



**Private and Confidential**

**Review of Safeguarding Practice  
in the  
Saint Patrick's Missionary Society  
undertaken by**

**The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the  
Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI)**

**The content of this Report is not to be accessed or shared without the consent  
of the Society Leader, Father Seamus O'Neill**

**February 2013**

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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 (CORI) and the Irish Missionary Union (IMU), 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 in Saint Patrick's Missionary Society* (SPMS) 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 by the Society, along with interviews with selected key personnel who contribute to safeguarding within SPMS. The NBSCCCI believes that all relevant documentation for these cases currently within the possession of the Central Leadership Team (CLT) was passed to the reviewers and this was confirmed by the Society Leader and Deputy Leader.

Of necessity, the reviewers can only comment on matters as they found them during their site visits, and therefore a review report describes safeguarding at a particular point in time. While a Church authority has the opportunity to correct any factual inaccuracies that might be contained in the draft of the review report that is shared with them, it is not possible to expand a report to incorporate information shared with the reviewers after the review has been completed. It is also possible for a Church authority to correct matters highlighted by the reviewers in advance of the publication of the review report, but it is not possible for that report to reflect any developments that happened after the review fieldwork process was completed.

The findings of the review have been shared with a reference group in redacted form before being submitted to SPMS, along with any recommendations arising from the findings.

## **Introduction**

Saint Patrick's Missionary Society is based in Kiltegan in the Wicklow hills. The headquarters consists of their administrative offices, a retreat centre and a former seminary, which is now a residence and nursing home for retired members. As well as the Society headquarters, SPMS have four other houses in Ireland, one in each metropolitan area. They have a large house in Leeson Park in south Dublin which acts as a hostel for students, retired SPMS members and as a base for members that have to be in Dublin on a temporary basis. They have a house next to the Knock shrine in County Mayo; and a member based there provides some cover for pilgrims who attend the shrine. They have another house in Belfast, which is not used that frequently; members engaged in promotional work for the Society would use it from time to time. Finally, they have a house in Cork which is mainly used to accommodate members who undertake promotional work or who are returning from work abroad on the missions.

SPMS is the only Irish missionary Society that has its headquarters here in Ireland. The Central Leadership Team (CLT) holds responsibility for the activities of all of its members wherever they may be located in the world. The Society has a house in Rome, but the leadership of the Society is based at Kiltegan. SPMS has 293 members globally of which 141 are within Ireland. Approximately 40 of those located here are retired, elderly, or in need of nursing care. The seminary building on their headquarters site has been converted into use as a residence for the ageing membership. They have 12 nursing beds in this unit, and they intend to extend this provision to 24 beds in the coming months.

SPMS has approximately 60 students for the priesthood attending two colleges of education in Africa, one in Kenya and one in South Africa. The clerical students live in smaller *Houses of Formation*, in Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya.

The management of the SPMS involves a Society Leader and a Central Leadership Team of four members. The men in these posts are elected at each Chapter meeting of the Society every six years, and they may serve for two terms. The current Society Leader is coming to the end of his second term in office.

The SPMS is divided administratively into five regions, as follows:-

1. Ireland – (the island of Ireland, the United Kingdom, the USA, and Mexico)
2. East Africa – (Kenya and the Republic of South Sudan)
3. West Africa – (Nigeria and Cameroon)
4. Central and Southern Africa – (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi)
5. Caribbean and South America – (Brazil and Grenada)

Each of the five regions has a degree of autonomy; and each has its own safeguarding structure, which involves the appointment of an Advisory Panel and a designated person. All designated persons in the four non-Irish regions are members of the Society, while 30 of the 43 other people involved in these safeguarding structures are not members of the Society, although some are religious. It was reported to the reviewers that the intention is

to continue to involve lay people and to do so to a greater extent over time. As the headquarters for SPMS are in Ireland, the CLT holds overall responsibility for the management of all child abuse cases reported wherever they occur in the world, in terms of overseeing the appropriateness of the response. The case records examined by the reviewers represent the total stock of case material relating to child abuse committed by a member of the Society anywhere in the world; this was confirmed to the reviewers by members of the CLT during the fieldwork.

SPMS members can move between the regions, through changed appointments. The convention exists that any Irish members that are thought to have been involved in abuse in the other four regions would be returned to Ireland to live.

Since its formation in 1932 the SPMS has been centred in Ireland. However, in recognition of its developing focus on the continent of Africa, it was reported to the reviewers that the headquarters of the Society is likely to migrate to that continent in the coming years. The next Chapter of the Society may well decide that this should happen.

