

# Diocese of Ossory Safeguarding Newsletter

Safeguarding is  
Everyone's  
Responsibility



## What is Safeguarding Sunday?

Safeguarding Sunday is a time for the Diocese of Ossory to remind our parish communities and wider society that protecting children and vulnerable people is at the heart of the Christian message. It is an opportunity for all the parishes to pray as one and to acknowledge the dedication of all church personnel and volunteers who serve in the ministry of Safeguarding across the Diocese.

During the celebration of the Safeguarding Sunday liturgy, we will also renew our commitment to the pastoral care of victims and survivors of abuse, as well as their families.

## Message from Bishop Niall Coll

Recent decades in Ireland have uncovered a sad history of abuse in the Church, and this is a source of shame to our community of faith. We cannot wipe away the horror of this history, nor can we restore the shattered lives of those who have been traumatised. But we - people, religious and clergy - can, as Pope Francis constantly exhorts, play our part in building up a culture of safeguarding in our parish communities and wider society. I hope that, as you read this annual Newsletter, you will be reassured and encouraged by the commitment that the Diocese of Ossory shows to embedding best practice within, as the recent safeguarding audit noted, that culture of safeguarding which already exist in our parishes. Having been bishop now for one year, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who are at the heart of this safeguarding culture. They include the diocesan director of safeguarding, the diocesan safeguarding committee, the designated liaison team, the vetting coordinators, the parish safeguarding representatives, the parish clergy, the diocesan office and the many parents and volunteers who work quietly and assiduously in our 42 parishes.

May the Lord bless this work.

+ Niall Coll

Bishop of Ossory

If you have a safeguarding concern, please contact: Ailish Higgins, Diocesan Designated Liaison Person (DLP) on 085 8021633 or Email: [dlp@ossory.ie](mailto:dlp@ossory.ie). Deputy DLPs: Ms. Rose Brophy 087 331 4330/Mr. Cathal Cullen 0567762448 (Diocesan Office). Contact details for all civil authorities are on display at the back of all churches in the diocese and available on the website [www.ossory.ie](http://www.ossory.ie).

## Update from Safeguarding Office

A Message from Ailish Higgins, newly appointed Director of Safeguarding & DLP.

I have officially taken over the mantle from Kathleen Sherry as of 24th October 2023. Let me take this opportunity to thank Kathleen again for all her hard work in the Diocese.

I would like to also say thank you for the warm welcome I have kindly received from people and clergy since taking up the role in Ossory. I know I still have many more of you to meet, and I look forward to visiting parishes over the coming year.

While Safeguarding Sunday is one day in the year to highlight the importance of safeguarding and for the Church to publicly recommit to best practice, it is important to note that safeguarding is at the forefront of the Diocese's concerns every day and that we take this responsibility seriously.

While I, as Safeguarding Director, along with Bishop Coll and the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee, take leading roles in outlining the key aspects of what needs to be in place to protect children, young people, and adults from harm, safeguarding is very much a shared community responsibility in which each and every one of us has a part to play. So, I thank you for your continued hard work and commitment to creating and maintaining a safe environment for all in the Diocese.

**If you have any queries regarding safeguarding of children or of vulnerable adults, please do not hesitate to contact me.**

"I enjoy being part of the mass and helping out the priest with the different jobs" Emma

"It feels good to help get the church ready and I like receiving Holy Communion after helping at mass" Kyle

## Review by the National Board for Safeguarding of Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI)

Safeguarding Practices within the Catholic Church are reviewed independently, by the NBSCCCI. You will remember that the Diocese of Ossory was reviewed in March 2022 and that the final report was released and published on the Diocesan website in December 2022.

Main points contained in the report;

- ♦ The reviewers were assured regarding the Diocese of Ossory's compliance with the Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016.
- ♦ The reviewers commended the development of a culture of child safeguarding in the diocese.
- ♦ Safeguarding practices have continued to improve over the years with increasing consistency in case management.
- ♦ The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee has been in place since before the previous Review in 2013, and it has worked proactively and effectively in strengthening child safeguarding.

## VETTING

Information and forms for Garda Vetting can be found at: [www.ossory.ie/safeguarding](http://www.ossory.ie/safeguarding) under the Garda Vetting Resources section. If you have a query in relation to completing a vetting application, you can email your query to Sr. Ena Kennedy at [vetting@ossory.ie](mailto:vetting@ossory.ie).

## Annual Parish Audits

- ♦ The Local Safeguarding Rep in each of the 42 Parishes carry out an annual safeguarding self-audit on behalf of the parish Priest.
- ♦ The audits are collated by the Director of Safeguarding who compiles a report for the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee.
- ♦ This information is valuable to the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee when formulating their three-year strategic plan.
- ♦ It also helps advise the committee on how best to re-engage young families, children and young people with the Church.

The summary of Annual Parish Self-Audits for 2022 is available on the Diocesan website.

*"I like being an Altar Server, I get to meet my friends and enjoy working together to do our jobs" Eoin*

## Promoting Youth Participation –

Jesus said "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14

If your child/young person is interested in becoming an altar server, joining the parish youth choir, engaging with youth ministry or indeed you would like to learn more about youth participation in the church, please contact your Parish Priest or Local Safeguarding Rep.

Or you can contact Ailish Higgins, Director of Safeguarding – 085 802 1633

## Safeguarding Prayer

Lord Jesus, may we welcome the Kingdom of God anew into our hearts and lives, embracing discipleship and openness to others. You call us to walk with integrity in the service of others. May our service be filled with kindness, and respect for all God's people, giving special protection to children and the vulnerable. May we seek the truth, listen to those wounded by abuse, and choose to act with compassion and justice. Give us the strength, to serve humbly and faithfully, and to love one another as we are so loved by You. Amen

## Support for Survivors of Abuse



**Towards Healing** is an independent organisation providing free professional support for people who have experienced institutional, clerical or religious abuse in Ireland. They provide counselling for survivors and their families.

Their helpline is open: Tuesday to Friday 9am -5pm. Freephone 1800 303416. Hearing-impaired Text Line Number: 085-8022859. Email: [info@towardshealing.ie](mailto:info@towardshealing.ie) Website: [www.towardshealing.ie](http://www.towardshealing.ie).



**Towards Peace** Provides spiritual support in a safe supportive space, where people who have been affected by abuse in a Church context can be accompanied as they seek their own experience of spiritual peace, one step at a time. Phone: 01 505 3028/ 086 771 0533. Email: [towardspeace@iecon.ie](mailto:towardspeace@iecon.ie) Website: [www.towardspeace.ie](http://www.towardspeace.ie)

## Safeguarding Training

Kathleen Sherry kindly completed the training schedule for 2023 along with the Diocesan Safeguarding Trainers with the last events being held in November 2023 in St Patrick's Parish Centre Kilkenny and in Portlaoise Parish Centre during a joint training day with the Diocese of Kildare & Leighlin.

A training schedule for the Diocese will issue in Spring 2024. This training currently being developed by Ailish Higgins, will use feedback from parish self-audits to ensure that the training meets the needs of the parishes.