



# SAFEGUARDING MATTERS

in the Catholic Church in Scotland

October 2022

## “So, let me be clear . . .”



**A**ddressing the SCSSA’s first national conference, the Hon. Lady Rae (Board Chair) stressed that the agency will operate fully independently of the Church.

*“I personally recruited the Directors to the SCSSA Board; together we have appointed the agency staff. We are determining our own priorities, informed by research and developments in Safeguarding, and by the advice that we are seeking from practitioners and, in particular, from those who have survived abuse in the Church.”*

Lady Rae recognised the significant challenge that was faced by the new agency: *“I do not doubt the challenges that lie ahead. Safeguarding is not easy. But it is vital that we all play our parts to ensure the safety and wellbeing of every person who participates in any Church activity.”*

*“All of us – laypeople, ordained or consecrated, religious, deacons, priests and bishops - **all of us** - must work together to uphold the safeguarding standards that have been designed to help us all to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse or harm. This is the vocation of all those who have been baptised.”*

Lady Rae thanked the thousands of Church volunteers who dedicate their time, energy and expertise to manage risk and to keep people safe.

She concluded: *“I am determined that everyone can make a contribution to developing the culture of care that should be the hallmark of safeguarding policy and practice in the Church.”*

The Conference, which took place on Saturday 1st October in the University of Strathclyde, was the first national Safeguarding conference since 2019 for people from across the Church in Scotland to meet together (almost 150 attended in person while 144 participated via Zoom).

SCSSA Director **Paul Donaldson** was impressed by the participants. Paul said, *“It was a great opportunity to meet so many people with years of experience in Safeguarding. I look forward to accompanying them and learning from them in the years ahead.”*

**Helena Rameckers**, SCSSA Head of Safeguarding Training, was delighted with the feedback on the day and the evaluations that were submitted. *“We had hoped that our programme provided the right balance of inputs and opportunities to contribute ideas. So many positive evaluation responses show that there was something for everyone. We owe much to those who assisted on the day, in particular those who facilitated the breakout rooms.”*

# Walking Together in Safeguarding

## The Conference: inputs and outcomes

The Conference programme tried to provide a range of inputs that were intended to inform and inspire the participants, but also to engage with them by seeking their advice on how the SCSSA should work to improve Safeguarding practice. **Key input 1** included an address by **Lady Rae**, followed by a summary of the agency's key priorities, provided by Vice Chair **Pat O'Meara** who then asked all the participants, in breakout discussions to contribute their own thoughts on what the agency should prioritise. The feedback that emerged from these discussions will prove vital to the SCSSA Board as they refine their plans. It is summarised on the next page.

In **Key input 2** **Fr Hans Zollner SJ**, provided an international perspective on how the Catholic Church had been responding to the ongoing crisis of sexual abuse. He stressed the importance of everyone in the Catholic community recognising their shared responsibilities for continuing to keep people safe in the Church.

In **Key Input 3** **Dani Wardman**, CEO of the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS) in England & Wales, spoke to her experience of walking with victims and survivors of abuse in the Church. She stressed the need for empathy, introspection and knowledge.

Further short sessions previewed an online Safeguarding Risk Assessment Tool that is under development, highlighted the major themes that were found in the reports of the Independent Safeguarding Audits in all 8 Scottish Dioceses and featured some practitioners' insights into how Safeguarding is improving in various contexts.



## The Conference: evaluations and feedback

At the time of publishing this newsletter, **108** evaluations had been received. While we recommend careful consideration of the full **Conference Evaluations Report** ([link here](#)), the following snapshots provide a good flavour of the responses.

**99%** rated the conference overall as "excellent", "very good" or "good".

**98%** were "satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" that the Conference enhanced their understanding of safeguarding as a journey we are all called to undertake.

**97%** reported that the Conference did "very well" or "quite well" in enhancing their understanding of the remit of the SCSSA.

**92%** reported that the Conference did "very well" or "quite well" in enhancing their understanding of how the Church is responding to Pope Francis' call to "personal and communal conversion" in relation to safeguarding.

**88%** reported that the Conference did "very well" or "quite well" in enhancing their understanding of the Church's accompaniment of survivors of abuse.

Lady Rae's opening comments set the right tone for the day and I appreciated her acknowledgement of the work that had gone before the creation of SCSSA.

The speakers provided an excellent balance of content and covered a broad spectrum of perceptions of the various elements of Safeguarding.

The whole day was very well put together - it was a full programme, but when so many people came such a long way, that is a good thing. Fr Hans' input was excellent and very thought provoking. The whole conference was very positive and it demonstrated how the Church is responding to Pope Francis.

I have a slight concern about the number of actions that the agency has set itself. Forty plus actions sounds like too many things to focus on.

I feel very content that we have such dedicated well-equipped people who will be there to help and guide us in our combined desire to uphold our safeguarding principles for the protection of our children and vulnerable adults. Thank you to each one of you.

## Conference resources

**Videos** of each of the inputs can be viewed [here on the SCSSA website](#) where you will also find copies of the slides used by each speaker. [The full Conference Evaluations Report can be read here.](#)

# Feedback on 3 Questions

Following Lady' Rae's opening address on the SCSSA, Vice Chair Pat O'Meara provided a summary of the agency's key priorities. Subsequently, participants were asked in breakout groups and Zoom rooms to discuss 3 questions which invited them to contribute their own thoughts on what the agency should prioritise. It was made clear that all the feedback from these discussions would be considered fully by the SCSSA Board and staff and that it would inform the work of the Board's Committees on: *Survivor Engagement, Safeguarding Training, Audit, Policy & Resources*.

