

## The Diocese of Ossory Parish Safeguarding Self-Audit for November – December 2021

### 1. Introduction

The 2021 Diocesan Safeguarding Audit was carried out to reflect the period between December 2020 and November 2021. Audit forms were distributed to every parish in October 2021. All 42 parishes returned their audits by the end of February 2022.

2021 was a difficult year for all parishes with many parish activities on hold including servers & choirs. Thus, this report needs to be read through a covid lens as many parishes interchanged no's and not applicable due to children's activities being on hold 'due to Covid'.

For the 2021 audit, all areas that parishes have responsibility for were focussed on.

It was acknowledged on the audit form that as training had not been offered in the diocese since early 2020 that many personnel may be due training and that this would be offered in 2022.

### 2. Data arising from the audit returns

NAME OF PARISH:	Returns were received from all 42 parishes.
YEAR UNDER REVIEW:	December 2020 to November 2021.
PERSON(S) COMPLETING AUDIT:	Most forms were completed by the parish priests and the Local Safeguarding Representatives (LSR) and sometimes the parish secretary.
DATE OF COMPLETION:	All forms were completed between November 2021 and February 2022.

### 3. Findings

#### Standard 6: Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message.

##### 1. Are child safeguarding posters displayed at eye level in all church porches?

	Yes	No	N/A	Not answered
1 Child Safeguarding Policy Statement signed by Bishop Nulty & dated 2021	40	1		1
2 Code of Conduct for Adults	40			2
3 If you have groups whose first language is not English, do you have copies of the safeguarding message in accessible formats?	4	2	36	

**Standard 6: 2. Are child safeguarding posters displayed at eye level in all church sacristies?**

		Yes	No	N/A	Not answered
1	Child Safeguarding Policy Statement signed by Bishop Nulty & dated 2021	41	1		
2	Code of Conduct for Adults	38	1		3
3	Code of Conduct devised by young people for young people and displayed where young people meet	23	5	13	1
4	Celebret request in sacristy	42			

There is very strong compliance with having policy and adult codes of conduct posters on display in churches and sacristies. With almost all having these posters up. The parishes who needed policy posters got copies to put up. About a quarter answered not applicable to having children's code up some citing 'due to covid'. However, for some it reflects no children's choir or no altar servers. There is full compliance with celebret request posters on display in sacristies.

**Standard 6: 3. Are child safeguarding posters displayed at eye level in all church buildings e.g. parish halls/parish centres??**

		Yes	No	N/A	Not answered
1	Child Safeguarding Policy Statement signed by Bishop Nulty & dated 2021	31	2	8	1
2	Code of Conduct for Adults	28	1	10	3
3	Code of Conduct devised by young people for young people and displayed where young people meet	14	7	19	2

Approximately three quarters of parishes said they have the required policy poster and adult code of conduct on display in parish buildings, with less than half having code of conduct for children on display. Many answered not applicable to this with some citing no children's activities due to covid.

Based on comments in the audits and queries received there was some hesitance in relation to the question 'code of conduct devised by young people for young people'. Ossory has a standard code of conduct for young people which parishes display, is on leaflets used and parishes use with their young people. The practice of groups of altar servers or youth choirs devising their own codes is not widely practiced.

**Standard 6: 4. Parish Safeguarding Representative(s)**

	Have Parish Safeguarding Representative(s):	Yes	No	N/A	Not answered
1	been appointed? (write no. of reps here)	42 1-3			
2	completed the 'full day' of safeguarding training?	38	4		

3	has 'refresher safeguarding' training been completed where it is over 3 years since 'full day' training completed?	21	18	3	
4	names been made available locally e.g. on posters or newsletters?	41		1	

All parishes reported having Local Safeguarding Representatives in place, with all parishes citing between 1 to 3. The predominant number in each parish is 2.

As expected, there is a backlog in relation to refresher training required with approximately half of the parishes requiring refresher training for LSR's.

In hindsight the option of N/A should not have been included here as it is not a valid option. Many parish personnel have signed up to do refresher training online in March & April and full day training for new personnel will be offered in May/June.

