

Standing Committee – Report 2011

**APPENDIX F**

**BOARD OF EDUCATION RI**

**REPORT OF THE REVIEW OF THE POSITION OF CHILD PROTECTION  
OFFICER FOR RI (CPO RI) MAY 2010**

**INTRODUCTION**

In March 2006, the Representative Church Body (RCB) approved the positions of Child Protection Officers for NI and RI subject to review by Standing Committee. A CPO RI was appointed in September 2007 with a job role description which included the following strategic and operational roles:

**Strategic role**

1. Developing and reviewing policy

**Operational roles**

2. Co-ordinating and delivering training at all levels
3. Providing professional advice and assessment in relation to the reporting of any child protection issue
4. Monitoring implementation of Safeguarding Trust

(A detailed Job Description is found in Appendix 1 of this report).

In respect of the appointment of Child Protection Officers in the Church of Ireland, it was considered prudent to review the roles at the end of the first contract period in order to inform members of the Standing Committee on the perceived needs of the Church in respect of these positions.

**Review of operational role – survey**

In order to assist with a review of the operational roles, a questionnaire was devised which sought responses from a limited number of individuals who had experienced direct contact with the CPO over the past two years in the above three areas of the role. It was made clear to respondents that the purpose of the questionnaire was to consider the position and not the current post holder. The questionnaire used in the review of the CPO RI position was adjusted where appropriate to reflect the marginal difference in the role description between the two jurisdictions, there being some distinctions between the legislative requirements in NI and the Republic of Ireland. The questionnaire is found in Appendix 2 of this report.

### **Sample**

The questionnaire was issued to a small and limited sample of: Bishops, Clergy, Diocesan Secretaries, Parish Panel members and Diocesan Support Team members. In the selection of respondents consideration was given to geographical spread across the dioceses in the Republic of Ireland and included clergy and lay members. The total sample number was 24. This was not designed as an exhaustive survey but rather as a capture of the some experiences of the CPO role over the past two years.

### **ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES**

The following is a summary of responses under the following four operational aspects of the role:

#### **1. Designing and delivering training**

Those who had experienced the training provided by the CPO, rated it as either highly or fully meeting their needs. The SGT training programme for parish panels was rated as good by the majority of respondents, and the training package for parish workers was also rated as good by almost all respondents. The Republic of Ireland responses mirrored those already obtained from the review of the NI position in stressing the importance of connecting the CPO's role to diocesan and parish worker training and making training more centralised. The RI responses articulated a stronger concern over support for parish panels and indicated a greater sense of 'loneliness' and perhaps even anxiety among parish panel volunteers. A large number of suggestions were made in respect of aspects of training that require to be developed including: ensuring that parish panels understand fully the range of actions that they are responsible for taking; more information on mobile phone and internet issues (including some education about the specifics of how young people use these new services); providing evaluation; refresher training for people after a year in post; more engagement with Select Vestries to ensure they understand the supports and resources needed to ensure Safeguarding Trust is effectively implemented; consideration of having diocesan training teams to support parishes; developing interactive training resources (electronic or CD); more emphasis on Safeguarding Trust in respect of youth ministry work.

#### **Supporting parishes and dioceses take appropriate action to recognise and respond to concerns about the welfare of children**

Most respondents had consulted the CPO on two or more occasions. The evaluation of the support in response to issues raised was appreciative and expressed the view that their

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expectations were fully met with a number of respondents making specific comment in support of this.

### **2. Monitoring implementation of Safeguarding Trust**

Seven of the returns had experienced parish evaluation visits. The responses indicated that this area requires considerable reinforcement and development and a number of suggestions were made.

- Volunteers for children's ministry are put off by the sense of liability now associated with child protection and view implementing Safeguarding Trust as a part of the scariness of the environment of children's ministry rather than in a positive light;
- Where no visit had taken place - dioceses should be compelled to do visiting;
- The newsletter is helpful, but not always given to parish panels – a new method of distribution should be considered;
- The person doing the audit should have permission to view records and check for compliance.

The response of sampled bishops to the idea of written reports was positive and seemed to favour an annual diocesan report of parishes visited.

### **3. Other comments by respondents**

A number of comments were returned which reflected upon the future role of the CPO, which was seen as essential and some considered that it really required more than the current 3/5 day staffing allocation.

Among the other suggestions made, a number reflected the concerns expressed at Section 2 in respect of parish panels. These respondents suggested more direct support from the CPO to parishes in respect of training and evaluation. However, as it was never envisaged that the CPO would support parishes directly in this way, it is recommended that a review of the training of local trainers and evaluators should be undertaken so that a universal approach can be developed.

Another request was that additional dates are made available so that those unable to attend a diocesan meeting with the CPO can receive this training at another time.

