



THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR  
**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN**  
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

**Review of Child Safeguarding Practice**

**in the religious congregation of**

# **The Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles**

**undertaken by**

**The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the**

**Catholic Church Ireland (NBSCCCI)**

**Date: March 2015**

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## **Background**

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) was asked by the Sponsoring Bodies, namely the Irish Episcopal Conference, the Conference of Religious of Ireland and the Irish Missionary Union, to undertake a comprehensive review of safeguarding practice within and across all the Church authorities on the island of Ireland.

The NBSCCCI is aware that some religious congregations have ministries that involve direct contact with children while others do not. In religious congregations that have direct involvement with children, reviews of child safeguarding have been undertaken by measuring their practice compliance against all seven Church standards. Where a religious congregation no longer has, or never had ministry involving children, and has not received any allegation of sexual abuse, the NBSCCCI reviews are conducted using a shorter procedure. The size, age and activity profiles of religious congregations can vary significantly and the NBSCCCI accepts that it is rational that the form of review be tailored to the profile of each Church authority, where the ministry with children is limited or non-existent. The procedure for assessment of safeguarding practice with such congregations is set out in the contents page of this report. The NBSCCCI welcomes that in order to have full openness, transparency and accountability, religious congregations that do not have ministry with children have made requests to have their safeguarding practice examined and commented upon.

The purpose of this review remains the same and it is to confirm that current safeguarding practice complies with the standards set down within the guidance issued by the Sponsoring Bodies in February 2009 *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland* and that all known allegations and concerns had been appropriately dealt with. To achieve this task, safeguarding practice in each of these Church authorities is reviewed through an examination of policy and procedures, and through interviews with key personnel involved both within and external to the religious congregation.

This report contains the findings of *the Review of Child Safeguarding Practice within the religious congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles*, undertaken by the NBSCCCI in line with the request made to it by the Sponsoring Bodies.

The findings of the review have been shared with a reference group before being submitted to the Provincial, Sr. Kathleen McGarvey along with any recommendations arising from the findings.

There were no allegations in respect of other forms of abuse within the time period, in respect of deceased and living members of the congregation. The review therefore is primarily based on policies and procedures made available plus interviews with key personnel involved in the safeguarding process within the congregation, particularly in the services run by the congregation. The reviewer visited the Provincial House of the OLA congregation on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 to conduct interviews and to read file material and other child safeguarding documentation.

## **Introduction**

The Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles (OLA) was founded in France in 1876 by Fr. Augustine Planque, who was committed to missionary work, particularly with the people of Africa. Fr. Planque was also a co-founder of the Society of the African Missions and these two missionary orders have remained linked since that time.

The OLA currently work in 19 countries, including Botswana, Tanzania, Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, Togo, Chad, Niger, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Egypt and Lebanon, as well as in Argentina, Canada, Holland, France, Italy, and Ireland. The Generalate is in Rome, and there are eight Provinces – Ireland, French speaking Africa, Italy, France, Egypt, Lebanon, Nigeria and Ghana – along with four Districts, Quebec, Algeria, Argentina and the Nederland's. Botswana is referred to as a 'new insertion' and will develop District status over time.

The OLA congregation in Ireland is in the Province of Ireland and Tanzania. The OLA has community houses in each of the four Metropolitan areas in Ireland, in Cork, Dublin, Rostrevor, Co. Down and Claremorris, Co. Mayo.

## **Role Profile (past and present role with children)**

No member of the congregation of Our Lady of Apostles has any ministry in Ireland that involves significant contact with children. These ministries are detailed below. The congregation's ministries abroad do involve direct contact with children and young people in places where it has developed missionary activity. The Irish part of the Ireland and Tanzania Province has been requested by the congregation's international leadership to assist all Provinces with the promotion of child safeguarding thinking and action.

In the past the OLA had involvement in two schools that it owned and operated at the campus in Ardfoyle, Cork where the Provincial House is located, a primary school which closed in 1971, and a secondary school that closed in 1973. It also provided a residential hostel in Cork until it closed in 1998, for children with disabilities who were attending the Enable Ireland School of the Divine Child, Lavanagh, Ballintemple, Cork. That school is one of the institutions that came under the purview of The Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB). Any matter that has been considered by the RIRB cannot be reviewed by the NBSCCCI, due to the provisions of Section 28 (Prohibition on disclosure of information) of the Residential Institutions Redress Act, 2002.

