

Review of Safeguarding Practice

in the

Dominican Sisters

undertaken by

**The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the
Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI)**

Date: November 2014

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Background

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) was asked by the Sponsoring Bodies, namely the Irish Episcopal Conference, the Conference of Religious of Ireland and the Irish Missionary Union, to undertake a comprehensive review of safeguarding practice within and across all the Church authorities on the island of Ireland. The purpose of the review is to confirm that current safeguarding practice complies with the standards set down within the guidance issued by the Sponsoring Bodies in February 2009, and that all known allegations and concerns had been appropriately dealt with. To achieve this task, safeguarding practice in each Church authority is to be reviewed through an examination of case records and through interviews with key personnel involved both within and external to a diocese or other authority.

This report contains the findings of the *Review of Safeguarding Practice in the Dominican Sisters* undertaken by the NBSCCCI in line with the request made to it by the Sponsoring Bodies. It is based upon the case material made available to the reviewers by the Dominican Sisters, along with interviews with selected key personnel who contribute to safeguarding within the Dominican Sisters. The NBSCCCI believes that all relevant documentation for these cases was passed to the reviewers, and the congregation Prioress, Sr Helen Mary Harmeey has confirmed this.

The findings of the review have been shared with a reference group in redacted form before being submitted to Congregation Prioress Sr Helen Mary Harmeey OP along with any recommendations arising from the findings.

Introduction

The distortion of the Christian message in his generation motivated St. Dominic to seek followers who would dedicate themselves to preaching and teaching the Gospel. Dominic believed that if preachers witnessed the fullness of the Gospel message through their everyday lives, God's Word of Mercy and Compassion would reach peoples' hearts.

The Dominican nuns in Lisbon, Galway and Dublin lived within their Monastery walls observing strict enclosure, except when they were fugitives. They lived lives dedicated to community prayer, penance, study, and evangelisation of youth through education.

Pupils came, mostly as boarders, during these early years. Within a year of arriving at Cabra the nuns opened a school for the local poor. The Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 enabled more and more young women to openly identify with the nuns' way of life, and many were received into the Cabra Community. Additional numbers enabled the nuns to open a Boarding School for girls in 1836 and establish seven new Convents, Sion Hill, founded by Cabra nuns, also founded six Convents and Dun Laoghaire and Falls Road founded two each. By 1912 there were 16 communities of Cabra origin as far afield as New Orleans, Cape Town, Australia, and New Zealand.

Cabra developed a special focus of care for children and adults with totally or partially impaired hearing. This ministry began in 1846 with the support of the Vincentian Fathers in Dublin. Later other Dominican Convents responded to similar needs in Belfast, South Africa and Australia. Both Cabra and Wicklow had a junior boarding school for Boys; and in 1884/5 the Sion Hill community opened St. Mary's University College for women. It was first housed in Eccles Street, and later in Merrion Square and Muckross Park. The College returned to its original site in Eccles Street in 1902. Scoil Caítriona, an Irish medium school, opened in Eccles Street in 1928, over time, three teacher training colleges developed within the Sion Hill campus and another on the Falls Road Campus in Belfast. The opening of a convent and School in Portstewart and Fortwilliam Park and Aquinas Hall University Hostel in Belfast increased the Dominican presence in Northern Ireland. In Dublin, Dominican Hall, on Stephen's Green, catered for university students, as does Muckross Park to this day.

As Dublin expanded westwards, a new community of Dominican Sisters moved to Ballyfermot in 1955, taking responsibility for seven primary schools, and a secondary school. In the last few years a family therapy centre and a resource centre which was set up by the Dominican Sisters for the people of Ballyfermot has been opened on this school campus. Dominican schools believe in a rich school experience with an 'education for life' focus.

In the 1970s and onwards some Sisters, of all ages, began to immerse themselves in new ministries with individuals and communities marginalized within mainstream society. They worked in partnership with other religious institutions, lay people, and the wider Dominican Family. Other Sisters lectured in universities, state run colleges, theological and ecumenical institutes; while several sisters, published books and articles of

theological and historical value. Many Sisters moved into smaller Dominican communities to be closer to the peoples of Tallaght, Ballyfermot, Chapelizod, Navan Rd., Blackrock, Wicklow, Galway and West Belfast.

The Dominican Sisters have trusteeship of 6 primary schools, including.

Dunlaoghaire; Scoil Róis, Galway; Scoil Mobhi, Holy Rosary Wicklow and two special schools Benincasa and Casa Caterina.

The schools offer specialised education to learning difficulties and behavioural problems.

The Wicklow campus has developed a new focus through its organic Farm and Ecology Centre. It helps participants from all over the world heighten their awareness of the interconnectedness between humans, God, and the whole of Creation. The community also enabled the establishment and development of the Traveller Centre, CEART.

A new Dominican Community for frail Sisters was opened in Cabra. The Sisters are cared for by a professional staff of nurses and carers in partnership with Dominican Sisters.

