The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland

First Report

Establishment, Structure, Standards and Guidance, and Progress

31 December 2008

THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Statement from the Chairman

Aidan A. Canavan

With the support of a committed and hard-working membership, the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church has achieved the objectives it set itself for its first period of operation.

The development by the Board of best practice standards for safeguarding children represents the expected level of performance needed in all parts of the Church. *Safeguarding Children* Standards and Guidance document, which will be published in February 2009, promotes core principles drawn from Gospel values mirrored in civil legislation and policy and applicable across both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland. From these core principles seven 'standards' are developed which represent, in the Board's view, best practice in the area of safeguarding and protecting children. Until now, a wide variety of child protection policy and procedures has been produced across dioceses, congregations and even parishes. Having a single clear framework for guidance is vital.

The National Board has been supported by a Liaison Committee under the chairmanship of Bishop Colm O'Reilly, supported by other representatives of the three Sponsoring Bodies, i.e. the Episcopal Conference, the Conference of Religious of Ireland and the Irish Missionary Union. This Liaison Committee has been invaluable to the Board. It has provided a means of communicating with and obtaining the support of all sectors of the Church. New ground has been broken and challenges engaged. Significant achievements can be reported, not least of which is the creation and endorsement of *Safeguarding Children*.

In addition, the Board will introduce a safeguarding questionnaire for completion by dioceses and congregations. Through this, we will keep abreast of what's happening, thereby enabling us to comment on the scale of any risks to children within the Church. Importantly, it will also help us to track responses and monitor progress. The main priority for the Board has been the emphasis we place on the safety and well-being of the child in all circumstances. Children and young people are our primary concern and we seek to assist the Church in its aim to be recognised as an exemplar of best practice in safeguarding them.

A major part of the Board's remit relates to the monitoring of safeguarding practice throughout the Church. This represents a new development for all those involved in this work. Through the office of the Chief Executive, the Board has sought to confirm that practice is in line with the expectations that are held centrally with regard to the standards that should be reached. Best practice will be highlighted and encouraged. Where practice is not up to the standards recommended, support and advice will be offered to address such shortcomings.

It is important to note that the role of the Board is primarily advisory. It relies heavily on the support of the many volunteers who give of their time to safeguarding children. We wish to extend our thanks to all of them at this time and offer this report to them to reflect the tremendous progress that the Church has made in the immediate past.

I cannot let this occasion pass without paying a warm and sincere tribute to Mr Justice Anthony Hederman, first chairman of the Board and my

immediate predecessor. His two-year commitment from 2005 involved working with the Sponsoring Bodies in developing the parameters of authority for the Board, recommending on the form of its setting up, including its role and remit and the design of its legal structure. The Church in Ireland is very much in his debt for his advice in providing a sure footing to underpin the Board's structure and the authority for its activities.

As to the future, the Board has provided, within this report, specific objectives it has set for its current operations and it will address progress on them in its next report.

Aidan A. Canavan, Chairman

Section 1
Introduction

Church Structure

The hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church on the island of Ireland involves twenty-six dioceses gathered into four provinces. Each diocese comprises a 'portion of the people of God' entrusted to the care of a Diocesan Bishop. The pastoral care of God's people is effected through parishes with their own designated parish priest and sometimes one or more curates. Appendix 1 provides current details on the number of parishes and churches and the Catholic population for each diocese in Ireland.

In addition to the hierarchical structure of the Church there are many religious institutes of men and women. These institutes, which are variously described (usually as specific Religious Orders or Congregations), have their own internal government independent of the government of Diocesan Bishops. In Ireland, most collaborate through membership of CORI (Conference of Religious of Ireland) or the IMU (The Irish Missionary Union). In matters of public worship or apostolic activity, religious may be subject to the supervision of Diocesan Bishops. Appendix 2 provides current details on the number of Priests and Religious in each Diocese in Ireland.

