



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

**Review of Safeguarding Practice**

**in the**

**The Vincentian Congregation**

**undertaken by**

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

**Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI)**

**This review was undertaken at the invitation of Fr. Eamon Devlin,  
Provincial**

**Date: May 2014**

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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 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 purpose of the review 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 Church authority is to be reviewed through an examination of case records and through interviews with key personnel involved both within and external to a diocese or other authority.

This report contains the findings of the *Review of Safeguarding Practice within the Congregation of the Mission* - hereinafter referred to as the Vincentian Congregation - undertaken by the NBSCCCI in line with the request made to it by the Sponsoring Bodies. It is based upon the case material made available to the NBSCCCI by the provincial, along with interviews with selected key personnel who contribute to safeguarding within the congregation. The NBSCCCI believes that all relevant documentation for these cases was passed to the reviewers, and the provincial has confirmed this.

The findings of the review have been shared with a reference group before being submitted to Vincentian provincial, along with any recommendations arising from the findings.

## **Introduction**

The Congregation of the Mission, or the Vincentians as they are commonly known can trace their origins in Ireland back to 1638, when a small group of Irish men fled to France to escape the persecution of Catholics and joined Vincent de Paul, then a priest who was ministering to the poor there. Later, in 1646 a small group returned to Ireland to help establish a religious community in Limerick, but they were quickly forced to return to France for fear of their lives due to Cromwell's siege of Limerick in 1649.

When Catholic Emancipation was achieved in 1829, a group of four young men studying together at Maynooth came together “...to form an institute which would combine the advantages of community life to preach missions to the Irish Faithful and educate them in their faith”<sup>1</sup>

Under the patronage of St. Vincent de Paul a community and day school for boys was opened at Ushers Quay, Dublin. The group of priests were asked to become chaplains at the Mendicity Institute at Ushers Island, which predated the Workhouses and later the group moved quarters to the North Circular Road, Phibsboro.

Towards the mid 1830s the opportunity arose, with the assistance from the then Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, to purchase the grounds of Castleknock College, formerly a protestant boarding school. The purchase enabled the Vincentian Community to set about establishing a junior seminary for the Dublin diocese. Thus commenced the Vincentians' long, and distinguished association, with the running of second level schools, including St. Vincent's College, Castleknock, St. Paul's College, Sybil Hill, and St. Patrick's College, Armagh. Their involvement in education also included the running of third level colleges, St. Patrick's College of Education, Drumcondra and All Hallows College, Dublin, the latter which was originally established as a training college for Irish Priests for foreign missions.

In recent years the Vincentians have ceased their active engagement in the day to day running of the schools, and now provide the chaplaincy service at St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, St. Vincent's College, Castleknock, and St. Paul's College, Raheny.

As is common with many smaller religious Congregations, the Vincentian congregation in Ireland is experiencing a decline in numbers in recent years. There are approximately 50 confreres now, compared to about 120 in 1979. Roughly 15 members in Ireland are in active ministry. The average age of the community is 73 years, with just 5 men in or around the age of fifty years. There is one man studying to enter the Vincentians. Worldwide, there are approximately 3,000 Vincentians with the main areas of growth being experienced in Eastern Europe and in the Far East.

The headquarters of the Vincentians is based in Rome, while Ireland and Britain are combined as one province with the leadership based in Sybil Hill, Dublin. The number of Vincentians in Great Britain is small and the Congregation is involved in the running of

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<sup>1</sup> Website of the Vincentian Community <http://www.vincentians.ie>

two parishes there. The province is administered by the Provincial Council which meets on a monthly basis.

The Vincentians were subject to an HSE audit at the beginning of this year and provided the HSE with statistical information. The audit methodology adopted by the HSE does not involve the examination of case management files. At the time of writing that audit remains unpublished.

Because of their age profile and declining numbers, the Vincentians have had to gradually withdraw from their active roles in education. The Congregation administers two parishes, St. Peter's in Phibsboro, Dublin 7 and St. Vincent's in Sunday's Well, Cork. St. Peter's Youth Group is based in Phibsboro and operates in the parish under the auspices of the Catholic Youth Council, which provides the leaders and volunteers with training.

The Vincentians continue to provide chaplaincy services to several religious sisters' Congregations, and they are also involved in the provision of chaplaincy services to the African community in Dublin. Their role has historically seen them minister to other priests, as well as providing supply priests to parishes when possible. The congregation also provides spiritual direction, spiritual formation of seminarians, hospital chaplaincies and the Vincentian Parish Mission Team.

The Vincentians in Ireland are also involved in a variety of collaborative projects with other religious organisations, including the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Ireland, although informed by Vincentian spirituality, is a separate organisational entity.

There are currently two Irish Vincentians involved in mission work in China and in Kenya. In Ethiopia they maintain strong links with a school for the deaf which they helped to establish.

The Vincentians have been involved in the creation of, and continue to have an interest in the Vincentian Lay Missionary group (VLM). This group has projects mainly in Ethiopia where students from Irish Vincentian schools have been assisted to experience missionary life for short periods of time. The work of the VLM includes support to the school for the deaf and to people with Hansen's Disease (leprosy).

The Vincentians in Ireland are accommodated in six community houses in Dublin, Cork and Belfast. The vast majority of men are retired and of advanced years. The leadership team based in Dublin is led by Provincial Fr. Eamon Devlin who is in post since 2012. Prior to that, he was a curate in St. Peter's Phibsboro and he has a background in education.