STANDARDS

This section provides the findings of the review. The template employed to present the findings are the seven standards, set down and described in the Church *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland*. This guidance was launched in February 2009 and was endorsed and adopted by all the Church authorities that minister on the island of Ireland, including the Dominican Sisters. The seven standards are:

Standard 1 A written policy on keeping children safe

Standard 2 Procedures – how to respond to allegations and suspicions in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

Standard 3 Preventing harm to children:

- recruitment and vetting
- running safe activities for children
- codes of behaviour

Standard 4 Training and education

Standard 5 Communicating the Church’s safeguarding message:

- to children
- to parents and adults
- to other organisations

Standard 6 Access to advice and support

Standard 7 Implementing and monitoring the Standards

Each standard contains a list of criteria, which are indicators that help decide whether this standard has been met. The criteria give details of the steps that a Church organisation, diocese or religious order, needs to take to meet the standard and ways of providing evidence that the standard has been met.

Standard 1

A written policy on keeping children safe

Each child should be cherished and affirmed as a gift from God with an inherent right to dignity of life and bodily integrity, which shall be respected, nurtured and protected by all.

Compliance with Standard 1 is only fully achieved when the Dominican Sisters meet the requirements of all nine criteria against which the standard is measured.

Criteria

| Number | Criterion | Met fully or Met partially or Not met |
|---------------|--|--|
| 1.1 | The Church organisation has a child protection policy that is written in a clear and easily understandable way. | Met fully |
| 1.2 | The policy is approved and signed by the relevant leadership body of the Church organisation (e.g. the Bishop of the diocese or provincial of a religious congregation). | Met fully |
| 1.3 | The policy states that all Church personnel are required to comply with it. | Met fully |
| 1.4 | The policy is reviewed at regular intervals no more than three years apart and is adapted whenever there are significant changes in the organisation or legislation. | Met fully |
| 1.5 | The policy addresses child protection in the different aspects of Church work e.g. within a church building, community work, pilgrimages, trips and holidays. | Met fully |
| 1.6 | The policy states how those individuals who pose a risk to children are managed. | Met fully |
| 1.7 | The policy clearly describes the Church's understanding and definitions of abuse. | Met partially |
| 1.8 | The policy states that all current child protection concerns must be fully reported to the civil authorities without delay. | Met fully |
| 1.9 | The policy should be created at diocese or congregational level. If a separate policy document at parish or other level is necessary this should be consistent with the diocesan or congregational policy and approved by the relevant diocesan or congregational authority before distribution. | Met fully |

The reviewers were advised that the Dominican Sisters published their first child safeguarding policy in 2010. This was reviewed in 2011 and again in 2013. The 2013 document was endorsed by the Congregation Prioress, and states that *'each child shall be*

cherished and affirmed as a gift from God with an inherent right to dignity of life and bodily integrity which shall be respected, nurtured and protected by all. Everyone in the Congregation of Dominican Sisters has an obligation to ensure that the fundamental rights of children are respected’.

The child safeguarding policy is well structured and easily read. It contains 21 pages, in A4 format, and is professional and practical in its presentation. The reviewers consider Criteria 1.1 and 1.2 to be fully met.

The Dominican Sisters acknowledge their responsibility in preventing abuse, and through their safeguarding policy have set out an expectation *‘that all members of the Congregation, their co-workers and volunteers take every possible measure to prevent abuse. It aims to ensure that none of its personnel or volunteers engages in behaviour that could allow abuse to occur or actions that could be misinterpreted by children, their families or other adults as constituting, or leading to abuse’*. The reviewers are satisfied that this statement defines the intent of the Dominican Sisters, and provides unambiguous expectations on the Congregation concerning safeguarding. Therefore, Criterion 1.3 is met fully.

Criterion 1.4 is met partially. The reviewers are aware, through the course of their fieldwork, that the safeguarding policy has been reviewed and updated on a regular basis, to meet the changes in Church and State guidance. The reviewers commend the ongoing work engaged in by the Dominican Sisters to ensure that their policies emphasise best practice. However, a commitment from the Dominican Sisters to a periodic review of safeguarding policies is not contained within their policies and procedures. The reviewers are concerned that if, in the future, current safeguarding personnel are unavailable, or emphasis is placed elsewhere, there is no policy direction regarding the revision of safeguarding standards within the Dominican Sisters.

Criterion 1.5 is met fully through the Dominican Sisters safeguarding policies and the reviewers were impressed by the code of behaviour and risk assessment of activities contained within the document. The reviewers acknowledge that those members of the Dominican Sisters employed in medical and educational settings, or engaged in diocesan activities, are subject to safeguarding practices within those environments. However, the Dominican Sisters safeguarding policy also provides clear guidelines on the behavioural expectations, attitudes, and approaches, to ensure child safety and welfare within their Congregation..

