



**1. Introduction**

The 2023 Diocesan Parish Safeguarding Self-Audit was carried out to reflect the period between December 2022 and December 2023. Audit forms were distributed to every parish in January 2024. 50 out of a possible 56 parishes returned their audit by July 2024.

The audit is completed as part of our compliance with Standard 7 (Quality Assuring Compliance with the Standards) as set out in the Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016 developed by the National Board for the Safeguarding of Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI).

Local safeguarding personnel, priests and other parish personnel who participated in this auditing process should be commended for their participation and their overall strong awareness of and adherence with safeguarding practices in their parishes.

**2. Data arising from the audit returns**

NAME OF PARISH:	Returns were received from 50 out of a possible 56 parishes.
YEAR UNDER REVIEW:	December 2022 to December 2023.
PERSON(S) COMPLETING AUDIT:	Most forms were completed by the Parish Priest and the Local Safeguarding Representatives (LSR). A small number were completed by priests only or by parish secretaries or by the LSR with the parish secretary.
DATE OF COMPLETION:	All returned forms were completed between January 2024 and July 2024.

### 3. Findings

#### Standard 6: Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message.

##### 1. Are child safeguarding posters displayed at eye level in all church porches?

		Yes	No	N/A	Not answered
1	Child Safeguarding Policy Statement signed by Bishop Nulty.	48	1		1
2	If you have groups whose first language is not English, do you have copies of the safeguarding message in accessible formats?	8	14	27	1

#### Standard 6: 2. Are child safeguarding posters displayed at eye level in all church sacristies?

		Yes	No	N/A	Not answered
1	Child Safeguarding Policy Statement signed by Bishop Nulty.	49	0		1
2	Code of Conduct for Adults	29	13	5	3
3	Code of Conduct devised by young people for young people and displayed where young people meet	16	12	20	2
4	Celebret request in sacristy	47			3

There is very strong compliance with having the Policy statement displayed in church porches with only 1 parish not displaying the statement in their porch. There is almost full compliance with having the policy on display in churches sacristies. A quarter of parishes have children's codes of behaviour on display in church sacristies. *With 28 parishes having altar servers, best practice would mean that all 28 of these parishes display codes of behaviour for children. Follow up with 12 parishes who have servers and answered no to this question.*

20 parishes answered 'not applicable' to having a children's code in sacristies, which reflects the high number of parishes (22/50) where altar servers are not in place.

8 parishes report to having the safeguarding poster up in another language. Posters are available on the diocesan website in Irish, Polish and Ukrainian.

There is almost full compliance with celebret request posters on display in sacristies with just three parishes out of the 50 returns not answering this question.

#### Standard 6: 3. Are child safeguarding posters displayed at eye level in all church buildings e.g. parish halls/parish centres?

		Yes	No	N/A	Not answered
1	Child Safeguarding Policy Statement signed by Bishop Nulty.	38	4	4	4

2	Code of Conduct for Adults	21	18	7	4
3	Code of Conduct for young people	18	16	12	3

Almost all parishes said they have the required policy poster on display in parish buildings with a number saying no or n/a, in cases where the parish has no other building other than the Church. Just over a quarter report to having the code of conduct for children on display, again with a number choosing no or n/a as they do not have any parish halls or centres.

**Standard 6: 4. Safeguarding Leaflets**

		Yes	No	Not answered
1	Are diocesan safeguarding information leaflets available in churches, parish centres etc.?	47	2	1

Almost all parishes said they have the safeguarding leaflets developed by the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee available in churches and parish centres. Those parishes who reported “no,” have since been contacted and leaflets will be provided.

**Standard 6: 4. Local Safeguarding Representative(s)**

	<b>Have Local Safeguarding Representative(s):</b>	Yes	No	N/A	Not answered
1	been appointed? (write number of reps here)	50			
2	completed the ‘full day’ of safeguarding training?	46	3		1
3	completed ‘refresher safeguarding’ training where it is over 3 years since ‘full day’ / ‘refresher’ training completed?	37	9	3	1
4	names been made available locally e.g. on posters or newsletters?	48	2		

All 50 parishes report to having Local Safeguarding Reps appointed with the average number per parish being two reps. Almost all parishes make the names of the safeguarding representatives available locally. Some new safeguarding representatives require to complete their full day training and some also require refresher training.