The Provincial Leadership Team has largely absorbed the Safeguarding Committee role and safeguarding issues are discussed on a monthly basis at the Provincial Council meetings. The provincial acts as Chairperson of the Safeguarding Committee, and as Co-ordinator of Safeguarding. He is assisted by the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) who is in post since 2007. The DLP is a Vincentian priest, as are the Priest Advisor and the Victim

Support person. There is a separate DLP for the English Region. The provincial and his safeguarding team state that they are motivated by the challenge to create and maintain an awareness of child safeguarding issues amongst their confreres and to create an environment wherein safeguarding is an instinctive and acculturated response. The Vincentians view their response to the complainant /victim as a priority and they endeavour to respond in a compassionate, meaningful and pastoral way to complainants.

The reviewers would like to acknowledge the warm and courteous welcome extended to them by the Vincentian Community at Sybil Hill during the course of this review.

## **STANDARDS**

This section provides the findings of the review. The template employed to present the findings are the seven standards, set down and described in the Church's *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland*. This guidance was launched in February 2009 and was endorsed and adopted by all the Church authorities that minister on the island of Ireland, including the Vincentian Congregation.

The seven standards are:

**Standard 1:** A written policy on keeping children safe

**Standard 2:** Procedures – how to respond to allegations and suspicions in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

**Standard 3:** Preventing harm to children:

- recruitment and vetting
- running safe activities for children
- codes of behaviour

**Standard 4:** Training and education

**Standard 5:** Communicating the Church's safeguarding message:

- to children
- to parents and adults
- to other organisations

**Standard 6:** Access to advice and support

**Standard 7:** Implementing and monitoring the standards

Each standard contains a list of criteria, which are indicators that help decide whether this Standard has been met. The criteria give details of the steps that a Church organisation - diocese or religious congregation - needs to take to meet the standard and ways of providing evidence that the standard has been met.

## **Standard 1**

### **A written policy on keeping children safe**

*Each child should be cherished and affirmed as a gift from God with an inherent right to dignity of life and bodily integrity, which shall be respected, nurtured and protected by all.*

Compliance with Standard 1 is only fully achieved when a religious Congregation meets the requirements of all nine criteria against which the standard is measured.

### **Criteria**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Met fully or Met partially or Not met</b>
1.1	The Church organisation has a child protection policy that is written in a clear and easily understandable way.	Met fully
1.2	The policy is approved and signed by the relevant leadership body of the Church organisation (e.g. the Bishop of the diocese or provincial of a religious congregation).	Met fully
1.3	The policy states that all Church personnel are required to comply with it.	Met fully
1.4	The policy is reviewed at regular intervals no more than three years apart and is adapted whenever there are significant changes in the organisation or legislation.	Met fully
1.5	The policy addresses child protection in the different aspects of Church work e.g. within a church building, community work, pilgrimages, trips and holidays.	Met fully
1.6	The policy states how those individuals who pose a risk to children are managed.	Met partially
1.7	The policy clearly describes the Church's understanding and definitions of abuse.	Met fully
1.8	The policy states that all current child protection concerns must be fully reported to the civil authorities without delay.	Met fully
1.9	The policy should be created at diocese or congregational level. If a separate policy document at parish or other level is necessary this should be consistent with the diocesan or congregational policy and approved by the relevant diocesan or congregational authority before distribution.	Met fully

The Vincentian Congregation first published their policy and procedures document in relation to the safeguarding of children in 2006 under the leadership of a previous provincial. That document was closely based on the *Our Children, Our Church*, Child Protection Policies and Procedures for the Catholic Church in Ireland, which was published in 2005. As the Irish Province of the Vincentian Congregation encompasses Britain, the

policy document had also to consider and embrace the requirements of the British child protection system.

The current Vincentian child protection and procedures document, *Keeping Children Safe*, was produced in February 2013 by the Vincentian Leadership Team, the Provincial Council. As mentioned previously, the Provincial Council also undertakes the role of Safeguarding Committee and has considered the topic of safeguarding to be a high priority agenda item for council meetings over the years. The reviewers have evidenced this from the minutes of Provincial Council meetings over the last 10 years.

The policy and procedures document is to be reviewed in February 2016. It states that the procedures and guidelines for Child Protection of the Irish Province of the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians) are applicable to both the Irish and English parts of the Province. They are closely based on -

- *The Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland* publication of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI).
- *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Ireland 2011, and
- *The Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults* publication for the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

In its introduction the policy states that

*Each of us as Vincentians and staff/volunteers working with us has a part to play to ensure the highest standards of child safeguarding. Therefore all involved in ministry to children will be made aware of the policy of the Vincentians and required to engage fully in implementing the procedures and guidelines of the policy.*<sup>2</sup>

All Vincentians are required to sign a pro-forma statement that they have received and will comply with the Vincentian's *Keeping Children Safe* policy document.

The Vincentian policy document is a comprehensive and well put together 47-page document, which includes relevant resource material that is displayed in a clear and readable format. All criteria under this standard (bar 1.6) are deemed to be fully met. The reviewers are of the view that there is insufficient reference in the procedures to how those who pose a risk to children are managed and that therefore Criterion 1.6 is met partially. In discussion with the Leadership Team, the reviewers understand and accept that the guidance provided by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) in this respect is fully adopted and adhered to by the Vincentians, and that risk management plans are in place for those men who have been or are currently out of ministry. It would be appropriate however to state this in the next version of their

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<sup>2</sup> *Keeping Children Safe* - The Vincentians' Child Protection Policy and Procedures. Pg.2

document for the sake of transparency and clarity and therefore the following recommendation is made:

**Recommendation 1**

**That the Provincial Leadership Team should ensure that a statement about how men who pose a risk to children are managed within the Vincentian Community is included in the next version of the Vincentian child safeguarding policy and procedures document.**

**Standard 2**

**Management of allegations**

*Children have a right to be listened to and heard: Church organisations must respond effectively and ensure any allegations and suspicions of abuse are reported both within the Church and to civil authorities.*

Compliance with Standard 2 is only fully achieved when a religious Congregation meets the requirements of all seven criteria against which the standard is measured.

