



THE DIOCESE OF CLOYNE

Annual Report of Cloyne Diocesan Safeguarding Children Committee for the year 2010

28/02/2011



CLOYNE DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN COMMITTEE

Annual Report for the year ending 31/12/2010

1. Background

The Cloyne Diocesan Safeguarding Children Committee is the end product of a series of initiatives aimed at promoting child protection in the Diocese of Cloyne. It was formerly known as the Cloyne Child Protection Committee – a committee which was established in 2004 and this succeeded a steering committee which had been established earlier that year. The secretariat of the Cloyne Diocesan Safeguarding Children Committee is based in CDYS Mallow.

2. Membership

2.1 Membership of Cloyne Diocesan Safeguarding Children Committee on 31st Dec. 2010.

Con Lynch (Chairman), Sr. Nuala O’Gorman (Secretary), Rosarie O’Riordan (Training Coordinator), Fr. Gerry Casey (communications officer with diocesan authorities), Una Relihan, Brian Williams, Denis Ring and Fr. Bill Bermingham.

2.2 Changes in personnel

In July 2010, Fr. Brian Boyle took up duties as curate in Charleville, with additional duties (for the time being), in Newtownshandrum and Dromina and fearing that a lack of time would compromise his input to the safeguarding children committee, tendered his resignation. Fr Brian had acted as child protection coordinator since 2004 and he made a significant contribution in that role and in his input to the work of the committee. We wish to record our appreciation of his contribution to safeguarding children and we wish him continued success in his parish ministry.

The safeguarding committee recommended the appointment of Fr. Bill Bermingham. He was duly appointed by Archbishop Clifford and attended his first meeting of the committee in November.

4 The work of the committee – fulfilling our role and responsibilities

The role and responsibility of Cloyne Diocesan Safeguarding Children Committee is defined in the *Safeguarding Children Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland*:

❖ *The provision of training*

❖ *The safe recruitment of volunteers and staff within their service are
Their role is primarily focused on creating, maintaining and monitoring a safe environment for children in all aspects of Church life and for advising on the human resources required for implementing best safeguarding practice across services*

The manner in which the committee applied itself to fulfilling the various elements of its role and responsibilities is summarized in Sections 4.1 – 4.8.

4.1 Approach and methodology

4.1.1 Meetings

The approach to our work is facilitated through regular meetings for the purpose of:

- ❖ Discussion, decision making
- ❖ Identification and targeting areas that require attention
- ❖ Allocation of tasks
- ❖ Setting deadlines for completion of tasks
- ❖ Reporting back and evaluating progress

Generally meetings are of half-day duration and were held on the following dates during 2010: 25th January, 24th February, 13th April, 19th May, 7th July, 18th August, 1st September, 19th October, 23rd November and 14th December - a total of 10 meetings. Additionally, the Policy Review Committee met for two full day meetings.

4.1.2 Communication

Good communication is essential to the work of the committee and involves:

- ❖ Member to member communication between meetings – usually via e-mail or telephone
- ❖ Communication between the committee officers as required
- ❖ Communication/consultation between officers and the training coordinator
- ❖ Communication with parishes through the facilities at the diocesan office in Cobh
- ❖ Communication with the diocesan authorities and priests of the diocese – usually facilitated by the committee’s communications link officer.
- ❖ Direct communication via the safeguarding children secretariat at CDYS Mallow
- ❖ Use of the diocesan website
- ❖ Direct communication between individual committee members and the parishes allocated to them for audit.

4.1.3 Establishing and maintaining accurate data bases

The availability of accurate, up to date information regarding training and garda vetting of Church personnel is essential to fulfilling the functions of the committee. Significant progress has been made in this area during 2010.

4.2 Provision of training

During the year seven training sessions were provided. Five training sessions were held in Mallow, one session in Killeagh and one individual session in Midleton.