The SPMS leadership has been challenged by a relatively high incidence of serious and ongoing abuse amongst its members, some of which the NBSCCCI would be aware of through undertaking other reviews. For example, one man ordained by the Society spent some years on the missions before being returned to Ireland to receive treatment for alcohol abuse. He then requested to be allowed to be incardinated into a diocese where he engaged in substantial abuse, which eventually led to him being prosecuted and sentenced to twelve years imprisonment. It is not known whether he abused children while involved in missionary work on behalf of the Society, and there is no evidence extant that he did so. There were other instances of individual priests who engaged in frequent abuse, some of which has attracted media attention. At the time that the review was undertaken, one of these alleged perpetrators, who had been laicised, was on trial for additional alleged offences. The record of the Society in relation to case management will be addressed in more detail below, under the relevant Standards.

The fieldwork for the review was undertaken on 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> January and 12<sup>th</sup> February 2013 at the SPMS offices in Kiltegan.

## **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 guidance, *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 SPMS. 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 order - 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.*

Each of the five regions of the SPMS has their own set of policies and procedures. There is also an international version for the Society as a whole, the February 2012 (Revised) – *Policies and Procedures for Safeguarding Children – St. Patrick's Missionary Society*, which is on the website of the Society. It is a cause of confusion however that the Irish Region Policy and Procedures, the June 2012 *St. Patrick's Missionary Society – Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Children in the Region of Ireland*, is not available on the Society's website, and this needs to be rectified.

### Recommendation 1

**That the St. Patrick's Missionary Society create a dedicated set of pages on its website that are clearly marked as containing information about the Irish Region, to include the June 2012 *St. Patrick's Missionary Society – Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Children in the Region of Ireland*.**

The policy and procedures document that was examined by the reviewers is the Region of Ireland version. Compliance with Standard 1 is only fully achieved when a Church authority meets the requirements of all nine criteria against which the standard is measured.

### Criteria

Number	Criterion	Met fully or Met partially or Not met
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

<b>1.6</b>	The policy states how those individuals who pose a risk to children are managed.	Met partially
<b>1.7</b>	The policy clearly describes the Church's understanding and definitions of abuse.	Met fully
<b>1.8</b>	The policy states that all current child protection concerns must be fully reported to the civil authorities without delay.	Met fully
<b>1.9</b>	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

On page 15 of the document, at paragraph E.10, it is stated that,

“If the Regional Leader is satisfied that child sexual abuse has occurred, the accused member will be removed from any pastoral appointment which affords access to children”.

The Regional Leader however cannot wait until the evidence that child sexual abuse has been perpetrated by a Society member is available before removing him from ministry. Once it is clear that a complaint / allegation / report is of sufficient concern, that there is a semblance of truth to the allegation/concern, and that it requires investigation and notification to the relevant statutory authorities, the Regional Leader should consider the appropriateness of removing the respondent member from ministry. The steps to be taken in such cases need to be more clearly spelt out in the policy and procedures document and guidance on a case by case basis should be sought from the Advisory panel. For this reason, Criterion 1.6 is not met fully.

### **Recommendation 2**

**The Society Leader should amend the policy and procedures to clarify the process of removal from ministry, where there is a semblance of truth to an allegation and notification to civil authorities has taken place.**

The SPMS is a complex and diverse body that operates in many different locations across the world. In some of those places, legislation to protect the rights of vulnerable children is very poorly developed, and the statutory authorities have not yet acquired a focus on the need to safeguard children. As a consequence, it is seen as being important by the reviewers that the SPMS achieve clarity regarding what their responses will be to the abuse of children involving members of the Society, regardless of where it happens in the world. The safeguarding policies and procedures in operation across the four non-Irish regions of the Society presumably reflect local child safeguarding legislation and statutory practices. However, the Central Leadership Team must ensure that at the heart of these policies and procedures there must be an emphasis on the protection of children by applying a speedy response to any identified concerning behaviour by a member. This should involve the active supervision of the alleged offender and an attempt to reach out to and support any identified victims regardless of where they may be. The reviewers

have been assured that all of the policy and procedures documents iterated and in use in the four mission regions of the Society are based on the highest child safeguarding standards, as contained in the February 2012 (Revised) – *Policies and Procedures for Safeguarding Children – St. Patrick's Missionary Society*.

### **Recommendation 3**

**The Central Leadership Team (CLT) should ensure that the safeguarding standards that apply across all of the locations within which members of the SPMS minister internationally are clearly based on a commitment to protect children, support victims and effectively intervene with abusive members.**

The purpose of having a set of policies and procedures to guide the effective safeguarding of children can only be achieved if they are known and applied by the members of the Society. Attention must be paid to ensuring that all members, and especially those in positions of authority, are familiar with the expectations of the SPMS in this regard. The reviewers saw evidence of some communications initiatives taken by the Central Leadership Team in relation to child safeguarding within the Society's five regions, and this is commended. However, the only proof of the effectiveness of communicating the child safeguarding message is the practice of the Society when a complaint is received.

