

# Safeguarding Children and Young People



The Spiritans recognise and uphold the dignity and rights of all children and are committed to ensuring their safety and well-being. The Spiritan Congregation adheres to the principles and guidelines set out in “Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland (2009) and the civil guidelines of the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland.

The Spiritans are committed to:

- Recognising the right of the child to protection from harm as paramount
- Best practice in ensuring that children are safeguarded, their rights protected and their welfare promoted.
- Minimizing risks in order to safeguard the interests of children
- Ensuring that all Spiritans and their co-workers are carefully recruited, selected, trained, supported and supervised
- Providing appropriate support for survivors of child sexual abuse by members of the Spiritan Congregation
- Working closely with statutory authorities to ensure that all allegations of sexual abuse are dealt with justly and promptly.
- Engaging in a reflection as to how this terrible abuse could have occurred within the context of a religious life that seeks to follow the compassionate and loving Jesus in his example of service and self-giving for God’s Kingdom.



# Safeguarding Children and Young People

## **Seven Standards for Safeguarding Children**

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) was established in 2006 by the Irish Episcopal Conference (IEC), the Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI) and the Irish Missionary Union (IMU) to provide advice on best practice in safeguarding children across both jurisdictions in Ireland. In 2008 the Board published *Safeguarding Children - Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland*. The seven standards outlined in that document are to be used by all Church organisations and personnel.

### Standard One

#### *Written policy on keeping children safe*

Each child shall be cherished and affirmed as a gift from God with an inherent right to dignity of life and body which shall be respected, nurtured and protected by all. The welfare of the child is paramount.

- a. All church organisations must have a written policy
- b. The policy upholds the Gospel principle that the church is committed to keeping children safe

## *Spiritan Response*



The Spiritan Congregation undertakes to adhere to the Seven Standards as outlined by the National Board for Safeguarding Children

The Spiritan *Policy for Safeguarding Children: Procedures and Guidelines* was written and accepted in March 2011. The policy is currently being reviewed to accommodate changes in the organisation and/or legislation. The revised policy will be published later this year.



## Standard Two

### *Procedures for responding to child protection allegations and suspicions*

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.

- a. Clear guidance must be provided on what to do when a concern arises
- b. A prompt response is required
- c. National and international legal and practice requirements must be met

## Standard Three

### *Preventing harm to Children*

Children should have access to good role models they can trust, who will respect and nurture their spiritual, physical and emotional development. They also have a right to an environment free from abuse and neglect. To this end it is necessary to develop a culture of safety that minimises risk to children

- a. Safe recruitment and vetting structures
- b. Codes of behaviour with clear guidelines
- c. Operating safe activities for children

## Spiritans Response



The current policy has step-by-step guidance on actions to be taken if there are allegations or suspicions of abuse of a child. All actions are in accordance with Church and civil legislation. All current and historic child protection concerns are reported to the civil authorities. The Spiritan Designated Person receives records and makes the reports.

The Spiritans have a Garda Vetting policy and Codes of Behaviour for safe activities. There is a process for dealing with complaints about unacceptable behaviour towards children and vulnerable adults



## Standard Four

### *Training and education for keeping children safe*

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

- a. Induction into the policy and procedures on child protection
- b. Identified personnel are provided with appropriate training and regular opportunities for updating skills and knowledge

## Standard Five

### *Communicating the Church's safeguarding message*

Children are welcomed, cherished and protected in a manner consistent with their central place in the life of the Church.

- a. Clear processes are in place to disseminate the child protection policy and procedures to all Spiritan contacts.
- b. Ensure that all personnel and children understand that policies and procedures and know how to use them.

## *Spiritan Response*



The Spiritans are committed to providing appropriate training in child protection to its members and co-workers and to provide regular opportunities for updating knowledge and skills.

The Spiritans have circulated the child protection policy to all its members and co-workers and have taken steps to ensure that they understand their obligation to implement it. Each community has a 'Community Child Protection Officer' who reports any concerns or allegations directly to the Spiritan Designated Person



## Standard Six

### *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.

- a. All who have been abused or perpetrated abuse should be assisted and supported in seeking help.
- b. Church organisations have a duty to ensure advice and support is available.

## Standard Seven

### *Implementing and monitoring the Standards*

To keep children safe, policies, procedures and plans have to be implemented across all Church organisations. Checks are needed to ensure this is happening consistently. The views of those involved inside and outside of church organisations can help to improve the effectiveness of any measures taken.

## Spiritans Response



The Spiritans have appointed a Support Person who is responsible for offering pastoral support to survivors and their families. The Spiritan Safeguarding Office is taking concrete measures to identify and reach out to survivors. Each survivor is invited to suggest ideas for outreach.

A plan of action has been developed for communities and the leadership team to monitor the effectiveness of the steps that are being taken to keep children safe.

- Tools have been developed for communities to self-audit practices and procedures
- Structures are in place to monitor the work