The training programme for the year was focused primarily on completing the training of:

- ❖ 100% of priests appointed to parishes
- ❖ Retired priests who are active in ministry in the diocese with 100% completion targeted for early in 2011.
- ❖ 100% of priests of the diocese who are engaged in work outside of parish ministry
- ❖ Training of newly appointed parish representatives.

The total number of priests trained in 2010 was 62.

The total number of parish representatives trained was 18.

We wish to acknowledge the contribution of the training coordinator, the trainers and the cooperation of the priests and parish representatives.

4.3 Safe recruitment of staff and volunteers

The committee sought to promote safe recruitment of staff and volunteers through:
Clearly outlining the selection and recruitment procedures/guidelines of the diocese in the diocesan policy document *Safeguarding Children in the Diocese of Cloyne*

Clearly specifying roles and responsibility at diocesan and parish level (in the diocesan policy document and in the sample parish policy)

Facilitating the garda vetting process by:

- ❖ Provision of garda vetting forms to parishes
- ❖ Identifying, insofar as possible individuals for whom vetting was necessary
- ❖ Encouraging compliance with the vetting process
- ❖ Passing on, where appropriate, documentation to the diocesan garda vetting administrator
- ❖ Building up a data base (which does not contain sensitive information) of the vetting status of diocesan personnel –

4.4 Creating a safe environment for children

In addition to the provision of training and safe recruitment of staff and volunteers, the committee also contributed to creating a safe environment for children by producing the new policy documents.

4.5 Implementation

As well as the provision of training and monitoring, the production of a revised diocesan policy on safeguarding children proved to be an onerous and protracted task during 2010. The work was structured as follows –

4.5.1 Establishing a policy review committee

A subcommittee for carrying out reviews of policies was established. This committee focused principally on producing drafts of the new safeguarding children policy for the diocese

4.5.2 Producing the policy

. The work involved:

- ❖ Review of the existing policy *Child Protection in the Diocese of Cloyne*, which was published in 2007.
- ❖ Consultation with the National Office for Safeguarding Children regarding format and content.
- ❖ Research and consultation with other dioceses.
- ❖ Producing a document which would be a comprehensive reference for child safeguarding matters - policy statement, procedures, codes of behaviour, information and resources.
- ❖ Designing a format which would allow the user to dip into the appropriate section for whatever safeguarding children element was required.
- ❖ Providing an indexed Policy Summary which would provide the user with details of the issues covered and which would indicate where in the document more information can be found.
- ❖ Production and review of initial drafts.
- ❖ Submission of draft document to committee members.
- ❖ Submission of draft document to Archbishop Clifford.

4.5.3 Drafts of policy document refined and amended by the safeguarding committee members

- ❖ The work of producing the policy was discussed at the regular meetings of the safeguarding committee.
- ❖ There were ongoing consultations with the National Office for Safeguarding Children regarding the content. Clarification was sought on various issues – including the inclusion of vulnerable adults.
- ❖ The document was reviewed, amended by the National Office.
- ❖ It was decided that the policy should be extended to apply to vulnerable adults as well as children
- ❖ Drafts of the new policy document, *Safeguarding Children in the Diocese of Cloyne* were made available to members of the Cloyne Diocesan Safeguarding Children Committee both in hard copy and electronic format.
- ❖ Amendments were submitted, by the members principally in electronic format, but also via telephone and in writing. These amendments were substantially incorporated into the policy.

- ❖ Meetings of the Safeguarding Committee which specifically discussed the draft policy were held in Blarney in November and in Mallow in December but a second meeting planned for December had to be cancelled due to inclement weather conditions.
- ❖ A design for the cover was agreed at the Blarney meeting in November.

4.5.4 Publication strategy

The document as amended by the committee members was submitted for a second review to the National Office and further amendments as suggested by them were incorporated. There is an element of fluidity currently existing, which may require that amendments be made in the short term to *Safeguarding Children in the Diocese of Cloyne* i.e. new guidelines having been prepared by the Department (but not yet made operational) and new vetting guidelines being prepared by the National Office. Based on these considerations and on the fact that the National Office had ‘twice reviewed the document, committee members agreed that:

(i) It would be published on the diocesan website along with a statement that the document may be subject to further review.