The Church is also aided in its mission and in the provision of pastoral care by a significant number of lay people. Some are direct employees but many are volunteers.

The Church has pastoral responsibility for over a million children and young people, and through the work of the National Board, clergy and lay volunteers seeks to safeguard and promote children's development in all aspects of Catholic life.

Background in Child Protection Initiatives

Child Sexual Abuse: Framework for a Church Response (commonly referred to as the *Green Book*), published in 1996, created the first set of national guidelines in the Church throughout Ireland. These guidelines related solely to child sexual abuse by priests and religious. The experience gained from practical implementation of the *Green Book* guidelines, aided in part by the extensive research project undertaken by the Royal College of Surgeons (commissioned by the Bishops' Committee on Child Abuse), and published in *A Time to Listen* in December 2003, informed subsequent work in this area.

A working group, under the chairmanship of Ms Maureen Lynott was set up in 2003 to develop a comprehensive and integrated child protection policy encompassing all Church-related activities and personnel (including volunteers) in Ireland, north and south. Its objectives included the need to be consistent with civil law, statutory guidelines in the area of child protection and all relevant Church law. This project led to the publication of *Our Children, Our Church*.

At the December 2005 launch of *Our Children, Our Church*, Church leadership committed to the setting up of a National Board for Child Protection in the Catholic Church and the name of the first chairman was announced – Mr Justice Anthony Hederman. This new Board held its inaugural meeting in May 2006.

The Board chose to adopt a different title to reflect more accurately its wider view of its remit. It adopted the title of The National Board for Safeguarding

Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland early in 2008. It is now legally incorporated under the name *Coimirce* (which translates, Safeguard).

The Formative Period of the Board

The terms of reference for the working party charged with producing *Our Children, Our Church* were confined to establishing policy and structures and did not extend to any role in terms of implementation of that policy. One of the first tasks of the Board therefore involved a rigorous examination and testing of the likely effects of implementing policy within the recommended structures. The Board concluded that the structures recommended in *Our Children, Our Church* needed alteration and improvement.

Another key review, which required considerable consultation with Church leaders, concerned the terms of reference of the Board itself. The Board concluded, after legal advice, that it could not, as envisaged by *Our Children, Our Church*, take responsibility for ensuring the implementation of Church policies. The responsibility for ensuring the implementation of Church policies lies with the bishops and religious leaders themselves, aided by 'best practice' advice from the Board and its National Office. The Board emphasised that there should be no ambiguity in its key role to monitor how Church leaders fulfil their responsibilities in adopting and ensuring implementation of best practice and procedures. The main objective of the Board is to promote, on behalf of the Catholic Church in Ireland, the safeguarding of children so that they may grow and develop in a healthy and nurturing environment.

When agreement was reached with Church leadership on the remit of the Board and on reconfiguration of the structures to deliver child safeguarding policies, procedures and protocols, the Board moved quickly to undertake the process of appointing a Chief Executive Officer. In May 2007 an appointment was confirmed, with Ian Elliott taking up his position on 1 July 2007.

In the period through year end 2008, the Board's full attention has been directed to supporting the Chief Executive in the extensive consultative role he has undertaken. Effort has been put into obtaining high quality data regarding the safeguarding of children in Church-related activities. An important feature has been the development of best practice guidance and standards. The Board, principally through the CEO, has engaged with state agencies north and south, developing partnership and co-operation with them.

Evaluating the Current Situation

Over the past year and a half, the Board has initiated a process of gathering statistical data in order to assess the volume of safeguarding issues that arise within the Church, and to better understand the management of allegations, assessment of risk and response to those in need of support.

Analysis of responses to the first request for information addressed to the 26 dioceses and 166 religious congregations revealed a lack of clarity, understanding of language and common approach to safeguarding across the Church in Ireland.

It was clear that the various dioceses and religious congregations placed different interpretations on what was being requested.

In order to obviate confusion, another request for information in December 2008 was confined to dioceses. An amended data collection questionnaire set out to facilitate a pilot study. All dioceses responded.