The reviewers found evidence of delay in the SPMS clearly adhering to Church safeguarding policies and practice guidelines as these were being introduced in the Irish Church. However, it was explained to the reviewers that, being a Missionary Society, SPMS was dependent on the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith for both general advice and specific guidance in relation to clerical child sexual abuse matters. It was some time before all guidance on clerical child sexual abuse was centralised in the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, as the dicastery of the Roman Curia holding responsibility for overseeing the responses made to clerical abuse cases occurring within the Church. It seems clear that before this transfer of reporting responsibilities, SPMS was not as robust as it might otherwise have been in dealing decisively with child protection concerns about some of its members. The reviewers wish to emphasise to the CLT that it needs to ensure the creation of sound safeguarding standards and structures within the Society, at all levels and in all regions. For that reason the NBSCCCI would make the following recommendation.

### **Recommendation 4**

**The Central Leadership Team should devise an oversight process by which it can assure itself that the SPMS policies and procedures are being adhered to across all five regions.**

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) can provide guidance to the SPMS in this regard.

## **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 Church authority meets the requirements of all seven criteria against which the standard is measured.

### **Criteria**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Met fully or Met partially or Not met</b>
<b>2.1</b>	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
<b>2.2</b>	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
<b>2.3</b>	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
<b>2.4</b>	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 partially
<b>2.5</b>	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
<b>2.6</b>	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
<b>2.7</b>	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

**Table 1**

**Incidence of safeguarding allegations received within SPMS from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1975 up to end of January 2013**

<b>Name of Diocese or Order</b>		
<b>1</b>	Number of Diocesan/Order priests/religious against whom allegations have been made since the 1 <sup>st</sup> January 1975 up to the date of the Review.	<b>14</b>
<b>2</b>	Total number of allegations received by the Diocese/Order since 1 <sup>st</sup> January, 1975	<b>50</b>
<b>3</b>	Number of allegations reported to An Garda Síochána involving priests / religious of the order since 1 <sup>st</sup> January 1975.	<b>47*</b>
<b>4</b>	Number of allegations reported to the HSE (or the Health Boards which preceded the setting up of the HSE,) involving priests of the Diocese/Order since 1 <sup>st</sup> January 1975.	<b>47*</b>
<b>5</b>	Number of priests/ religious (still members of the Diocese/Order) against whom an allegation was made and who were living at the date of the review.	<b>9</b>
<b>6</b>	Number of religious against whom an allegation was made and who are deceased.	<b>2</b>
<b>7</b>	Number of priests/religious against whom an allegation has been made and who are in ministry.	<b>3</b>
<b>8</b>	Number of priests/religious against whom an allegation was made and who are "Out of Ministry, but are still members of the order".	<b>6</b>
<b>9</b>	Number of priests/religious against whom an allegation was made and who are retired	<b>5</b>
<b>10</b>	Number of religious against whom an allegation was made and who have left the order/ priesthood.	<b>5</b>
<b>11</b>	Number of religious of the order 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>1</b>

*Footnote: The term allegation in this table includes complaints and expressions of concern.*

*Note \*: three allegations not reported in Ireland as the offences occurred in other jurisdictions and were reported in those jurisdictions; none of these priests reside in Ireland.*

The essence of this standard is openness to the situation of vulnerable children. If they are at risk of harm or have suffered abuse, this information should bring forward a response and give rise to actions that are aimed at their protection and the prevention of further harm. It is also important to emphasise that all children deserve the same respect and attention regardless of where they are geographically located, or of their ethnicity. The reviewers are concerned that this has not always been reflected in the practice of the SPMS, as detailed in the case files. Abuse that has been identified outside the Irish region has not in every case given rise to an appropriate and robust response.

As one example, concerns with regard to the behaviour of a priest were identified in 1966. Minutes of a 1997 meeting record that *In the mid to late 60's there were several reports in Kenya of homosexual activity between Fr. X and young Goan boys.* Unfortunately, this local information was never communicated to Central Leadership until specific questions were posed in 1997. This man was finally stepped aside in 1986, and he remained a member of the Society until 2002. He was dismissed from the clerical state at his own request, which was the only way in which this could happen while the Society was under the jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. It is believed that this priest may have abused at least 50 victims since 1966. To date, the Society has made contact with 34 of these people. The reviewers accept the logistical difficulty in identifying and tracing adults who might have been abused in childhood in locations where there are rudimentary communications technologies and where there may not be cultural acceptance and support for coming forward as a victim of clerical sexual abuse.

