

WHAT'S
NEXT?

SAFEGUARDING MATTERS

in the Catholic Church in Scotland

November
2021

“There will be . . . a new Safeguarding Standards Agency.”

Bishop Hugh Gilbert, President of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland, has announced that the **Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency** - SCSSA - will be established as an independent private company.

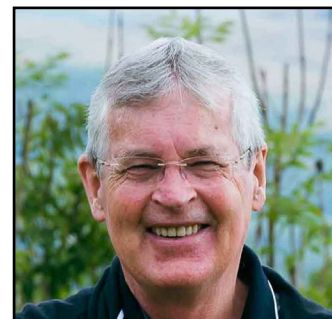
Speaking towards the end of a national Safeguarding webinar which attracted 450 people from across Scotland, Bishop Gilbert highlighted steps taken in recent years to develop Safeguarding practice in the Church. He referred to the call of Pope Francis to “a continuous and profound conversion of hearts, attested by concrete and effective actions that involve everyone in the Church.” He described the Bishops' decision to establish the **SCSSA** as such an action and “one more step on that journey of improvement”.

Operating entirely independently of the Bishops' Conference, the SCSSA will have its own staff and Board of Management.

The agency will work in close collaboration with dioceses and religious communities to ensure that they are able to meet our national safeguarding standards. It will also develop a process that will provide an independent review of complaints about safeguarding practice. Crucially, it will develop a forum in which those who have experienced abuse can contribute their own perspectives to the development of safeguarding practice in the Church.

Bishop Gilbert concluded, “We know that it will take some time to establish the new agency and we ask for your patience and support while that process is underway. We ask for your prayers that the Holy Spirit will guide us in the selection of agency staff who will bring authority and credibility to the work of this new agency that will promote consistency, transparency and accountability in safeguarding across Catholic institutions in Scotland.”

Michael McGrath, Assistant General Secretary to the Bishops' Conference of Scotland, has been appointed as the Project Officer who will manage the establishment of the new agency. He will work with a small group who will monitor and advise on the project until the Board members are appointed.



Michael commented, “It is an honour to be entrusted with the task of setting up the new agency. I hope that, with the active collaboration of everyone, we can build a solid foundation that will enable the agency to promote consistent and transparent practice in

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Safeguarding Webinar 2nd October 2021

450 people registered for the 2021 national Safeguarding webinar which addressed the theme: "Growing our Culture of Care". Participants included bishops, clergy, religious, Church employees and volunteers from every diocese in Scotland. As well as viewing two video presentations, they heard from a panel of speakers from dioceses, parishes and a Religious Congregation: **Bishop Joseph Toal, Fr Mark Impson, Sr Kathleen Curran & Lynsey May**. They spoke to the opportunities and the challenges presented by In God's Image v2 and later responded to questions that had been raised by participants.

Inputs were also presented by **Baroness Helen Liddell**, Chair of the Independent Review Group, on the value of external scrutiny of safeguarding practice and by **Caterina O'Connor**, Safeguarding Adviser in the Archdiocese of Glasgow, on the Safe Recruitment procedures being developed in response to changing legislation. The webinar was concluded by **Bishop Hugh Gilbert** who thanked the participants, the contributors and the team who planned and managed the event, especially **Helena Rameckers** who chaired the webinar and **John Smith** who managed and responded to the online questions.

See below for some behind-the-camera pics of the event which was broadcast from the Eyre Hall in the Archdiocese of Glasgow. On page 3 we provide some highlights of the very positive evaluation of the event as well as the responses provided to some questions that were raised during the event itself.



While a full recording of the webinar can be watched, using this link: <https://youtu.be/QTraUkwM3JY> to the BCOS YouTube channel, the two videos below can be watched, using the links given below.



Greetings from Cardinal O'Malley OFM
<https://youtu.be/dmQFYcYOZk>



IN GOD'S IMAGE v2

Instruction on Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Scotland

Introduction to In God's Image v2
<https://youtu.be/eXhMwC15Mlk>

Webinar EVALUATION

(with thanks to Frances Gunn, DSAG Chair in the Diocese of Galloway)

Feedback from the webinar, received via email, was overwhelmingly positive. In all, 176 evaluations were submitted - a 47% response. The following points were highlighted:

- More than 98% of respondents reported that the webinar was successful or somewhat successful in introducing them to In God's Image v2.
- Participants scored the various reflections from practitioners **8 out of 10** in helping to demonstrate how IGLv2 can help "to grow a culture of care" in safeguarding.
- 99% reported that the webinar helped to develop their understanding of the role of independent audits in improving safeguarding culture.
- 96% reported that the webinar supported their understanding of the new Safe Recruitment process.
- The online webinar format worked well: 98% of respondents indicated that they found it easy to access.
- 96% were in favour of continuing with online access to future national events, either fully or in part.

