

SAFEGUARDING MATTERS

in the Catholic Church in Scotland

MARCH 2024



Our Journey So Far

Director of Safeguarding Paul Donaldson reflects on:

Finding our place in the world of Safeguarding



approach needs to be grounded in the importance of listening and taking time to understand the needs of stakeholders, the most important of whom are the survivors of abuse.

I can now acknowledge that, when taking up this appointment, armed with the experience I had gained working in other large organisations, my approach to the role was filled with a real eagerness to gain some 'quick wins'.

This way, I initially thought, we could establish our presence in the Safeguarding world and set the scene as to how the Agency could make a difference.

However, it became clear relatively quickly that, to achieve this end, we must first start to build our relationships with the key people in the various stakeholder organisations and to develop trusting working arrangements between them as a means of delivering our operational aims and objectives.

My current view of what will make the real difference is not the Agency

aiming to deliver 'quick wins', but all of us doing our utmost to build the strongest foundations for the Agency. That way, it can be established as a sustainable organisation that will deliver meaningful and tangible outcomes in the safeguarding policies and practices within the Catholic Church in Scotland.

My personal determination to achieve this goal is now even stronger. Having witnessed first-hand the commitment of those involved in Safeguarding within the Church, particularly the individuals who volunteer, and those in other faith groups and organisations who do likewise, I am more convinced, that this is a goal worth striving for.

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Welcome to our first newsletter of 2024. As it has been a while since we published the previous issue, we want to take this opportunity to let you know what work we have been doing to establish the Agency, not only forming the critical links with the Catholic Church in Scotland, but with other key stakeholders here in Scotland, as well as the rest of the United Kingdom and internationally.

It is not easy for a new organisation to establish its place in any sphere of activity. For the SCSSA, to 'find its feet', there needs to be an approach that involves real determination and drive. Most importantly, our

Work of the SCSSA Board

To assist in the development of the Agency, and to progress the work required to build strong foundations for its future, the SCSSA Board is supported by five sub-committees, each of which is led by a Board Director.

- **Survivor Engagement** led by Mary Kearns
- **Education and Training** led by Marie Connell
- **Policy and Resources** led by Greg Gallagher
- **Safeguarding and Audit** led by Pauline McDonald
- **Finance & Remuneration** led by Sr. Helen Costigane.

Each of the subcommittee leads has ensured that there is wider engagement of relevant personnel through representation from Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors (DSAs), where appropriate, and the attendance of subject-matter experts within groups that have been set up to review and develop new policies and procedures. (N.B. The Terms of Reference for each Board subcommittee can be found on the SCSSA website.) The SCSSA's strategic priorities, set within a 3-year Business Plan, will be published in summer 2024.

SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

This group oversees the activity being undertaken currently by Paul Donaldson to develop relationships with survivors and survivor groups.

Paul has placed considerable effort in delivering on our commitment to establish an effective engagement structure with survivors and survivor groups. Over some months he has met with numerous individuals and groups to develop links and opportunities for working together and to give reassurance and confidence that the Agency is determined that the voices of survivors are heard, and that the Agency's work is guided by their lived experience.

It is essential that the Agency can build trust with survivors and survivor groups and is completely open and transparent in what options may be open to create a survivor engagement framework that allows survivors to be the influencers and drivers of change in the safeguarding practices in the Church.

Paul has already developed some meaningful links that has enabled Agency work to be shared and commented upon. The Board is determined that, throughout 2024 and beyond, the Agency will seek to adopt an inclusive and collaborative approach to the co-production and design of its policies and processes.

While we do not underestimate the effort necessary to deliver this, we are determined that voices will be heard, and choices will be offered to ensure that the Agency can truly sustain a commitment to meaningful survivor engagement and participation. Please email suggestions on how we might approach this work to: survivorengagement@scssa.org.uk

EDUCATION & TRAINING SUBCOMMITTEE

This group oversees the work being developed by Helena Rameckers, *Head of Safeguarding Training*, in conjunction with the guidance offered by the Safeguarding Training Advisory Group (STAG). The STAG currently consists of a wide range of safeguarding practitioners, clergy and religious, all with a real depth of experience as educators.

The work of the STAG has led to the development of a new national Safeguarding Induction Training package for Safeguarders and volunteers. In the dioceses where this training package is being delivered, feedback has been very positive. Whilst some revisions and technical adjustments are ongoing, we are confident that, when all dioceses are delivering this training, there will be consistency of approach throughout Scotland.

Safeguarding Trainers will be invited to a national day in autumn 2024 to provide feedback on the content of the training session and also receive an input from an expert speaker.

POLICY & RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE

This group is working to develop a formal 'Working Agreement' between the SCSSA and the dioceses and religious congregations in Scotland. This agreement will set out clearly the responsibilities of each of the organisations, how the working relationship between them will operate, and the commitments that will lead to a joint effort to ensure that the safeguarding standards being applied within the Church are consistent and of the highest quality. This will be supported by an appropriate Data Sharing Agreement, with both agreements hopefully being ready for approval by Summer 2024.