**Standard 6: 5. Use of CCTV**

		Yes	No	N/A
1	If you use CCTV and/or webcams is appropriate signage up to alert the public?	29	1	12

Two thirds of the parishes responded to having CCTV signage in place with a third saying they do not have CCTV and/or webcams. Only one parish said it did not have signage up.

**Standard 1: Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments**

**1. Registers**

		Yes	No	N/A	Not answered
1	Is there a register (an up-to-date listing) of all groups and organisations/lay apostolates <b>associated with the parish?</b> E.g. choirs/youth group)	25	2	14	1
2	Is there an up-to-date register with the name of the person in charge of all groups and organisations <b>associated with the parish?</b>	21	3	17	1
3	Is there an up-to-date register of all <b>non-parish</b> groups working with children and young people and using parish property? E.g, study club, dancing.....	15	2	24	1

For approximately one third of parishes registers were 'not applicable' and there was no register of persons in charge of groups for 2021. This figure was higher for non – parish groups with nearly two thirds citing registers not applicable for non-parish groups. Parishes were asked to provide the names of who is responsible for maintaining these lists and almost two thirds of parishes named their PP or LSR or parish secretary as responsible.

**Standard 1: 2. Children involved in Ministry e.g. altar servers/choirs:**

		Yes	No	N/A	Not answered
1	Has each parent/child signed the Activities/ Media Consent Form SG-04?	15		26	1
2	Has each parent/guardian/child received a copy of the Information Leaflet for parents/children involved in Parish Activities	18		23	1
3	Has each parent/ guardian /child received a copy of the code of conduct for children and adults?	17		25	
4	Has each parent/ guardian /child been made aware of the reporting procedures for abuse allegations, suspicions/concerns (Form SG 20)?	19		23	
5	Is each group aware of and maintaining adequate supervision ratios (SG 21)?	17		25	
6	Does each group have access to the procedure for dealing with accidents (Form SG 05)?	19		23	

Responses to questions concerning children and guardians signing the consent forms and being made aware of what they need to be made aware of yielded feedback which indicates a strong compliance with creating and maintaining safe environments. Parishes either responded not applicable (almost two thirds) or yes for the remainder. There were no parishes that responded with a 'no' which indicates a high awareness of the need to follow safeguarding procedures in this area.

**Standard 1: 3. Do groups involving children associated with the parish use sign-in registers?**

		Yes	No	N/A
1	Altar servers (Sacristy Register)	21		21
2	Altar server practice for special liturgies, feasts etc	17		25
3	Youth Choir	8		34
4	Adult choir where young people are involved	7		35
5	Children's Liturgy Group	4		38
6	AIM HIGH groups	4		38
7	Other group meetings involving persons under 18 years	3		39

The most widely used registers are with altar servers. However, again perhaps due to Covid even for altar server half of parishes responded not applicable. For all other activities it was over three quarters and close to all responding not applicable. Again, reflective of the impact of Covid in some parishes and reflective of the decline in children's participation in some parishes. On a positive note – no parish responded with a no to any question relating to creating safe environments for children indicating a high awareness of the need to follow safeguarding procedures in this area.

**Standard 1: 4. Groups/organisations involved with children on behalf of the parish.**

		Yes	No	N/A	Not answered
1	Has each group been approved to work within the Parish by the Parish Priest? E.g. altar servers / choir/ parish youth group.	17		25	
2	Is each group complying with the requirements in the Safeguarding Children handbook for Parish Groups involving children?	15		27	
3	Has each group leader carried out a Risk Assessment for the group? (See Sample Risk Assessment on <a href="http://www.ossory.ie">www.ossory.ie</a> form SG 06)	14	3	25	

This section reflected that no children's activities were happening in parishes without the permission of the parish priest. However again about two thirds of parishes responded as not applicable which could be due to Covid preventing activities and / or a decline in activities. Some parishes (3) said risk assessments are not in place for these groups.

