseen by a Reference Group to whom the CEO will report on a regular basis. The membership of this Reference Group has been drawn from each of the statutory child protection agencies in both jurisdictions, along with eminent individuals in the field from academia. The current Reference Group consists of: Dr Helen Buckley (TCD); Mr Paul Harrison (Tusla), and John Toner (SBNI).

It is important to confirm that the value of the review is dependent upon full and complete access to all relevant documentation and information relating to the abuse of children known to the individual Church authorities. The review will proceed on the basis that willingness exists on the part of each of the subjects of the review to provide full access to the fieldwork team, subject, where relevant, to the terms of the Data Processing Deed agreed between the Sponsoring Bodies and entered into between the parties hereto.

Step Guide to the Review Process

Step 1.

A letter of invitation to review is sent by the Provincial/Regional Superior or other person responsible for the congregation/ order or missionary society (hereinafter referred to as 'the Ordinary').

Step 2.

The CEO will forward a survey to the provincial which will identify:

- Current number of members
- Past role with children
- Current role with children
- Total number of allegations received up to 2014
- Number of living members against whom there are allegations

Step 3.

For any Order where there have been allegations a full review will proceed, as per step 4 - 23. For those Orders where there have been no known allegations a desk top examination of policies and procedures will take place followed by a site visit to interview all relevant personnel within the safeguarding structure. For these orders step 5 and 13-23 will apply.

Step 4.

The CEO and Ordinary will confirm the dates for the fieldwork for the review, and names of the fieldwork team.

Step 5.

The Church Authority will be asked to make available all of the case files and related documentation in respect of any safeguarding concerns that have been identified within the diocese. The Church Authority will make available a room with wireless internet access for the reviewers to conduct their review of files, so that any records made by the reviewers can be directly typed and stored onto a secure server which is only accessed by the reviewers. In the absence of internet access the reviewers will type their notes onto a secure encrypted USB stick for later uploading onto the secure server.

Step 6.

The Church Authority will be requested to sign the revised Data Processing Deed prior to the arrival of the team.

Step 7.

The Church Authority will arrange a schedule of interviews with all who hold safeguarding roles within its functional area. The designated person and the Church Authority will be available to the reviewers throughout the period of fieldwork.

Step 8.

The fieldwork team when they arrive on site will firstly confirm that they have a suitable place to work in and that all the required documentation has been provided to them for their review. In the event that the fieldwork team forms the opinion that the Church Authority has not provided access to all such documents, the NBSCCCI shall give notice in writing to the Church Authority of the opinion of the fieldwork team and such notice shall specify the reasons for same. Thereupon, the Church Authority shall respond in detail to the notice. Each party shall use its best endeavours to resolve any differences of opinion which shall arise and, in the event that resolution is not arrived at, the parties will attempt to resolve the dispute by recourse to the services of a mediator agreed between them or nominated for the purpose at the request of any of them without prejudice to the NBSCCCI's entitlement to terminate the review. In the event that resolution has not been arrived at following mediation, either party shall be at liberty to terminate forthwith the review.

Step 9.

On arrival, the fieldwork team should be supplied with a single case file index that lists all the cases that have been created within the diocese. These may be divided into two groups. The first group will contain all allegations that relate to living alleged or known perpetrators. The second will contain any that are deceased.

Step 10.

Depending on the volume involved a decision should be made as to whether all or a random sample of the "deceased group" should be reviewed. Care should be taken to include all prominent cases in the sample.

Step 11.

Each case file will be reviewed by each fieldworker independently in the first instance. They will create a written summary with chronological information of the case. In certain cases a second reader may be required, this will be discussed and agreed between the fieldworkers.

Step 12.

Following the reading of the case and the creation of a summary, the fieldworkers will analyse and assess the actions taken in the case. They will assess compliance with agreed Church policy that was extant at that time. They will also indicate whether any current risk exists in respect of the information contained within the file and advise the church Authority of necessary safeguarding action to reduce the risk.

Step 13.

When all the case files have been read, the fieldwork team will then examine and review any procedures or protocols that exist within the diocese to confirm that they are in compliance with the *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance* document issued by the NBSCCCI in February of 2009.

Step 14.

To complete the review, the fieldwork team will then seek to speak to those directly involved in the safeguarding structure in the diocese. This should include the Advisory Panel, a sample of parish safeguarding representatives, the designated person, the safeguarding committee, victim support and advisors and the Bishop/Provincial. The purpose of these interviews is to form a view of the competence and effectiveness of the safeguarding structure that exists within the Church Authority.

Step 15.

The fieldwork team will also seek to speak to representatives of the key statutory agencies to provide them with an opportunity to express their views on the quality of the working relationships that exist between them and the Church Authority.

Step 16.

A verbal feedback session on initial key findings will be given to the Church Authority.

Step 17.

Upon completion of the field work, the team may request to take materials – other than casework records to review off-site; this alongside all materials gathered by the reviewers, including written notes on cases and meetings, will be analysed and will form the basis of the draft assessment review report.

Step 18.

The draft will be forwarded to the Church Authority for factual accuracy checking.

Step 19.

Alongside all other reports under review, the report will be presented in draft to the Reference Group for their critique and comment. If further work is required at the direction of the Reference group the CEO will ensure this work is completed and advise the Church Authority accordingly.

Step 20.

The report will be legally proofed by NBSCCCI lawyer.

Step 21.

The report will be forwarded to the NBSCCCI for approval

Step 22

A final draft report will then be submitted to the Church Authority. The expectation would be that the report will be published by the Church Authority at an agreed time in the future.

Step 23.

All case material written, including summaries, as part of the review, which are for the reviewers use only, will be stored on a secure server.

Guide for Reviewers

In terms of small (female religious orders) reference should be made to the following:

1. Has the Order provided alternative care to children in an orphanage, industrial school or children's residential home, but no longer is engaged in running such services;
2. Has the order provided education to children, in both or either boarding schools and day schools, but no longer does so ;
3. Has the order provided medical and/or nursing services to children, but no longer does so;
4. Has the order provided any other services to children, in community services centres, youth clubs etc., and no longer does so;
5. Does the order currently provide any sort of service to children and families that brings them into regular contact with children;
6. Has the order never provided any service to children (e.g. contemplative orders).

In relation to category 1 above;

1. The reviewers will establish whether any service they provided is included in the list of children's residential services produced by the Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB);
2. If this is the case, reference should be made to this.

- 3.** If complaints have been referred to the Redress Board or Ryan Commission, this review cannot access these records and that will be stated in the report.
- 4.** If the order has received complaints which have not been processed through Redress or Ryan these cases will be thoroughly examined as detailed above.

Review of Policy and Procedures

- 1.** It is recognised that not all Orders will have any ministry with children and therefore their policies and procedures should reflect the work that they do with children.
- 2.** If the Order only works through other organisations, example in Diocesan work or in schools, they are required to follow the policies of those organisations.
- 3.** If there are gaps in the policy document an assessment should be made as to whether the ministry engaged in requires full compliance with all criteria attached to the seven standards
- 4.** Where it is clear that the criteria do not apply a reference should be made at the beginning of the review report that the Order's ministry is not directly with children and therefore adherence to particular criteria do not apply.
- 5.** If the Order is a contemplative Order, there is no expectation that they will have detailed policies and procedures, but reference should be made to their ministry and that they have no contact with children.
- 6.** In all cases, contact will be made with the civil authorities to identify if they have any child safeguarding concerns in relation to the order.