Through an examination of the returns and discussion with the dioceses of the cases behind some of the figures, it became clear that there is still variation in interpretation. The key issue was that some dioceses were being more rigorous than required by civil guidelines or Church standards.

As a result, a total of fifty-six allegations of abuse were notified by the twenty-six dioceses and all these were reported to the statutory authorities (north and south, in Ireland) during 2008. Twenty-one involved deceased clergy. On analysis, all allegations covered a broad spectrum in interpretation. Some were little more than suspicion and anonymous innuendo. Included, for example, was one reported allegation where neither the alleged victim nor the alleged perpetrator could even be identified.

Having undertaken rigorous investigation of serious allegations in relation to at least one diocese, it was clear to the National Board that it would be inappropriate and unhelpful to accept these returns as a true reflection of safeguarding practice. However, the Board would accept that, from the information it has received, appropriate procedures are being followed within all dioceses with regard to referring new allegations that emerge against members of clergy to the statutory authorities for their investigation.

Over the next year the Board will continue to work with dioceses and congregations to obtain quantitative and qualitative information, to increase awareness of the processes necessary to safeguard children and young people, and to further improve safeguarding practice. In addition to seeking statistical data, National Office staff will liaise with diocesan and congregational designated staff to keep abreast of the extent of allegations as they emerge and how these are being responded to.

Section 2
About the Board

Members

Aidan Canavan – Chairman
A graduate of Queens University, Belfast. A solicitor and member of the Council of the Law Society for Northern Ireland for twelve years, serving as its President in 1994. Was a member of the Parades Commission for Northern Ireland from 1996–1999 and President of the Special Educational Needs Tribunal for Northern Ireland from 1996–2002.

Sr Martina Barrett
A psychotherapist and family therapist with many years' experience working with survivors of abuse. Has undertaken specialised training for work with communities affected by sexual abuse. Currently a member of the leadership team of the Sisters of Mercy, Western Province.

Martina Duggan
Has extensive front-line experience in crisis intervention and in assisting the most marginalised in society. Currently involved in support group work and after-care service in the areas of substance and alcohol misuse. Joined the Board in 2008.

Marie Kennedy
Has a background in social work and has extensive experience in child protection and welfare with a post-graduate diploma in child protection and an MSc in Health Services Management. Through a range of important assignments, provides significant and extensive experience in all aspects of childcare management. Joined the Board in 2008.

Fr Paul McCafferty
A priest of the Diocese of Derry. A Canon Lawyer, he holds an STB Degree in Theology from the Gregorian University, Rome, and a Licence (Post-Graduate) degree in Canon Law from the Angelicum University, Rome. Has extensive experience in the practice of Canon Law.

Rosaleen McElvaney
A lecturer in psychology in Dublin Institute of Technology. Trained as a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist. Has extensive clinical experience working in the field of child sexual abuse. Recently completing her PhD (funded by the Health Research Board) on how children relate such experiences.

Brian Matthews
A solicitor with many years' experience in child protection policy development and implementation. Served for ten years as member of the Child Protection Task Force of the Conference of Religious of Ireland.

John Morgan
Has had a career in business primarily as a Corporate Lawyer. Has served as chairperson of the Bishops' Committee on Child Protection from 2002–2006. Prior to that, was a member of the committees established by the Bishops dealing with Child Protection since the first formal Bishops' Committee on Child Abuse, which was appointed in 1999.

Michael Ringrose
Chief Executive PWD (People with Disabilities in Ireland), the National Representative Organisation of all people with disabilities, their parents, carers, families and advocates. Prior to that, served as a Chief Superintendent with An Garda Síochána.

Except as stated, all Board members have served since 2006.