### **CONCLUSION OF RESULTS OF SURVEY**

The overall conclusions to be drawn from the survey are:

The role of the CPO is regarded as essential to the Church of Ireland. Most respondents had required the services of the CPO to address specific issues within the two year period. Their evaluation of the service delivered was positive, commenting on the availability of the CPO and the pragmatic, non-intimidating way in which advice was delivered. Respondents felt that it would be beneficial to have more rather than less of the existing role, which was established at three days per week. Some of this demand seemed to be related to a concern over the way in which dioceses exercise their responsibilities, although it was clear that this perception arose from comments related to specific dioceses as other comments reflected a sense of excellence on the part of the diocese regarding evaluation and support. This dimension of the survey needs to be looked at more fully.

The reaction to the training programme is positive and the training events seem to act as a form of anchor for Safeguarding Trust volunteers, providing part of the structure of implementation. A need has been expressed for increased support for parish worker training in SGT and there was a distinct sense that parish volunteers can feel isolated.

The effectiveness of administration of evaluation visits requires review in the light of comments received.

### **REVIEW OF STRATEGIC ASPECTS OF THE ROLE OF CPO NI**

The CPO job description has a strategic role in developing and reviewing policy. These include:

1. to review and develop SGT guidelines in the light of changing legislation and guidance from other agencies;
2. to develop policy and practice and assess risk;
3. to undertake research and further development of child protection issues for central church bodies as appropriate.

The CPO was asked to provide a short summary of her activity over the past two years. Her report is provided as Appendix 3 and includes a report on strategic aspects of the role.

**Comments by the Head of Synod Services on the strategic aspects of the role:**

- The need to review SGT in the light of changing legislation is vital and ongoing. In NI, the development of the role is being driven legislatively by the introduction of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups NI Order, which will introduce a new **Vetting and Barring Scheme** requiring all who have close contact with children and vulnerable adults to be registered with the Independent Safeguarding Authority. Best practice suggests that the Church should be taking parallel steps to introduce guidelines in respect of vulnerable adults for the Republic of Ireland, even if it is not legislatively required at this point. There have already been numerous instances that raise concern over services for the elderly and disabled in the Republic of Ireland and, given the recent national experience in respect of child protection, Standing Committee should consider a proactive approach in respect of vulnerable adults. This may require a review of the resourcing allocated to the role in future.
- **The management of risk** is another developing area of child protection within which the church will require to gain expertise. A number of rectors have received disclosures from individuals with convictions for sexual offences against children who wish now, following the completion of their sentence, to become part of the worshipping congregation. In order to provide advice to clergy in these circumstances the church needs to develop a policy for working with offenders, with appropriate guidelines. This challenging work will require risk assessment and close working with An Garda Síochána and the probation service.
- If a case of a serious nature arises where criminal action or church disciplinary procedures have to be instigated following disclosures of offences of a sexual nature having been committed by clergy and other church workers, the reporting of such disclosures to the statutory authorities does require a **facilitation role** on behalf of the church. This requires information gathering and fact-checking as well as liaison with An Garda Síochána, the HSE, the Department of Education, the Garda Vetting Unit, CPOs in other jurisdictions, bishops, and individuals/ families affected by the abuse. This role needs to be clarified and added to the CPO role description as it is not explicitly part of the current role description.

To carry out the activities required in respect of child protection and the protection of vulnerable adults, the Church continues to need a professional appointment, possibly for more than the current three days per week if the Standing Committee agrees to the development of

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certain aspects of the role in respect of vulnerable adults. Some responsibilities of the CPO will overlap with aspects of role of the Secretary of the Board. The Secretary will continue to have a responsibility for overseeing the work of the CPO and providing a strategic direction to the work of the Board in the area of child protection.

### **CONCLUSION OF REVIEW**

In the three years since its inception, the role of CPO has become well-established and has demonstrable benefits to the Church. If the CPO did not exist, bishops, clergy and parish panels, would lose a key support in implementing child protection and in addressing any reported incidents. The Church of Ireland must by reason of its calling and public responsibility offer the highest standard of care for all the children within its ministry – child protection must be one of our top priorities. The conclusion reached as a result of the review is that the role of CPO should be continued with some adjustment to current roles made on the basis of the above discussion.

The public sphere views child protection as a primary function of any organisation engaged in working with or caring for children – many churches in the past have been found not to have dealt with child protection concerns with the paramountcy of the welfare of the child as a first principle. To have a professional social worker lead this work brings objectivity and enables the church to be much more accountable for the standards of care provided in our parishes.

This review has highlighted a number of areas where the CPO role may need developed, these include:

- risk assessment of offenders in church;
- new roles arising from best practice in respect of safeguarding vulnerable adults;
- a facilitation role for cases of a serious nature;
- further development of training programmes for panels and workers at the diocesan and parish level;
- as a result of reallocation of work in Church House following staff reductions, incorporation of a component of Garda vetting work into the CPO role, as in the NI position.