The safeguarding document provides comprehensive direction under ‘Procedures for an Allegation’ in the management of individuals who may pose a risk to children. The guidelines refer to the Dominican Sisters religious Constitution and Canon Law; and incorporate civil enquiry and statutory obligations. The document states; *‘the Congregation Prioress possesses all the necessary powers to take measures to promote and ensure the safety and welfare of children’*. Criterion 1.6 is met fully.

Definitions of abuse are provided in Appendix 1 of the Dominican Sisters safeguarding policy. However, the definitions provide minimum information, and would give little guidance on the recognition and understanding of abuse. The definitions are simply provided and lack context and there is no reference to them from other sections of the document. While the reviewers are of the opinion that the definitions and explanation of abuse could have been compiled in a more comprehensive manner, information is provided within the Dominican Sisters safeguarding policy. Therefore Criterion 1.7 is seen as partially met.

The Dominican Sisters safeguarding policy states; *'we hold that the safety and wellbeing of children will be the paramount consideration and at no time will children be put at further risk of harm by delay or inaction'*. The policy directs that *'on receiving a complaint, the Designated person, on behalf of the Congregation Prioress must inform civil authorities'*. While the policy does not define a timeframe regarding the reporting of the allegation, the reviewers are satisfied that the policy implies concerns would be fully reported to the civil authorities without delay. Therefore, Criterion 1.8 is met fully.

Standard 2

Management of allegations

Children have a right to be listened to and heard: Church organisations must respond effectively and ensure any allegations and suspicions of abuse are reported both within the Church and to civil authorities.

Compliance with Standard 2 is only fully achieved when the Dominican Sisters meet the requirements of all seven criteria against which the standard is measured.

Criteria

| Number | Criterion | Met fully or Met partially or Not met |
|---------------|---|--|
| 2.1 | There are clear child protection procedures in all Church organisations that provide step-by-step guidance on what action to take if there are allegations or suspicions of abuse of a child (historic or current). | Met fully |
| 2.2 | The child protection procedures are consistent with legislation on child welfare civil guidance for child protection and written in a clear, easily understandable way. | Met fully |
| 2.3 | There is a designated officer or officer(s) with a clearly defined role and responsibilities for safeguarding children at diocesan or congregational level. | Met fully |
| 2.4 | There is a process for recording incidents, allegations and suspicions and referrals. These will be stored securely, so that confidential information is protected and complies with relevant legislation. | Met fully |
| 2.5 | There is a process for dealing with complaints made by adults and children about unacceptable behaviour towards children, with clear timescales for resolving the complaint. | Met fully |
| 2.6 | There is guidance on confidentiality and information-sharing which makes clear that the protection of the child is the most important consideration. The Seal of Confession is absolute. | Met fully |
| 2.7 | The procedures include contact details for local child protection services e.g. (Republic of Ireland) the local Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána; (Northern Ireland) the local health and social services trust and the PSNI. | Not met |

With the exception of Criterion 2.7, the Dominican Sisters meet all the criteria under Standard 2. Their policy document provides clear procedural direction on safeguarding and is consistent with current legislation and safeguarding standards. The Designated Officer has been in post for approximately four years and supported by the Congregation Prioress, is clear in her role, and the safeguarding responsibilities that accompany it. Through discussion, the reviewers noted the Designated Officer's competency in her understanding of safeguarding expectations and structure within the Dominican Sisters.

The safeguarding files held by the Dominican Sisters are well structured. They are referenced by the respondent name, with details of the allegation and the alleged victim contained within the file. The file contents follow a chronological sequence and are not divided into relevant sections. It is worth noting that the Dominican Sisters have a small number of allegations against its members. The reviewers expressed some concern that should further allegations be made against Dominican Sisters, the recording of information will need to be comprehensive and structured in a manner that places emphasis on the accessibility of pertinent information.

The safeguarding policy does not contain contact details for the Designated Person or Statutory Agencies, and therefore Criterion 2.7 is not met.

Recommendation 1

While the reviewers recognise the intent of the Dominican Sisters to allow safeguarding personnel add local details for statutory agencies to the policies and procedures, there is no guarantee this would occur. It is also worth noting that the Designated Officer has been in her role for four years, and her contact details should be easily available. To address this, the Congregational Prioress must ensure that contact details for the Designated Officer and statutory agencies are stated in their child safeguarding document.

Table 1

Incidence of safeguarding allegations received within the Dominican Sisters against Sisters, from 1st January 1975 up to time of review.

| Dominican Sisters | | |
|--------------------------|--|------------|
| 1 | Number of Sisters against whom allegations have been made since the 1 st January 1975 up to the date of the Review. | 3** |
| 2 | Total number of allegations received by the Congregation since 1 st January, 1975 | 3 |
| 3 | Number of allegations reported to An Garda Síochána involving Sisters since 1 st January 1975. | 3 |
| 4 | Number of allegations reported to TUSLA /HSE/HSC (or the Health Boards which preceded the setting up of the HSE) involving Sisters of the Congregation since 1 st January 1975. | 3 |
| 5 | Number of sisters (still members of the Congregation) against whom an allegation was made and who were living at the date of the review. | 3 |
| 6 | Number of Sisters against whom an allegation was made and who are deceased. | 0 |
| 7 | Number of Sisters against whom an allegation has been made and who are in ministry. | 0 |
| 8 | Number of Sisters against whom an allegation was made and who are 'Out of Ministry', but are still members of the Congregation. | 0 |
| 9 | Number of Sisters against whom an allegation was made and who are retired | 3 |
| 1 0 | Number of Sisters against whom an allegation was made and who have left the Congregation. | 0 |
| 1 1 | Number of Sisters of the Congregation who have been convicted of having committed an offence or offences against a child or young person since the 1 st January 1975. | 0 |

