

WELCOME



Welcome to the first SBNI Interfaith Group newsletter. We hope over the coming academic year to produce these regularly to communicate the safeguarding work undertaken by the group. The newsletter will be disseminated, not only to SBNI members but, also externally by the membership of the group to their faith communities. This extended audience will ensure that the work of SBNI and the key safeguarding messages are widely disseminated.

In compiling the newsletter, group members were asked to provide some information about their history of safeguarding work and to highlight one topic which their church/faith sector is currently engaged in.

The interfaith group is conscious that, whilst it is in its infancy, as a member of SBNI, it must be committed to focusing its work in line with the 8 broad principles of SBNI and to integrate the work of other SBNI committees. One example of this was the development of the social media & E-communication leaflet for young youth leaders.

Outlined below are some of initiatives the sub group hope to undertake in the coming year.

MEMBER UPDATES NEWS & RESOURCES

Social Media & E-communication

guidance (copies available on the SBNI website)

In late 2016 the Interfaith Sub-Group produced a 'Guidance for faith based groups on the use of social media and other e- based communications'. It is aimed at youth workers and volunteers who engage with young people in a range of settings, where social media is used to share information. The Guidance seeks to provide simple, common sense advice about using social media, cameras, mobile phones and other various forms of communication technology in a safe and positive manner, protecting both young people and volunteers and employees who work with them. The guidance forms part of the wider work undertaken by SBNI on e-Safety.

Forthcoming initiatives by the sub group

1. A programme of lunchtime seminars starting with managing offenders returning to faith and worship.
2. Developing an information guide for all church personnel on managing allegations of abuse. This will form part of the wider work of SBNI policies and procedures committee.
3. Establishing a set of agreed safeguarding standards and indicators for faith-based communities to supplement existing best practice.



**The Methodist Church
In Ireland**
Methodist Church in Ireland

The Methodist Church in Ireland is committed to the wellbeing of the children and young people among them and to that end in 1995 put together the first Child Protection Policy called 'Keep Them Safe'. The other churches used this document as they sought to develop their policies. In 2004, in conjunction with the Presbyterian Board of Social Witness, an updated and expanded policy was put in place called, 'Taking Care'. This is the document on which our child protection policies are based.

Within the structures of the Methodist Church in Ireland, we have 8 separate districts, covering the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. As every children's or youth volunteer within the Methodist Church is required to attend our training every three years, we have committed to offering training at least twice per year per district, which means that we have on-going regular contact with large numbers of our volunteers on an annual basis.



The Association of Baptist Churches in
Ireland

The Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland was established in 1895. It is a partnership of 119 churches who have voluntarily agreed to work together. These churches have over 8,500 members and represent a Baptist community of over 20,000. It is a joy to have the opportunity to encourage, support and equip one another, not least in the extremely significant area of Safeguarding. As one of the Association departments, Baptist Youth takes the primary role of offering support to local churches in the area of Safeguarding. This is achieved through the provision of numerous services. In particular, the desire for ad hoc safeguarding training has risen greatly in the past number of years. This training is free and available to all volunteers within our Association churches. It has been a joy to see many churches utilise this initiative as the concern for the welfare of children and young people continues to increase.

Having recently joined the interfaith sub-group of SBNI, we greatly appreciate the opportunity to work together and enhance safeguarding across Northern Ireland. We have no doubt that this partnership will allow for improved policies, procedures, resources, and initiatives across the Baptist churches.



The Evangelical Alliance

The Evangelical Alliance was formed in 1846 and is the largest umbrella body representing the UK's two million evangelical Christians. From Skye to Southampton, from Coleraine to Cardiff, the Evangelical Alliance works across 81 denominations, 4,000 churches, 600 organisations and thousands of individual members. The Evangelical Alliance brings Christians together in unity and mission and helps them listen to, and be heard by, the government, media and society.

Estimates show that around two thirds of youth work in Northern Ireland is carried out by Churches or faith-based organisations. The Evangelical Alliance does not provide any safeguarding training or oversight itself however encourage our local members to look to their denominational leads and/or the SBNI for best practice. We endeavor to highlight good governance and policies which best protect children and vulnerable adults as well as volunteers and staff. We will also continue to advocate for the proper tension between freedom and responsibilities to safeguard the Church from undue administration and inappropriate state interference with theology. We believe the Church is good news for everyone in society and will continue to work with other denominations and find common ground with other faiths to protect the most vulnerable.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland agreed the "Taking Care of All" statement in 2016;

Christ calls us to love, care for and value everyone.

This gospel imperative of loving our neighbor as ourselves leads us to respect all as individuals, treating each with dignity and empowering them to reach their full potential.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland seeks to reflect Christ's compassion for everyone and to safeguard all those who come into contact with the mission and ministries of the Church, by preventing harm and protecting those at risk.