**APPENDIX 1**

**Child Protection Officer (Republic of Ireland) - Job Description**

**Summary:** To advise and support parishes, dioceses and central Church bodies on the implementation and development of the Church of Ireland’s child protection policy “*Safeguarding Trust*” throughout the Republic of Ireland. The role will include coordinating and delivering training at all levels, providing professional advice and assessment in relation to the reporting of any child protection issue and advising on future policy development and review. The post will be based in Dublin and will involve travel throughout the Republic of Ireland.

**Accountability**

The post-holder will report to the Education Officer (Republic of Ireland) and will attend meetings of the Board of Education (RI) to report on *Safeguarding Trust* matters as appropriate. The line management of the post will be as follows:

Child Protection Officer → Education Officer (RI) → Head of Synod Services → Chief Officer RCB

**Strategic Roles**

**1. Developing and reviewing policy**

- a. To review and develop the *Safeguarding Trust* guidelines, subject to the approval of the Standing Committee of the General Synod, in the light of changing legislation and guidance from other statutory agencies
- b. To develop policy and practice to assess and manage risk
- c. To liaise with insurers and to advise in relation to the programme
- d. To undertake research and further development of child protection issues for central church bodies as appropriate

**Operational Roles**

**1. Designing and delivering training**

- a. To coordinate and/or deliver training to clergy and parish panel members in *Safeguarding Trust*
- b. To assist clergy and parish panels to understand and implement the *Safeguarding Trust* guidelines
- c. To coordinate the training of the Diocesan Support Teams or trainers and further develop their training and evaluation roles.
- d. To develop child protection support within each diocese

- 2. Supporting parishes and dioceses taking appropriate action to recognise and respond to concerns about the welfare of children**
  - a. To advise rectors and panel members on child protection queries
  - b. To advise bishops on child protection matters within their dioceses
  - c. To ensure appropriate supports are in place for rectors/panel members during and following a child protection enquiry
  - d. To keep a record of concerns reported by bishops / rectors / panel members
  
- 3. Monitoring implementation of the code**
  - a. To develop and oversee the programme of parish *Safeguarding Trust* evaluations
  - b. To monitor the implementation of *Safeguarding Trust* in parishes and assist bishops and diocesan councils review implementation
  
- 4. Forging links with statutory organisations and other bodies**
  - a. To develop links with the HSE, Garda and others in the Health and Voluntary sector
  - b. To liaise with the child protection officers of other churches
  - c. To help prepare for the possibility of accreditation
  
- 5. Providing reports for the Board of Education (RI)**
  - a. To present *Safeguarding Trust* progress reports to the Board of Education (RI)
  - b. To devise and maintain an annual budget for *Safeguarding Trust* functions to the Board of Education (RI)



**APPENDIX 2**

**BOARD OF EDUCATION RI**

**REVIEW OF THE POSITION OF CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER FOR RI (CPO RI)**

**Questionnaire issued to limited sample of: Bishops, Clergy, Diocesan Secretaries, Parish Panel members and Diocesan Support Team members.**

**INTRODUCTION**

In March 2006 the RCB approved the positions of Child Protection Officers for NI and RI subject to review by Standing Committee. The review of the CPO RI is now due and this questionnaire is being circulated to a sample of: Bishops, Clergy, Diocesan Secretaries, Parish Panel members and Diocesan Support Team members to help evaluate the role.

Please note that **the purpose of this questionnaire is to consider the position** and not the current post-holder – this will be undertaken internally by the RCB as employer. It may be that the future role needs to be modified in the light of responses and we therefore value your thoughts about this important resource for the church.

**Designing and delivering training**

1. Have you experienced any training delivered by the Board of Education RI since September 2007?  
Yes / No [If you answered ‘No’, please move on to question 5.]
2. How much did the training meet your needs? [1=less than fully , 5 fully]  
1            2            3            4            5
3. How would you describe the design of the Safeguarding Trust training programme for Parish Panels? (Please circle as appropriate)  
                          inadequate            adequate    satisfactory            good            excellent
4. How would you describe the effectiveness of the training package provided for parish workers?  
                          inadequate            adequate    satisfactory            good            excellent
5. Thinking broadly about training needs, which aspects of training require to be developed in your view?