*** The alleged victim in one case applied to the Residential Institutions Redress Board and therefore is not a subject of this audit. The legislation which established the Residential Institutions Redress Board forbids the use of any information provided to the Redress Board being used in any other forum.*

The Dominican Sisters have received three separate allegations against three of their members since 1975. As outlined in Table 1, one of the alleged victims applied to the Residential Institutions Redress Board, and is therefore not a subject of this audit.

Of the remaining two cases, the congregation were notified of allegations against

Sister A by the statutory authorities. This followed their investigation whereby HSE/Tusla found that there was no evidence to conclude that any form of abuse took place.

Correspondence between the Dominican Sisters and Tusla outlines how child protective services conducted their assessment and reached their conclusion. It is documented that the statutory services were informed of and have no concerns relating to Sister A and no further intervention is warranted by them.

The case involving Sister B is ongoing and relates to incidents that are alleged to have occurred approximately 30 years ago. The Dominican Sisters were made aware of the allegations recently and have cooperated fully with the statutory authorities. While Sister B adamantly denies any wrongdoing, she too has cooperated fully with safeguarding procedures. Sister B is retired and has no ministry with children. Despite this, safeguarding restrictions have been put in place and practical expectations relating to Sister B's religious duties have been agreed with her.

Sister B's case has been referred to the NBSCCCI's National Case Management Reference Group, and as mentioned, the circumstances surrounding the allegation are currently under investigation. The reviewers are aware that the credibility of the allegation against Sister B is in doubt, and the reviewers are satisfied that all steps have been taken to assess its credibility.

Having read the files, the reviewers are satisfied that expected safeguarding policies and procedures were implemented in both cases. Prompt reporting to the statutory authorities is evident in Sister B's case and the Dominican Sisters have sought assistance from the National Case Management Reference Group (NCMRG) on how to proceed.

Standard 3

Preventing Harm to Children

This standard requires that all procedures and practices relating to creating a safe environment for children be in place and effectively implemented. These include having safe recruitment and vetting practices in place, having clear codes of behaviour for adults who work with children and by operating safe activities for children.

Compliance with Standard 3 is only fully achieved when the Dominican Sisters meet the requirements of all twelve criteria against which the standard is measured. These criteria are grouped into three areas, safe recruitment and vetting, codes of behaviour and operating safe activities for children.

Criteria – safe recruitment and vetting

| Number | Criterion | Met fully or Met partially or Not met |
|---------------|--|--|
| 3.1 | There are policies and procedures for recruiting Church personnel and assessing their suitability to work with children. | Met fully |
| 3.2 | The safe recruitment and vetting policy is in line with best practice guidance. | Met fully |
| 3.3 | All those who have the opportunity for regular contact with children, or who are in positions of trust, complete a form declaring any previous court convictions and undergo other checks as required by legislation and guidance and this information is then properly assessed and recorded. | Met fully |

Criteria – Codes of behaviour

| Number | Criterion | Met fully or Met partially or Not met |
|---------------|---|--|
| 3.4 | The Church organisation provides guidance on appropriate/ expected standards of behaviour of, adults towards children. | Met fully |
| 3.5 | There is guidance on expected and acceptable behaviour of children towards other children (anti-bullying policy). | Not met* |
| 3.6 | There are clear ways in which Church personnel can raise allegations and suspicions about unacceptable behaviour towards children by other Church personnel or volunteers ('whistle-blowing'), confidentially if necessary. | Not met |

| | | |
|------------|--|-----------|
| 3.7 | There are processes for dealing with children’s unacceptable behaviour that do not involve physical punishment or any other form of degrading or humiliating treatment. | Not met* |
| 3.8 | Guidance to staff and children makes it clear that discriminatory behaviour or language in relation to any of the following is not acceptable: race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality or political views. | Met fully |
| 3.9 | Policies include guidelines on the personal/ intimate care of children with disabilities, including appropriate and inappropriate touch. | Not met* |

Criteria – Operating safe activities for children

| Number | Criterion | Met fully or Met partially or Not met |
|---------------|--|--|
| 3.10 | There is guidance on assessing all possible risks when working with children – especially in activities that involve time spent away from home. | Met fully |
| 3.11 | When operating projects/ activities children are adequately supervised and protected at all times. | Met fully |
| 3.12 | Guidelines exist for appropriate use of information technology (such as mobile phones, email, digital cameras, websites, the Internet) to make sure that children are not put in danger and exposed to abuse and exploitation. | Met partially |

Where criteria are denoted with *, it is recognized that the range of activity relating to children and young people is very limited, and that the criteria have minimal application. Where Dominican Sisters have ministry with children, this is guided by the safeguarding policies of the organisation in which they work.

