

SAFEGUARDING MATTERS

in the Catholic Church in Scotland

May 2023

Progress Report from the SCSSA



Welcome to our first newsletter of 2023 which reports on some recent developments, including the 2022 Safeguarding Audit, SCSSA Board appointments, and Safeguarding training developments.

2022 Safeguarding Audit

Our last newsletter was published in December 2022 ahead of the annual Safeguarding self-audit of all parishes, dioceses, religious congregations and Catholic organisations that form the wider Catholic Church in Scotland.

By 17th March 2023 we had received audit submissions from **381** parishes, **8** dioceses, **64** religious congregations, and **42** Catholic organisations, which equates to a submission rate of 98%. Whilst we acknowledge this as being an excellent return, and there being mitigating reasons for non-submissions, it is our intention to ensure that we reach 100% submissions in the future.

Engagement with survivors

Since August 2022 the SCSSA has been engaging the Church's various safeguarding structures,

including Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors (DSAs) and Safeguarding administrators, Parish Priests and Safeguarding Co-ordinators in parishes and religious congregations. We are also actively reviewing the current links that exist with survivors and Survivor Groups.

As part of this process, we have met with some individual survivors and Survivor Groups to convey the message that we are committed to doing more work in this area and that we view working with survivors as being absolutely critical to the success of the SCSSA. It is essential that we create an environment that provides opportunities to listen to the lived experience of survivors of abuse, that we learn from them, and that this learning is translated into Safeguarding training and practice.

Identifying and developing ways we can work with survivors and Survivor Groups to co-produce material and processes will be a key focus for Paul Donaldson, SCSSA Director of Safeguarding, as we move through 2023.

Links have been established with the Scottish Government and explored with Survivor Groups and Third

Sector survivor agencies, but more needs to be done to ensure that the commitments set out in Standard 4 (para. 4.7) of 'In God's Image' are met.

Paul will soon write to a number of Survivor Groups and Third Sector survivor agencies to seek views on how best to achieve the aims outlined above. These views would assist the SCSSA to work towards co-producing material and processes that will ensure that Safeguarding practices operate within a culture that is survivor-focused.

This work will be overseen by SCSSA Board member Mary Kearns who will chair a Survivor Engagement group which will seek input from relevant stakeholders, including survivors and Safeguarding personnel.

Ahead of this, the SCSSA would be grateful to hear views on how best to engage effectively with survivors and Survivor Groups.

Please email any comments and suggestions on how the SCSSA can best engage with survivors to:

survivorengagement@scssa.org.uk

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If you wish to offer your views on how Safeguarding can be improved, please email:

chair@scssa.org.uk

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SCSSA Developments and other News

SCSSA Board Appointments

Ms. Clare McDade has stepped down from the SCSSA Board to pursue career opportunities in the legal sector. We offer sincere thanks for the work she did on behalf of the Board, and we wish her success in the future.

Board Chair Lady Rae has made two new appointments to the SCSSA's Board of Directors: **Ms. Mary Kearns** and **Sister Helen Costigane**. Both Sr Helen and Mary will bring extensive knowledge and experience in the Safeguarding arena to our work.

Lady Rae regards these appointments as providing a significant further step in creating a Board of Directors with extensive and varied skillsets and experience in Safeguarding: *"These additions will further enhance the SCSSA's capability to oversee the Safeguarding practices in place throughout the Catholic Church in Scotland and to ensure that the safety and protection of children and vulnerable adults are at the core of the Safeguarding services being delivered."*

Sr Helen Constigane is a member of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. She is a qualified Canon Lawyer who provides advice to solicitors, dioceses, clergy and religious congregations on canonical matters. She is an author, academic writer and lecturer of some distinction, having been a visiting lecturer at universities and institutes in the United Kingdom, Europe, Asia and



Africa as well as having delivered keynote presentations to conferences across the world.

Mary Kearns qualified as a solicitor in 1988 and as a solicitor advocate in 1995. She was a litigation partner in a large Scottish legal firm. From 2016 until October 2022, Mary was Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser to the Diocese of Paisley on a voluntary basis. During that time, she was involved both nationally and internationally, networking with others in helping to develop and adopt safeguarding best practice.