SAFEGUARDING & AUDIT SUBCOMMITTEE

This group is working to develop updated Safeguarding Practice self-evaluation questionnaires for distribution to parishes, dioceses, religious congregations and Catholic organisations.

The aim of this work is to establish an audit process that encourages a more reflective approach and gives participants more opportunity to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their own safeguarding practice and to identify the areas where best practice can be shared or where learning and improvement can be introduced.

The group is developing a Quality Improvement Framework to enable a positive and supportive approach to monitoring compliance with safeguarding standards.

FINANCE & REMUNERATION SUBCOMMITTEE

This group has been setup primarily to ensure that the agency has sufficient funds to carry out its work with a sustainable income stream. It also assures the expenditure that takes place.

Development of the SCSSA Board

BOARD DEVELOPMENT DAY

On 27th January 2024, Board members participated in a Development Day within St. Margaret's Children and Family Care Centre in Glasgow. The day offered an opportunity for Board members to come together and explore the key strategic issues impacting on the Agency and to discuss our strategic and operational priorities, and the timeline for delivering these priorities over the next three years 2024 – 2027.

The Board also heard a detailed input from *Fr. Barry O'Sullivan*, as well as a first-hand account of safeguarding within a parish from *Fr. Dominic Quinn* of the Diocese of Motherwell. His perspective on the practicalities of safeguarding in the context of a busy parish was enlightening. It underlined for the Board the importance of ensuring that the work of the Agency, in respect of its oversight, monitoring and work to improve safeguarding standards, takes full cognisance of what safeguarding looks and feels like from the perspective of parish clergy and volunteers.

This is equally applicable to the considerations that must be given to the work of those with safeguarding responsibilities in religious congregations and Catholic organisations. The Board were grateful for Fr. Dominic's informed contribution to the day which allowed them to appreciate more how the work of the Agency could have a tangible positive effect on safeguarding in parishes.

STUART ALLARDYCE

The Board also heard from *Stuart Allardyce*, Director of [The Lucy Faithfull Foundation](#). Stuart is responsible for the delivery of **Stop It Now** services in Scotland in its work in preventing Child Sexual Abuse.

Stuart highlighted his organisation's ongoing work around prevention and the developments around situational prevention of child sexual abuse within the context of large organisations. His input was illuminating and provided the opportunity for Board members to reflect on how the prevention approach to child sexual abuse could be transferable to our aims and objectives.

NEW SCSSA BOARD MEMBER



Professor Christopher Moore is Principal and Chief Executive of New College Lanarkshire (NCL) and has years of academic leadership experience and expertise in business management and marketing. In his NCL role, he is committed to ensuring positive academic and life experiences for his students and is passionate about developing opportunities and advancing the educational, economic, social and cultural prospects of North Lanarkshire. This passion is evident in the work of the SCSSA and he has already demonstrated critical insight into how the Agency communicates its values and priorities to the outside world. **Lady Rae** commented: *"I was delighted to appoint Professor Moore. He will bring strong skills especially in the areas of education, safeguarding, governance and business development and will complement the broad range of talents that I am fortunate to have with our Board members".*

PATRICK SANDFORD

The Board were also very lucky to have *Patrick Sandford* with them to view the film of his theatre play **Groomed**.

Patrick is a renowned playwright, a survivor of sexual abuse and award-winning theatre maker.

Groomed, a first-person documentary about his own experience of being sexually abused by a teacher whilst in primary school, has been performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and has now been made into a film. He recently performed his play live in person to the *Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors* at the Vatican.



Having Patrick with us on the day was a true privilege. After the viewing of the play, his sharing of his experiences provided a stark reminder of why our Safeguarding work, and our efforts to improve our processes and procedures, are so important to making sure that children and vulnerable adults are kept safe whilst being involved and enjoying the many activities offered within the Church in Scotland.

We are deeply grateful to Patrick for sharing his experiences, and to *Dr Matthew McVarish*, from the **Brave Movement** for facilitating our connection with Patrick.

Reflecting on the day, **Patrick O'Meara**, *Vice Chair*, said:

"It was a very successful day with Board members able to reflect on the work that has been taking place since the agency was established 18 months ago. We were also able to look forward to the work that needs to be done to ensure that the agency carries out its vital work in assuring safeguarding across Scotland robustly, but also supportively. It was a very moving day, with Patrick Sandford's personal story reminding us starkly as to why our agency exists."

National Safeguarding Conference 2023



The SCSSA's 2nd National Safeguarding Conference took place on November 18th 2023 within the University of Strathclyde's Technology and Innovation Centre in Glasgow. Attendance at the event was excellent, with 221 delegates physically in attendance and over 30 people joining us for the day's events online.

The theme for the 2023 Conference was: 'One Chance to Change a Life' and it gave Safeguarders within the Church an opportunity to hear an excellent input from **Professor Alex O'Donnell**, the co-founder of *Epione*, on Trauma-Informed Listening.

A session led by **Brother Brendan Geary** on *Leah's Story* provided delegates with the opportunity to engage in workshop groups and explore best practice in responding to disclosures of abuse. Participants considered how a disclosure of abuse might be responded to through various role perspectives, and to give some thought to how Trauma-Informed Listening might be deployed in various circumstances.