**Standard 6: 5. Use of CCTV**

		Yes	No	N/A
1	If you use CCTV and/or webcams is appropriate signage up to alert the public?	39	4	7

Only 4 parishes with CCTV/ Webcams reported having no signage and did note in the audit that they would follow up on this as an action.

## Standard 1: Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments

### 1. Children and young people's participation in the parish.

Parishes were asked if they had any activity involving children or young people organised by the parish in either the church or anywhere else, not including preparation for Holy Communion/Confirmation where the school takes responsibility for the preparation of the children for the sacrament and the involvement of the parish is for example a monthly preparation mass.

	<b>Ministry / Activity</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
1	Altar Servers	28	
2	Children's Choir	9	
3	Adult choir where young people are involved	8	
4	Sunday School	3	
5	Children's Liturgy Group	4	
6	Parish led preparation for the sacrament of Holy Communion in addition to monthly mass	17	
7	Parish led preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation in addition to monthly mass	17	
8.	JP II	3	
	Other:		
9	Children's Rosary	1	
10	Young Readers	1	
11	Youth Group		
12	Godly Play		
13	Electronic Admin – Facebook Live, PPT Slides etc	1	
	<b>Total number of Parishes with a children's activity</b>	<b>34</b>	

This year the audit captured the parishes who had children's activities in 2023. 34 out of 50 parishes responded that they had at least one children's activity, (the same as 2022 where 34 parishes reported having at least one youth activity).

The most dominant organised activity was altar serving (28), followed by preparation for sacraments (17). It was noted that only 3 parishes recorded in their audit that they had the JP II Awards available for young people, however, from speaking to the Diocesan Faith Development Team over 20 parishes were registered as having taken part in the programme for 2023. Clarification to be sought by the Director of Safeguarding on this matter.

**If a parish answered yes to the previous question, they were asked to complete the following thus the following section is based on the 34 parishes who had some activities for children.**

#### 1. If you answered Yes to the previous question:

		Yes	No	Not answered
1	Has each parent/guardian and child signed the Activities/ Media Consent Form?	26	6	2
2	Has each parent/guardian/child received a copy of the Parish Activities Information & Guidance Leaflet for parents/children?	24	9	1
3	Has each parent/ guardian /child received a copy of the code of conduct for children and adults?	19	14	1
4	Has each parent/guardian/child been made aware of the reporting procedures for abuse concerns/suspicious/allegations?	28	5	1
5	Is each group aware of and maintaining adequate supervision ratios?	29	4	1
6	Does each group have access to the procedure for dealing with accidents/incidents?	23	10	1

There is strong adherence to the requirement for children and parents signing the joint consent form. While it is not explicitly stated in the data, the reason for non-use of consent forms could be related to adult and children's choirs where children only attend with a family member and some parishes First Holy Communion and Confirmation activities are held with parents present.

There is a strong practice of giving the safeguarding leaflets to children and their parents and this practice is promoted in all safeguarding training sessions.

		Yes	No	Not answered	N/A
	<b>Sign-in registers</b>				
7	Do altar servers sign the Sacristy Register?	27	1		
8	Do adults supervising altar servers sign the Sacristy Register?	27	1		
9	Do all other activities involving persons under 18 years keep an attendance register?	21	1	2	

The most widely used registers are with altar servers (sacristy register) and this is reported to be signed by all children and supervising adults in 27 of the 28 parishes with altar servers. One parish maintains a separate register for servers as they do not enter the sacristy at any time prior, during or following Mass. Parishes reported a strong compliance with using registers for other children's activities, with only one parish saying they are not using registers. The Director of safeguarding to follow up with this parish directly and explain importance of well-kept attendance registers.