**Criteria**

Number	Criterion	Met fully or Met partially or Not met
2.1	There are clear child protection procedures in all Church organisations that provide step-by-step guidance on what action to take if there are allegations or suspicions of abuse of a child (historic or current).	Met fully
2.2	The child protection procedures are consistent with legislation on child welfare civil guidance for child protection and written in a clear, easily understandable way.	Met fully
2.3	There is a designated officer or officer(s) with a clearly defined role and responsibilities for safeguarding children at diocesan or congregational level.	Met fully
2.4	There is a process for recording incidents, allegations and suspicions and referrals. These will be stored securely, so that confidential information is protected and complies with relevant legislation.	Met fully
2.5	There is a process for dealing with complaints made by adults and children about unacceptable behaviour towards children, with clear timescales for resolving the complaint.	Met partially
2.6	There is guidance on confidentiality and information-sharing which makes clear that the protection of the child is the most important consideration. The Seal of Confession is absolute.	Met fully
2.7	The procedures include contact details for local child protection services e.g. (Republic of Ireland) the local Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána; (Northern Ireland) the local health and social services trust and the PSNI.	Met fully

The Vincentian policy document meets six of the above seven criteria fully and this is commendable. In the case of Criterion 2.5, the reviewers draw attention to the absence of a specific written process followed by the Vincentian congregation in dealing with complaints made by adults and children in relation to unacceptable behaviour towards children and the timescales to be followed in resolving the complaint.

The policy and procedures document does include a Child Protection Recording Form which can be used by anyone wishing to record a disclosure or concern and it details the necessary information to be noted. However, the document falls short in detailing the process of dealing with complaints which are not necessarily of a child protection nature. This shortcoming is acknowledged by the Leadership Team which has indicated that this is an area which requires their attention.

**Recommendation 2**

**That the Provincial Leadership Team formulate a complaints process in which complaints made by adults and children about unacceptable behaviour towards children are resolved within clearly specified timescales.**

**Table 1**

**Incidence of safeguarding allegations received within the Vincentian Congregation against priests, from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1975 up to May 2014 s**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>1.</b>	Number of priests against whom allegations have been made since the 1 <sup>st</sup> January 1975 up to the date of the review.	<b>13*</b>
<b>2.</b>	Total number of allegations received by the Vincentian congregation since 1 <sup>st</sup> January, 1975.	<b>42</b>
<b>3.</b>	Number of allegations reported to An Garda Síochána/PSNI involving Vincentian priests since 1 <sup>st</sup> January 1975.	<b>42</b>
<b>4.</b>	Number of allegations reported to the TUSLA/HSE/HSC (or the Health Boards which preceded the setting up of the HSE,) involving priests of the Congregation since 1 <sup>st</sup> January 1975.	<b>40**</b>
<b>5.</b>	Number of priests (still members of the Congregation) against whom an allegation was made and who were living at the date of the review.	<b>2</b>
<b>6.</b>	Number of priests against whom an allegation was made and who are deceased.	<b>11</b>
<b>7.</b>	Number of priests against whom an allegation has been made and who are in ministry.	<b>1</b>
<b>8.</b>	Number of priests against whom an allegation was made and who are out of ministry, but are still members of the Congregation.	<b>1</b>
<b>9.</b>	Number of priests against whom an allegation was made and who are retired.	<b>0</b>
<b>10.</b>	Number of priests against whom an allegation was made and who have left the Congregation/priesthood.	<b>0</b>
<b>11.</b>	Number of priests of the Congregation who have been convicted of having committed an offence or offences against a child or young person since the 1 <sup>st</sup> January 1975.	<b>0</b>

*Footnote:* The term allegation in this table includes complaints and expressions of concern. The figures include allegations of sexual abuse, physical abuse and boundary violations.

\*Not included in the above table is one allegation made against a student seminarian who left the Vincentian Congregation in the 1970s; his current whereabouts is unknown.

\*\* Advice was sought regarding two concerns where the advice was that these did not reach the threshold for notification to HSE.

In total, 42 allegations have been made against 13 priests since 1975. A total of 25 allegations are related to one priest Fr. 'A', who was named in the July 2009 Commission of Investigation Report into the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin (Murphy Commission) and who was dealt with in a chapter of that report. The Commission's Report concerned itself with 16 allegations relating to Fr. 'A' known at the time of that report and this NBSCCCI review does not revisit those allegations. The Commission's Report was very critical of the Vincentian Congregation and their handling of allegations of child safeguarding concerns. It noted that:

*Fr. A's victims were sadly failed by the Vincentians. Despite the fact that there were suspicions about his behaviour as far back as 1974 he continued abusing children over the next 20 years and, apart from the period he spent in Stroud, no real efforts were made to curb his behaviour. It appears that his alcoholism was presented as an excuse and accepted.*<sup>3</sup>

and it continues:

*The commission is astounded that these problems were not brought to the Archdiocese's attention by the Vincentians.*<sup>4</sup>

The current provincial spoke about the continuing anguish felt by the Vincentian Congregation as a result of the legacy of Fr. 'A's actions; Fr. 'A' died suddenly in 1994 while he was receiving medical treatment abroad. A further 9 allegations against Fr. 'A' have been received by the congregation since 2004, which was the cut off for cases dealt with by the Commission. The reviewers have examined the files on these later reports. A central feature of these files is the way in which the congregation made prompt notifications to the civil authorities upon receipt of the allegations, in contrast to how it had dealt with the earlier allegations. Some of these allegations came to the Congregation through correspondence from solicitors acting on behalf of complainants who were seeking some financial recompense for the abuse alleged. Offers of counselling and pastoral support are made to complainants via their solicitors, but experience suggests that it is less likely for them to respond positively to such an offer made through an intermediary. In 5 of these cases the reviewers noted that a clear, prompt and effective supportive response to the complainant was proffered by the congregation.