In considering Standard 3, the reviewers acknowledge the very low level of direct contact the Dominican Sisters have with children and young people. Of the 198 Dominican Sisters in Ireland, 15 have roles through parish and educational activities that presents direct contact with children. These Sisters are bound by comprehensive diocesan and Department of Education and Skills’ safeguarding policies and procedures and have received training regarding same. However, the reviewers feel it is necessary for the Dominican Sisters to develop policies and procedures relating to all environments in which their members may require safeguarding direction. These policies would coexist and compliment diocesan and Department of Education and Skills’ procedures, while also providing specific guidance to Dominican Sisters relating to their role.

The reviewers are satisfied that Criteria 3.1 to 3.4 are fully met within the Dominican Sisters safeguarding policies and procedures. In relation to Criteria 3.2 and 3.3 (Recruitment and Vetting), the reviewers were informed that those members involved in parish and educational activities have been Garda vetted. The Prioress of Ireland has responsibility for vetting and process is ongoing and renewed as required.

The Dominican Sister' safeguarding policies and procedures outlines a code of behaviour which is expected from the Congregation's members, staff and volunteers. The code covers a number of important issues that include;

- Treat all children with respect
- Provide an example of good conduct we wish others to follow
- Operate within Church principles and guidance
- Recognise and obey civil law
- Be visible to others when working with children whenever possible
- Challenge and report potentially abusive behaviour
- Develop a culture where children can talk about their contacts with staff and others openly
- Respect each child's boundaries and help them to develop their own sense of their rights as well as helping them to know what they can do if they feel there is a problem
- Respect the physical integrity of children
- Respect the sexual integrity of children
- Respect the emotional integrity of children
- Always use appropriate language, and offer appropriate advice
- Act in ways that protect children from abuse or risk of abuse
- Be accompanied by another adult if bringing children away overnight
- Consult with parents in relation to intimate care of children with special needs
- Challenge the behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive

This is a good overall guide for the membership and it satisfies the requirement of Criteria 3.4 and 3.8.

Criteria 3.5 and 3.6 are not met. The reviewers acknowledge the limited relevance of Criterion 3.5 to the religious activities of the Dominican Sisters. In contrast, the reviewers consider a significant omission from the safeguarding document is the absence of a whistle blowing policy.

Recommendation 2

The Congregational Prioress must ensure that the Dominican Sisters develop policy on how members can raise allegations and suspicions about unacceptable behaviour towards children by other Church personnel or volunteers (whistle-blowing), confidentially if necessary.

The reviewers consider that Criteria 3.7 and 3.9 do not have active relevance to the Dominican Sisters application of religious duties.

The reviewers consider Criteria 3.10 to 3.11 to be met fully. The reviewers were impressed by the policy relating to a risk assessment of activities and the detailed guidelines in ensuring safe activities with children.

Appendix 3 of the policy document advises on the use of internet and digital technologies. The policy is comprehensive and commendable in its guidance on computer and internet access. However, the policy does not offer direction on the use of mobile phones, digital cameras/video imagery, or tablets. Given the usage and availability of these items, the reviewers consider it important that guidance be provided on their appropriate use.

Recommendation 3

The Congregational Prioress must ensure that the Dominican Sisters expand their information technology policy to include all information technologies and digital media.

Standard 4

Training and Education

All Church personnel should be offered training in child protection to maintain high standards and good practice.

Criteria

| Number | Criterion | Met fully or Met partially or Not met |
|---------------|---|--|
| 4.1 | All Church personnel who work with children are inducted into the Church's policy and procedures on child protection when they begin working within Church organisations. | Met fully |
| 4.2 | Identified Church personnel are provided with appropriate training for keeping children safe with regular opportunities to update their skills and knowledge. | Met fully |
| 4.3 | Training is provided to those with additional responsibilities such as recruiting and selecting staff, dealing with complaints, disciplinary processes, managing risk, acting as designated person. | Met fully |
| 4.4 | Training programmes are approved by National Board for Safeguarding Children and updated in line with current legislation, guidance and best practice. | Met fully |

As mentioned above, there are 198 Dominican Sisters in Ireland, of which 149 are retired. The average age within the Congregation is approximately 78 years old and of the 49 Sisters not retired, only 15 remain in active duties that may provide direct contact with children.

Acknowledging this demographic, the Dominican Sisters Safeguarding Representatives conducted a training audit, categorising members depending on their role and potential contact with children. The NBSCCCI have provided training to safeguarding representatives on three occasions over the last four years and the reviewers are satisfied that those within the safeguarding structure have been appropriately trained. It should be noted that safeguarding training has also been provided to members by the Department of Education, where a Dominican Sister has an active role in a school.