## **Profile of Members**

There are 84 Sisters in the Ireland and Tanzania Province, of whom 73 are Irish – the other Sisters are English (1), Nigerian (4), Ghanaian (3), Burkinabe (2), and Lebanese (1). Five Sisters in the Province are under 60 years of age. The overall age profile of the Sisters in the Ireland and Tanzania Province is as follows:

- 0 – 40 years – 4 Sisters, none of who is Irish
- 41 – 50 years – 7 Sisters (4 of who are not Irish)
- 51 – 6- years – 4 Sisters (2 of who are not Irish)
- 61 – 70 years – 5 Sisters

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71 – 80 years – 29 Sisters  
81 – 90 years – 20 Sisters  
90 years and over – 15 Sisters

In Ireland the OLA Sisters live in four community houses in Cork, including the large community house where the Provincialate is based: ‘A’ – 25 Sisters, plus another 15 Sisters in the adjoining Infirmary; ‘B’ - 6 Sisters; ‘C’ – 3 Sisters; and ‘D’ – 3 Sisters. There are five Sisters in each of the congregation’s community houses in Dublin, Rostrevor and Claremorris. An additional 15 Sisters are abroad, 11 of who are in Tanzania where the congregation has three community houses.

Ministries or activities in which members of the congregation are involved in Ireland include:

- Care of the elderly
- Hospitality to OLA and other Sisters – including giving English language lessons
- Prayer ministry
- Archives
- Volunteer lay mission to Tanzania
- Lay Mission movement
- Fundraising
- Coordinated Parish Promotion Programmes
- Vocations Ireland
- Former OLA’s
- JPIC desks
- Remembrance Day

In addition, a few Sisters have individual ministries, including:

- Immigrants – Lantern Centre; Episcopal Commission
- Vulnerable people – Cuan Mhuire; Simon; St. V de P; Cork Penny Dinners; Amnesty; and the St. Nicholas Trust
- Counselling (adults)
- Parish Sisters
- Medical services – mountain rescue; Lourdes

Any OLA Sister who has a Parish Ministry follows the relevant child safeguarding policy and procedures for the diocese within which the parish is based.

Like members of other missionary congregations, the members of OLA generally have professional qualifications in medicine, nursing, teaching and other fields that would be relevant to work in the developing world.

### **Policy and Procedures Document**

The Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles child safeguarding policy statement reads as follows:

*We, the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles (OLA) commit ourselves by the vows of religion to follow Christ as the Apostles did. We are committed to the promotion and protection of authentic human values, which are the integral part of the proclamation of the Gospel.*

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*Inspired by the example of Jesus in showing great love, respect and care for children, we believe that each child must be cherished and affirmed as a gift from God and has an inherent right to dignity of life and bodily integrity.*

*We commit ourselves to do all in our power to ensure that the children who come in contact with us in any way will be cared for in a safe and enabling environment, where their holistic development is facilitated and where they are safeguarded against any form of harm or abuse. We do our utmost to ensure that the fundamental rights of these children are always respected and upheld.*

The OLA Sisters Province of Ireland's child safeguarding policy and procedures, 2013 is a 50-page document. This is supplemented by a second 2013 publication, *Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles Province of Ireland Child Safeguarding Resource Document*, which runs to 42 pages. Together these constitute up to date and very comprehensive guidance for the members of the congregation; and both can be downloaded from the OLA website, at [http://www.olaireland.ie/files/8214/2297/9177/Child\\_Safeguarding\\_Policy-OLA.pdf](http://www.olaireland.ie/files/8214/2297/9177/Child_Safeguarding_Policy-OLA.pdf) and [http://www.olaireland.ie/files/8214/2297/9270/Child\\_Safeguarding\\_Resource\\_OLA.pdf](http://www.olaireland.ie/files/8214/2297/9270/Child_Safeguarding_Resource_OLA.pdf) respectively.

On page 6 of the policy and procedures document, the following commitments are made, at the end of which the page is signed by the then Provincial, and dated 30/09/2013:

*This document is fully compliant with child protection procedures in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland and therefore does not stand alone. It incorporates and complements the best practice and guidance provided in the two statutory policy documents 'Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011)' and 'Cooperating to Safeguard Children'. It is also compliant with Church Law.*

*This policy is binding on all OLA Sisters in our Province, on those who work in our convents and on our colleagues in ministries where children are involved. It has been devised to provide clear guidance for us in relation to behaviours with children and for the effective management of people who pose a risk to them.*

*The policy applies to:*

- *All Irish OLA sisters including those working overseas;*
- *All OLA Sisters working in OLA Province of Ireland.*
- *All staff working in Institutions owned/administered by OLA, Province of Ireland*
- *All volunteers working with or recruited by OLA, Province of Ireland.*

Another three-page document entitled *Safeguarding Children – Guidance on supporting and managing a Sister when an allegation has been made*, was produced and is dated 2015. These three documents together address all of the matters contained in the 2009 Church's *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland*.