In attendance at Board Meetings

Ian Elliott, Chief Executive Officer
Ms Teresa Devlin, Director of Safeguarding
Sr Colette Stevenson, Director of Professional Standards
Ms Ann Doyle, Administrator

Management of National Office

Ian Elliott – Chief Executive Officer
A graduate of Trinity College and the University of Ulster, with a Master of Business Administration from the Open University Business School. He has qualifications in social work and certification in advanced social work for over twenty years. He was appointed director of NSPCC in June 2001, which involved responsibility for leading services, influencing and campaigning within Northern Ireland. In September 2005 he was seconded to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Services (DHSSPS) to a government role of lead child protection advisor. This role was further expanded by the Minister to design and implement a major reform programme for child protection services within the region. He was appointed Chief Executive Officer to the National Board in July 2007.

Teresa Devlin – Director of Safeguarding
With a background in social science, social studies and psychology, and with an advanced diploma in child protection, she has extensive experience in child protection management and family support, both at the levels of senior management and in the specific areas of risk assessment and care planning. Before recently joining the National Office, she served for four years as Head of Research Policy and Service Review at the office of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY).

Sr Colette Stevenson – Director of Professional Standards
A Presentation Sister. She has been involved in child protection work within the Church since 1995, when she became Director of the CORI child protection office. Previously she worked as a teacher and later in retreat work. She is a qualified marriage and family therapist.

Current Board Committees

Finance and General Purposes
(including Communications)
Chaired by John Morgan

Policy Practice and Procedures
Chaired by Sr Martina Barrett

Guiding Principles

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church dedicates itself to assisting the Church in Ireland, as a community, on what needs to be undertaken in order to develop better child safeguarding and protection systems. In practical terms the Board must consider and advise on the processes required to give children and vulnerable young people the best possible level of safeguarding.

In that work the Board is guided by the vision and example given to us by Jesus Christ himself, who showed a constant care for the vulnerable. In Matthew 25 he tells us that wherever we assist and show concern and compassion for the least in our community we show it to him. He extended such care in a tender and urgent way to children (Mt 19:14) and he uttered a grave warning about anyone who would lead little ones astray (Mt 18:6).

The Board is also guided by principles in International Law, particularly those which underpin the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in domestic legislation.

All these principles determine the Board's explicit goals:

- To help safeguard all children
- To help promote healing and reconciliation with victims
- To help guarantee an effective response to allegations of abuse
- To help ensure that we undertake our role and terms of reference as diligently and comprehensively as we can.

Terms of Reference of the Board

The main objective of the Board is to promote and safeguard, on behalf of the Catholic Church in Ireland, the rights of children so that they may grow and develop in a healthy and nurturing environment. In fulfilling this objective, the Board's core and essential tasks can be summarised as follows:

- To assist in establishing and operating a National Office for Safeguarding of Children for the Catholic Church in Ireland
- To liaise regularly with civil agencies in both parts of the island of Ireland which have responsibility for the welfare of children, with a view to maintaining awareness of the relevant developments in civil legislation, policy and practice
- To monitor and report on the Catholic Church's adherence to the best practice in all policies and practices relating to the safeguarding of children
- To advise the Church on the implications of developments in best practice in the area of safeguarding children and, in light of such developments, make recommendations to the Church for the adaptation and progress of the Catholic Church's policy on safeguarding children
- To provide support and advice to dioceses and religious congregations in the procurement of adequate training in relation to the safeguarding of children
- To issue from time to time protocols for the safeguarding of children and to urge and recommend to the Bishops' Conference, Conference of Religious of Ireland and the Irish Missionary Union adherence to the relevant protocols.

These activities will be reported on publicly through the medium of an Annual Report.

Legal Structures Underpinning the Board

Coimirce (Co. Number 465899), a Company limited by guarantee without a share capital, has been incorporated. The Company is regulated by its Memorandum and Articles of Association which may be amended from time to time to accommodate the attainment of the Board's objectives. The members of the Company are nominees of the Sponsoring Bodies. The Directors of the Company comprise members of the Board profiled in this Report.