(ii) A limited edition would be printed and distributed using the facilities available to the Committee in CDYS Mallow. This would be in a loose-leaf format to facilitate inclusion of any alterations which might be required throughout the course of the year 2011.

The document would be professionally formatted and published following on the first review in January 2012.

The document will be reviewed annually by the Policy Review Committee.

4.6 Producing a Sample Parish Policy

4.6.1 Reasons for a sample parish policy

The decision to produce a sample policy which parishes could adopt in full or adapt to suit the particular circumstances of their own parishes was influenced by the following considerations:

- ❖ The requirement that each parish should have a policy document
- ❖ The desirability for consistency in so far as this is practicable
- ❖ The requirement that all Church staff/volunteers should be clear on the responsibilities attaching to their roles
- ❖ The need for a small, easily readable “manual” which would be distributed to Church staff/volunteers
- ❖ The need to communicate and spread the Church’s safeguarding children message
- ❖ Equipping Church staff/volunteers to respond and report allegations of child abuse.
- ❖ During the course of the parish audits/visitations, some parishes had asked for a sample parish policy

4.6.2 Content of the sample parish policy

This content and format is substantially based on a policy document which had been devised, reviewed and re-reviewed and piloted in one parish in the diocese. It was amended by the Safeguarding Committee, reviewed ‘twice by the National Office and approved by them.

The document describes the safeguarding structure in the parish, the codes of conduct, procedures to be followed, the responsibilities attaching to various roles and information on how to recognise and respond to suspicions/allegations of abuse.

It also contains footnotes which *inter alia* direct the reader to where more information may be found in the diocesan policy *Safeguarding Children in the Diocese of Cloyne*. The sample parish policy applies to vulnerable adults and to children.

4.6.3 Distribution of the sample parish policy

The sample parish policy will be distributed to parishes electronically and in hard copy where required.

4.6.4 Attendance registers

A number of sample attendance registers were compiled including – sacristy registers and parish group attendance registers.

4.7 Monitoring - parish audit/visitation

4.7.1 Audit questionnaire

In fulfillment of its monitoring role as defined in the *Safeguarding Children Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland*, Cloyne Diocesan Safeguarding Children Committee:

- ❖ Drafted and circulated a sample audit document to acquaint them of the areas which would be monitored during the visitation.
- ❖ Drafted, piloted amended and produced the final Parish Audit questionnaire containing 10 sections, 41 questions, some of which had multiple sub-sections.
- ❖ Prepared and supplied to parishes a resource pack containing diocesan policy statement and contact details in English, Irish and Polish, and a variety of forms including application forms, accident/incident report forms, declaration forms and garda vetting forms.
- ❖ Circulated a letter advising parish priests that the purpose of the audit/visitation was intended to be supportive and helpful to the implementation of safeguarding children policies and procedures.

4.7.2 Carrying out the parish audit

Each member of the Cloyne Diocesan Safeguarding Children Committee was given responsibility for visiting a number of parishes and a standardized approach to the work was outlined.

The parish audits which began in October were substantially completed by year's end, with 38 of the 46 parishes having been visited. A return call was made in some instances. In other instances information which was not available to the parish priest on the day of the visitation/audit, was subsequently sent by e-mail or telephone. The audit will be completed in the remaining 8 parishes early in 2011.

In general the committee members were disposed to be positive, to affirm the work already done and to give assistance if possible.

4.7.3 Analysis of parish audit questionnaire

The level of detail in the questionnaire reflects the extent to which safeguarding children is being promoted in the Diocese of Cloyne.

The completed questionnaires will be analysed in late February and March and a report will be prepared.

4.7.4 Self audit

The completed self audit documentation from the *Safeguarding Children Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland* will be returned to the National Board in early 2011.