Some individual comments:

"Encouraging to see the level of commitment, knowledge and willingness to serve the Church."

"Excellent and well-chosen panel to reflect the various loci of safeguarding practice."

"There were several iterations of the point that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and a sense of respectful inclusion and consideration for those who have experienced abuse."

"Speakers were excellent - clear knowledgeable and empathetic."

"We are on the right track - we just have to keep moving forward!"

Answering your questions

Contact with, and outreach to, survivors:

- » Every diocesan safeguarding team will receive survivors with respect and compassion, and will offer support including independent counselling. Survivors are encouraged to make contact with their local Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser if they wish to do so.
- » Safeguarding personnel foster professional links with support agencies and charities who work with survivors of abuse. A Survivor Reference Group will be established by the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency, for the purpose of engaging with, and seeking the views of, those who have experienced abuse so that Church safeguarding policies can be informed by their perspectives.

Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinators: isolation and retention

- » As the remit of PSCs has evolved in response to changes in legislation and best practice, we understand that the role has become more time consuming and challenging. Innovative ways to manage this include having more than one PSC per parish. The role can be divided between multiple people in such a way that each person has a clear remit. Your diocesan safeguarding team can provide support to develop this.
- » It is good practice for PSCs to meet together within their deaneries at regular intervals. This allows for the fostering of relationships, sharing of difficulties, and sharing of good practice and ideas. As this develops, PSCs form relationships with one another and 'trouble shoot' with each other by email/phone between meetings. Your diocesan safeguarding team can assist with establishing these meetings.

Vulnerability of those who are falsely accused

- » It is recognised that clergy, including seminarians, can be vulnerable to malicious allegations. It is vital that they avoid situations that might pose a safeguarding risk. Standard 5 of IGLv2 provides information on what a priest, religious or seminarian can expect to happen if an allegation is made against them. Any questions can be directed to diocesan safeguarding teams.

Safeguarding Training

- » Details of training and support available in each diocese can be obtained from the diocesan safeguarding team.

Access to resources

- » Webinar videos: <https://www.scsafeguarding.org.uk/Training>
- » IRG reports and external audits: <https://www.bcos.org.uk/Safeguarding>

Taking the first steps

While the Project Implementation group is just about to meet for the first time, we can reveal the major milestones that it will plan to overtake on its journey towards establishing the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency.



From the outset of making plans to establish the new independent agency, we are keen to keep everyone informed of what is being planned. We also want to hear your thoughts on how the agency can work to support everyone - those who have been abused, those who are members of parishes, religious congregations and organisations, religious, clergy, volunteers and employees. It is important to remember that, as WE ARE ALL RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING EVERYONE SAFE, we all have a right to offer our views on this important development.

To give us your views on the development of the SCSSA, you can participate anonymously in the first of a series of **online polls** by using this link: [SCSSA Poll 1](#)

ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING AUDIT 2021

Arrangements for the 2021 Audits will be announced in December 2021. While these will take account of the restricted activities during the pandemic, they will still provide the opportunity to review safeguarding arrangements in each parish, diocese, religious community and organisation.

Completing the audit provides the ideal opportunity to make plans for what needs to improve and to identify further training that is required by various people. **PLEASE PLAN AHEAD TO BE READY TO DO YOUR AUDIT.**



3rd ANNUAL IRG REPORT <https://www.bcos.org.uk/Safeguarding>

The Independent Review Group published its third annual report on 5th October 2021. It acknowledges the significant action taken by the Church in recent years - the commissioning of independent safeguarding audits in all 8 dioceses, the updating of 'In God's Image' and the decision to establish the SCSSA as an independent private company. But its main focus is on "what comes next" to keep children and vulnerable adults safe in the Church. It calls on the Bishops to continue to show leadership in Safeguarding, to continue engaging with survivors and to ensure a continuing focus on reviewing practice at all levels.

Safeguarding Contacts

Aberdeen 01224 319154	Glasgow 0141 226 5898
Argyll & Isles 07938 253133	Motherwell 01698 269114
Dunkeld 01382 225453	Paisley 0141 847 6138
Galloway 01292 266750	St Andrews & Edinburgh 0131 623 8949
National Office 0141 332 7177	

This is the third in a series of newsletters intended to inform you about developments in the Church's safeguarding practice.

If you have suggestions for topics to be covered in future issues, please email these to: newsletter@bcos.org.uk