We were also delighted that **Bishop Brian McGee** of the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles was able to enlighten us on aspects of discussions, relevant to the area of safeguarding, that took place at the Synodal event he attended in Rome in October 2023. ([Read Synthesis Report here.](#)) Much of the Synod discussions centred on the importance of listening, emphasising the critical importance of listening to, and hearing, survivors/victims of abuse, and of accompanying them on their journeys towards healing.

We also heard a short input from **Fr. Barry O'Sullivan** on the training programme he is developing around

the Theology and Spirituality of Safeguarding, aimed at the clergy during their ongoing formation.

Whilst the input from Fr. Barry was brief, it was clear from the feedback that there was an enthusiasm around his work, and that further opportunities to learn about it will be welcomed. The Agency continues to engage with Fr. Barry and will look to identify opportunities to make his work accessible to those with Safeguarding responsibilities within the Catholic Church in Scotland.

The aim of the conference was to shine a light on the importance of listening, and to introduce the concept of Trauma-Informed Listening to many of the attendees. It is hoped that, by adopting processes and behaviours that are informed in this way, we can make all the difference to those individuals who show courage and bravery in disclosing their experience of abuse.

The conference introduced participants to the positive aspects of listening in this way, and it enabled them to explore possibilities of how we might introduce and cascade the knowledge and benefits of this practice to the clergy, religious, employees and volunteers within the Catholic Church in Scotland.

In her opening address, SCSSA Chair **Lady Rae** reflected that *"working towards creating a culture within the Church where we listen with openness and empathy can lead us to become experts in the art of the encounter and enable us to be more able to accompany those who have suffered abuse and hurt in the Church."*

[A summary Conference Evaluation Report can be found on the SCSSA website.](#)



Safeguarding Training



INDUCTION TRAINING

The rollout of the new Induction Training is underway, with initial feedback from those already delivering the training suggesting that it is being very well received. A number of resources, including a guide on 'Responding to Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations of Abuse', have been created to accompany Induction Training. These resources were introduced at the 2023 National Safeguarding Conference and should be distributed to volunteers attending Induction Training. Trainers may obtain these resources from their respective DSA. To fully review the impact and effectiveness of the new Induction Training package, trainers will be invited to attend a development day in Autumn 2024, where they will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the content of the training session and will also receive a relevant Continuous Personal Development (CPD) input from an expert speaker.

SAFEGUARDING DAY FOR RELIGIOUS 2024

We are planning to build on the success of the 2023 Safeguarding Day for Religious which was attended by almost 100 Religious personnel from across the country. In response to calls for further input from Fr. Barry O'Sullivan who spoke at the 2023 National Safeguarding Conference, we are delighted to announce that he has accepted our invitation to be our keynote speaker for the 2024 Safeguarding Day for Religious which will take place on Friday, 24th May in St Francis Xavier Centre in Carfin. He will speak on the theme: *Safeguarding in the Context of Catholic Social Teaching*.



PSC TRAINING

Parish Safeguarding Coordinators (PSCs) play a critical role in helping to keep our communities safe. The STAG are in the early stages of overhauling the existing training for PSCs, and are keen to hear from people currently carrying out this role. In particular, we want to hear your thoughts on these points:

- *What should be included in training for new PSCs?*
- *What would it have been helpful for you to know before you began your role?*
- *Are there any areas of your role that you are not clear on and would like additional guidance for?*
- *What practical resources would support you in your role?*

If you want to share your thoughts on these or any other aspects of PSC Training, please email these to Helena: helena.rameckers@scssa.org.uk

INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDING CONFERENCE 2024

In June 2024, the annual International Safeguarding Conference in Rome will address the theme: 'Protect the most vulnerable: Safeguarding and Disability'.

NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING CONFERENCE 2024

The 2024 National Safeguarding Conference, scheduled for **Saturday 16th November**, is provided for clergy, religious, and lay employees and volunteers responsible for safeguarding in various Church settings. A planning group will soon be formed to develop the Conference theme and programme, taking account of feedback on the 2023 Conference. Updates on progress with planning will be provided.



Evaluating Safeguarding Practice

'In God's Image' Standard 8 requires that ongoing self-evaluation of Safeguarding practice should be undertaken by all those responsible for managing safeguarding in parishes, dioceses, religious congregations and Catholic organisations.

Each year the SCSSA is charged with managing the formal self-evaluation audit exercise that is designed to ensure that a consistent approach to self-evaluation is being used in all Church jurisdictions.

This formal audit exercise is intended to facilitate analysis, reporting and planning. In particular, it enables the SCSSA to gather data and compare Safeguarding practice from year to year.

The timeline for 2024 has been affected by the deliberations of the SCSSA's Safeguarding and Audit subcommittee which has been piloting a revised Parish Audit form in two dioceses.

The accompanying infographic outlines the responsibilities of various bodies for the different stages and deadlines of the audit exercise.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Our website has been undergoing a 'refresh' and will shortly be organised under 4 main sections:

- Listening
- Learning
- Improving
- Informing.

Please use it to keep in touch with our work.

www.scssa.org.uk

2023 Safeguarding Audit Tasks Timeline