This statement will underpin everything the church does in the whole area of Safeguarding. The Safeguarding Programme of the Presbyterian Church is "Taking Care", a programme that is well established, building on the first child protection guidelines issued in 1995. Every congregation has a Designated Person, resulting in the links with Taking Care, remaining at a local level. An additional seven Accredited Trainers graduated this summer from Union College, bringing the number of trainers to thirty-five. Over 130 training sessions are delivered annually at Foundation and Refresher levels.

At this year's General Assembly, we acknowledged the mountain that we had climbed as a denomination and that Safeguarding was now so much part of all programmes and activities within congregations. The Assembly also passed our Adult Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines, giving us the greenlight to develop an implementation and training strategy and consider how we integrate our "Taking Care of All" aspiration.

SPUD our Youth Assembly at their Fringe Event, during the Assembly discussed the whole issue of social media within a church context. Copies of the SBNI "Use of Social Media and other E-Based Communication (Guidance for Faith-Based Groups)" were circulated at the event.



Taking Care Trainers graduation at Knock Presbyterian Church



Church of Ireland

Safeguarding within the Church of Ireland has traditionally fallen within the Board of Education and there had been growing concern that there needed to be a separate board dedicated to safeguarding. At the recent General Synod in Limerick, the Church of Ireland Safeguarding Board was approved. It still keeps its close links to education and the Education Secretaries (north and south) will also act as Secretaries to the new Safeguarding Board.

In the North, Margaret Yarr continues to carry out her vital work as the Child Protection Officer for NI. Margaret's work involves giving advice and guidance, delivering training and managing individual cases. Claire Geoghegan supports her in her role as Access NI administrator.

Our safeguarding officer in the South, Renée English has recently retired and has been replaced by Gabriel Chrystal. Gabriel brings a great range of experience and most recently as member of the child abuse unit of the Metropolitan Police.

We are currently reviewing all our policies and procedures with a review of Child Safeguarding and the introduction of Adult Safeguarding policies and procedures. This is hoped to be completed in the autumn in line with the introduction of new regional policies in NI.

Training and development continues with regular events across NI at both parish and diocesan level. Colin Reid from Hillsborough Parish has trialed new training material in his parish on the use of the internet. Colin has drawn on his work from NSPCC and being part of the SBNI faith sub group. The launch of the new SBNI Internet training material has been promoted extensively through our youth and children networks.



Diocese of Down and Connor Catholic Church

The Safeguarding Office for the diocese of Down and Connor, the second largest diocese in Ireland, was formally established in 2003. However, the practices of responding to allegations of abuse dates back to 1995 when Bishop Walsh appointed a senior cleric, undertake the role of "Diocesan Delegate" with the responsibility for managing all allegations of clerical abuse.

Since then there have been many significant developments in the practice of safeguarding within the Diocese. New structures have been established both at Diocesan and Parish levels to support this work. Funding was made available to create a dedicated Diocesan Safeguarding Office managed by 3 professionally qualified social work staff, and a part time retired civil servant, tasked to produce a wealth of best practice procedures, policies, information leaflets and training adopted and endorsed across the Diocese, to ensure a uniform and standardised approach to how safeguarding is managed.



Andy Thomson, Susan Gordon, Barbara McDermott and Philip O'Hara

In March 2016, the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland launched their new 'Policy and Standards Document (2016)', which sets the direction of travel for safeguarding for the Catholic Church across the Island of Ireland. The aim is to ensure that safeguarding, within the Catholic Church develops a 'one church approach' and standardizes the quality of safeguarding practices across all 26 Dioceses and 155 Congregations across Ireland.

continued ...

Diocese of Down and Connor Catholic Church (continued)

The standards target the key areas of our safeguarding practices at local level and cover the following areas:



The Vetting arrangements for all 6 Catholic Dioceses across the north of Ireland is managed through the Down and Connor Diocese. Over the past 5 years upwards of 7,750 volunteers, staff and clergy, who engage in a regulated activity, have been vetted.

Structural Arrangements:

To assist with the dissemination of the standards and best practice in safeguarding, all Diocese and Religious Congregations throughout Ireland are expected to have robust structural arrangements in place through which safeguarding practices can be disseminated. The diagram below gives a broad overview of how safeguarding structures and processes are in place.

This example below is taken from the Diocese of Down and Connor, child protection policy and procedures).

continued ...

Diocese of Down and Connor Catholic Church (continued)

This example below is taken from the Diocese of Down and Connor, child protection policy and procedures).

The Structure for Safeguarding Children



**PROTECTING AND SAFEGUARDING
CHILDREN FROM NEGLECT**