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**Supporting parishes and dioceses take appropriate action to recognise and respond to concerns about the welfare of children**

6. How often have you required the advice / support of the Child Protection Officer (CPO) in the past two years?
- Never                      once,                      twice,                      more than twice (Please circle as appropriate)
- [If you answered 'Never' please move on to question 8]
7. How much did that support meet your expectation? [1=less than fully , 5 fully]
- 1            2            3            4            5
8. Have you any views on how the child protection support service could be improved?
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**Monitoring implementation of Safeguarding Trust**

**[Questions 9-12 for Clergy and Parish Panel members only]**

If your parish received an evaluation visit in the last two years please answer the following questions. [If you received no visit please move on to question 12]

9. How would you describe the administration of that visit?
- inadequate            adequate    satisfactory            good            excellent
10. How would you describe the helpfulness of that visit? [1=not very, 5 = very helpful]
- 1            2            3            4            5
11. Did you find that there was effective support during and after the visit to enable you to implement Safeguarding Trust in your parish? Yes/ No
12. Have you any comments to make about how the Board of Education can help you implement Safeguarding Trust better?
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**[Questions 13-14 for Bishops only]**

13. Would you like to receive written reports following evaluation visits, assessing the implementation of Safeguarding Trust in parishes your diocese? Yes / No
14. If you answered 'Yes' to question 13, how frequently would you like reports provided for you? (Please circle)
- termly                      annually   on a needs basis

**And finally,**

15. In your view, is there any additional role required of the CPO in future to enhance implementation of Safeguarding Trust in your parish / diocese?
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16. Have you any further comment to make which may be of assistance in reshaping the role of the CPO or reviewing the priorities of the tasks assigned to the role?
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**APPENDIX 3**

**Summary report of the work of CPO (RI) September 2007- 2010**

**Strategic Roles**

1. **Developing and reviewing policy**

- September 2007- March 2008 Preparation of revised Safeguarding Trust policy document
- April-June 2008 Information events in dioceses and distribution of new Safeguarding Trust manuals
- Spring 2008 Preparation of revised worker's summary cards
- 2009+Researching policy in relation to sex offenders' involvement in parish life
- 2009 Introduction of 2 part training requirement for panel members to reflect their responsibilities

**Operational Roles**

1. **Designing and delivering training**

- Regular updating of Safeguarding Trust training programmes and notes for trainers
- Annual training for Theological Institute students
- 2008 2 session training for new Safeguarding Trust trainers
- Provision of an annual training event for Diocesan Support Team members
- 2008 Joint presentation with Margaret Yarr at Anglican Safer Church conference in Woking Surrey
  - training day for new incumbents introduced
- Provision of training to both panel members and workers on request from the dioceses
- Annual delivery of Keeping Safe training in compliance with registration requirements of the HSE/Volunteer Development Agency partnership

Select Vestry members who are not panel members might find it useful to attend panel members training to assist their understanding of the content and administrative requirements of implementing Safeguarding Trust in parishes

2. **Supporting parishes and dioceses taking appropriate action to recognise and respond to concerns about the welfare of children**

- Advising rectors, panel members and workers on child protection issues, including responses to issues of historical abuse
- Advising bishops on child protection matters within their dioceses
- Maintaining records of reported concerns

Most contact with parishes is in relation to implementing good practice in children's and youth ministry rather than responding to child abuse concerns. There is now a central record of child welfare concerns discussed with parishes. Safeguarding Trust (2008) requires the reporting of concerns whether or not the parish panel has a legal interest.

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3. **Monitoring implementation of the code**
  - Advising rectors regarding the process of parish evaluations
  - Reviewing evaluations carried out by the Diocesan Support Teams and at times providing feedback to rectors
  - Providing support and advice to parish evaluators
  - Reviewing and providing feedback to bishops who have carried out their own parish evaluations
  - Liaison with bishops re parish evaluation needs
  - 2010 Preparation of training for a team of parish evaluators
  - Dioceses have been offered assistance in training nominated evaluators where appropriate.
4. **Forging links with statutory organisations and other bodies**
  - Developing and maintaining links with HSE Social Work Depts., the Keeping Safe initiative, An Garda Síochána, voluntary and community organisations such as the National Youth Council of Ireland and the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Linking with child protection personnel in other Churches both nationally and internationally.
  - Founding member of network for child protection workers in voluntary bodies
  - Member of the Anglican Safe Church Consultation
5. **Providing reports for the Board of Education (RI)**
  - Providing annual reports to the Board of Education (RI)
6. **Looking to the future**
  - Incorporating Garda vetting into the role of the CPO would be a useful development.
  - Vulnerable Adults - While there is currently no legislation in the Republic, this is an area for development in the CPO role in line with that in Northern Ireland.

The CPO role provides integral support to youth and children's ministry in the Church of Ireland. There remain concerns that regulation inhibits volunteerism but this should not be overemphasised and indeed, some dioceses have increased the number of youth workers to carry out this vital role. The Church of Ireland has a duty to implement national guidelines for good practice in the youth work sector and a positive presentation by those in authority and reassurance that guidelines are also for the protection of workers can help to allay fears.