Section 3
Report of the Chief Executive Officer

The Board

Membership of the Board is composed of lay people, with the exception of two members, Fr Paul McCafferty, a Canon Lawyer, and Sr Martina Barrett, a representative from the Conference of Religious of Ireland. All Board members are volunteers who give generously of their time to support the Church in the task of safeguarding children.

Over the course of the last twenty months, the Board has sought to establish itself and refine the task entrusted to it by the three Sponsoring Bodies, the Episcopal Conference, the Conference of Religious of Ireland and the Irish Missionary Union. They have met as a Board monthly, with much of the work being undertaken by committees.

The Board has recognised that the diverse and dispersed nature of the Church in Ireland, in many ways a source of great richness and blessing, can be a limitation when trying to achieve a consistent and coherent response to key issues, such as the safeguarding of children. Trying to champion a single approach has been a major objective from the very beginning of the National Board's operations.

A strategy paper entitled *Developing a Safeguarding Framework for the Catholic Church in Ireland* was presented to the Sponsoring Bodies for their endorsement during the early part of 2008. The paper set out a broad strategy and outlined an approach to implementation. The strategy was based on the founding principles contained in the Gospels and looked to use these as a reference guide for the creation of a standards-based approach to safeguarding children. It was well received by all parts of the Church. It was then adopted by the Board as its immediate work plan.

The creation of clear, coherent guidance for the Church as a whole in this area was identified as a critical first step in establishing the safeguarding framework. That guidance has now been written and approved by the three Sponsoring Bodies for implementation across all parts of the Church. Through producing the *Standards and Guidance* document for safeguarding children the Board has achieved one of its main objectives. This initial step represents a major achievement for all those involved in safeguarding children in the Church and the focus will now move to the implementation of this framework. It will be published in February 2009.

Towards Partnership in Working for Children

The National Board is an all-Ireland body incorporating the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland in its service area. As a consequence, it seeks to build relationships with all the key stakeholders on the island of Ireland. It also appreciates the differences that exist in legislation, policy and service provision in each jurisdiction.

Where difficulties have existed in the past, the Board seeks to create greater transparency in the actions taken by the Church for the sake of children. Since its formation, it has viewed the establishment of sound working relationships with other key partners in the field of safeguarding children as being of the highest importance. To that end, much time and energy has been directed towards developing and maintaining open and effective relationships with government departments and statutory child care agencies in both jurisdictions. Regular liaison meetings have taken place at which information is exchanged on developments and best practice. Through these contacts, a much better sharing of information and understanding has been achieved. The Board briefs the key government agencies charged with the safeguarding of children on the role, remit and progress of initiatives aimed at safeguarding children. This dialogue affords an early opportunity to provide support and advice on the Church's actions to safeguard children.

This spirit of mutual respect and collaboration is no small achievement, and the Board wishes to acknowledge the immense support and encouragement it has received from statutory agencies. It should also be noted that this work is taking place at a time when those agencies are under unprecedented and sustained pressure to provide additional access to services, with no increase in resources to do so.

The Catholic Church in Ireland is a complex and diverse body and is greatly enriched by the diversity that is present within its boundaries. However, this diversity can make the task of working in partnership challenging. Achieving a single, shared approach to the task of responding to the needs of children within the Church is a major objective of the Board. In this work the Board will continue to rely on an extremely generous volunteer corps of committed lay persons. Most give of their time at parish level and within their own communities. Many bring levels of relevant professional expertise that materially assists the Board's efforts. Without them the Board would be faced with an almost impossible task. In addition there is a dedicated cohort of professional staff across the Church, mainly found in the larger dioceses, who have been most helpful and co-operative, and the Board would like to pay tribute to their contribution in assisting its efforts.

Creating a shared approach to safeguarding children requires a great deal of discussion, education and encouragement. In some ways the structure of the Church itself does not easily lend itself to achieving a shared approach. Within the island of Ireland there are 26 dioceses, over 160 congregations or religious orders, approximately 1,300 parishes and several associated organisations and bodies.