In preparation for this review, the OLA placed a notice on their website announcing the review and inviting anyone with a concern to come forward:

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***SAFEGUARDING AUDIT BY THE NBSCCCI***

*The Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles have invited the National Board for Safeguarding of Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) to conduct a review of safeguarding practice.*

*If you have any concerns about Safeguarding in the order of the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles, we invite you to come forward to us (021-4294076), to the National Board for Safeguarding of Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (01-5-53124) or to An Garda Síochána/PSNI or TUSLA/HSC and give contact details.*

## **Structures**

The reviewer met the Provincial Leader and the Designated Person of the OLA congregation, and also read the comprehensive lever arch file that was prepared in advance of the review with the assistance of a Designated Person from another Church authority. That file was divided into seven sections, in each of which was contained evidence to indicate the congregation's level of compliance with the criteria that underpin the Church's seven standards. This information was very helpful and the congregation is commended for taking the initiative to produce it. It will remain a very useful reference document for the members. The congregation has a Designated Liaison Person and a Deputy Designated Liaison Person. There are Sisters acting in the roles of Support Person for Complainants; Trainer / Adviser; and Local Safeguarding Representatives, one appointed in each of the community houses. Four Safeguarding Representatives along with the Trainer and a Sister from the Provincial Leadership Team make up the congregation's Safeguarding Committee: This committee has written Terms of Reference, and all child safeguarding roles also have written lists of responsibilities.

While this review is not being conducted as a full audit of the OLA against all 48 criteria within the seven standards, some important observations can be beneficially made.

- Safeguarding Children in Tanzania: A policy dated March 2011, entitled *Safeguarding Children Information – Policy, Principles and Guidance Document* has been produced by the OLA Ireland and Tanzania Province, and a detailed letter describing the child safeguarding initiatives taken there since 2008 was examined;
- Child Safeguarding is now on the agenda of Irish Provincial Chapter and General Chapter meetings, with the Irish Province taking a lead role for the congregation;
- A written chronology of Child Safeguarding Training undertaken within the congregation since January 2007 was examined, with the title of each training event, along with the dates of training and who attended. There is clear evidence of a Province-wide spread of information and training sessions; as well as relevant training being attended by individuals with particular roles (DLP, D/DLP, Provincial Leader etc.) The congregation's Trainer is a NBSCCCI trained Trainer. On this evidence, the OLA congregation has strong commitment to training;
- There is good written evidence of information being made available to members of the congregation on agencies that have some statutory or voluntary role in child safeguarding and related activities.–

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- The OLA congregation has a written communications policy; and it makes use of its Irish Province newsletter as needed to circulate child safeguarding information;
- The Minutes of Provincial and House Team meetings were examined; and from October 2008 to the present, child safeguarding was discussed at these meetings on 32 occasions, so it has been a frequent agenda item for the Sisters.

**Management of allegations and liaison with the statutory authorities**

As the OLA congregation had a direct association with the Enable Ireland School of the Divine Child, Lavanagh, Ballintemple, Cork, which is one of the institutions listed as covered by The Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB), it is a possibility that matters could have been brought to the attention of that body that relate to the OLAs. The NBSCCCI is not permitted to access any case file material that has been processed by the RIRB. However, the reviewer is completely satisfied that all Sisters in the congregation are of good standing.

**Conclusion**

The Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles has actively developed its child safeguarding practices over the last number of years. They have excellent policies and procedures in place, as well as an effective child safeguarding structure. While all members of the congregation are Sisters in good standing, the congregation has had to respond to an historical complaint and did so appropriately and effectively.

There are no recommendations necessary to improve child safeguarding in this congregation.



**Review of Child Safeguarding in the Catholic Church in Ireland**

**Terms of Reference**

**Small Religious Congregations**

**(which should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Notes)**

**Introduction**

In order for the NBSCCCI to be able to state that all Church Authorities on the island of Ireland have been evaluated in respect of their child safeguarding policies and practices, both historical and current, then some form of appropriate assessment has to be conducted of every one of these. It is rational however that the form of assessment is tailored to the profile of each Church Authority, and that needless expenditure of resources and unnecessary interference in the life of religious orders and communities that have no children-specific ministry would be avoided.

This review seeks to examine the current arrangements for safeguarding children across small religious congregations /orders, and missionary societies in Ireland who have limited or no direct contact with children as part of the congregation's ministry.

It would also scrutinize practice within all known cases to ensure that they have been responded to appropriately.

The review's methodology is an adaptation of the methodology developed for all dioceses and large religious congregations and missionary societies, where the ministry involves regular contact with children.