**Standard 1: 5. Non-church groups working with children and using parish property**

		Yes	No	N/A
1	Has the Parish Priest given permission for the group?	15		27
2	Has each group signed the "External Groups using Church Property Form" SG-07 confirming that it has its own Insurance indemnifying the parish?	13	1	28
3	Has each group signed the "External Groups using Church Property Form" SG-07 confirming that it has its own Child Safeguarding Policy?	13	1	28

There is a strong compliance with the need for external groups using parish property to have sought permission and signed the necessary forms and have their insurance and child safeguarding policies in place. One parish replied this is not in place and they are following up on this. For two thirds of parishes non-church groups working with children and using parish property was 'not applicable' for 2021.

**Standard 1 and Standard 5: Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe**

**6. Recruitment and Safeguarding awareness with parish personnel**

	Have all parish personnel (staff and volunteers) who will not have ministry with children or vulnerable adults:	Yes	No	N/A	Not answered
1	been provided with clear job descriptions?	25	2	14	1
2	completed the relevant sections of Application Form SG-02?	23	4	12	3

3	received induction training?	24	5	11	2
4	been familiarised with Diocesan whistle-blowing guidelines (SG 19)?	23	4	11	4
5	been given a copy of or the website reference for the safeguarding policies?	24	5	11	2
6.	Signed an agreement form (Page 2 of Application Form SG 02)	26	3	11	2
	<b>Have all personnel (Staff and Volunteers) who work with young people under 18 years or vulnerable adults</b>	Yes	No	N/A	
1	completed all sections of the Application Form SG-01?	11	2	17	2
2	completed a Garda Vetting form NVB1?	21	2	18	1
3	Is Garda vetting dated within the last three years for all such personnel in line with Diocesan policy?	19	5	17	1
4	received appropriate safeguarding training?	21	2	18	1
5	been advised as to the content of the diocesan safeguarding Parish Handbook / been given the Diocesan website reference for safeguarding as part of induction?	23		18	1
6	have evidence of reference checking available on file?	13	9	19	1
7	Signed an agreement form (Page 2 of Application Form SG 01)	22	1	18	1

In answer to the question concerning recruitment practices around staff and volunteers who 'do not' have ministry with children or vulnerable adults – over half of parishes responded that they are complying with the recommended recruitment practices. However, a small number of parishes (between two and five) responded 'no' to complying with the recommended recruitment practices.

In relation to the questions concerning staff and volunteers who work with under 18's or vulnerable adults being recruited as per the standards almost a quarter answered with an N/A indicating no recruitment in 2021. Parishes tended to answer this based on their general recruitment practices. Parishes are generally compliant on Garda vetting and training with some parishes out of date on these. Again, due to Covid, training was not offered in 2021. Since covid restrictions lifted many parishes are catching up on their Garda vetting and many have signed up to Zoom training offered. Reference checking is not as strongly adhered to as other recruitment practices.

**Standard 1:**                    **7. Priests/clerics who are members of the parish, but who are ministering with children in an external organisation/church body: e.g a paid staff in a school/working in another Diocese/GAA club** (This does not include routine parish school visits).

		Yes	No	N/A
1.	If a priest is ministering with children in an external organisation has, he completed the necessary form (Form 1.10A for Clerics/Religious who have ministry with children in an external organisation/church body) which includes the written agreement that the priest/cleric agrees to follow effective safeguarding practice?		1	41
2	If a priest is ministering with children in an external organisation has he notified the Bishop of this arrangement as the Diocese is required to keep a central record of this.	1		41

There was just one parish where a priest said he ministered with children in an external organisation. On checking into this – the role reflected is within the diocese but in another parish thus does not need to be included here.

**Standard 1:**                    **8. Dealing with complaints or concerns:**

		Yes	No	N/A
1	Have all safeguarding complaints / concerns been reported to the Designated Liaison Person?	11		31

In relation to passing on safeguarding complaints, no parish responded with a no which is what we would expect. All parishes responded either yes or N/A.