In a second case, a priest was sent to a treatment centre in England in late 1993, three years after his problematic sexual behaviour had first been identified. He was referred because of casual sexual activity with young men aged 17 to 25 years of age and because of excessive drinking. He was granted leave of absence a year later. The priest indicated his wish to be discharged from the clerical state in 2002. The then Leader of the Society wrote to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in May 2002, and received a written response in December 2002, setting out what steps the Society should take in the case. It was November 2007 before the Society was in a position to formally respond to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, which represents a long delay in applying the required 'canonical admonishments' to the priest. There followed a further delay in Rome, which was outside the control of the SPMS. The Society dismissed the priest from membership in May 2009 and he was dismissed from the clerical state by Papal decree on June 26<sup>th</sup> 2009.

In a third case, a priest was accused in 2006 of abuse of a young person when on the missions in Africa, 26 years previously. This allegation was admitted to by the priest who was asked by the Society Leader if he had abused any other young people to which he responded that he had not. He was sent for an assessment which reported that he was low risk of reoffending.

In 2012, a second allegation emerged which led to this priest being sent for a second assessment. The specific focus on this occasion was the existence of risk of reoffending

and it was undertaken by a different and very experienced professional. Through this process, several previous incidents of offences against young people by this priest when he was on mission in Africa were identified. Because of the passage of time, it is extremely difficult to identify child victims abroad who are now adult and who have not come forward themselves to make a complaint.

These cases are quoted to illustrate a concern that emerged from the reading of the case files. It appears to the reviewers that there were failures on the part of authority within the Society to always vigorously and decisively apply itself to ensure that the adopted policies and disciplinary code of the organisation and the Church as a whole was adhered to. Accused priests were afforded too much tolerance and so found it too easy to avoid being held accountable for their actions.

It also appeared to the reviewers that the identification of abuse of a child on the missions did not always evoke the actions that evidence an empathic response to the experiences of victims. The Society must ensure into the future that there is no lower standard of safeguarding afforded to children abroad than that which is available to Irish children.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**The CLT ensure that all allegations of clerical abuse are responded to quickly, in compliance with Church requirements and in accordance with the standards of the Society.**

There is a letter on file in which a Society Leader expresses regret to a member at the fact that he has decided to leave and to seek laicisation. While this priest had suffered with serious mental illness and deserved a compassionate response because of that, he was also a self-confessed abuser of young boys while serving on the missions. Men, occupying leadership roles in a missionary Society or religious order, have to take great care in how they write to members who are known to have abused children, as the tone of such letters has to clearly indicate an abhorrence of the abusive behaviour and the primacy of the need to protect children. Official correspondence from leadership holders to Curial offices in Rome must also avoid any suggestion that the Society and/or wider Church should be protected from scandal through covert action, as was the case in another piece of correspondence examined.

The reviewers were not satisfied that canonical sanctions against many of the priests who are known to have abused children were being sought as a matter of course. There is either a failure to use Canon Law appropriately, or a lack of understanding about the importance of doing so. Some men have left the Society but these members have usually themselves requested to leave. Those that have remained and who are out of ministry have not been provided with a canonical precept that sets out clearly what they can and cannot do. A canonical precept is different to a signed agreement concerning behaviour, and is a legal instrument under Canon Law. Some members who are out of ministry have engaged in family funerals and weddings, and it is not clear if the relevant bishops of the dioceses in which these events have taken place have been formally asked to provide faculties. This is a different matter to that highlighted earlier concerning the reluctance of

the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to quickly deal with requests from the Ordinary for assistance.

**Recommendation 6**

**The CLT should ensure that appropriate canonical sanctions in accordance with current Church guidance are placed on those who are suspected of having committed serious delicts involving children and who remain within the Society.**

The reviewers met with the Advisory Panel for the Irish Region. Four members of that group made mention of the fact that the approach to the management of safeguarding concerns in the SPMS has changed positively within the last 18 months or so. The Irish Designated Officer was also interviewed separately and he confirmed to the reviewers that this was the case. He gave a detailed description of the slow development of policy and practice within the Society over a period of years, which development had perceptively speeded up in the previous year or two. Prior to that change in approach there was a perceived reluctance on the part of the CLT to share relevant information on accused priests with the Irish Advisory Panel or with the Irish Designated Officer. This extended to the latter not being permitted to access the case files which were held by the CLT until relatively recently. This situation has now changed, which is to be welcomed. However, the Irish Advisory Panel members spoke to the reviewers of being unclear as to why the CLT still retains responsibility for the management of some cases, and this needs to be attended to.