The proposed review would consider the following:-

- (a) Former role with children
- (b) Allegations of child abuse against members and how these have been responded to
- (c) Existing relationships with statutory authorities such as the HSE, Gardai in the Republic and the HSCT or PSNI in Northern Ireland.
- (d) Policies in place and being applied for safeguarding children
- (e) Roles and responsibilities and where they exist the operation of Advisory Panels, and Safeguarding Committees

The objective of the review would be to confirm if there have been any allegations and how known allegations have been responded to; in addition the review seeks to confirm what the current arrangements for safeguarding children are. In particular, emphasis will be placed on establishing how policies and practice match up to the standards set down in *Safeguarding*

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*Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland* published by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland and launched in February 2009. Priority, at all times, will be given to how policy and practice can be improved and strengthened. If policies and/or practices are identified that are concerning, inadequate, or dangerous, they will be addressed through the provision of guidance and support, and through the reporting of these situations to the appropriate statutory authorities, if this has not already happened. Similarly, those that are good examples will be highlighted with a view to them being adopted comprehensively across all parts of the Church. All cases that relate to alleged or known offenders that are alive will be read and included in the review. In cases where the alleged or known offender is deceased, these will be sampled in an attempt to gather learning from them that will be used to inform the framing of recommendations.

### **Guidance Documents**

The review will be guided by the following:-

- (a) *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland*
- (b) *Children First* Guidance in ROI; and Regional Child Protection Guidelines in Northern Ireland;
- (c) Legislation that exists in each jurisdiction which contributes to safeguarding children and young people.

The review will be undertaken by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) through their National Office and led by the Chief Executive Officer.

The review process will be overseen by a Reference Group to whom the CEO will report on a regular basis. The membership of this Reference Group has been drawn from each of the statutory child protection agencies in both jurisdictions, along with eminent individuals in the field from academia. The current Reference Group consists of: Dr Helen Buckley (TCD); Mr Paul Harrison (Tusla), and John Toner (SBNI).

It is important to confirm that the value of the review is dependent upon full and complete access to all relevant documentation and information relating to the abuse of children known to the individual Church authorities. The review will proceed on the basis that willingness exists on the part of each of the subjects of the review to provide full access to the fieldwork team, subject, where relevant, to the terms of the Data Processing Deed agreed between the Sponsoring Bodies and entered into between the parties hereto.

## **Step Guide to the Review Process**

### **Step 1.**

A letter of invitation to review is sent by the Provincial/Regional Superior or other person responsible for the congregation/ order or missionary society (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Ordinary’).

### **Step 2.**

The CEO will forward a survey to the provincial which will identify:

- Current number of members
- Past role with children
- Current role with children
- Total number of allegations received up to 2014
- Number of living members against whom there are allegations

### **Step 3.**

For any Order where there have been allegations a full review will proceed, as per step 4 - 23. For those Orders where there have been no known allegations a desk top examination of policies and procedures will take place followed by a site visit to interview all relevant personnel within the safeguarding structure. For these orders step 5 and 13-23 will apply.

### **Step 4.**

The CEO and Ordinary will confirm the dates for the fieldwork for the review, and names of the fieldwork team.

### **Step 5.**

The Church Authority will be asked to make available all of the case files and related documentation in respect of any safeguarding concerns that have been identified within the diocese. The Church Authority will make available a room with wireless internet access for the reviewers to conduct their review of files, so that any records made by the reviewers can be directly typed and stored onto a secure server which is only accessed by the reviewers. In the absence of internet access the reviewers will type their notes onto a secure encrypted USB stick for later uploading onto the secure server.

### **Step 6.**

The Church Authority will be requested to sign the revised Data Processing Deed prior to the arrival of the team.

**Step 7.**

The Church Authority will arrange a schedule of interviews with all who hold safeguarding roles within its functional area. The designated person and the Church Authority will be available to the reviewers throughout the period of fieldwork.

**Step 8.**

The fieldwork team when they arrive on site will firstly confirm that they have a suitable place to work in and that all the required documentation has been provided to them for their review. In the event that the fieldwork team forms the opinion that the Church Authority has not provided access to all such documents, the NBSCCCI shall give notice in writing to the Church Authority of the opinion of the fieldwork team and such notice shall specify the reasons for same. Thereupon, the Church Authority shall respond in detail to the notice. Each party shall use its best endeavours to resolve any differences of opinion which shall arise and, in the event that resolution is not arrived at, the parties will attempt to resolve the dispute by recourse to the services of a mediator agreed between them or nominated for the purpose at the request of any of them without prejudice to the NBSCCCI's entitlement to terminate the review. In the event that resolution has not been arrived at following mediation, either party shall be at liberty to terminate forthwith the review.