There is clear evidence from many of the files examined by the reviewers that in the period following publication of the Murphy Commission Report, i.e. post November 2009, much greater effort was made by the Vincentian safeguarding team to put proper procedures in place and in particular to ensure that full and prompt notification of allegations to the civil authorities took place. This is not only true of the allegations in relation to the priest Fr. 'A', but it is the case in relation to all abuse allegations.

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<sup>3</sup> *Commission of Investigation – Report into the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin July 2009. Pg.359 s.22.27*

<sup>4</sup> *Commission of Investigation – Report into the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin July 2009 Pg. 359 s. 22.29*

In the vast majority of cases concerning allegations relating to other priests, these became known to the congregation after the priests' deaths and in some cases, a great many years following a particular priest dying. So the question of managing real and current risk to children has seldom arisen for the Vincentians. However, the reviewers noted two current situations in which the Leadership Team was required to take positive and definite action to manage such risk.

In the first case the situation was extremely well managed by the Vincentians and this involved a high level of interagency communication and cooperation, whilst also including the priest at the centre of the complaint in discussions and decisions. Good and appropriate assessments were procured by the provincial for the priest, which assisted and supported him to make the changes that were required of him as part of a supervised behavioural contract. The matter was also referred to the National Case Management Reference Group (NCMRG) of the NBSCCCI, of which the Vincentian Congregation is a member, for advice and guidance.

In the second case the allegation received in 2013 refers to alleged historical sexual assault. Once the complaint was received there was immediate notification to the civil authorities. There was an appropriate safety plan established to manage any risk posed by the respondent priest while a canonical investigation is completed. The provincial is aware that this case needs to be referred to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) and he will be requesting assistance and advice from the NBSCCCI on the proper protocols to follow.

The reviewers are confident that policy and procedures are now being properly adhered to in a timely fashion in the management of allegations by the Vincentian Leadership Team. The Vincentian Congregation does not have its own Advisory Panel but it uses the expertise of the NBSCCCI's National Case Management Reference Group, of which it is a member.

Priests who visit Vincentian communities are required to provide an in-date *celebret* issued by their Ordinary to show that they are in good standing. This is an important safeguard, even if the number of such visiting priests is small, as is the case with the Irish Vincentians.

The case files examined by the reviewers indicate that good narrative records have been kept by the Vincentian Congregation, particularly in the period post the Murphy Commission Report. Prior to that report there were gaps in the narrative contained in some case files, which do not allow the reader to gain an easy and full understanding of the progress of those cases. The more recent files, from 2010 especially, contain all relevant information, are transparent and document clearly the actions taken. In particular pastoral outreach to and support of complainants is well documented, which was not always clear in earlier files.

The reviewers consider that the case files would benefit from more structure and from improved organisation and suggest that the DLP and Provincial Leader adapt the Recording Guidance and Case File Template recommended by the NBSCCCI<sup>5</sup>.

**Recommendation 3**

**That the Provincial Leader and Designated Person introduce the case file template and case recording methods that are recommended by the NBSCCCI in all future cases of concerns of abuse by Vincentian priests.**

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<sup>5</sup> Recording Guidance and Case File Template (version 5) - <http://www.safeguarding.ie/resources>

**Standard 3**

**Preventing Harm to Children**

*This standard requires that all procedures and practices relating to creating a safe environment for children be in place and effectively implemented. These include having safe recruitment and vetting practices in place, having clear codes of behaviour for adults who work with children and by operating safe activities for children.*

Compliance with Standard 3 is only fully achieved when a religious congregation meets the requirements of all twelve criteria against which the standard is measured. These criteria are grouped into three areas, safe recruitment and vetting, codes of behaviour and operating safe activities for children.

**Criteria – safe recruitment and vetting**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Met fully or Met partially or Not met</b>
3.1	There are policies and procedures for recruiting Church personnel and assessing their suitability to work with children.	Met fully
3.2	The safe recruitment and vetting policy is in line with best practice guidance.	Met fully
3.3	All those who have the opportunity for regular contact with children, or who are in positions of trust, complete a form declaring any previous court convictions and undergo other checks as required by legislation and guidance and this information is then properly assessed and recorded.	Met fully

**Criteria – Codes of behaviour**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Met fully or Met partially or Not met</b>
3.4	The Church organisation provides guidance on appropriate/ expected standards of behaviour of, adults towards children.	Met fully
3.5	There is guidance on expected and acceptable behaviour of children towards other children (anti-bullying policy).	Met fully
3.6	There are clear ways in which Church personnel can raise allegations and suspicions about unacceptable behaviour towards children by other Church personnel or volunteers ('whistle-blowing'), confidentially if necessary.	Met fully

3.7	There are processes for dealing with children’s unacceptable behaviour that do not involve physical punishment or any other form of degrading or humiliating treatment.	Met fully
3.8	Guidance to staff and children makes it clear that discriminatory behaviour or language in relation to any of the following is not acceptable: race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality or political views.	Met fully
3.9	Policies include guidelines on the personal/ intimate care of children with disabilities, including appropriate and inappropriate touch.	Met fully

**Criteria – Operating safe activities for children**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Met fully or Met partially or Not met</b>
3.10	There is guidance on assessing all possible risks when working with children – especially in activities that involve time spent away from home.	Met fully
3.11	When operating projects/ activities children are adequately supervised and protected at all times.	Met fully
3.12	Guidelines exist for appropriate use of information technology (such as mobile phones, email, digital cameras, websites, the Internet) to make sure that children are not put in danger and exposed to abuse and exploitation.	Met fully

Criteria 3.1 – 3.3 are deemed to be fully met. The Vincentian Congregation uses the vetting services of the Dublin Diocesan Child Safeguarding and Protection Service in relation to all new recruits, paid staff and volunteers. Resource 3(i) of the Vincentian policy document sets out clearly the procedures followed in recruiting personnel.