The reviewers acknowledge that it is not practical, or necessary, to provide safeguarding training to all members of the Dominican Sisters, where those members are incapacitated due to age and poor health. The reviewers are also conscious of environmental considerations where Dominican Sisters are resident of a private care home (not open for public residency) and potential access to children is minimal.

Review of Safeguarding Practice in the Dominican Sisters

The commitment to training in the Dominican Sisters is positive. While emphasis is placed on safeguarding personnel, raising awareness of safeguarding within the Congregation has also occurred. The reviewers consider this an important aspect of safeguarding within the Dominican Sisters and regular awareness activities will allow for a greater understanding of safeguarding expectations within the Congregation.

Standard 4 is met fully by the Dominican Sisters.

Standard 5

Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

This standard requires that the Church's safeguarding policies and procedures be successfully communicated to Church personnel and parishioners (including children). This can be achieved through the prominent display of the Church policy, making children aware of their right to speak out and knowing who to speak to, having the Designated Person's contact details clearly visible, ensuring Church personnel have access to contact details for child protection services, having good working relationships with statutory child protection agencies and developing a communication plan which reflects the Church's commitment to transparency.

Criteria

| Number | Criterion | Met fully or Met partially or Not met |
|---------------|--|--|
| 5.1 | The child protection policy is openly displayed and available to everyone. | Met fully |
| 5.2 | Children are made aware of their right to be safe from abuse and who to speak to if they have concerns. | Met fully |
| 5.3 | Everyone in Church organisations knows who the designated person is and how to contact them. | Not met |
| 5.4 | Church personnel are provided with contact details of local child protection services, such as Health and Social Care Trusts / Health Service Executive, PSNI, An Garda Síochána, telephone helplines and the designated person. | Not met |
| 5.5 | Church organisations establish links with statutory child protection agencies to develop good working relationships in order to keep children safe. | Met fully |
| 5.6 | Church organisations at diocesan and religious order level have an established communications policy which reflects a commitment to transparency and openness. | Met fully |

The profile of the Dominican Sisters in Ireland should be considered when assessing the requirements of Standard 5, and its application to the Congregation. Practical engagement by the Congregation with the community is predominately activities through the Wicklow campus, An Tairseach and their 'trusteeship of six schools, four in Dublin two of which are special schools, one in Galway and one in Wicklow . As mentioned above the reviewers acknowledge the important individual roles conducted by Dominican Sisters in diocesan, educational, and medical and care settings.

The reviewers are satisfied that the safeguarding policy is openly displayed within facilities overseen by the Dominican Sisters. Given the limited public access to the Congregation's residential communities and convents, the inclusion of the safeguarding policy on the Dominican Sisters' website is welcomed by the reviewers. Criterion 5.1 is considered to be met fully.

However, the safeguarding policies and procedures document does not identify the Designated Officer and provide contact details for her. Contact details for the statutory agencies are also not provided within the document, or on the child safeguarding policy. While the Designated Officer is identified on the Congregation's website, along with a general email address and postal address, a contact number is not provided.

Recommendation 1 addresses this deficit.

There is no guidance provided on confidentiality in communicating with the Designated Officer through email or postal address and the reviewers are concerned that the current method of contacting the Dominican Sisters is not conducive to members of the public sharing sensitive and personal information with the Congregation. Therefore, Criteria 5.3 and 5.4 are not met.

In their child safeguarding policy 2013, the Dominican Sisters set out a commitment to ensuring children are aware of the safeguarding policies and procedures of the Congregation. The document states '*we will display our Child Safeguarding Policy in a public place in all our Convents, Houses and places of direct Dominican ministry. We endeavour to ensure that our Child Safeguarding Policy is communicated to all personnel – Sisters, employees and volunteers, to parents, to children and to external agencies. We are aware that policies and procedures are only effective if everyone, including children, know how to use them*'. The reviewers consider Criterion 5.2 to be met fully.

Contact with An Garda Síochána and the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) by the reviewers confirmed that the Dominican Sisters have appropriate communication with the statutory agencies. Criterion 5.5 is considered met fully.

Standard 6

Access to Advice and Support

Those who have suffered child abuse should receive a compassionate and just response and should be offered appropriate pastoral care to rebuild their lives.

Those who have harmed others should be helped to face up to the reality of abuse, as well as being assisted in healing.