**Standard 1:**                    **9. Sacristy**

		Yes	No	N/A	Not answered
1	Are there appropriate supervision ratios in place?	18		23	1
2	Are visiting clergy asked for Celebret/letter of Permission to minister?	42			

In relation to supervision ratios in sacristy's no parish responded with a no which reflects compliance with creating and maintaining safe environments. Just over half indicated N/A this reflects a combination of some parishes who do not have altar servers and some who had suspended altar servers due to the covid pandemic. There is full compliance with visiting clergy being asked for their celebret or letter of permission.

**Standard 5:**                    **Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe**

**1. Safeguarding awareness with parents/guardians**

		Yes	No	N/A
1	Has any safeguarding awareness initiatives been carried out with children and young people and/or their parents/guardians?	11	10	21

Half of the parishes responded N/A to providing safeguarding awareness to parents / guardians again reflective to the drop-in activities due to Covid. However, only half of those who do have activities responded to providing awareness initiatives to these parents / guardians.

**Standard 5: 2. Support**

		Yes	No	N/A
1	Is there a system for formal or informal support in place to provide support to all parish personnel involved in child safeguarding e.g meetings between priest & Safeguarding reps?	36	2	4
2	Have the Safeguarding Reps been invited to attend some parish pastoral council meetings?	32	9	1

There was a strong reflection of support provided by PP's to LSR's with over 36 parishes reflecting formal or informal support in place.

Almost a quarter of parishes do not have a link with their local pastoral council. The question was not asked if the parish has a pastoral council. In some parishes, the LSR is also on the pastoral council. Also, Covid was mentioned as a reason why pastoral council meetings had not happened.

**Standard 5 4. The storage of records and information**

	Are the following records stored safely and securely?	Yes	No	N/A
1	Does the Parish have a locked filing cabinet or locked press for all completed application forms, signed agreement forms, garda vetting records and training records for all parish personnel?	42		
2	Does the Parish have a locked filing cabinet or locked press for all sign-in registers that are maintained?	40		2
3	Are blank copies of the Accident/Incident form SG 05 available where groups involving young People or vulnerable adults meet – e.g. Sacristy, Parish Hall etc	37	1	4
4	Are blank copies of the General Complaints form SG 08 available where groups involving young People or vulnerable adults meet – e.g. Sacristy, Parish Hall etc	37	1	4
5	Are safeguarding information leaflets readily available in churches, halls etc?	40	1	1
6	Does the Parish have a locked filing cabinet or locked press for consent forms, accident/incident forms, hazard/risk assessment forms records of checks completed on external groups using parish/diocesan property, media permission forms, written agreements from external organisations/Church bodies where priests/clerics are ministering with children.	42		



There is a strong compliance with good practice on the storage of records and information with all parishes saying they have locked storage facilities for documentation. Some parishes had withdrawn leaflets due to covid restrictions.

### Standard 3 Care of Complainants

		Yes	No
1	Are 'Towards Healing' Posters displayed in all church porches?	39	3

There was a strong compliance with the display of Towards Healing posters with only three parishes not having it up at the time of the audit.

#### Final Questions

At the end of the form parishes were asked if they had any training needs that were not covered by the usual full day/refresher training provided.

Apart for requests for the standard training, the only training requested was in relation to developing children's codes of conduct with children.

Parishes were also asked for how the Safeguarding Director or Safeguarding Committee can support them in their safeguarding work. One parish looked 'for more information on what happens at diocesan level', two parishes asked for support visits.

#### 4. Final Comments

Overall, there appears to be a strong awareness and compliance with the requirements of safeguarding in parishes. Areas that parishes may need support with based on these findings are promoting children's activities and delivering safeguarding initiatives with children and parents/guardians, safe recruitment practices and risk assessing activities.

It should be acknowledged that this self-audit was completed following a year where parishes had to put on hold children's participation in church activities particularly altar serving and choirs. Parishes that have active participation of children were keen to reflect that they normally do have children involved but that activities were on hold due to Covid.

Parish safeguarding personnel should be commended for their participation in this process and their overall strong awareness of and adherence with safeguarding practices in their parishes.

Signed:



Mary Mescal

Date: 08/03/22

Chairperson of Ossory Safeguarding Committee