The Vincentian policy and procedures document has excellent sections on anti-bullying in Resource 3(vi), and also provides whistle blowing guidance in Appendix 2. Appendix 3 addresses the appropriate use of technology and guidance on assessing all possible risks when working with children on trips spent away from home is covered in Resource 3(vii). Guidance is also provided in the document in Resource 3(iv) in relation to the care and safety of children and young people with disabilities.

Appendix 4 of the policy and procedures document has extensive guidelines for CCTV and broadcasting on the internet, as the generation and storage of images of children is now a matter that has to be considered by Church authorities. The Vincentian guidance in this regard is excellent and is commended.

Reference is made in the 2013 Vincentian *Keeping Children Safe* policy and procedures in the section on *Training and Education* to the provision of training programmes in relation to dealing with unacceptable behaviour of children. There is a small bit of confusion in the document on page 13 where it states that:

*Children themselves should participate in drawing up an anti-bullying policy (for suggestions see Resource 3(vi) and this should never include physical punishment or any that is humiliating.*

Two related but separate matters are run together in this sentence; there is an anti-bullying policy at Resource 3(vi), but the very comprehensive *Sample Code of Positive Behaviour* is Resource 3(iii). When reviewing and revising their child safeguarding policy and procedures, the Vincentians will need to clarify this. This is however a small matter of phrasing and does not detract from the code being very extensive and clearly written. It includes the cautions that employees, volunteers and others must never *hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children*, and must never *act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle, or degrade*. Criterion 3.7 is therefore met fully.

**Standard 4**

**Training and Education**

*All Church personnel should be offered training in child protection to maintain high standards and good practice.*

**Criteria**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Met fully or Met partially or Not met</b>
4.1	All Church personnel who work with children are inducted into the Church's policy and procedures on child protection when they begin working within Church organisations.	Met fully
4.2	Identified Church personnel are provided with appropriate training for keeping children safe with regular opportunities to update their skills and knowledge.	Met fully
4.3	Training is provided to those with additional responsibilities such as recruiting and selecting staff, dealing with complaints, disciplinary processes, managing risk, acting as designated person.	Met fully
4.4	Training programmes are approved by National Board for Safeguarding Children and updated in line with current legislation, guidance and best practice.	Met fully

The Vincentian Congregation is a small congregation in terms of numbers. This has not led to any deficit in the commitment to safeguarding training and education however. They have accessed the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church of Ireland (NBSCCCI) for a lot of their training needs. They have also on many occasions provided additional training by commissioning appropriate professional practitioners and agencies to come in and provide tailored training to their members, staff and volunteers.

The reviewers have examined attendance sheets recording levels of participation at various courses and they are satisfied that safeguarding training is given a high priority by the Provincial Leadership Team. A small number of members of the congregation still need to have updated training. The Provincial Leadership Team however holds the conviction that where practicable and possible training should be attended by all members of the congregation and this is actively encouraged.

**Standard 5**

**Communicating the Church’s Safeguarding Message**

*This standard requires that the Church’s safeguarding policies and procedures be successfully communicated to Church personnel and parishioners (including children). This can be achieved through the prominent display of the Church policy, making children aware of their right to speak out and knowing who to speak to, having the Designated Person’s contact details clearly visible, ensuring Church personnel have access to contact details for child protection services, having good working relationships with statutory child protection agencies and developing a communication plan which reflects the Church’s commitment to transparency.*

**Criteria**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Met fully or Met partially or Not met</b>
5.1	The child protection policy is openly displayed and available to everyone.	Met fully
5.2	Children are made aware of their right to be safe from abuse and who to speak to if they have concerns.	Met fully
5.3	Everyone in Church organisations knows who the designated person is and how to contact them.	Met fully
5.4	Church personnel are provided with contact details of local child protection services, such as Health and Social Care Trusts / Health Service Executive, PSNI, An Garda Síochána, telephone helplines and the designated person.	Met fully
5.5	Church organisations establish links with statutory child protection agencies to develop good working relationships in order to keep children safe.	Met fully
5.6	Church organisations at diocesan and religious congregation level have an established communications policy which reflects a commitment to transparency and openness.	Met fully

Because of the relatively small number of Vincentians in full active ministry, the opportunities to come into contact with young children are limited, and the congregation does not have any specific work with children and young people. However, the Vincentians have two parishes in Ireland, one within the Archdiocese of Dublin, St. Peter’s in Phibsborough, and a second within the Diocese of Cork and Ross, in Sunday’s Well, and parish liturgies and pastoral work bring children and young people into contact with members of the Vincentian Congregation. Both parishes have also produced their own child safeguarding guidelines adapted from the Vincentian *Keeping Children Safe* policy document. One Vincentian priest is school chaplain to St. Vincent’s, Castleknock and St.

Paul's, Raheny and his ministry is influenced by the child safeguarding guidance within each school.

The reviewers note that the parish statistics for St. Peter's indicate that 39 per cent of its parishioners were born outside of Ireland and come from a wide range of countries. In order to reach as many of its parishioners as possible, the Vincentians should consider translating their safeguarding policy information into a number of the main languages spoken to help provide for as much inclusiveness as possible.

**Recommendation 5**

**That the provincial should arrange for the translation of Vincentian child safeguarding literature into different languages to include as many non-national parishioners as possible in its safeguarding project. This is an initiative that might be strengthened through cooperation with the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service of the Archdiocese of Dublin.**

The reviewers had the opportunity to interview two parish safeguarding representatives from the two parishes run by the Vincentians and they were impressed by their level of insight, knowledge and commitment to their parishes. Being diocesan parishes, lay personnel involved in safeguarding are provided with training by the relevant diocese. The reviewers noted that there was some discrepancy between the levels of training completed by each parish safeguarding representative, but this can be rectified with planning.

