

Bishops' Conference of Scotland



Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service



TAKING A CLOSE LOOK AT SAFEGUARDING IN OUR CHURCH

Every year, the Church in Scotland collects important information about all those working with children and vulnerable adults on Church premises across the country. Parishes, dioceses, religious congregations and Catholic organisations are asked to complete a detailed audit, answering questions about how they are complying with the safeguarding standards set out in the Church's policy document 'In God's Image' which was introduced in April 2018.

What is the point of the safeguarding audit?

The audit is intended to provide a transparent view of how effectively the Church is embracing a culture of safeguarding that respects, protects and nurtures the dignity of all people, keeps them safe and is compliant with legislation.

Effective auditing and planning should be a continuous commitment which underpins the development of good safeguarding practice. The completed audit – and the plans for improvement that emerge from it – are intended to provide helpful direction on how safeguarding practice will continue to be improved.

Careful analysis of the data gathered in each year's audit informs our ongoing safeguarding work, enabling us to see what is working well, to identify what needs to be improved and to plan for that improvement.

Completed audits highlight examples of good practice which can be shared across parishes, dioceses and congregations. They also show where there are potential risks or vulnerabilities in safeguarding practice so that these can be prioritised for action.

What is audited?

Our annual audit takes account of the contributions of ALL who work with children and/or vulnerable adults on Church premises and in activities organised by the Church.

- The number of abuse allegations reported by dioceses, religious congregations and organisations is recorded.
- The reporting of these allegations to the statutory authorities is recorded
- The PVG status and safeguarding training of clergy, religious, employees and volunteers is recorded.
- Information on the risk assessments carried out on church premises where children and/or vulnerable adults meet is recorded.
- Information on the risk assessments of activities involving children and vulnerable groups is recorded.
- Plans for how safeguarding practice will be improved are collected from dioceses, parishes, religious congregations and Catholic organisations and the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service.

The audit data is analysed, discussed and evaluated by various parties, including the Independent Review Group.

What did we learn from the 2018 safeguarding audit?

- The Church has a great many people to thank for all their efforts to keep children and vulnerable adults safe in various Church settings. Our safeguarding personnel include priests, deacons, religious sisters and brothers, diocesan workers and volunteers who support parishes, religious congregations and organisations in their work.
- Over 10,000 Clergy, religious, church employees and volunteers have been vetted through the PVG scheme organised by Disclosure Scotland and have obtained clearance to work safely with children and vulnerable adults.
- The Church is making huge efforts to train people in safeguarding so that they understand how to mitigate risks to the safety of children and vulnerable adults.
- The new safeguarding standards contained in 'In God's Image' are being used widely across parishes and religious communities and there is growing familiarisation with them, although more needs to be done to ensure that the standards are being kept at the front of people's minds.
- As expected, the total number of allegations recorded in the 2018 audit was higher than in 2017, as the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry has rightly encouraged previously 'silent' victims and survivors to come forward.

ALLEGATIONS REPORTED IN 2018

Allegations against personnel in DIOCESES

Time period of alleged abuse	No. allegations
1960s	1
1970s	4
1980s	2
1990s	3
2000-2010	4
2011-2018	2
TOTAL	16

10 of these allegations were reported to the statutory authorities by Dioceses
 2 allegations were already being investigated
 3 allegations involved alleged abusers who were deceased
 1 alleged abuse was unknown

Allegations against personnel in RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS

Time period of alleged abuse	No. allegations
1920s	1
1940s	1
1960s	5
1970s	12
2000 -	1
TOTAL	20

Allegations against personnel in RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS reported to Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI)

Time period of alleged abuse	No. allegations
1930s	2
1940s	6
1950s	9
1960s	25
1970s	5
1980s	1
Unknown	3
TOTAL	51

The crimes of sexual abuse offend Our Lord, cause physical, psychological and spiritual damage to the victims and harm the community of the faithful. In order that these phenomena, in all their forms, never happen again, a continuous and profound conversion of hearts is needed, attested by concrete and effective actions that involve everyone in the Church, so that personal sanctity and moral commitment can contribute to promoting the full credibility of the Gospel message and the effectiveness of the Church's mission. This becomes possible only with the grace of the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts, as we must always keep in mind the words of Jesus: "*Apart from me you can do nothing*" (Jn 15:5). Even if so much has already been accomplished, we must continue to learn from the bitter lessons of the past, looking with hope towards the future.

Pope Francis

'Vos Estis Lux Mundi' (Apostolic Letter issued motu proprio), 7th May 2019

What do we still need to do to improve safeguarding?

- We need to continue to reach out to abuse victims and survivors and to apologise for the harm they have suffered.
- We need to continue to offer support, such as specialist Counselling, to those who have suffered abuse.
- We need to improve access on all our websites to a range of information and advice for victims and survivors.
- We need to find ways for the experiences of victims and survivors to influence how our safeguarding policy and practice can be improved.
- We need to promote the audit process as a continuous cycle of reviewing, monitoring and planning and not as a box-ticking exercise.
- We need to help safeguarding co-ordinators to develop plans for improving safeguarding and to monitor these plans regularly.
- We need to promote the completion of online audits to enable better recording and analysis of safeguarding data.
- We need to publish audit data in ways that are accessible and informative.
- We need to improve access to safeguarding training for clergy, religious and parish volunteers across all dioceses. We recognise that this can be challenging due to geography and the availability of trainers.
- We need to develop a consistent approach to supporting those who hold voluntary positions of responsibility such as the Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinators and leaders of parish activities.
- We need to find better ways of sharing good safeguarding practice as it is identified in Scotland and elsewhere.
- We need to ensure that there is better communication about the vital work of safeguarding in every parish, religious congregation and Catholic organisation.
- We need to make a determined commitment to re-build trust and confidence in the Church's compassion and care for all who are vulnerable or suffering.

For more information on Safeguarding, visit www.scsafeguarding.org.uk