**Step 9.**

On arrival, the fieldwork team should be supplied with a single case file index that lists all the cases that have been created within the diocese. These may be divided into two groups. The first group will contain all allegations that relate to living alleged or known perpetrators. The second will contain any that are deceased.

**Step 10.**

Depending on the volume involved a decision should be made as to whether all or a random sample of the "deceased group" should be reviewed. Care should be taken to include all prominent cases in the sample.

**Step 11.**

Each case file will be reviewed by each fieldworker independently in the first instance. They will create a written summary with chronological information of the case. In certain cases a second reader may be required, this will be discussed and agreed between the fieldworkers.

**Step 12.**

Following the reading of the case and the creation of a summary, the fieldworkers will analyse and assess the actions taken in the case. They will assess compliance with agreed

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Church policy that was extant at that time. They will also indicate whether any current risk exists in respect of the information contained within the file and advise the church Authority of necessary safeguarding action to reduce the risk.

**Step 13.**

When all the case files have been read, the fieldwork team will then examine and review any procedures or protocols that exist within the diocese to confirm that they are in compliance with the *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance* document issued by the NBSCCCI in February of 2009.

**Step 14.**

To complete the review, the fieldwork team will then seek to speak to those directly involved in the safeguarding structure in the diocese. This should include the Advisory Panel, a sample of parish safeguarding representatives, the designated person, the safeguarding committee, victim support and advisors and the Bishop/Provincial. The purpose of these interviews is to form a view of the competence and effectiveness of the safeguarding structure that exists within the Church Authority.

**Step 15.**

The fieldwork team will also seek to speak to representatives of the key statutory agencies to provide them with an opportunity to express their views on the quality of the working relationships that exist between them and the Church Authority.

**Step 16.**

A verbal feedback session on initial key findings will be given to the Church Authority.

**Step 17.**

Upon completion of the field work, the team may request to take materials – other than casework records to review off-site; this alongside all materials gathered by the reviewers, including written notes on cases and meetings, will be analysed and will form the basis of the draft assessment review report.

**Step 18.**

The draft will be forwarded to the Church Authority for factual accuracy checking.

**Step 19.**

Alongside all other reports under review, the report will be presented in draft to the Reference Group for their critique and comment. If further work is required at the direction of the Reference group the CEO will ensure this work is completed and advise the Church Authority accordingly.

**Step 20.**

The report will be legally proofed by NBSCCCI lawyer.

**Step 21.**

The report will be forwarded to the NBSCCCI for approval

**Step 22**

A final draft report will then be submitted to the Church Authority. The expectation would be that the report will be published by the Church Authority at an agreed time in the future.

**Step 23.**

All case material written, including summaries, as part of the review, which are for the reviewers use only, will be stored on a secure server.

**Guide for Reviewers**

In terms of small (female religious orders) reference should be made to the following:

1. Has the Order provided alternative care to children in an orphanage, industrial school or children's residential home, but no longer is engaged in running such services;
2. Has the order provided education to children, in both or either boarding schools and day schools, but no longer does so ;
3. Has the order provided medical and/or nursing services to children, but no longer does so;
4. Has the order provided any other services to children, in community services centres, youth clubs etc., and no longer does so;
5. Does the order currently provide any sort of service to children and families that brings them into regular contact with children;
6. Has the order never provided any service to children (e.g. contemplative orders).

In relation to category 1 above;

1. The reviewers will establish whether any service they provided is included in the list of children's residential services produced by the Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB);
2. If this is the case, reference should be made to this.
3. If complaints have been referred to the Redress Board or Ryan Commission, this review cannot access these records and that will be stated in the report.
4. If the order has received complaints which have not been processed through Redress or Ryan these cases will be thoroughly examined as detailed above.

**Review of Policy and Procedures**

1. It is recognised that not all Orders will have any ministry with children and therefore their policies and procedures should reflect the work that they do with children.
2. If the Order only works through other organisations, example in Diocesan work or in schools, they are required to follow the policies of those organisations.
3. If there are gaps in the policy document an assessment should be made as to whether the ministry engaged in requires full compliance with all criteria attached to the seven standards
4. Where it is clear that the criteria do not apply a reference should be made at the beginning of the review report that the Order's ministry is not directly with children and therefore adherence to particular criteria do not apply.
5. If the Order is a contemplative Order, there is no expectation that they will have detailed policies and procedures, but reference should be made to their ministry and that they have no contact with children.
6. In all cases, contact will be made with the civil authorities to identify if they have any child safeguarding concerns in relation to the order.