

“Safeguarding is an on-going process and all need to be vigilante and attentive’ – Bishop McAreavey

"In the past generation we have lived through a time when trust between Church goers and Church leaders has been badly damaged. The disclosures in report after report that children and young people had been abused in our Church and the inadequate response of Church leaders have caused deep distress and dismay. My thoughts today are particularly with these women and men and again I express to them my deepest sorrow for what they experienced.

"In 2006 the Irish Church leaders set up the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland. This independent body was set up to offer guidance in this area and to oversee the implementation of good practice. In 2010 the Church asked the Board to review safeguarding in every diocese, religious congregation and missionary institute in Ireland. In December 2010 I wrote to the Board to invite a review of this diocese and in doing so I committed myself to publishing the report on completion. We are now at this stage.

"I want to thank the personnel of the National Board who carried out this review for their professionalism. To submit oneself or one's diocese to the scrutiny of an independent body is not easy. However the National Board carried out its review by helping us to recognise both our strengths and weaknesses. The final report also provides a series of recommendations to help us improve the way we do things.

"I accept this report. I also accept all the recommendations. Many have already been implemented. On the remaining ones, we already have plans in place to implement them as a matter of urgency.

What does the report say?

Ø Over the years since people began to come forward with complaints, the diocese has gradually learnt how to manage them better. At an early stage we were inclined to depend too much on legal advice; however we quickly involved people with a wide range of skills who helped the diocese to assess risk and decide how to respond effectively to complaints.

Ø The arrangements currently in place are effective in ensuring quick action and in providing good support and care for those who make complaints.

Ø The Board has praise for the work of Patricia Carville who has been the 'designated person' for dealing with complaints in recent years;

Ø Representatives of the PSNI and Social Services have expressed their satisfaction with how complaints are being handled.

Ø In addition to responding to complaints the Church is anxious today to ensure that arrangements are in place to ensure that wherever children and young people are involved in church life, they are safe. The Board looked at our safeguarding policies and procedures; they met the people responsible for drawing up policies and procedures at diocesan level; they met those who implement them at parish level and spoke of the 'infectious enthusiasm' that they have for their work.

"Hundreds of people are involved in working with our priests around the diocese in the area of safeguarding and they bring their own experience and sensitivity to children and young people to their safeguarding work in the diocese.

"However the work of safeguarding is an ongoing task and we need to continue to be vigilant and attentive. The people of the diocese – and particularly those who suffered in the past – deserve no less. I am aware today of the pain in many families, which relates to these issues and I ask the people of the diocese, the clergy and religious to pray and stand in solidarity with victims as they deal with the legacy of hurt and distress.

The report being published today says that it is critical that I, as Bishop, continue to show good leadership. Today, I commit myself to continue to give my best energy to the work of safeguarding in the diocese and in support of all those involved in this crucial area. I hope that this report will give some reassurance to the people of the diocese that things have changed."

The report can be accessed at www.dromorediocese.org .