

The 2022 Diocese of Ossory Parish Safeguarding Self-Audit

Summary report on the Diocese of Ossory Parish Safeguarding Self-Audit.

The 2022 Diocesan Safeguarding Audit was carried out to reflect the period between November 2021 and November 2022. The audit is completed as part of our compliance with Standard 7 (Quality Assuring Compliance with the Standards) as set out in the Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016 developed by the National Board for the Safeguarding of Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI). Audit forms were distributed to every parish in October 2022. There was full compliance in return of the audit forms with all 42 parishes returning their completed forms. Overall, there appears to be a strong awareness and compliance with the requirements of safeguarding in parishes.

Parishes continued to report the impact of Covid on parish activities, with some citing that children's activities or parish pastoral councils had not resumed since the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Parishes were asked questions on how they are meeting the requirements of Safeguarding Standards 1, 5, 6, and 7 from the Safeguarding Standards which cover creating and maintaining safe environments, training and support for keeping children safe, communicating the church's safeguarding message and quality assuring compliance with the standards. Areas of strength include communicating our safeguarding message with posters and leaflets being displayed as required and safeguarding representatives' names being made available locally. Another area of strength is adhering to creating and maintaining safe environment in the use of joint consent forms and use of registers. There is scope for improvement in our recruitment processes and some parishes are still catching up on completing Garda vetting and training post Covid. The audit reflects good supports between parish priests and safeguarding representatives with some parishes having weak links between parish pastoral councils and safeguarding representatives. However, it is not clear if this is due to a lack of pastoral councils or lack of linkage. There has been a good take up in the use of localised risk assessments which is positive. This requirement is covered in all training sessions and there was specific online training offered in 2022.

The audit found that less than half of the parishes create opportunities for participation of children and young people in ministries in our parishes with 18 of our 42 parishes having children or young people involved with the majority of these participating in the ministry of altar serving. Covid has played a part in some children's activities stopping and not resuming, anecdotally some parishes report challenges in getting young people and their parents involved due to clashes with other activities such as sports training/matches, they

also report challenges in getting adult volunteers for supervision while some parishes have a long-standing culture of youth involvement.

Parish safeguarding personnel, priests and other parish personnel who participated in this auditing process should be commended for their participation and their overall strong awareness of and adherence with safeguarding practices in their parishes. Findings from this audit will be used to inform the annual training and annual communication plans and for review of the three-year strategic plan.

Summary report compiled by:

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