



Safeguarding Development Newsletter

(Dec. 2017 - Issue 4)



*“The Lord himself, therefore, will give you a sign. It is this:
the maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a son
whom she will call Immanuel.”*

(Isaiah 7:14)

Safeguarding Development Group Updates

The most recent meeting held 25 Nov. had a busy agenda: examining in detail Standard 1 – *Creating & Maintaining Safe Environments*; Reviewing Volunteer Application Forms and signing-off on the Provincial's 'Safeguarding Letter', among others.



In considering *Standard 1 – Creating & Maintaining Safe Environments* some interesting points were expressed:

- A 'Summary Checklist' for volunteer recruitment would be essential (i.e. working with/Not working with Children).
- In addition to the Volunteer Application Form attention would also be required in the area of volunteer induction (e.g. probation, training, safeguarding & child protection policy; Code of Behaviour etc.).
- There was agreement that adopting a 'culture of desperation' in accepting any volunteer into church activities was to be avoided.

About 30 minutes before lunch the SDG members and the Lay Forum members met for the first time to say 'Hello' and compare notes with the possibility of further links developing in the future. Promoting safe and sacred spaces was a common objective shared by both groups. Chat and good humour continued over lunch in The Ashling Hotel.

In the afternoon following an overview of the original 'Timeframes' in the Safeguarding Development Plan '17 – '19, it was recognised that a number of over-ambitious targets had resulted in some slippage. Therefore, all actions relating to Standards 1, 5, 6 & 7 were to be revised and incorporated into a 'Progress Report Update' for consideration at 3 Feb. 2018 meeting.

Finally, Ms. Annette Comiskey was enthusiastically appointed SDG Chair for the duration of the current *Safeguarding Development Plan '17 – '19*.

Visits to Local Safeguarding Groups (Nov. – Dec. 2017)

At the time of the SDG meeting the Provincial and Safeguarding Officer had already met with Fethard, Dungarvan, John's Lane, Rivermount & Cork. Drogheda, Limerick, Galway and Ballyboden have since been completed with a meeting in St. Catherine's, Meath St. yet to be re-scheduled.

The main purpose of these meetings was to thank LSG members for their commitment over a number of years when trust in the church was weak for many. Also, to ask that an event be organised in the Springtime for all local volunteers engaged in lay ministry. They too need to be thanked and encourage to sow new seeds for the future.

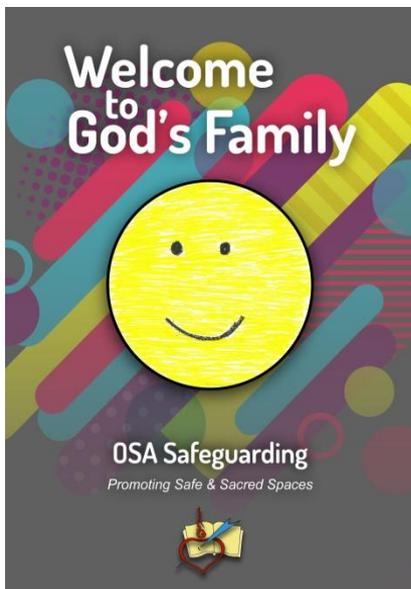
Such a gathering will provide an opportunity to launch a new child-friendly leaflet entitled 'Welcome to God's Family' and a new 'Code of Behaviour for Adults involving in OSA Ministries' that captures the values we promote and commit to in the context of safe and sacred environments (see opposite page).

Each LSG in consultation with the Prior/P.P will decide the shape and format of the event.

And hopefully, in some small but significant ways, current ministries will expand and new ones develop in the future among children, young people and adults in the belief that safeguarding, as a ministry, will enable other sacred ministries to grow and thrive.

Child-friendly Leaflet

The children and leaders of the Family Mass Team in Drogheda were central to the leaflet's creation. Leaving aside the cover title and the contact details (back page), they produced the entire contents.



Once a mock-up was available, it was important to send a copy back to the children (4 – 12 yrs. old) for comment. Here's some of their feedback.

What does the content of the leaflet say to you?

- *It says the church is welcoming you to God's family.*
- *The leaflet tells us that someone is always there in church to help, and if there is a problem to tell someone.*

How might it help new FMT members, if at all?