We want to thank everyone who contributed to these discussions. The sheer volume of responses received prevents us from including every individual comment made in the Breakout Discussions. However, all the comments and have been collated for the relevant SCSSA committees and our [Breakout Discussions Feedback Report \(available here\)](#) summarises the main themes. If your own comment has not been included in the report, please be assured that it has been passed to the appropriate committee to help inform their future work.

Below you will find some of the **key themes** that we have identified in the feedback that was received.

## Question 1: What are your hopes for how the work of the SCSSA will assist you in your own Safeguarding role?

Religious Congregations	Parishes	Catholic Organisations	General
Strengthen communication links, as members of Religious communities can feel isolated from the main channels of communication.	Provide practical, bite-sized information about IGlv2 to help embed the culture of safeguarding, taking current realities into account.	A clear internal structure for the SCSSA staff and Board, so that it's clear who to contact and how to contact them as issues arise.	Establishing an independent agency is a welcome and critical step, but communication must be clear and concise.

## Question 2: What gaps have you identified in the support available to you and what specific training needs can you identify?

Religious Congregations	Parishes	Catholic Organisations	General
Training must be developed which is specific to the needs of individual congregations, and which considers abuse within Congregations.	Guided opportunities for development to be undertaken by PPs and PSCs together.	Regular networking days with attendance from SCSSA staff with a view to developing training packages.	National training specific for DSAGs and DRAMTs to improve function and outcomes.

## Question 3: What suggestions do you have for ensuring that survivors' voices are incorporated into all the work of the SCSSA?

Embedding a safeguarding culture into our communities and parishes so that every victim of abuse feels safe in our midst.	Safeguarding literature should be available in every parish.  Bespoke training for PPs and PSCs.	Development of survivor-informed liturgical materials for use by clergy and religious.	Development of trauma-informed training and services.
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# News from the SCSSA

## Now that we have started . . .

**Paul Donaldson** and **Helena Rameckers** walked through the doors of the SCSSA offices in August 2022 and immediately got down to work to acquaint themselves with the Board's plans, meeting with various groups and individuals and preparing for the National Conference. Here they reflect on their first two months at work with the SCSSA.



**PAUL** says: "I have come to have a real appreciation of the enthusiasm, commitment, and drive of the many people I have had the pleasure to meet within the Safeguarding community of the Catholic Church in Scotland. Most are volunteers, which deepens my appreciation for the very significant work that they do, in their own time, to ensure children and vulnerable adults are kept safe. It is critically important, regardless of where you are in Scotland, that you are fully supported and provided with the best tools to carry out your role. I am committed to ensuring that the Agency develops strong working relationships and is visible to you all. In response to the feedback from the National Safeguarding Conference, I aim to ensure that the training delivered is relevant to the roles performed, is of real quality, and that the Agency builds on the great work already done to develop policies and processes that will be considered best practice and will withstand scrutiny against the standards set out within In God's Image v2."



**HELENA** says: "The appetite for safeguarding training in every corner of the Catholic Church in Scotland is huge. It is a privilege to listen to and work with people from all areas of the Church – clergy, religious, volunteers in diocesan and parish-based roles, and employees – to find out what the needs and expectations are, and what expertise is available to draw on. My biggest priority now, in conjunction with the Board's Training Sub-Committee, is to form the new Safeguarding Training Advisory Group, which will enable people with experience in a variety of Church safeguarding roles to assist me with the job of prioritising the many training needs that have been identified. The development of a comprehensive package of good quality e-modules, online videos and in-person training initiatives will take a long time, but I am very much looking forward to the challenge!"

## New starts in Safeguarding



**Bishop Brian McGee** has taken over episcopal responsibility for overseeing safeguarding matters within the Bishops' Conference of Scotland. He takes over from **Bishop Joseph Toal** who had previously held this responsibility for almost 10 years.

- **Gerry McBride** has been appointed as Safeguarding Adviser in the Diocese of Paisley.
- **Tony Fisher** has been appointed as Safeguarding Adviser in the Diocese of Galloway.
- **Scott Mackenzie** will take up the role of Safeguarding Adviser in the Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh in January 2023.

## Final report of the Independent Review Group



The Independent Review Group, established in 2017 by the Bishops of Scotland, published its final report on 15th October 2022 ([available here](#)). **Baroness Helen Liddell**, Chair of the IRG, thanked all the survivors who had come forward. She also acknowledged the contribution of the Bishops: "From embracing the theological foundation of safeguarding to providing the resources for audit, which has been substantial, they have listened and acted." She specifically thanked Bishop Toal and the staff of the BCOS General Secretariat who had assisted the IRG over 5 years.

**Bishop Hugh Gilbert**, BCOS President, thanked Baroness Liddell and her IRG colleagues for their contribution to the development of the Church's improved approach to Safeguarding: "In freely offering your expertise and your commitment during these years, you have provided great assistance, as the Church has been walking on this long (and continuing) journey towards improved Safeguarding practice. May God bless you for that."

## Report of Child Abuse Inquiry in England & Wales

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), chaired by Professor Alexis Jay OBE, was established in 2015 to look at the extent to which institutions in England and Wales discharged their duty to protect children from sexual abuse. [Its report, which was published on 20th October 2022, can be found here.](#)



## INDEPENDENT DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING AUDIT REPORTS

Reports of the independent safeguarding audits, carried out by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), in all 8 Scottish dioceses can be found here: [www.bcos.org.uk/Safeguarding](http://www.bcos.org.uk/Safeguarding)

This is the **9th** newsletter published to provide information about national developments in the safeguarding practice of the Catholic Church in Scotland. If you have suggestions for topics to be covered in future issues, please email these to: [comms@scssa.org.uk](mailto:comms@scssa.org.uk)