The reviewers are aware that the Central Leadership Team operates as the *de facto* Safeguarding Committee for the Society, but it appears from reading the Safeguarding Committee minutes that it is largely case management rather than safeguarding activity that is discussed in that forum. The reviewers are concerned that there is insufficient clarity about the various roles and responsibilities of the CLT, the Irish Advisory Panel and the Irish Designated Person. A member of the Irish Advisory Panel stated that they are worried that in a worst case scenario, this lack of clarity could contribute to something important 'falling between stools'.

**Recommendation 7**

**The CLT should meet formally with the Irish Region Advisory Panel to clarify any outstanding concerns that may exist for members of either group. This engagement should lead to the situation where access to all relevant information that is held within the Society is shared with those who are engaged in the task of deciding on how safeguarding cases should be responded to, and to ensure that appropriate management plans are in place and are working. At this meeting, all child safeguarding roles and responsibilities within the Society in Ireland need to be agreed and recorded.**

In the fieldwork, the reviewers had no contact with the Advisory Panels which have been created in any of the other regions; and did not see any documentation that provided evidence that this newly created regional structure is operating effectively in the area of

child safeguarding (as these groups do not come within the compass of the NBSCCCI). However, as long as the CLT is based in Ireland, it would be important for the Society to introduce a system of internal audit or review to test the effectiveness of these panels.

**Recommendation 8**

**The Society Leader should receive a copy of the minutes from every meeting of each of the five separate Advisory Panels; and the CLT should initiate a system of internal audit to ensure that all panels are operating effectively.**

In relation to meeting the criteria under Standard 2, the Society needs to continue to improve the quality of case file recording in line with the requirements of Criterion 2.4. The major piece of work that was conducted in bringing up the standard of the case files prior to the review is commended. The reviewers are satisfied that file records are maintained in a confidential and secure manner.

The absence of any guidance regarding time lines is the reason why Criterion 2.5 is only met partially rather than fully.

### 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 Church authority 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.

The St. Patrick's Missionary Society does not have responsibility for any parish in Ireland, and it does not provide any direct services to children and young people or engage them in any of its activities. As a consequence, some of the criteria under Standards 3, 4 and 5 below are not applicable to the Society, and where this is the case, this is what is recorded in the relevant tables. Where a member of the Society works in an Irish diocese, he is bound by the policies and procedures of that Church authority.

#### Criteria – safe recruitment and vetting

Number	Criterion	Met fully or Met partially or Not met
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.	Not applicable

**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 partially
3.5	There is guidance on expected and acceptable behaviour of children towards other children (anti-bullying policy).	Not applicable
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.	Not applicable
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.	Not applicable
3.9	Policies include guidelines on the personal/ intimate care of children with disabilities, including appropriate and inappropriate touch.	Not applicable

**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.	Not applicable
3.11	When operating projects/ activities children are adequately supervised and protected at all times.	Not applicable
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.	Not applicable

The above criteria apply to the Society within the Irish region only. This region is somewhat unusual in its composition, as it includes the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Mexico. The reviewers saw no documentation relevant to any of these countries.

Regarding the criteria above, the Society has an overall statement about the safety and welfare of children being paramount; and at paragraph L.1 - Youth Activities - on page 22 of the *St. Patrick's Missionary Society – Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Children in the Region of Ireland*, it also identifies how members might best relate to children who are involved in activities with them; but this section needs to be strengthened considerably.

The Society has a moral responsibility to ensure that it is committed to and takes every effort to protect children from harm, irrespective of the nationality, ethnicity or gender of these children. Policies and procedures in the other four regions have to support and assist such a commitment. These have to be underpinned by an assertion that children should never be abused, and that anyone who does harm them should be held to account for their actions.

The creation and adoption of safeguarding policies and procedures represent an important first step in achieving best practice, but they must be complied with. The commitment expressed to the reviewers and the noted change in approach as reported by the Irish Region Advisory Panel and the Designated Officer, are very encouraging and represent evidence of a clear commitment to safeguarding, which is commended.

Within the structure of the Society the responsibility for the management of risk and the prevention of further harm to children lies with the CLT. It is vital that each member of the CLT continues to be familiar with the current workload within the Society in terms of identified risk. It is also imperative that they are aware of where all the identified perpetrators are, how they are spending their time and what management plan is in place for them. To have this overview requires that they regularly read the case files, and generate questions for the Irish Advisory Panel and the Irish Designated Officer. There needs to be free and open communication between the parties charged with child safeguarding within the Society, while respecting the principle of confidentiality.

