



## Safeguarding Report

### Diocesan Councils of Tuam and Limerick & Killaloe (April 2025)

#### Panel meetings

The *Safeguarding Trust* policy states **that each parish panel "should meet on a regular basis (at least twice) throughout the year"**. Recently I offered guidance to parish panels in regard to how they might best do this practically, including suggestions and templates as to what should be on the panel meeting agendas. Where a panel does not already have a working pattern of two or more meetings a year, I suggest that the minimum two panel meetings a year should take place:

1. prior to the Easter general vestry meeting
2. and in August/September.

Where there is more than one panel in a group of parishes, I am encouraging the panels to meet together where appropriate to do so. Most of the things for discussion at routine panel meetings are things of relevance to all panels in the group, and it may be an encouragement to engage with them as part of a larger group. **However, anything of a sensitive nature (especially child protection concerns or disclosures) must only be discussed among the relevant panel.**

#### Safeguarding checklist for new select vestries

Until this year, safeguarding items were included in the Easter vestry packs sent out by the diocesan secretaries. However, in order to streamline all of the things that need to be done annually as part of safeguarding compliance, the diocesan secretaries and I have recommended that some of what may have been done in the past at the Easter vestry would in future be done at the first meeting of the newly formed select vestry, in addition to some additional things which many parishes have not done up until now. As this means that first select vestry meeting will have a fuller agenda than just electing a secretary and treasurer, **I have encouraged this first meeting of the newly formed select vestry to take place on a different day after the Easter vestry (but before the 24<sup>th</sup> of May).**

In addition, many people across the Dioceses had requested that I provide them with a checklist to help them get on top of the safeguarding compliance required by their parish(es). I hope that the **"Safeguarding checklist for new select vestries"** (which has been sent to incumbents/priests-in-charge, select vestry secretaries, and parish panel members) will meet this need by providing a helpful guide as to what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, and who it needs to be done by.

#### Annual online safeguarding returns

The link for parishes to submit their online safeguarding return for the calendar year 2024 is open and has been circulated. **All parishes must complete this by Friday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2025: a separate return must be completed for each select vestry in a group of parishes, even if there is a shared parish panel.** The return could be completed by the incumbent/priest-in-charge, the secretary of the select vestry, or a member of the parish panel. Where possible, the select vestry should have the opportunity

to discuss the return before it is submitted. At the very least, the submitted return ought to be discussed at a select vestry meeting so that the members know what has been submitted on the vestry's behalf.

### Parish panel training

Dr. Niall Moore (the Church of Ireland's Safeguarding Officer for the Republic of Ireland) delivered training for parish panel members online (via Zoom) on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025. This was hosted by our Dioceses but was also open to attendees from other parts of the Church of Ireland. In total, 37 people were trained at this session, **twelve of whom were from the Dioceses of Tuam, Limerick & Killaloe.**

### Worker training

Online “worker” training (for clergy, staff, and volunteers) will be delivered by Dr. Catherine Emerson and the Rev'd. Carole Reynolds in May – to both of whom may I take this opportunity to express my appreciation! As before, Part 1 of the training is a pre-recorded video, which must be watched before anyone attends Part 2 to complete their training. There are two dates on which Part 2 of the training will be delivered live on Zoom: **Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> May at 7:30 pm and Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at 7:30 pm.** If have not received the link to the Part 1 video and would like it, or if you have watched Part 1 and wish to register for Part 2, please email me at [safeguarding@tlk.ie](mailto:safeguarding@tlk.ie).

### Diocesan Support Team (DST)

The next meeting of the DST is scheduled to take place **via Zoom on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2025.**

### Auditing of parishes

Since the last Diocesan Council meetings, **eight audit visits to parishes have taken place.** Mr. Kieran Sparling visited the Killarney & Aghadoe Union; Mr. Mike O'Sullivan conducted an audit visit to the Tralee & Dingle Group; and Professor Michael Mulqueen made visits to Galway Parish and Kilcummin Parish, Oughterard. In addition, I visited the Aughaval Group; Straid Parish, Foxford; the Killala Group; and the Tuam & Omey Group. I would like to record my thanks to all the incumbents/priests-in-charge and the parishioners who facilitated and engaged with these audits. It is hoped that audit visits to the Rathkeale & Kilnaughtin Group, the Kenmare & Dromod Union, and the Birr Group will take place before the end of Eastertide.

I am very grateful to Kieran, Mike, and Michael for their involvement in the ongoing work of auditing – and particularly to Kieran and Mike who have just conducted their first audit visits. It would be wonderful to have more auditors from around the Dioceses, but I do feel we have **a particular need at the moment for some female auditors and for some auditors from Tuam, Killala & Achonry.** If anyone thinks they might be able and willing to consider becoming involved as an auditor (or indeed as a trainer), please let me know and we explore together what is involved.

The 22<sup>nd</sup> of April marks one year since I started work as Diocesan Safeguarding Compliance Officer. Once again, I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to serve you, and all in the Dioceses of Tuam, Limerick & Killaloe, in this role. I have enjoyed the year which has passed and am looking forward to the work of the year ahead!

*Damian Shorten*  
(Diocesan Safeguarding Compliance Officer)  
Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2025