		Yes	No	N/A*	Not answered
	<b>Groups/organisations involved with children on behalf of the parish.</b>				
10	Has each group been approved to work within the Parish by the Parish Priest?	22	1	14	
11	Is each group complying with the requirements in the Safeguarding Children handbook for Parish Groups involving children?	22	1	14	
	<b>Safeguarding Risk Assessments</b>				
12	Has each activity/group completed a risk assessment? (See Sample in safeguarding section of <a href="http://www.kandle.ie">www.kandle.ie</a> )	14	6	15	2

**\*N/A was not given as an option in this section.**

On looking at the replies to question 10, there may have been some confusion, as almost all the activities mentioned happened as part of weekend masses with the priests present with very few exceptions, so the 14 parishes responding 'not applicable' is not a true reflection of the situation. *Also 3 parishes who don't have activities with children answered these questions in error, skewing the results slightly.*

Compliance with the completion of risk assessments is an area which requires improvement. Only 14 out of 34 parishes with youth activity have risk assessments in place. 6 parishes replied no and 15 parishes responded n/a when in fact they are applicable as all activities with minors require a risk assessment.

Safeguarding Meetings have been held in pastoral areas since the completion of the 2023 audits, providing clarity on risk assessments and support to parishes with the completion and implementation of them. A sample safeguarding risk assessment for youth activity is available on the Diocesan website [kandle.ie](http://kandle.ie)

### **All parishes were asked to complete the following questions:**

**Standard 1                      3.                      Non-church groups working with children and using parish property e.g. Foroige, Legion of Mary, Scouts etc.**

		Yes	No	N/A	Not answered
1	Has the Parish Priest given permission for this group activity?	24	6	20	
2	Has each group signed the "External Groups using Church Property Form" SG-07 confirming that it has its own insurance indemnifying the parish?	21	9	20	
3	Has each group signed the "External Groups using Church Property Form" SG-07 confirming that it has its own Child Safeguarding Policy?	20	10	20	

There is a strong compliance with the need for external groups using parish property to have sought permission from the Parish Priest. However, 10 parishes, reported that they do not have the necessary forms indicating that external groups have their own insurance and own child safeguarding policies in place. Some of those parishes commented that they would follow up on this. The 20 parishes who chose n/a do not have any external groups functioning in their parish at present.

Safeguarding Meetings have been held in pastoral areas since the completion of the 2023 audits, providing clarity on External Groups using parish property.

**Standard 1: 4. Registers**

		Yes	No	N/A	Not answered
1	Is there an up-to-date list of all groups and organisations <b>managed by the parish?</b> E.g. altar servers, choirs/youth group)	30	7	12	
2	Is there an up-to-date register with the name of the person in charge of all groups and organisations <b>managed by the parish?</b>	25	11	14	
3	Is there an up-to-date register of all <b>non-parish</b> groups working with children and young people and using parish property? Eg Scouts, Legion of Mary...	15	17	18	
4	Has a person been named with responsibility for maintaining these lists.	31	14	5	

For most parishes with activities, there is compliance with keeping the required lists. However, improvement is needed when it comes to naming people who are in lead roles/in charge of the groups.

Only 15 parishes have lists of non-parish groups using church property, with many commenting that they would follow up on this.

N/A answers were given by parishes who have no groups.

**Standard 1 5. Dealing with complaints or concerns:**

		Yes	No	N/A	Not answered
1	Have all safeguarding complaints /concerns been reported to the DLP?	9	1	40	0

In relation to passing on safeguarding complaints, one parish responded with a 'no.' Director of Safeguarding sought clarification from the parish and they clarified that they had no concerns to report which reflects full compliance in this area. All other parishes responded either yes or N/A, meaning they had no complaints/concerns to pass on.