## **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>
<b>4.1</b>	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.	Not applicable
<b>4.2</b>	Identified Church personnel are provided with appropriate training for keeping children safe with regular opportunities to update their skills and knowledge.	Met partially
<b>4.3</b>	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
<b>4.4</b>	Training programmes are approved by National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland and updated in line with current legislation, guidance and best practice.	Met fully

The Society's Irish Designated Person has undertaken the Train the Trainers course and is NBSCCCI approved.

The national Church document, *Safeguarding Children – Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland* states that the following documents can be used to provide evidence that the Standard has been met:

- a copy of training plans and/ or programmes
- records of course attendance
- induction documentation/ guidance
- course evaluation documents
- systematic ongoing formation programmes for safeguarding children in seminaries and houses of religion.

The reviewers were provided with documentation about child safeguarding training for Society members in various locations in Africa, and it is encouraging to see evidence of these activities. The reviewers also examined two lists provided to them, one of which related to training provided to seven named Society members / employees in Ireland, and the second of which referred to 16 training courses in Ireland attended by Society

members and provided by the Irish Designated Person, or attended by Society members and provided by another agency. This commitment to training for CLT and other Irish region Society members is to be commended. While there are developments that the Society can continue to make in this area, the reviewers are confident that the Society is committed to appropriately addressing Standard 4.

To improve its record keeping in respect of Training so as to fully meet the requirements of Criterion 4.2 above, the Society needs to establish a Training Register in which the name and location of every course provided / attended is listed, along with the date on which it is held, the name of each Society member who attends and whether the course is approved by the NBSCCCI.

The SPMS has a considerable task to undertake with regard to the training of its members in safeguarding practice. Those who are part of the new regional structures represent a priority. Due to the fact that they are spread across the entire world, the possibility of “face to face” training is challenging. However, a chance for this to happen is planned for later in the year, when all of the Designated Persons from across all the five regions will be in Ireland and it will be possible to progress this work, and this is commended.

The Society has developed summer Training for Irish members who return to Ireland for any reason during the summer months. Training has been provided to these and other members in Kiltegan in June 2010, July 2011 and June 2012; and plans are in place for a similar initiative in 2013. This initiative is commended.

Strengthening the new framework for safeguarding in the SPMS must be seen as a priority. Given the diverse nature of the organisation, consideration should be given to using technology as a way of facilitating the development and learning of those involved. Training in best practice safeguarding could be delivered through the Internet through web conferencing. In this way, the CLT could assure itself that the structure that it has put in place is fit for purpose.

### **Recommendation 9**

**The CLT should consider how web conferencing could be utilised by a competent trainer to help to strengthen the developing framework that it has put in place to safeguard vulnerable children.**

Within the Irish region, the same challenges do not apply. It would be possible to bring the members together and deliver training to them. This is to be encouraged and the designated person reported to the reviewers that it is also planned to happen.

The Society needs to develop an agreed and written Training Plan based on a Training Needs Assessment.

**Recommendation 10**

**The CLT should ensure that a Training-Needs Assessment is conducted among all members of the Irish region, and that a Training Plan for that region is subsequently developed and implemented.**

**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>
<b>5.1</b>	The child protection policy is openly displayed and available to everyone.	Met partially
<b>5.2</b>	Children are made aware of their right to be safe from abuse and who to speak to if they have concerns.	Not applicable
<b>5.3</b>	Everyone in Church organisations knows who the designated person is and how to contact them.	Met fully
<b>5.4</b>	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
<b>5.5</b>	Church organisations establish links with statutory child protection agencies to develop good working relationships in order to keep children safe.	Met fully
<b>5.6</b>	Church organisations at diocesan and religious order level have an established communications policy which reflects a commitment to transparency and openness.	Met partially

Comment has been made under Standard 1 above about the non-availability of the Irish policy and procedures document, *St. Patrick's Missionary Society – Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Children in the Region of Ireland*, on the Society's website.

There has been confusion in the SPMS with regard to confidentiality. It was reported to the reviewers that historically, the interpretation of 'confidentiality' had in effect been 'secrecy'. As a consequence, there was real reluctance to share information about safeguarding matters in the Society, even where that information was not specifically related to cases. This approach has influenced the way in which the Society has sought to communicate its key safeguarding messages; and up until recently it has not done this with sufficient energy or commitment.

It is to be noted that the Society placed a notice on its website announcing the fact that the NBSCCCI was planning to undertake a review of the SPMS's safeguarding practice and encouraging anyone who has suffered abuse by members of the Society and who have not yet come forward to do so. This is commended. It is also important that this is built upon and the SPMS makes an effort to continue to reach out to those who have been hurt through contact with SPMS priests.