In each of the two Vincentian parishes, there is one safeguarding representative in place and both spoke of the need to have two people in the role as parish representative. In the Dublin parish, two new parish representatives are currently being recruited to take over from the current representative, who is leaving after serving for a three-year period. In the Cork parish training is required for a second person.

Both parish safeguarding representatives described well their role and responsibilities and they were very aware of what is required of them. The population age profile in the Cork parish is older than in the Dublin parish and there are no organised children's activities within the Sunday's Well parish. Recently however some children have joined what had been the adult choir and the necessary safeguarding vetting and awareness-raising has been carried out to accommodate this change.

The numbers of children in both parishes is low. St. Peter's in Dublin has a children's choir, children's liturgy and altar servers. There is a 'sign in sign out book' in the sacristy as there is in the Cork Parish and the altar servers are supervised by parents in the vesting area before Mass. The children's liturgy group is supervised by at least two parents. St. Peter's also has its own youth group run under the auspices of Catholic Youth Care (CYC) and good safeguarding practices are followed within this service. The young people who use the service have been involved in adopting the code of behaviour and youth contract developed by CYC.

The reviewers had an opportunity to speak with the various key members of the relevant civil authorities and statutory agencies in both jurisdictions of Ireland and invited them to comment on the quality of their working relationship with the Vincentian Congregation. In the experience of all four statutory agencies, the PSNI and An Garda Siochana, Tusla and the HSCT (Northern Ireland),-the comments were favourable and positive. The Vincentian Congregation is making prompt notification of allegations and it is experienced as being approachable, co- operative, willing to engage in information sharing and transparent.

The reviewers consider that the Vincentian Congregation meets all criteria under this standard.

**Standard 6**

**Access to Advice and Support**

*Those who have suffered child abuse should receive a compassionate and just response and should be offered appropriate pastoral care to rebuild their lives.*

*Those who have harmed others should be helped to face up to the reality of abuse, as well as being assisted in healing.*

**Criteria**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Met fully or Met partially or Not met</b>
6.1	Church personnel with special responsibilities for keeping children safe have access to specialist advice, support and information on child protection.	Met fully
6.2	Contacts are established at a national and/ or local level with the relevant child protection/ welfare agencies and helplines that can provide information, support and assistance to children and Church personnel.	Met fully
6.3	There is guidance on how to respond to and support a child who is suspected to have been abused whether that abuse is by someone within the Church or in the community, including family members or peers.	Met fully
6.4	Information is provided to those who have experienced abuse on how to seek support.	Met fully
6.5	Appropriate support is provided to those who have perpetrated abuse to help them to face up to the reality of abuse as well as to promote healing in a manner which does not compromise children's safety.	Met fully

It is noted that the Vincentian Leadership Team has strong contacts with the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) as well as the Dublin Diocesan Child Safeguarding and Protection Service (CSPS). The Provincial Leadership made many references to the expertise and advice received from both agencies. Correspondences on many case files evidence this also. The quality of relationship between the congregation and the various statutory bodies in the Republic and in Northern Ireland is very good.

The *Keeping Children Safe* policy document provides very good guidance in relation to how to respond to and support a child who is suspected to have been abused.

The Vincentian website has a link to its safeguarding policy<sup>6</sup> and in advance of this review a notice was posted to advise the public that the review was to take place and to explain its purpose. The notice stated that:

*The NBSCCCI is undertaking a routine safeguarding practice review of all dioceses and religious Congregations in Ireland. The Vincentian Community is currently being reviewed as part of this process. We invite anyone who has experienced abuse and has not yet come forward to do so either to the Designated Officer(s), the Gardaí, or the HSE.<sup>7</sup>*

Making relevant and easily understood safeguarding information is viewed by the Vincentians as an on going challenge. The congregation has produced safeguarding leaflets as well as the parishes' safeguarding policies adapted from the congregational policy document by the parish safeguarding teams in the two parishes. The reviewers are aware that the safeguarding representatives spoke at Masses at the last Dublin Archdiocesan *Safeguarding Day* to promote the message of safeguarding in their parishes. Parish newsletters are used on a regular basis to promote the message of safeguarding and the reviewers had the opportunity to examine examples of these.

The Vincentians have in place a priest advisor and victim support person. Both are members of the Vincentian Community and both have received training in various aspects of child safeguarding issues to enable them carry out their respective roles.

The reviewers interviewed both priests to get a sense of how they understand their roles and responsibilities, how they exercise these and what ideas they have for how further improvements could be made. In both cases the post holders reported that they have not yet been called upon to perform their respective roles. They independently expressed their belief that the provincial has innate compassion, a core charisma and a sense of justice that he has brought to bear in relating with and supporting many complainants/survivors and in some cases, their family members as well. This commitment to the welfare of others is a great exemplar to confreres in the congregation. In stating this, the reviewers also note the excellent safeguarding work and case management undertaken by others within the congregation in more recent times.

However, the challenge of managing safeguarding concerns should be shared by a team of people in clearly delineated roles in line with best practice. In order to both help in the delineation of respective roles and to protect himself from carrying too much of the overall safeguarding responsibility within the congregation, the provincial should ensure that all members of the safeguarding team are called upon to carry out their respective roles. One way to achieve this is for the main post holders to meet to work through a case together, looking at the different processes involved and the separate responsibilities of each team member in the management of a case.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://vincentians.ie> - Safeguarding Children, Policy and Procedures

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

In relation to the priest advisor role, it was mentioned by the holder of that post that more training specific to that role would be helpful. Ongoing training for people in all safeguarding roles would assist in ensuring that they are ready to play their part when called on, even if this happens rarely.

The reviewers note that all Vincentian safeguarding roles at provincial level are currently occupied by members of the congregation. The provincial has discussed with the reviewers his belief that more lay people should be involved in safeguarding roles and it would be both opportune and beneficial for the provincial to appoint at least one lay person to a safeguarding role within the Vincentian Community at provincial level.