**Standard 1 and Standard 5: (Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe)**  
**1. Recruitment and Safeguarding awareness with parish personnel**

	Have all parish personnel (staff and volunteers) <b>who will not have ministry with children or vulnerable adults:</b>	Yes	No	N/A*	Not answered
1	been provided with clear job descriptions?	36	8	5	
2	completed the relevant parts of the Staff/Volunteer Recruitment Form?	25	18	5	2
3	received induction training	33	10	5	1
4	Been familiarised with Diocesan whistle-blowing guidelines?	24	18	5	2
5	been given a copy of or the website reference for the safeguarding policies?	30	12	5	2
6	signed an agreement form (Application form)	19	12	7	12

**\*N/A was not given as an option in this section.**

The results above reflect differing practices in parishes in the recruitment of parish personnel such as cleaners/readers/eucharistic ministers/sacristans. Great improvement has been noted since the 2022 audit, but 18 parishes still reported “no” when it came to completed recruitment paperwork with these church personnel. From speaking to Local Reps and Priests, they report that there are many personnel who have been in place for 20+ years and these were verbal arrangements from that time. Clarity regarding recruitment practices has been provided at inter-parish safeguarding meetings in 2024 and is also part of the diocesan safeguarding training programme.

	Have all personnel (Staff and Volunteers) <b>who work with young people under 18 years or vulnerable adults</b>	Yes	No	N/A*	Not answered
1	completed <b>all</b> sections of the Recruitment Form?	16	12	17	3
2	completed Garda Vetting	30	4	14	
3	Is Garda vetting dated within the last three years for all such personnel in line with Diocesan policy?	23	10	14	1
4	received appropriate safeguarding training?	29	5	14	
5	been advised as to the content of the Diocesan Safeguarding parish handbook/given the Diocesan website reference for safeguarding/given the safeguarding leaflets as part of induction?	27	7	14	
6	Is there evidence of reference checking available on file?	18	12	16	2
7	signed an agreement form (Application Form)	14	17	14	3



**\*N/A was not given as an option in this section.**

In relation to the questions concerning staff and volunteers who work with under 18's or vulnerable adults being recruited as per the standards, approximately one third answered with an N/A. It appears that the division of the question on recruitment in relation to working with over and under 18s has caused confusion.

Looking at the responses per parish, of the 34 parishes who said they had children's activities, only 16 had completed the necessary paperwork with staff/volunteers working with children. There may be individual reasons per parish for example where parents accompany their own children in the activity such as choirs, Communion/Confirmation activities, altar serving.

Of these 34 parishes, 30 have completed their Garda Vetting. 10 parishes reported that vetting is out of date. These parishes will be contacted directly. Some of these individuals may have roles with vulnerable adults which requires vetting clearance however, do not work with children.

Compliance with safeguarding training has continued to improve in 2023 since the return of training post Covid.

## **Standard 5: Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe**

### **2. Safeguarding awareness with parents/guardians**

		Yes	No	N/A	Not answered
1	Have any safeguarding awareness initiatives been carried out with children and young people and/or their parents/guardians?	10	25	14	1

Above we ascertained that 34 parishes had children's activities and this table shows us that only 10 parishes held some safeguarding awareness activity with children and/or their parents. However, it is important to note that there was no Diocesan Safeguarding Sunday in 2023, this was held in Feb 2024. This is the main safeguarding initiative for children and parents in the Diocese, so compliance should be much higher next year.

### **Standard 5: 3. Support**

		Yes	No	N/A*	Not answered
1	Is there a system for formal or informal support in place to provide support to all parish personnel involved in child safeguarding e.g meetings between priest & safeguarding reps?	42	8		

2	Have the safeguarding reps been invited to attend some parish pastoral council meetings?	20	21	9	
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**\*N/A was not given as an option in this section.**

There was a good reflection of support provided by priests to safeguarding representatives with 42 parishes reflecting formal or informal support in place. The 8 parishes who answered no will be contacted directly to offer guidance on this.

The audits reflect an improved link between safeguarding personnel and parish pastoral councils since 2022. Some of the 'No's' or N/A's' indicated there are no pastoral councils, or no meetings were convened in 2023.