**Recommendation 11**

**The CLT should explore ways in which it can communicate its willingness to engage with victims of abuse committed by its members in a way which is supportive and respectful of their situation.**

The CLT in its role as the *de facto* Safeguarding Committee needs to take responsibility to develop, or to have developed by another nominated group, a Society-wide Communications Policy in relation to Child Safeguarding. As positive developments take place in the SPMS, it is important that these are shared with the members. The introduction of new policies or procedures or the creation of a new structure should continue to be advised to the membership as a whole through newsletters or meetings; and this should not be interrupted if / when the central authority in the Society transfers out of Ireland.

**Recommendation 12**

**The CLT in its role as the *de facto* Safeguarding Committee needs to take responsibility to develop, or to have developed by another nominated group, a Society-wide Communications Policy in relation to Child Safeguarding.**

## 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

Number	Criterion	Met fully or Met partially or Not met
6.1	Church personnel with special responsibilities for keeping children safe have access to specialist advice, support and information on child protection.	Met partially
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 partially
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 partially

This standard centres on two key groups of people. In the first instance, it seeks to ensure that those who have been harmed are provided with a compassionate and just response and should be offered appropriate pastoral care to rebuild their lives. Secondly, those who have harmed children should be helped to face up to the reality of their behaviour. It is the assessment of the reviewers that the Society has more work to do to meet an acceptable standard in both regards.

Some of the victims of abuse by priests from the Society are unidentified. This is either because the respondent priest has admitted to abuse but has not been able or willing to name his victims; or because the abuse that has come to light allegedly took place in an

African country 20 years or more ago and it is now extremely difficult to make contact with named victims who have not themselves come forward to make a complaint. As a result, attempts to reach out to these people and to confirm their present circumstances have been sporadic and unsuccessful. The situation for an unknown number of victims who are within the African continent is that they have had no redress. Survivors of abuse within Ireland are more likely to receive a response from the SPMS.

With regard to those who have perpetrated abuse, it must be noted that the Society has on occasions, sought professional advice with regard to the likelihood of an individual reoffending. The Society had the right to presume that the professional advice that they received was trustworthy and safe. Unfortunately, the quality of this advice was often poor and this led to situations where highly risky individuals were viewed as posing low or no threat to other children and were returned to ministry with tragic results. The Society leadership now regret decisions based on an erroneous understanding and it is important for them and their successors to learn from mistakes that have been made. It is essential that the Irish Church, with the assistance of the NBSCCCI, identifies practitioners and services that are professionally competent to provide assessment, guidance and treatment services to Church authorities on the island of Ireland.

Care needs to be taken with regard to the selection of appropriately trained and experienced professional practitioners from whom advice is sought in these matters. The NBSCCCI may be called upon to offer comment on who they would recommend in this area. The reviewers acknowledge and commend that the Society has made and maintained appropriate contact with the NBSCCCI since the introduction of the national 2009 standards and guidance and encourage the continuation of this link.

The most important professional assessment that the Society needs in relation to members who have abused a child / children is a Risk Assessment, which should then be used as the foundation for a written Risk Management Plan, which is implemented, reviewed, and if needs be, revised in the light of further information. There was an absence of well considered Risk Management Plans on the case files examined by the reviewers.

### **Recommendation 13**

**The CLT should satisfy itself that it is being supported by the provision of the best quality advice available to it when discharging its responsibilities in relation to all aspects of managing safeguarding cases; and should be clear about exactly what advice and guidance is being sought when making a referral to an outside professional practitioner or agency.**

**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>
<b>7.1</b>	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.	Not met
<b>7.2</b>	The human or financial resources necessary for implementing the plan are made available.	Fully Met
<b>7.3</b>	Arrangements are in place to monitor compliance with child protection policies and procedures.	Met partially
<b>7.4</b>	Processes are in place to ask parishioners (children and parents/ carers) about their views on policies and practices for keeping children safe.	Not applicable
<b>7.5</b>	All incidents, allegations/ suspicions of abuse are recorded and stored securely.	Met partially

As can be understood from what has already been reported in this review, the reviewers held significant concerns about the robustness of the case management arrangements that have been in place in the SPMS.

What is most worrying within the case records examined, is a historical failure on the part of those in authority to react appropriately to the abuse admitted to by the members of the Society. It is accepted by the reviewers that this impression was gained primarily through an examination of written material, but then this is the source of most of the information that is examined in the course of any review.