Over the course of the last year, the Board, through its Chief Executive Officer and members, has visited and presented to almost all of the dioceses on the island. Presentations have been made to gatherings of the religious and also to other bodies supported by the Church. Articles have been published in *Intercom* outlining the work of the Board and its plans for the coming year. A dialogue has been established with a wide range of people as a basis for working in partnership together.

For the first time, the Church has created an independent central resource for the whole Church rather than for one part of it. Through the work of the National Office, the Board hopes to provide an accessible source of support, advice and guidance to any who may need it within the wider body of the Church when responding to the challenges of effectively safeguarding children.

Towards Monitoring Safeguarding Practice

The officers of the Board have a responsibility to monitor practice throughout the various elements of the Church, to establish if the standards set down and agreed in the *Safeguarding Children* Standards and Guidance document are being met. These standards represent the expectation of the whole Church for the way in which each constituent part of the Church should respond to the safeguarding needs of children. This is an agreed minimum commitment by each constituent part of the Church, particularly each Diocese and Congregation.

In monitoring practice in safeguarding children, the Board is keen to highlight good practice, as well as identifying poor responses where these are found. It is gratifying to note that examples of good practice are becoming more common as systems develop. With regard to examples of good practice, the Board would wish to highlight the widespread adherence to reporting allegations to the appropriate statutory authorities in a timely fashion when they emerge. Indeed, this drive to report can, on occasions, lead to situations being referred that are not capable of being investigated. The Board would also feel that the development of the role of expert advice through advisory panels to key decision makers within the Church, such as Bishops and leaders of religious congregations, is another very good example of the Church's drive to improve its practice in this vital area. It is also encouraging to note that there is an increasing commitment to the attainment of best practice in safeguarding children. Risks to children are being recognised, addressed and removed with greater speed than in the past. Attention is being paid to preventing harm occurring rather than merely reacting to it once it has happened.

In order to discharge this responsibility adequately, the Board seeks to build on a culture of accountability, and encourage all parts of the Church to adopt a

more open and transparent approach to this work. Previously, accountability has been perceived as focusing exclusively on areas of poor practice, rather than also identifying examples of good practice. This has led to monitoring being viewed negatively and with suspicion by some in the Church. The Board has sought to change that perception by emphasising the positive opportunities for learning that can result from the monitoring of practice.

It is in this spirit that the Board has engaged in the monitoring of practice within the Church over the course of the last year. It has received a total of three complaints of alleged poor practice on the part of a diocese or religious congregation since its inception. Each one of these has been investigated and, where needed, recommendations have been presented in order to address the basis for the complaint and improve practice in the future.

The Board has been impressed by the willingness of many of those involved to accept advice and support in order to address any practice issues that have arisen. This has resulted in positive improvements to practice which will benefit children and young people.

One matter drawn to the attention of the Board was an allegation that there had been a failure to respond in a timely and appropriate way to safeguarding concerns that had previously been brought to the attention of one particular diocese. A review was carried out, with the support of the diocese that made available the relevant case papers to two separate matters which were examined. Serious deficits were identified in relation to practice, which were communicated to the diocese. A report containing the findings of the review was submitted to the Office of the Minister for Children who had originally alerted the Board to the existence of the complaint. The report made a number of recommendations for the diocese to implement. The diocese expressed its willingness to co-operate fully and the Board will also be monitoring the implementation of these recommendations for improvements to safeguarding practice.

In monitoring safeguarding practice in the Church, the Board has sought to place the needs of children before all other considerations. Where it identifies preventable risk, it will continue to highlight it and seek to support those responsible in addressing and eliminating it. The Board cannot do this effectively without the active support of those working within the Church. For that reason, on behalf of the Board I wish to pay tribute to the commitment and openness of many of those with whom the Board and its officers have worked over the course of the last year. Much has been achieved which is already resulting in increased safety and security for children, who are among the most vulnerable in the Church.