**Standard 5                      4.            The storage of records and information**

	<b>Are the following records stored safely and securely in a locked filing cabinet or locked press?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>N/A*</b>	<b>Not answered</b>
1	Completed application forms, signed agreement forms, garda vetting records and training records for all parish personnel?	48	2		
2	Sign-in registers?	46	4	0	
3	Are blank copies of the Accident/Incident form available where groups involving young people or vulnerable adults meet – e.g. Sacristy, Parish Centres etc.	29	13	8	
4	Are blank copies of the Complaints form or the leaflet 'Parish Activities Information and Guidance' available where groups involving young people or vulnerable adults meet – e.g. Sacristy, Parish Centres etc.	31	12	7	
5.	Consent forms, accident/incident forms, hazard/risk assessment forms, records of checks completed on external groups using parish/diocesan property, media permission forms, written agreements from external organisations/Church bodies where priests/clerics are ministering with children.	48	2		

**\*N/A was not given as an option in this section.**

There is strong compliance with good practice on the storage of records and information with almost all parishes saying they have locked storage facilities for documentation. However approximately a quarter of parishes do not have blank 'complaints or incident/accident' forms available. On further communication with parishes on this, they state that they know how to access these forms via the Diocesan website if required.

**Standard 3****1. Care of Complainants**

		Yes	No	Not answered
1	Are 'Towards Healing' Posters displayed in all church porches?	40	9	1

9 parishes cited not having 'The Towards Healing' poster on display at the time of the 2023 audit. Compliance with this request to have posters on display has greatly improved since 2022. The 9 parishes who answered 'No' have been contacted directly and posters provided.

**Final Questions**

At the end of the form parishes were asked to let us know the roles and estimated training needs for safeguarding training 2024. 29 parishes requested a combination of information and refresher training with a small number requesting full day training.

It is noteworthy that 7 separate training events have been held in the Diocese of Kildare & Leighlin between Feb 2024 and June 2024, thus meeting some of the training needs cited in the 2023 audits already.

Parishes were asked if there was any way in which the Safeguarding Committee or Director of Safeguarding can support them in their safeguarding work. Very few parishes entered a response in this section, examples of those who did are as follows;

"More information on External Groups"

"Vulnerable Adults not defined"

"Ongoing Communication re: changes of diocesan safeguarding requirements."

"Guidance on the Audit Form"

"Local Area Meetings Good Idea"

"Paperwork for Children's Activity"

"Difficulty getting Volunteers"

"Less red tape and paperwork."

"Thanks for the good work."

**Comments**

Unlike the 2022 audits there was not full compliance in return of the audit forms for 2023 with 6 parishes outstanding. These have all been contacted directly by Director of Safeguarding and there will be follow up.

Of the 50 parishes who returned their audits, overall, there appears to be a strong awareness and compliance with the requirements of safeguarding in parishes.

Areas of strength include communicating our safeguarding message with posters and leaflets being displayed as required and safeguarding representatives' names being made available locally. Another area of strength is adhering to creating and maintaining a safe environment in the use of joint consent forms and use of registers. There is still scope for improvement in our recruitment processes but there have been clear advancements since 2022.

Compliance with Safeguarding Training is strong in the Diocese.

In a small number of parishes (8), the audit reflects scope for improvement in the links between local safeguarding representatives and their local priests. The audit also reflects weak links between parish pastoral councils and safeguarding representatives.

While there has been improvement since 2022 with localised risk assessments, this is still an area of weakness, 15 parishes of the 34 with children's activities citing "n/a" even though all activities with minors require a RA.

Since the completion of the 2023 audit, inter-parish safeguarding meetings have been convened by the Director of Safeguarding with a particular focus on RA's, so it is hoped there will be improved compliance in the 2024 audit.

The area of recruitment is an area where small improvements have been noted since 2022, but there are still ongoing weaknesses in this area, particularly checking references of those working with u18s.

Unfortunately, the 2023 Audit shows that the level of participation of children and young people in our parishes remains largely unchanged. Only 34 out of 50 parishes who responded have children or young people involved.

Anecdotally, some parishes report challenges in getting young people and their parents involved due to clashes with other activities such as sports, dance etc. They also report challenges in getting adult volunteers, especially due to the paperwork, vetting etc.

It is important to state that some parishes in our diocese have thriving youth ministries with a strong culture of youth involvement, and it is hoped that youth participation will grow in 2024 as particular focus is given to youth participation from a diocesan safeguarding level.

Findings from this audit will be used to inform the annual training and annual communication plans and indeed the review of the three-year strategic plan.

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9<sup>th</sup> July 2024