



## Message from Bishop Deenihan

### “Create a culture of welcome in our parishes for the involvement of our young people”

The past nineteen months have been difficult for everyone. The Church has also experienced the isolation and disconnection that has characterised the pandemic. The experience of broadcast liturgies without a congregation is an experience that we do not wish to return to and highlighted the importance of participation by the community, the body of Christ.

Thankfully, over the last few weeks and again this month, we are seeing an easing of restrictions and a consequent return to ‘normality’. As the past year and a half has seen the disappearance of participation by readers, choirs and servers, as restrictions disappear, it is vital that different ministries are exercised, parishioners of all age groups return to worship and our parishes are seen as places of welcome and participation. One of the more unfortunate consequences of the pandemic was the disappearance of young people from participation in our liturgies, be it as servers, readers or choir members. We now have an opportunity to restore that participation and adherence to safeguarding procedures provides the confidence and reassurance to do that. I want to thank all those who are involved in safeguarding in our parishes and in our diocese. You provide the means through which our young people can be involved and you give confidence to all of us. At this time of return, your role is more important than ever. As we celebrate Safeguarding Sunday, let us commit ourselves once again to following safeguarding procedures and creating a culture of welcome in our parishes for the involvement of our young people.

## Independent Assessor Review



The independent assessor completed a review of the parish safeguarding self-audit process for the year 2020. It was noted that completed forms from 68 of the 69 parishes were available for review. The assessor commended the significant rate of response particularly in the context of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic at the time of completion.

The changes to the audit form were commended and it is the view of the assessor ***“that the changes have improved the ease of completion for those involved at parish level through the provision of significantly greater clarity as to the expectations of the audit process”***.

Given the limits on training in 2020, the feedback from the assessor relating to the Autumn 2019 training programme is worth highlighting: “Of particular note in the forms was the fact that most parishes availed of the training updates in the Autumn of 2019. Clearly a very comprehensive and diocesan-wide training initiative had been provided and taken up at the time. The Diocesan Safeguarding Children Committee and Resource Team are to be commended on this scale of provision and its evident ease of access as the parish personnel involved are largely acting in a voluntary capacity.”

### Sacristy Ledgers

The sacristy ledgers, provided by Veritas, are a vital part of safeguarding practice in parishes. They keep a record of who is present in the sacristy on any occasion. In that regard, it is essential that, if altar servers are not present, this should be noted in the register. Simply put a line through the relevant space in the register to indicate that altar servers were not present.

### Guidance on risk assessment

The NBSCCCI has pointed out that Tusla is currently reviewing Child Safeguarding Statements with reference to how local risk assessments are conducted. This is in the context of Indicator 1.8 of the child safeguarding policy which requires that a written risk assessment is carried out on all ministries with children. Each ministry must be reviewed at parish level, by those involved and safeguards put in place to minimise risk. In relation to children’s ministries at local level the focus should be on risk assessment in relation to safeguarding issues. Revised guidance on conducting risk assessments is available on [www.meathsafeguarding.ie](http://www.meathsafeguarding.ie) at Section 1 (1.14) and the form which should be used is at Section 4 (4.15). This form should be completed for each activity which involves children.

## Safeguarding Sunday

### 10 October 2021

This Sunday is Safeguarding Sunday in the Diocese of Meath. As we come back together it is important that we remember the spirit of safeguarding embodied in our parish communities.

We have been aware during Covid restrictions of keeping each other safe. Safeguarding in our Church involves this same spirit and underpins everything that we do as a parish community.

As adults in the Church, it is our Christian duty to work together to make sure that children's participation in Church activities is safe. We can fulfil this duty by participating in safeguarding training and abiding by the policies and procedures in place in Church activities such as attendance registers and appropriate supervision ratios.

#### **Possible text for Parish Safeguarding Representatives to read at Mass on 10 October, 2021**

Today, Safeguarding Sunday, I am reminded that as a parish safeguarding representative I face a new year of engagement in safeguarding in our parish. I ask all of you for your support and encouragement for all of the children returning to their previous roles in our parish. Children are the future of our Church and it is incumbent on each of us as adult Church members to support and encourage their safe participation in Church activities through our safeguarding practices. May we all embrace a spirit of safeguarding as we go about our Parish lives and ensure that every day in our Parish is safe for children through training; safe recruitment of volunteers and codes of behaviour.

## Mandated Persons

From 11 December 2017, Children First legislation placed a legal requirement on people in a specified list of roles to report child safeguarding concerns. People in these roles are described as 'Mandated Persons' and as well as being legally obliged to report concerns they may also be required by TUSLA to assist with their investigations.

Included in the list of legally mandated persons are members of the clergy. Although a mandated person may submit a joint report of their concerns with another profession, for example a DLP, it is not sufficient for the mandated person to report to the DLP and for them to report the concern. The legal obligation falls to the individual.

#### **Training dates for Mandated Persons**

Lorraine Byrne will host a series of mandated person training via zoom on the following dates:

**Monday 18 October at 7:30pm**

**Monday 8 November at 7:30pm**

**Monday 15 November at 7:30pm**

The link to the zoom sessions will be circulated by the Diocesan Office.

#### **Training dates for parish safeguarding representatives**

The annual information session for parish safeguarding representatives in the Meath area will take place on **Wednesday 27 October at 7.30pm in St Anne's Centre, Navan.**

Dates will shortly be fixed for similar in-person training in Westmeath and Offaly.

A series of online information sessions will be hosted on zoom for parish safeguarding representatives. These dates will also be circulated by the Diocesan Office in the coming weeks.



#### **Appointment of new Training Coordinator in the Diocese of Meath**

##### **Lorraine Byrne**

has been appointed by Bishop Deenihan and the Safeguarding Committee as Training Coordinator for the Diocese of Meath. Loraine will be offering training online and in person to groups throughout the Diocese. All Church volunteers are invited to attend a safeguarding information session and volunteers with roles directly with children are invited to attend a full training session. Loraine is available to discuss local training needs. She can be contacted directly: [Lorraine.byrne@gmail.com](mailto:Lorraine.byrne@gmail.com)