Two key principles apply. Firstly, that all children should be protected from harm regardless of where they reside in the world. Secondly, those who harm children should be held accountable for their actions and the Church as a whole, if seriously committed to the safeguarding of children, needs to remove from the clergy all those who have caused harm to a child. Neither of these principles is assisted by a failure to share relevant information with the appropriate authorities both within the Church and outside. It is surprising and disappointing to find that the penalties that exist within the code of Canon Law within the Church have not been applied to the members of the Society who have committed serious delicts.

The reviewers are not convinced by the argument that canonical sanctions have not been pursued because it is easier to manage offenders when they are within the Church authority rather than outside it. Removing someone from the priesthood because they have behaved in a way that has brought the Church and the clergy into disrepute, does not mean that they cannot remain within the religious community that is the Society. However, dismissing a man from the clerical state does communicate an important message with regard to how their behaviour is viewed within the Church as a whole and specifically within the Society.

**Recommendation 14**

**The St. Patrick's Missionary Society needs to develop and implement as a matter of priority a comprehensive written Child Safeguarding Plan, as required in Criteria 7.1 above.**

The full implementation of a Society child safeguarding plan would address the other responsibilities of the Society under Standard 7 that follow from it. The Leadership team have stated that they are committed to improving practice and to making the resources available for full implementation of a safeguarding plan. For this reason criterion 7.2 is fully met.

## **Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1**

**That the St. Patrick's Missionary Society create a dedicated set of pages on its website that are clearly marked as containing information about the Irish Region, to include the June 2012 *St. Patrick's Missionary Society – Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Children in the Region of Ireland*.**

### **Recommendation 2**

**The Society Leader should amend the policy and procedures to clarify the process of removal from ministry, where there is a semblance of truth to an allegation and notification to civil authorities has taken place.**

### **Recommendation 3**

**The Central Leadership Team (CLT) should ensure that the safeguarding standards that apply across all of the locations within which members of the SPMS minister internationally are clearly based on a commitment to protect children, support victims and effectively intervene with abusive members.**

### **Recommendation 4**

**The Central Leadership Team should devise an oversight process by which it can assure itself that the SPMS policies and procedures are being adhered to across all five regions.**

### **Recommendation 5**

**The CLT ensure that all allegations of clerical abuse are responded to quickly, in compliance with Church requirements and in accordance with the standards of the Society.**

### **Recommendation 6**

**The CLT should ensure that appropriate canonical sanctions in accordance with current Church guidance are placed on those who are suspected of having committed serious delicts involving children and who remain within the Society.**

### **Recommendation 7**

**The CLT should meet formally with the Irish region Advisory Panel to clarify any outstanding concerns that may exist for members of either group. This engagement should lead to the situation where access to all relevant information that is held within the Society is shared with those who are engaged in the task of deciding on how safeguarding cases should be responded to, and to ensure that appropriate management plans are in place and are working. At this meeting, all child safeguarding roles and responsibilities within the Society in Ireland need to be agreed and recorded.**

**Recommendation 8**

The Society Leader should receive a copy of the minutes from every meeting of each of the five separate Advisory Panels; and the CLT should initiate a system of internal audit to ensure that all panels are operating effectively.

**Recommendation 9**

The CLT should consider how web conferencing could be utilised by a competent trainer to help to strengthen the developing framework that it has put in place to safeguard vulnerable children.

**Recommendation 10**

The CLT should ensure that a Training-Needs Assessment is conducted among all members of the Irish region, and that a Training plan for that region is subsequently developed and implemented.

**Recommendation 11**

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**Recommendation 14**

The St. Patrick's Missionary Society needs to develop and implement as a matter of priority a comprehensive written Child Safeguarding Plan, as required in Criteria 7.1 above.

## **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 diocese / religious congregation by individuals or by the Civil Authorities in the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 1975 to date of review against Catholic clergy and/or religious still living and who are ministering/or who once ministered under the aegis of the diocese / religious congregation and examine/review and report on the nature of the response on the part of the diocese / religious congregation.
2. If deemed relevant, select a random sample of complaints or allegations, knowledge, suspicions or concerns of child sexual abuse, made to the diocese / religious congregation by individuals or by the Civil Authorities in the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 1975 to date of review against Catholic clergy and/or religious now deceased and who ministered under the aegis of the diocese / religious congregation and examine/review and report on the nature of the response on the part of the diocese / religious congregation.
3. To ascertain all of the cases during the relevant period in which the diocese / religious congregation:
  - 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 diocese / religious congregation.
4. To consider and report on the following matters:
  - child safeguarding policies and guidance materials currently in use in the diocese / religious congregation and an evaluation of their application;
  - communication by the diocese / religious congregation with the Civil Authorities;
  - current risks and their management.

## **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>1</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”.

### ***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).

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<sup>1</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 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.

**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 date of review and must be selected randomly in the presence of an independent observer.

**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.