**Recommendation 6**

**The Provincial Leadership Team should initiate a review of the various safeguarding roles within the Vincentians in order to clarify and delineate the separate and complementary responsibilities of each post holder.**

**Recommendation 7**

**The Provincial Leadership Team should conduct a review of the training needs of all Vincentian safeguarding personnel and ensure that they receive the requisite training identified. A specific training exercise to involve all safeguarding post holders together should be planned and provided.**

**Recommendation 8**

**The provincial should recruit and appoint at least one lay person to a safeguarding role within the Vincentian community at provincial level.**

**Standard 7**

**Implementing and Monitoring Standards**

*Standard 7 outlines the need to develop a plan of action, which monitors the effectiveness of the steps being taken to keep children safe. This is achieved through making a written plan, having the human and financial resources available, monitoring compliance and ensuring all allegations and suspicions are recorded and stored securely.*

**Criteria**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Met fully or Met partially or Not met</b>
7.1	There is a written plan showing what steps will be taken to keep children safe, who is responsible for implementing these measures and when these will be completed.	Met fully.
7.2	The human or financial resources necessary for implementing the plan are made available.	Met fully
7.3	Arrangements are in place to monitor compliance with child protection policies and procedures.	Met fully
7.4	Processes are in place to ask parishioners (children and parents/ carers) about their views on policies and practices for keeping children safe.	Met partially
7.5	All incidents, allegations/ suspicions of abuse are recorded and stored securely.	Met fully

The Provincial Leadership Team developed their planning document *Safeguarding Goals (2012-2013)* as a map for the promotion of necessary safeguarding initiatives. The document set out three overall goals and then breaks these down into specific steps to be taken by named individuals or groups. The three core goals to be achieved in the period were:

1. **To have a Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines that are clear, logical and accessible to:**
  - a. The membership of the Vincentian community.
  - b. To those who work with Vincentian community.
  - c. To the young people in the Vincentian ministries.
  - d. To those who may have been hurt so that they can approach the Vincentians.

- 2. To develop and deepen awareness of our Policy and Guidelines and to implement them in our works and places of ministry through;**
- a. Professional in-service training and training for leadership; and through publicising the policy and guidelines.
  - b. Safe recruitment and vetting practices are already being deployed by the congregation in this respect.  
[Since taking up role as Provincial Fr. Devlin has initiated the practice of requiring audit returns and since 2012 each community house, chaplaincy and ministry is required to return an annual audit. In 2013 the Provincial team has seen an improvement in the number of returns].
- 3. To respond to concerns and allegations, current or historical, so that both the accused and the accuser receive justice.**  
**In this regard the Provincial Leadership Team:**
- a. Commit to the reporting of allegations or concerns to both civil and church authorities.
  - b. Place an emphasis on the pastoral and professional care of survivors and the provision of practical assistance as an expression of sorrow.
  - c. address the pastoral care of those accused and to make efforts to progress canonical processes;
  - d. Aim to regularly seek the advice of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

In the opinion of the reviewers based on the evidence they have examined, these goals have been well achieved in the timeframe set. The existence of a planning process and written Safeguarding Plan meet the requirements of Criterion 7.1. The reviewers are satisfied that the Provincial Leadership Team has made available all the resources necessary to achieve the goals set out in the plan, and so Criterion 7.2 is fully met. The audit process that the provincial has put in place, the returns for which the reviewers examined, ensures that Criterion 7.3 is met in full.

The Provincial Leadership Team has now put in place a strategy document entitled *Safeguarding Goals (2014-2015)*. The goals set for 2014-2015 are:

- To organise training days in both regions of the province on aspects of safeguarding guidelines in Spring, 2014 – in particular re-engaging with young people in Vincentian ministries.
- To develop guidelines for safeguarding vulnerable adults, by autumn 2014
- To develop a strategy and process for implementing guidelines among people in Vincentian ministries, by end of 2014.
- To organise a way to allow Vincentian priests to express their personal responses to the reality of abuse, in early 2015.

In relation to the second goal above, the Vincentian Congregation has an ageing population of priest members, many of who now need supported living or full-time care arrangements.

These men have themselves become vulnerable adults to whom the congregation has a duty of care.

The fourth goal has been developed in recognition of the difficulty that priests have of coming to terms with the abusive behaviours of a minority of their confreres and in grappling with the real damage that abuse has caused to children. The congregation is committed to finding safe and supportive ways of assisting its members achieve a compassionate acceptance of the fact of historical clerical child sexual abuse.

The reviewers examined the written case records and the arrangements for their safe storage, and the Vincentians are fully compliant with Criterion 7.5.

In relation to Criterion 7.4, the consultative process is being planned for but has not yet been fully implemented and therefore the criterion is deemed to be partially met. One type of consultation that the provincial has piloted has been asking victims of sexual abuse to evaluate the Vincentian *Keeping Children Safe* policy and procedures document. Fr. Devlin has noted that those who have given feedback have not been overly impressed with the document, perceiving it to have little to say about their reality and being about making sure that the Vincentian Congregation is covered in relation to its legal responsibilities. This critique has motivated the provincial to find ways of making the words and actions of his congregation more responsive and relevant to the needs of complainants.

In conclusion, much effort has been expended by the Vincentian Provincial Leadership Team to ensure proper planning and compliance with safeguarding standards. The reviewers are of the view that the Vincentian Congregation is addressing its child safeguarding responsibilities in a comprehensive and thorough manner under the excellent leadership of the provincial, Fr. Eamon Devlin. It is clear that the Provincial Leadership Team has given priority to child safeguarding in the Vincentian Congregation and has brought an awareness of and sensitivity to the complex issues involved to his community of confreres and supporters. The way in which the team members have responded to those making allegations and to a number of their family members, is commendable for the compassion and understanding and strong pastoral sensibility shown.