Criteria

| Number | Criterion | Met fully or Met partially or Not met |
|---------------|--|--|
| 6.1 | Church personnel with special responsibilities for keeping children safe have access to specialist advice, support and information on child protection. | Met fully |
| 6.2 | Contacts are established at a national and/ or local level with the relevant child protection/ welfare agencies and helplines that can provide information, support and assistance to children and Church personnel. | Met fully* |
| 6.3 | There is guidance on how to respond to and support a child who is suspected to have been abused whether that abuse is by someone within the Church or in the community, including family members or peers. | Met fully |
| 6.4 | Information is provided to those who have experienced abuse on how to seek support. | Met fully |
| 6.5 | Appropriate support is provided to those who have perpetrated abuse to help them to face up to the reality of abuse as well as to promote healing in a manner which does not compromise children's safety. | Met fully |

The Dominican Sisters do not have an Advisory Committee, instead choosing to consult the NBSCCCI on case management issues. They are formal members of the NBSCCCI's National Case Management Reference Group (NCMRG) and have utilised this service on their most recent case. The reviewers note that this is not reflected in the safeguarding policy document, which refers to the Congregation's intent to establish an Advisory Committee; outlining the composition and role of same. While the reviewers consider Criterion 6.1 to be met fully, given the Congregation's membership of the NCMRG, it is necessary for the Dominican Sisters to formally amend its position in a revised safeguarding document.

In assessing Criterion 6.2, the reviewers recognise that the Dominican Sisters have only found it necessary in the most recent case to establish a working relationship with the statutory agencies. However, the Congregation verbalised a confidence in the developing relationship, which is seen as positive. Safeguarding personnel within the Dominican Sisters place significant emphasis on their relationship with the NBSCCCI, which has provided policy and case advice and training to the Congregation. The reviewers consider Criterion 6.2 to be met fully.

Appropriate guidance is contained within *Child Safeguarding Policy (2013)* responding and supporting a child who is suspected of having been abused. Step by step direction is provided within the document regarding initial contact and subsequent procedures. The Dominican Sisters set out their commitment to providing a support person to anyone making an allegation of abuse and to providing information that will assist the individual in having their experiences heard. The reviewers consider Criterion 6.3 as met fully.

The Dominican Sisters child safeguarding policy (2013) states that;

‘Lists of services, authorities and organisations with contact details that can provide assistance to children will be openly displayed in all areas frequented by children. These lists will also be made available to Sisters, staff and volunteers so that they know what services are available in order to be able to respond and support children’.

This policy meets the requirements of Criterion 6.4, which is considered fully met. However, the reviewers did not see evidence of these lists and suggest that the Dominican Sisters consider including the information within their policy document.

The Dominican Sisters have identified support persons/Advisor for respondent Sisters. The role of the Advisor is clearly defined in the safeguarding document and a commitment to have this person appropriately trained is set out. Additional information regarding the role is also provided in Appendix 6. In the course of the fieldwork, the reviewers met with the Advisor allocated to the respondent. The Advisor verbalised a confidence and clarity in her role and the reviewers consider the requirements of Criterion 6.5 as met fully.

Standard 7

Implementing and Monitoring Standards

Standard 7 outlines the need to develop a plan of action, which monitors the effectiveness of the steps being taken to keep children safe. This is achieved through making a written plan, having the human and financial resources available, monitoring compliance and ensuring all allegations and suspicions are recorded and stored securely.

Criteria

| Number | Criterion | Met fully or Met partially or Not met |
|---------------|--|--|
| 7.1 | There is a written plan showing what steps will be taken to keep children safe, who is responsible for implementing these measures and when these will be completed. | Met partially |
| 7.2 | The human or financial resources necessary for implementing the plan are made available. | Met fully |
| 7.3 | Arrangements are in place to monitor compliance with child protection policies and procedures. | Met fully |
| 7.4 | Processes are in place to ask parishioners (children and parents/ carers) about their views on policies and practices for keeping children safe. | Not met* |
| 7.5 | All incidents, allegations/ suspicions of abuse are recorded and stored securely. | Met fully |

The reviewers accept that Criterion 7.1, which requires a strategic safeguarding plan to be in place, is geared for medium – large Church organisations. Its practical relevance to a small congregation is limited. However, the intent of the Dominicans Sisters to develop a ‘plan of action’ is identified in the safeguarding policy document. Through fieldwork interviews it is evident that practical steps are being taken to raise awareness of safeguarding within the congregation. Safeguarding is a relevant issue within the Dominican Sisters, with training audits, allocation of safeguarding roles and the dissemination of responsibility in monitoring and maintaining safeguarding standards to Community Prioress’ and representatives. While the reviewers are aware these measures are in place, it is unfortunate that the Dominican Sisters have not correlated their activities in the format of a safeguarding plan. Therefore, Criterion 7.1 is partially met, while Criteria 7.2 and 7.3 are considered to be met fully.

Criterion 7.4 has no application to the religious activities of the Dominican Sisters. Criterion 7.5 relating to the safe and secure storage of records is met fully.

Recommendation 4

The Congregational Prioress must ensure that a written safeguarding plan for the Congregation is developed and reviewed annually.

Conclusion

The Dominican Sisters have demonstrated a strong commitment to safeguarding children, through the development of their policies, procedures, training and practice.

