



**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN  
IN THE DIOCESE OF MEATH**

**NOVEMBER 2011**

## Parish Audit

As 2011 comes to an end, parishes are asked to complete the annual self-audit. This exercise should help parishes to review their safeguarding practices. The audit provides the Diocese with a sense of the good working being done at local level and also identifies areas for development in the year ahead.

The two-page audit questionnaire is available at “Resource S” in the parish resources section of [www.meathsafeguarding.ie](http://www.meathsafeguarding.ie). This year you can fill out the form online prior to downloading it for signing. This audit should be completed by the Parish Safeguarding Representatives and given to the Parish Priest, who will send it to the Diocesan Office.

The deadline for completion is 25 November 2011. Please contact Sandra Neville if you have difficulties with any element of the parish audit.

## New guidance from HSE

The Government has published a revised document, “Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children” (2011). The aim of the document is to promote the safety and wellbeing of children. Personnel from the Diocese of Meath have met the HSE Children First Officer in the region since the publication of the national guidance. Our policies and procedures were reviewed in light of the publication to ensure compliance and best practice. The document is online at [www.hse.ie/go/childrenfirst](http://www.hse.ie/go/childrenfirst).



## Parental Consent for Photos

Many parishes send photographs of events and celebrations to local newspapers or add them to parish websites. If children are included in these photos, parental permission is required. This guidance is given by the Data Protection Office.

In order to ease this process, the consent form covering children taking part in regular parish activities – altar servers, choir members, readers etc – includes the following line: “I accept that my child may be included in photos or videos from Church-related events that might be published by the parish.” The consent form is available as “Resource K” at [www.meathsafeguarding.ie](http://www.meathsafeguarding.ie). There may be children who will not be covered by this procedure, in which case “Resource J3” (for occasional activities) should be used.

## Non-parish groups using parish property

Parish properties are frequently used by non-Church groups, providing various community or commercial services. Some of these groups, such as Irish dancing instructors or sports training, are working with children. The Parish Priest should contact the organisers of these activities, indicating the parish’s desire that all children are kept safe while present on church property. The organisers are required to complete “Resource J2” from [www.meathsafeguarding.ie](http://www.meathsafeguarding.ie) which asks about public liability insurance cover, child protection policy as well as familiarity with health and safety requirements for working with children.

## Advisory Case Management Committee

The last meeting took place on 11 August 2011, chaired by Fr John Byrne. All current cases and complaints were reviewed. The Designated Officer, Fr Seán Henry, reported on his ongoing meetings with the HSE and An Garda Síochána as well as the National Board for Safeguarding Children, Maynooth. The Advisory Case Management is satisfied with the handling of complaints and matters will continue to be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

## **Safeguarding Children Committee**

This Committee, which manages all aspects of policy development, training and support at diocesan and parish level, last met on 01 September 2011. Mrs Teresa Devlin from the National Board for Safeguarding Children, Maynooth made a presentation at the meeting, outlining the ongoing relationship between her office and the Diocese in the areas of training and audit.

The Committee has prepared several new policies relating to communications, recordings and data protection, as well as guidance on parental consent for the use of photographs. These documents are available at [www.meathsafeguarding.ie](http://www.meathsafeguarding.ie).

## **Resource Team**

Sandra Neville and Joan Walshe assist the Diocese of Meath with the implementation of policy and the provision of training.

Following a recent review, Joan will now concentrate fully on policy development, ensuring that our practices are compliant with new guidance from the HSE and the NBSC.

Sandra will conduct the field work in all parishes, supporting the clergy and parish safeguarding representatives at local level to maintain best practice on the ground.

## **Safeguarding Representatives, clergy and volunteers**

We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to you all for your help in safeguarding children in our parishes. Without your assistance, this work could not take place.