Engagement with Bishops' Conference of Scotland

Earlier this year SCSSA Chair Lady Rae and Vice Chair Pat O'Meara, together with Paul Donaldson, met with Bishop Brian McGee in his role as Bishop President for Safeguarding.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the detail of the workplan needed to ensure that the necessary arrangements are made that will enable the SCSSA to discharge the Agency's commitments, as outlined within 'In God's Image'. These arrangements will ensure that the operating practices of the SCSSA are independent of other safeguarding structures within the Church. In this way, by creating an open and transparent working environment, the SCSSA will be able to provide the necessary oversight and scrutiny that ensures compliance with national safeguarding standards.

SCSSA Workplan

In February the SCSSA Board agreed to set out a workplan across 4 broad workstreams:

- Engagement and Listening to Voice
- People and Learning Development
- Leadership and Quality Improvement
- Systems, Policies and Procedures.

These workstreams, aligned to the 'In God's Image' Standards, will be addressed by 4 sub-committees of the SCSSA Board, each led by a Board Director. Within each workstream, key priorities have been identified which include:

- developing working relationships with survivors and Survivor Groups and mechanisms to listen to and learn from the lived experience of survivors
- developing a comprehensive safeguarding induction training package and a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme which incorporates trauma-informed principles
- developing online resources for safeguarding practitioners.

A full outline of the SCSSA's strategic priorities will be produced within a 3-year Strategic Action Plan which will be published in late summer 2023.

OTHER NEWS

- ❑ [CLICK HERE to see a short video](#) of his Prayer Intentions for March in which the Pope explains that: "Asking for forgiveness is good for the victims, but they are the ones who have to be at the centre of everything."
- ❑ An updated version of Pope Francis's motu proprio **Vos Estis Lux Mundi** came into force on 30th April 2023. It reaffirms the Church's intention to combat and investigate crimes of sexual abuse. While the English text of the updated document is not yet available, some related comments can be found using the links below.
 - [Pope confirms 'Vos estis lux mundi' procedures against abuse.](#)
 - [Pope Francis decrees permanent 'Vos estis lux mundi' legislation to counter abuse.](#)
 - [Interview with Cardinal Cupich of Chicago](#)
 - [Interview with Archbishop Scicluna of Malta](#)

Our findings from the 2022 Safeguarding Audit

Analysis of the first annual audit process conducted by the SCSSA into the Safeguarding practice of each parish, diocese, religious congregation and Catholic organisation is near completion. Relevant feedback has been provided to all dioceses who are now developing action plans based on the findings from respective parish and diocesan audits. The intention behind the audit process is to assess how effectively the principles of 'In God's Image' are being applied, and how local practice is compliant with the 8 national safeguarding standards. The audit offers an opportunity to reflect on the previous year, and also to identify any gaps in learning or practice that should be addressed. The reasons for this is to ensure we look towards developing a culture of continuous improvement, leading to the delivery of a Safeguarding service across the Catholic Church which is consistently of a high standard, and rooted within a culture of care. While more details of the Audit analysis will be published over the summer, some key findings are reported below.

CHURCH PEOPLE

- 94% of all parishes in Scotland have a dedicated person occupying the role of Parish Safeguarding Coordinator (PSC). It was found that in most parishes there was a strong working relationship towards Safeguarding between the Parish Priest and PSC.
- WITHIN PARISHES AND DIOCESES: **90 employees** and **6,734 volunteers** are involved in activities relating to children and vulnerable adults. Of this number, 97% (n. 6,594) were subject to the PVG scheme where the activities undertaken met the criteria around 'regulated work'.
- WITHIN RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS: **189 members**, **329 employees** and **85 volunteers** are involved in activities relating to children and vulnerable adults. 100% of these were subject to the PVG scheme.
- WITHIN CATHOLIC ORGANISATIONS: **796 volunteers** were involved in activities relating to children and vulnerable adults. Of this number 97% (n. 774) were subject to the PVG scheme.
- 419 clergy** (priests and deacons) and **90 priests from religious congregations** provided ministry in parishes. 100% of these possessed the relevant PVG certification and had undertaken Safeguarding induction training.
- 454 visiting priests** provided ministry in parishes. While most parishes appropriately recorded the relevant details, as required by 'In God's Image', it was identified that the processes were being applied inconsistently.

SAFEGUARDING CULTURE

- 30** Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Group (DSAG) and **38** Diocesan Risk Assessment Management Team (DRAMT) meetings were held in 2022.
- 88%** (n. 342) of the audit submissions involved collaboration between the PP and PSC. Whilst there were some valid reasons for not reaching 100%, work will be undertaken to improve this.
- Across the dioceses, there are proactive working relationships between PPs and PSCs with regular meetings to discuss safeguarding issues.
- 100% of parishes, religious congregations and Catholic organisations utilise relevant materials and resources to publicise the Safeguarding message and the guidance provided by 'In God's Image'.
- All parishes and religious congregations took part in the Annual Safeguarding Day of Prayer.