The reviewers would like to acknowledge their efforts and commend them for keeping a strong focus on children.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

While the reviewers recognise the intent of the Dominican Sisters to allow safeguarding personnel add local details for statutory agencies to the policies and procedures, there is no guarantee this would occur. It is also worth noting that the Designated Officer has been in her role for four years, and her contact details should be easily available. To address this, the Congregational Prioress must ensure that contact details for the Designated Officer and statutory agencies are stated in their child safeguarding document.

Recommendation 2

The Congregational Prioress must ensure that the Dominican Sisters develop policy on how members can raise allegations and suspicions about unacceptable behaviour towards children by other Church personnel or volunteers (whistle-blowing), confidentially if necessary.

Recommendation 3

The Congregational Prioress must ensure that the Dominican Sisters expand their information technology policy to include all information technologies and digital media.

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Recommendation 4

The Congregational Prioress must ensure that a written safeguarding plan for the Congregation is developed and reviewed annually.

Review of Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Ireland

Terms of Reference (which should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Notes)

1. To ascertain the full extent of all complaints or allegations, knowledge, suspicions or concerns of child sexual abuse, made to the Church Authority (Diocese/religious congregation/missionary society) by individuals or by the Civil Authorities in the period 1st January 1975 up to the date of the review, against Catholic clergy and/or religious still living and who are ministering/or who once ministered under the aegis of the Church Authority, and examine/review and report on the nature of the response on the part of the Church Authority.
2. If deemed relevant, select a random sample of complaints or allegations, knowledge, suspicions or concerns of child sexual abuse, made to the Church Authority by individuals or by the Civil Authorities in the period 1st January 1975 to the date of the review, against Catholic clergy and/or religious now deceased and who ministered under the aegis of the Church Authority.
3. Examine/review and report on the nature of the response on the part of the Church Authority.
4. To ascertain all of the cases during the relevant period in which the Church Authority
 - knew of child sexual abuse involving Catholic clergy and/or religious still living and including those clergy and/or religious visiting, studying and/or retired;
 - had strong and clear suspicion of child sexual abuse; or
 - had reasonable concern;
 - and examine/review and report on the nature of the response on the part of the Church Authority.

As well as examine

- Communication by the Church Authority with the Civil Authorities;
- Current risks and their management.

5. To consider and report on the implementation of the 7 Safeguarding Standards set out in *Safeguarding Children* (2009), including the following:
 - a) A review of the current child safeguarding policies and guidance materials in use by the Church Authority and an evaluation of their application;
 - b) How the Church Authority creates and maintains safe environments.
 - c) How victims are responded to by the Church Authority
 - d) What training is taking place within the Church Authority
 - e) How advice and support is accessed by the Church Authority in relation to victim support and assessment and management of accused respondents.
 - f) What systems are in place for monitoring practice and reporting back to the Church Authority.

Accompanying Notes

Note 1: Definition of Child Sexual Abuse:

The definition of child sexual abuse is in accordance with the definition adopted by the Ferns Report (and the Commission of Investigation Report into the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin). The following is the relevant extract from the Ferns Report:

“While definitions of child sexual abuse vary according to context, probably the most useful definition and broadest for the purposes of this Report was that which was adopted by the Law Reform Commission in 1990¹ and later developed in Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Health and Children, 1999) which state that “child sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or that of others”. Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child;
- intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- masturbation in the presence of the child or the involvement of the child in an act of masturbation;
- sexual intercourse with the child whether oral, vaginal or anal;
- sexual exploitation of a child which includes inciting, encouraging, propositioning, requiring or permitting a child to solicit for, or to engage in prostitution or other sexual acts. Sexual exploitation also occurs when a child is involved in exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, video tape, or other media) or the manipulation for those purposes of the image by computer or other means. It may also include showing sexually explicit material to children which is often a feature of the ‘grooming’ process by perpetrators of abuse.”

¹ This definition was originally proposed by the Western Australia Task Force on Child Sexual Abuse, 1987 and is adopted by the Law Reform Commission (1990) *Report on Child Sexual Abuse*, p. 8.

Note 2: Definition of Allegation:

The term allegation is defined as an accusation or complaint where there are reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, or is being sexually abused, or is at risk of sexual abuse, including retrospective disclosure by adults. It includes allegations that did not necessarily result in a criminal or canonical investigation, or a civil action, and allegations that are unsubstantiated but which are plausible. (NB: Erroneous information does not necessarily make an allegation implausible, for example, a priest arrived in a parish in the Diocese a year after the alleged abuse, but other information supplied appears credible and the alleged victim may have mistaken the date).

Note 3: False Allegations:

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland wishes to examine any cases of false allegation so as to review the management of the complaint by the Diocese/religious congregation/missionary society.

Note 4: Random sample:

The random sample (if applicable) must be taken from complaints or allegations, knowledge, suspicions or concerns of child sexual abuse made against all deceased Catholic clergy/religious covering the entire of the relevant period being 1st January 1975 to the date of the Review.

Note 5: Civil Authorities:

Civil Authorities are defined in the Republic of Ireland as the Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána and in Northern Ireland as the Health and Social Care Trust and the Police Service of Northern Ireland.