

St. Brigid's Parish Safeguarding Committee

An outline of the work of the Committee

Introduction

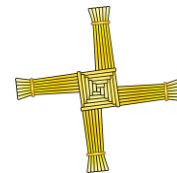
The Parish Safeguarding Committee's role is to ensure that our parish is a safe and welcoming place for children and adults at risk of harm and that the parish takes steps to ensure that all persons working in the parish are aware of and comply with safeguarding standards.

To understand the work of the Parish Safeguarding Committee in our parish, we first outline below the broader context of how the Catholic Church in Ireland is responding to the need for action on safeguarding. We then show how the Diocese gives a lead in applying Church policy and standards at Diocesan level and how it provides resources and assistance for each parish.

The Parish Safeguarding Committee has approved a general safeguarding policy which you can read on this website. The safeguarding policy is consistent with Diocesan and broader Catholic Church standards, and it guides the work of the Committee. We trust that this background information will assist our parishioners and other enquirers to understand better the work of the Committee and the outline of that work which follows below.

Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Ireland

Safeguarding standards are set by the National Board for the Safeguarding of Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland. The National Board is a limited company set up to develop and deliver safeguarding standards. It is staffed by a range of experts in the field of safeguarding



and publishes reports on its activities and on the implementation of the standards in the Church in Ireland. The standards comply with all legal requirements and with best practice principles adopted generally in society and are kept under constant review and updated in the light of experience.

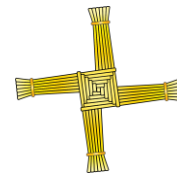
The work of the National Board guides all Dioceses in Ireland, and the Diocese in turn ensures delivery by each parish within its jurisdiction. The aim is to provide an integrated and comprehensive programme at all levels of the Catholic Church in Ireland.

Safeguarding at Diocesan level

There are 26 Dioceses in the Catholic Church in Ireland and one of the largest is Down and Connor, which covers mostly the same area as the counties of Antrim and Down, including the Belfast area. Each Diocese has overall responsibility to deliver safeguarding within its geographical area. The Down and Connor Diocese has 87 parishes, and it ensures that all clergy and diocesan employees for all parishes are vetted and trained.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Office is primarily responsible for this task. It has developed policies and codes of practice based on the National Boards standards and these are made available in a comprehensive resource pack to assist parishes to comply, and it arranges for training sessions take place in the parishes and to be available online.

The Diocese also works with a variety of statutory and other agencies in Northern Ireland on safeguarding issues and it publishes newsletters and provides advice and assistance to parishes. Each parish is audited annually by the Diocese to assess how it is complying with safeguarding standards and to see the extent of delivery throughout the whole Diocese. The bishop reviews the responses and reports the findings to the National Board.



Safeguarding in St. Brigid's Parish

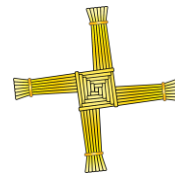
St Brigid's is one of largest parishes in Down and Connor and the Parish Safeguarding Committee is primarily responsible to deliver safeguarding in our parish. Currently, committee members are as follows:

- Father O'Donnell (Parish Priest)
- Kevin Delaney (Chair)
- Pauline Forker (Secretary)
- Áine McKeating
- Mary Murphy
- Geraldine O'Hare
- Angela McNickle
- Mícheál Gallagher
- Geralyn Woods

The committee meets up to six times a year and individual members meet more often to carry out its work. The committee communicates safeguarding messages regularly in the parish bulletin and newsletter and it organises the annual Safeguarding Sunday event which takes place throughout the church in Ireland. Its overall aim is to raise awareness about safeguarding practices generally among all parishioners and to nurture a culture of safety and well-being of children and adults at risk.

Two of the most important activities of the committee are first, recruiting, vetting and training of volunteers for parish groups and second, ensuring those using the Parish Centre, including non-parish organisations, comply with the terms of the Diocesan licence for all users. The committee carries out an annual audit of all groups in the parish, and as mentioned above, it also responds to the Diocesan annual audit of the parish.

Committee members assist volunteers to prepare their application for vetting. The vetting process is carried out by Access NI, a statutory body set up by law to ensure that a person who has been legally barred from working with children or adults at risk does not become a



volunteer. When the vetting of a volunteer is completed the Diocesan Vetting Office informs the chair of the committee that it is free to appoint the volunteer to work with the group in question.

Volunteers undergo training for their role every three years and while the Diocese organises a variety of training sessions, participation by volunteers is administered and recorded by the committee. The committee promotes codes of behaviour for adults and children, consent forms for various activities, including for events taking place outside of the parish, for complaints, for breaches of codes and related matters. Committee members ensure that these requirements are made known to group leaders and to volunteers.

Contact details of the relevant statutory authorities such as the police, social services or the Designated Liaison Person of the Diocese are publicised so that anyone with a concern will know how to proceed with a complaint. Complaints are never investigated by the committee or by the parish – these must always be referred to the statutory and Diocesan authorities for independent investigation. The document “Reporting a concern about safeguarding” on our website gives details and contact information on how to make a report of a concern.

Summary

The aim of St. Brigid’s Parish Safeguarding Committee is to promote a culture of safeguarding in our parish which will reduce the risk of harm to children and adults at risk. Our experience is that there is widespread and willing co-operation by all in this task and we are grateful for that response.

Any person who wants to know more about any aspect of the work of the committee should contact us through the Parish Office or through any committee member.