- *It tells new members what the church and its choir is all about: pray, smile, talk and pray.*

- *Give them the confidence that it is ok to speak out.*

What do you think of the layout?

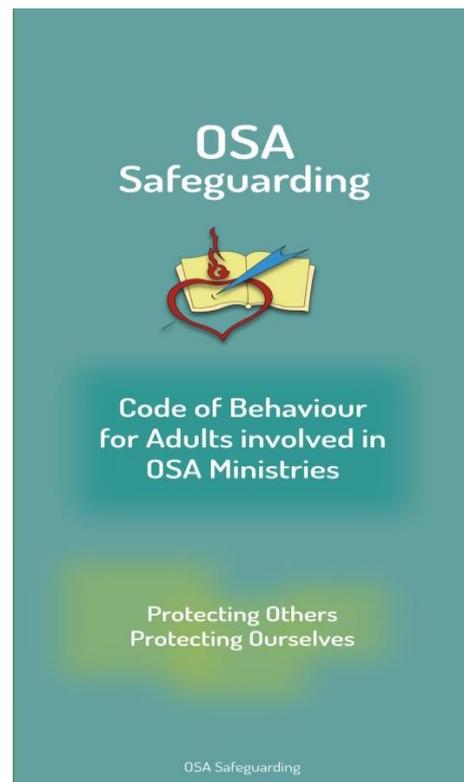
- *I like the layout because it is simple.*
- *I like the colours.*
- *It is child-friendly, easy to read and understand and it's very informative.*

Some parents' comments:

- *It highlights a safe child-friendly environment which encourages openness.*
- *Great idea, especially for today's society. Well done! Thank you for thinking ahead.*

A polish translation of the leaflet will be produce with the assistance of the Cork LSG.

Adult Code of Behaviour



Consultation with all Local Safeguarding Groups regarding the content of this new resource has been on-going over the past year. The leaflet states, *"In a church context, it is vital that all lay volunteers and staff involved in ministry are clear about how they should behave around and towards children.*

Whatever your ministry you will potentially act as a role model to children and young people. Because of this position of influence, it is vital that clear values and positive behaviours guide all such interactions."

When launched in Spring 2018 all volunteers and staff will be invited to commit to these standards and practices. Hopefully, this will be a source of encouragement and a confidence boost to all involved: *"Protecting Others, Protecting Ourselves."*

Children First Act 2015 (Further Update)



The remaining sections of the Act have now commenced with effect from 11 December 2017 following Katherine Zappone, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs announcement last October. Two sections will potentially have important implications for safeguarding within the Church namely,

1. Mandatory Reporting¹ and
2. Child Safeguarding Statements.

A 'Mandated Person' in a Church context is described as "a member of the clergy and a pastoral care worker, or someone involved in child safeguarding". There are two main legal obligations placed upon Mandated Persons:

- A. To report to Tusla harm to children that is above a defined threshold and
- B. If requested, to assist Tusla in assessing a concern (i.e. past or current harm and/or potential risk) that has been the subject of a mandated report.

The second obligation means that a Church body that falls within Table 1 of NBSCCCI Safeguarding Children 2016 (i.e. managing historical and/or current cases of abuse and working with children) must produce, display publically and share a 'Child Safeguarding Statement' with all Church personnel involved in providing service(s) to children and young people before St. Patrick's Day 2018 (i.e. 3 months from commencement). Such a statement must specify the service(s) on offer and principles/procedures being observed to ensure children and young people are safe from harm.

The National Board is currently developing a sample 'Child Safeguarding Statement' that references Church policy and can be adapted for use locally. More advice and guidance will be made available to all LSGs in the New Year to ensure compliance with the law.

While we speak of 'safeguarding being everyone's responsibility' it will be important to clarify the relationship between 'Mandated Persons' and particularly, members of each Local Safeguarding Group. Additionally, clarity will be needed with respect to what constitutes a 'service' and the position of volunteers who support a preventative approach but are not required to fulfil any 'child protection' responsibilities. That falls to the Designated Liaison Person, while in practice a 'Mandated Person' can make a notification of concern to the civil authorities jointly with the DLP.

Feedback and Queries Welcome

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or the Provincial directly.

Many thanks.

¹ Previously highlighted in the Sept. 2017 Newsletter.