Towards Developing a Culture of Accountability

The Board aims to support the Church in becoming an exemplar for best practice in the field of safeguarding children. This has been its objective from its inception. It is our firm belief that the Church can achieve this and be accepted internationally as promoting excellence in this field. In seeking to move beyond the failings of the past, the Church can discover a new strength and a greater confidence in itself as a transforming force in society. To do this, it has to further develop and help inculcate a culture of accountability, holding those who are responsible for poor practice to account. The aim is not primarily one of apportioning blame but to educate, while rectifying mistakes, so as to ensure that they will not be repeated again, and importantly to make sure that children are protected in the future.

One of the most telling criticisms that victims of abuse and others make of the Church is that offenders and those responsible for them appear to be unaccountable for their actions. Victims all too frequently have felt unheard and under-valued. They can have a perception of aloofness and remoteness on the part of those in positions of responsibility. This deepens the hurt and the anger that those who have been harmed by the members of the Church feel. It is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Over the past year, the Board has sought to listen to many of those who have been involved in safeguarding cases in the Church. Representatives of the Board have talked to victims and heard their stories first hand, and listened to priests accused of abuse. Those who have to make the decisions within the Church have also spoken to members of the Board and shared their fears, doubts and concerns, as have volunteers who are contributing to improving safeguarding practice. Such information is invaluable

to the Board and to its members as they seek to provide the best quality advice.

Everyone who is part of the Church should expect to be held accountable for their actions. It is certainly the case that the Board holds itself accountable for making a positive contribution to achieving a safer environment for children in the Church. No one part of the Church can be totally independent of the main body of the Church, and fail to strive to meet the standards that have now been agreed and set down, against which performance in this area will be measured. All with leadership roles in the Church have responsibilities to others and therefore cannot act independently without experiencing pressure from their peers or comment from the Board.

This process of accountability is critical to the development of best practice in the future. For the first time, an independent body, the Board, is monitoring practice in the Church and seeks to hold individuals to account who do not meet the required standards. The Board will use the mechanism of the Annual Report to inform and to educate in this matter, according to its experience. Unacceptable practice, if it is found, will be identified and improvement sought. Exceptional practice will be similarly highlighted and brought to the attention of the wider public.

Ultimately what is sought is the emergence of a culture of commitment and accountability, rather than one simply of compliance. Safeguarding children within the Church meets the rightful needs of children, but also strengthens the Church and helps it fulfil its mission. Actions that place children at risk will achieve the contrary. If the Church is to fulfil its role in society it must not fail in this area again but strive to nurture children as Jesus did. This aim was strengthened further by Pope Benedict XVI, in his *ad limina* message to the Irish Bishops. He set out what he wants to happen for the protection and nurturing of children and charged the Bishops and all within the Irish Church to ensure that it will be achieved. The Board seeks to support all those who are working to achieve the objective set out in the Holy Father's message.

Ian A. Elliott

Ian A. Elliott, Chief Executive Officer

Section 4
Objectives for 2009

As this First Report indicates, the Board has made considerable progress in its remit, but recognises that its task is both ongoing and developing. Therefore, looking to the year ahead, the Board has a number of specific objectives:

- To develop a National Office team of experienced, skilled and highly motivated staff, in order to create a central advisory and support resource for safeguarding practice in the Catholic Church in Ireland

- To circulate the *Standards and Guidance* document, following a comprehensive consultation process, that will provide the key architecture for child safeguarding policies and procedures for the Catholic Church in Ireland; and subsequently to introduce a suite of documents, agreed with the key statutory agencies, that will provide clear guidance for constituent groups within the Church, so that the safeguarding of children is promoted and strengthened. The first of such documents, on the creation and maintenance of records relating to allegations of child abuse, will be written specifically for Designated Persons, Bishops and Congregational Leaders

- To advise and assist dioceses and congregations in the introduction of the structures proposed by the *Standards and Guidance* document