CHURCH PLACES & ACTIVITIES

- 34** parishes are providing internet access to congregations and are applying suitable security protocols to ensure the safe use of the internet.
- 140** parishes and **11** religious congregations livestreamed some services and displayed appropriate signage.
- 105** parishes, **12** religious congregations and **19** Catholic organisations display photographs of children's activities on their websites and social media platforms, with appropriate measures being taken to ensure that the safety and rights of the child are observed. These measures include: parental consent being sought, the avoidance of identifiable personal details, and children not being identifiable from the images displayed.
- Premises in **297** parishes, **36** religious congregations and **17** Catholic organisations were used to facilitate activities involving children and vulnerable adults.
- While the management and completion of risk assessments and the records maintained were found to be appropriate, some inconsistencies were found. These will be addressed in the relevant Action Plans.

SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

- 377** members of the clergy, **236** PSCs, and **1157** volunteers participated in Safeguarding training in 2022.

ALLEGATIONS

Each year the Catholic Church in Scotland publishes: the number of allegations received in the previous year, the type of abuse recorded, the year(s) in which the abuse took place and the outcome(s) of any criminal investigations, if known. While the 2022 details will be published later on the SCSSA website, the key findings are:

- DIOCESES** reported receiving **5 allegations of abuse** in 2022. All were reported to the statutory authorities, in line with the mandatory reporting policy.
- RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS** reported receiving **15 allegations of non-recent abuse** in 2022. All these allegations were received from solicitors acting on behalf of those disclosing they had suffered abuse.

Safeguarding Training News

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SAFEGUARDING TRAINING



In November 2022, members of the newly formed Safeguarding Training Advisory Group (STAG) agreed that the existing Induction Training Parts 1 & 2 required updating, and they further decided to merge the two training programmes into one. Following four months of reviewing the current materials in light of the revisions made to 'In God's Image' in 2021 and considering current best practice, we are pleased to announce that a new Safeguarding Induction Training package has now been created.

Safeguarding Trainers across the country will attend an update session before the summer period, and rollout of the new training will take place later in 2023. PSCs and other Safeguarding volunteers should look out for invitations to attend this mandatory national training programme which will provide, for most volunteers, the first safeguarding update since Covid.

On Saturday 15th April, STAG members met in the SCSSA offices (see above pic) to finalise the content of the new Induction Training package. Safeguarding Trainers in the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh attended a session on Saturday 22nd April to learn about the new training and to get some hands-on practice with it. Later, it was successfully delivered by Helena to those men participating in the Propaedeutic course for the Permanent Diaconate.

FUTURE TRAINING DEVELOPMENTS

The 2022 Safeguarding Audit included a list of training requests (received during the 2022 National Conference) for prioritisation. Additional training requests were also received during the audit process. STAG will meet in early May to begin the process of creating a training plan, which will be circulated in Summer 2023 with target completion dates.

CRS TRAINING DAY - 15TH MAY 2023

Following requests from Religious Congregations for a Safeguarding Day centred on the theme of 'Healing from a legacy of abuse', a day has been arranged in Carfin on 15th May 2023. The day will include a session led by Helena (Head of Safeguarding Training) and a visiting speaker from a religious congregation which has lived experience of abuse. There will also be Mass, lunch, and an opportunity to learn more about the work of the CRS.

INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDING CONFERENCE 2023

In June, the International Safeguarding Conference is being held once more in Rome. This year's theme is 'Accountability'. Helena is working with a group of experienced Church Safeguarding personnel from across Scotland, England and Ireland to hold working groups ahead of the Conference itself. Scotland will be well represented at the ISC, with Lady Rae (SCSSA Board Chair), Pat O'Meara (SCSSA Vice Chair), Paul and Helena joining DSAs from around the country.

NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING CONFERENCE 2023

See below for the date of the 2023 National Safeguarding Conference, details of which will be confirmed soon. The conference should be of interest to clergy and religious, as well as any lay employees and volunteers responsible for safeguarding in various Church settings.



This newsletter provides information about the work of the SCSSA in monitoring the safeguarding practice of the Catholic Church in Scotland. If you have suggestions for topics to be covered in future issues, please email these to: comms@scssa.org.uk