4.8 Communicating the Church's safeguarding message

The safeguarding committee actively communicated the Church's safeguarding message throughout 2010 in the following areas:

- ❖ Making contact details widely known – updating contact details and introducing a colour scheme to make it easy for parishes to check on whether the information on display was up to date. Updated information on green paper was supplied during the parish audits. Versions in Irish, English and Polish were supplied. When contact details are changed, a paper of a different colour may be used.
- ❖ Encouraging parishes to provide dedicated notice boards for display of safeguarding Children material. (The purchase of these was facilitated by the training coordinator).
- ❖ Giving Church personnel information at parish level – this was facilitated through provision of indices in the sample parish policy containing clear definitions of child abuse, the signs and symptoms and information on responding and reporting allegations of child abuse.
- ❖ Making children aware of their right to speak out – awareness in this area was raised through the parish audit, the sample parish policy and the draft diocesan policy
- ❖ Providing information on the safeguarding structure at national, diocesan and local levels (Safeguarding Structures Section 8 *Safeguarding Children in the Diocese of Cloyne*).

- ❖ Establishing links with statutory authorities – a written report of the work of the safeguarding committee was sent to the local HSE official and a decision was taken to invite him to a meeting in 2011.
- ❖ Communications policy – a subcommittee of the Cloyne Diocesan Safeguarding Children Committee made recommendations aimed at achieving greater cohesion understanding, linkage and coordination between the various child safe guarding elements in the diocese. (See recommendations).

Communication of the Church’s safeguarding message was effected through a variety of channels including the Safeguarding Committee’s secretariat based in CDYS Mallow, the Cloyne Diocesan Centre in Cobh and the diocesan website www.cloynediocese.ie

5 Workload

5.1 Administration

The extension of the of the Training Coordinator’s hours from twelve to twenty per week was helpful to the committee and to the progression of the work. However, a considerable burden of work was borne by committee members, additional to attendance at meetings.

8.2 Administrative Costs

Administrative and secretarial facilities are provided through CDYS Mallow. The financial arrangements for these services are negotiated between the diocese and CDYS Mallow. The Safeguarding Children Committee is not privy to these financial arrangements.

9. Recommendations

Based on discussions throughout the year and in fulfillment of its duty for “advising on the human resources required for implementing best safeguarding practice across services,”¹ the committee recommends that greater cohesion, linkage and efficiency be effected in the area of safeguarding children by:

- (i) Appointment of a Diocesan Safeguarding Children Manager/Coordinator whose functions would include coordinating, overseeing and giving cohesiveness to safeguarding children in the diocese.
- (ii) Appointment of a female to act in the capacity of diocesan designated officer.
- (iii) Devising diocesan wide mechanisms for rapid updating of information regarding training and vetting e.g. of newly appointed parish representatives and/or priests from others dioceses who have retired to a parish and who assist in ministry.

¹ Safeguarding Children Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland - 55

(iv) Devising a communication strategy to improve information sharing – between the diocese and diocesan agencies involved with safeguarding children.

The committee recommends that the issues (i) – (iv) would form the basis for discussions between the Cloyne Safeguarding Children Committee and the relevant diocesan authorities as early as possible in 2011.

Conclusion

The volume of work carried out in 2010 by the safeguarding committee collectively, and by individual members thereof, is very impressive. I wish to thank each and every member of the committee. In particular I acknowledge the work of the secretary, the communications officer, the training coordinator, the members of the policy review committee, the committee members who carried out the parish visitation/audit and those who undertook other individual projects on behalf of the committee.

I acknowledge the significant contribution of CDYS Mallow and its director to the work of the committee through provision of accommodation for meetings and the provision of office accommodation and infrastructure. I acknowledge the assistance of the administrative secretary and the pastoral coordinator in the diocesan office in Cobh and the significant input of the diocesan webmaster. I also acknowledge the assistance given by the National Board for Safeguarding Children and the Staff at the National Office. At parish level, I acknowledge the cooperation of priests, of parish representatives of parish staff/volunteers and group leaders.

28th February 2011

Sr. Nuala O’Gorman (Secretary)

Con Lynch (Chairman)