## **Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1**

**That the Provincial Leadership Team should ensure that a statement about how men who pose a risk to children are managed within the Vincentian community is included in the next version of the Vincentian child safeguarding policy and procedures document.**

### **Recommendation 2**

**That the Provincial Leadership Team formulate a complaints process in which complaints made by adults and children about unacceptable behaviour towards children are resolved within clearly specified timescales.**

### **Recommendation 3**

**That the Provincial Leader and Designated Person introduce the case file template and case recording methods that are recommended by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland in all future cases of concerns of abuse by Vincentian priests.**

### **Recommendation 5**

**That the provincial should arrange for the translation of Vincentian child safeguarding literature into different languages to include as many non-national parishioners as possible in its safeguarding project. This is an initiative that might be strengthened through cooperation with the Child Safeguarding and Protection Service of the Archdiocese of Dublin.**

### **Recommendation 6**

**The Provincial Leadership Team should initiate a review of the various safeguarding roles within the Vincentians in order to clarify and delineate the separate and complementary responsibilities of each post holder.**

### **Recommendation 7**

**The Provincial Leadership Team should conduct a review of the training needs of all Vincentian safeguarding personnel and ensure that they receive the requisite training identified. A specific training exercise to involve all safeguarding post holders together should be planned and provided.**

### **Recommendation 8**

**The provincial should recruit and appoint at least one lay person to a safeguarding role within the Vincentian Community at provincial level.**

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

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

1. To ascertain the full extent of all complaints or allegations, knowledge, suspicions or concerns of child sexual abuse, made to the Church Authority (Diocese/religious congregation/missionary society) by individuals or by the Civil Authorities in the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 1975 up to the date of the review, against Catholic clergy and/or religious still living and who are ministering/or who once ministered under the aegis of the Church Authority, and examine/review and report on the nature of the response on the part of the Church Authority.
2. If deemed relevant, select a random sample of complaints or allegations, knowledge, suspicions or concerns of child sexual abuse, made to the Church Authority by individuals or by the Civil Authorities in the period 1st January 1975 to the date of the review, against Catholic clergy and/or religious now deceased and who ministered under the aegis of the Church Authority.
3. Examine/review and report on the nature of the response on the part of the Church Authority.
4. To ascertain all of the cases during the relevant period in which the Church Authority
  - knew of child sexual abuse involving Catholic clergy and/or religious still living and including those clergy and/or religious visiting, studying and/or retired;
  - had strong and clear suspicion of child sexual abuse; or
  - had reasonable concern;
  - and examine/review and report on the nature of the response on the part of the Church Authority.

As well as examine

- Communication by the Church Authority with the Civil Authorities;
- Current risks and their management.

5. To consider and report on the implementation of the 7 safeguarding standards set out in *Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland* (2009), including the following:
  - a) A review of the current child safeguarding policies and guidance materials in use by the Church Authority and an evaluation of their application;
  - b) How the Church Authority creates and maintains safe environments.
  - c) How victims are responded to by the Church Authority
  - d) What training is taking place within the Church Authority
  - e) How advice and support is accessed by the Church Authority in relation to victim support and assessment and management of accused respondents.
  - f) What systems are in place for monitoring practice and reporting back to the Church Authority.

**Accompanying Notes**

**Note 1: Definition of Child Sexual Abuse:**

The definition of child sexual abuse is in accordance with the definition adopted by the Ferns Report (and the Commission of Investigation Report into the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin). The following is the relevant extract from the Ferns Report:

*“While definitions of child sexual abuse vary according to context, probably the most useful definition and broadest for the purposes of this Report was that which was adopted by the Law Reform Commission in 1990<sup>8</sup> and later developed in Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Health and Children, 1999) which state that “child sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or that of others”. Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:*

- *exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child;*
- *intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;*
- *masturbation in the presence of the child or the involvement of the child in an act of masturbation;*
- *sexual intercourse with the child whether oral, vaginal or anal;*
- *sexual exploitation of a child which includes inciting, encouraging, propositioning, requiring or permitting a child to solicit for, or to engage in prostitution or other sexual acts. Sexual exploitation also occurs when a child is involved in exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, video tape, or other media) or the manipulation for those purposes of the image by computer or other means. It may also include showing sexually explicit material to children which is often a feature of the ‘grooming’ process by perpetrators of abuse.”*

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<sup>8</sup> This definition was originally proposed by the Western Australia Task Force on Child Sexual Abuse, 1987 and is adopted by the Law Reform Commission (1990) *Report on Child Sexual Abuse*, p. 8.

**Note 2: Definition of Allegation:**

The term allegation is defined as an accusation or complaint where there are reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, or is being sexually abused, or is at risk of sexual abuse, including retrospective disclosure by adults. It includes allegations that did not necessarily result in a criminal or canonical investigation, or a civil action, and allegations that are unsubstantiated but which are plausible. (NB: Erroneous information does not necessarily make an allegation implausible, for example, a priest arrived in a parish in the Diocese a year after the alleged abuse, but other information supplied appears credible and the alleged victim may have mistaken the date).

**Note 3: False Allegations:**

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland wishes to examine any cases of false allegation so as to review the management of the complaint by the Diocese/religious congregation/missionary society.

**Note 4: Random sample:**

The random sample (if applicable) must be taken from complaints or allegations, knowledge, suspicions or concerns of child sexual abuse made against all deceased Catholic clergy/religious covering the entire of the relevant period being 1<sup>st</sup> January 1975 to the date of the Review.

**Note 5: Civil Authorities:**

Civil Authorities are defined in the Republic of Ireland as the Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána and in Northern Ireland as the Health and Social Care Trust and the Police Service of Northern Ireland.