- To monitor practice and adherence to the *Standards and Guidance* document and any other policy documents recommended by the Board

- To maintain a database on new allegations of child abuse through obtaining statistical data from dioceses and congregations, every two months

- To develop the website for the Board, to facilitate access to all documents developed by the Board and its National Office

- To enhance communication on issues of child safeguarding policy and practice within the Catholic Church through regular contact with the Liaison Committee of the Sponsoring Bodies

- To enhance the relationship between the Board and dioceses and congregations through regular meetings between the Board and its National Office and child safeguarding personnel

- To continue the development of relationships with key statutory agencies, both in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. This will involve meetings with key officers in the statutory agencies

- To publish the next report by April 2010.

The Board has set itself a robust plan of action for the coming year. The next report will provide a measure of the degree to which this ambitious plan has been realised.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Figures for Parishes, Catholic Population and Churches In Ireland, 2009

	Parishes	Catholic Population	Churches
Armagh	61	213,030	152
Dublin	200	1,097,618	238
Cashel	46	82,135	84
Tuam[1]	56	122,353	131
Achonry[1]	23	34,826	47
Ardagh[1]	41	71,806	80
Clogher	37	86,047	85
Clonfert[1]	24	36,000	47
Cloyne	46	164,344	107
Cork & Ross[1]	68	220,000	124
Derry	51	240,977	104
Down & Connor	88	329,243	151
Dromore[1]	23	63,400	48
Elphin	38	70,800	90
Ferns	49	100,227	101
Galway	39	111,916	71
Kerry[1]	54	127,850	105
Kildare & Leighlin[1]	56	205,185	117
Killala	22	40,887	48
Killaloe[1]	58	114,525	133
Kilmore[1]	36	57,024	95
Limerick[1]	60	184,340	94
Meath[1]	69	250,000	149
Ossory	42	86,598	89
Raphoe[1]	33	81,250	71
Waterford & Lismore	45	146,206	85
Totals[2]	1,365	4,338,587	2,646

Notes:

1. Data unchanged from 2006.
2. Totals estimates only.
Source: Diocesan returns.
Source: *Irish Catholic Directory 2009*, Veritas Publications, 2009.

Appendix 2
Number of Priests and Religious

	Active in Diocese[1]	Others[2]	Religious Orders		
			Clerical	Brothers	Sisters
Armagh	104	36	47	21	281
Dublin	461	48	878	318	2,793
Cashel	89	11	20	8	153
Tuam[3]	99	25	8	17	234
Achonry[3]	39	8	2	0	78
Ardagh[3]	61	15	5	9	204
Clogher	79	7	4	3	144
Clonfert[3]	42	8	18	0	95
Cloyne	113	30	0	5	220
Cork & Ross[3]	119	30	141	36	580
Derry	98	19	5	4	108
Down & Connor	159	44	50	30	243
Dromore	36	13	26	11	156
Elphin	54	15	11	1	114
Ferns	98	25	10	6	164
Galway	53	23	45	12	206
Kerry	84	25	10	5	292
Kildare & Leighlin[3]	106	17	93	54	380
Killala[3]	52	18	4	3	70
Killaloe[3]	101	22	22	19	185
Kilmore[3]	86	10	6	1	59
Limerick[3]	95	31	64	6	290
Meath[3]	113	19	102	20	163
Ossory[3]	63	16	17	52	211
Raphoe	64	16	11	5	52
Waterford & Lismore	68	24	52	40	321
Totals[4]	2,536	555	1,651	686	7,796

Notes:
1. Diocesan priests only.
2. Priests of the diocese retired, sick, on study leave or working in other dioceses in Ireland and abroad. Details are listed under the diocese.
3. Data unchanged from 2008.
4. Totals estimates only.

Source: Diocesan returns.
Source: *Irish Catholic Directory 2009*, Veritas Publications, 2009
Canon 365 of the Code of Canon Law
The Holy See, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (as part of the UK) are all signatories to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.