

Safeguarding Children

Diocese of Meath Newsletter

April 2009



“Let the children come to me; do not stop them”. Then he put his arms around them, laid his hands on them and gave them blessing. (Mk 10:14, 16)



“The Diocese of Meath is committed to best practice in the safeguarding of children, particularly when involved in Church activities. I wish to express my thanks to the members of our diocesan committees and all those working at parish level to bring the caring attitude of Christ to children. You can be assured of my fullest support and appreciation”

Bishop Michael Smith

Safeguarding Children in the Diocese of Meath

The words of Jesus reveal his tender and gentle attitude to children and to all those who are vulnerable. We aim to reflect this attitude of Jesus in all activities involving children and young people in the Diocese of Meath. We value and encourage the active participation of children and young people in the life of the Church. We also endeavour to ensure that their fundamental right to be respected, cared for and protected is upheld in accordance with the teaching of the Gospel and civil legislation. This will be achieved through the development of best practice in the area of safeguarding children across every aspect of life in our Diocese.

Safeguarding Children Committee

This Committee was appointed by Bishop Michael Smith. He has asked it to manage all aspects of policy development, training and support at diocesan and parish level. Committee members are drawn from across the diocese and they bring to this role various skills in education, law, psychology, counselling, parish ministry and social work. The members are as follows: Fr Paul Crosbie, Jackie Faulkner, James Nugent, Neil O’Brien, Sean Waite, Joan Walshe and Marie Willoughby. Central to the Committee’s task is implementing diocesan guidelines, assisting parishes in their efforts, and overseeing an annual audit of activities in this area.

Advisory Case Management Committee

The Advisory Committee is appointed by the Bishop to work on his behalf to advise on all aspects of case management, including reporting and pastoral care. This Committee works to ensure an effective response is made to complaints and the appropriate pastoral care is put in place. The members of this Committee are: Fr Sean Henry, Nuala Kiernan, Sr Rose King, Fr Brendan Ludlow, Martin Marshall and Tom Shaw.

Resource Persons

The Diocese of Meath has three Resource Persons – Anne Feely, Sandra Neville and Joan Walshe. Their training is provided by the Health Services Executive, with which the Diocese has fostered a very good relationship in the provision of child protection measures. They work on behalf of the Safeguarding Children Committee, facilitating the training of Church personnel in child protection policies and procedures.

Anne is available to the deaneries of Duleek, Kells and Ratoath; Sandra is available to the deaneries of Clara, Fore and Mullingar; Joan is available to the deaneries of Navan and Trim. Sandra has also been trained as Authorised Signatory for the Garda vetting of Church personnel and volunteers.

Designated Officer

The role of Designated Officer in the Diocese of Meath is carried out by Fr Sean Henry. His task is described in the national guidelines “*Safeguarding Children*” as follows:

- To hear concerns relating to safeguarding, including any disclosures or allegations of abuse, and take responsibility for managing the response to that concern or disclosure, from start to finish. This includes the preliminary internal inquiry and referral to the Health Services Executive and/or An Garda Síochána
- To ensure that the person raising a concern, disclosing abuse, or making an allegation and anyone who is implicated by that are regularly informed about the progress of the inquiry process
- To record all steps undertaken as part of these procedures.

To protect and to heal

“One of the central challenges to our faith has been the betrayal of trust and the wounding of many. Healing these wounds must continue to be at the heart of the mission of the Church. Therefore, I ask anyone who has a child protection concern or wishes to report an allegation of child abuse to contact your local parish representative or the Designated Officer, Fr Sean Henry. You may also go directly to the Health Services Executive and/or An Garda Síochána”

Bishop Michael Smith



Parish Representatives

Each parish has been asked by Bishop Smith to nominate two representatives who will help the parish to develop awareness of best practice in working with children. They assist their parishes in the drawing up of a policy statement and a code of basic procedures, as well as ensuring that these practices are implemented. They act as a support to parish volunteers, liaise with the relevant civil and church authorities, and carry out an annual audit to present to the Parish Priest. Whenever concerns or complaints are received at parish level, they are brought to the attention of the Diocesan Designated Officer by the parish representative for referral to the appropriate authorities.

We are here to help

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