

Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service



General Secretariat Office Bishops' Conference of Scotland 64 Aitken Street Airdrie

Introduction

The Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service (SCSS) was established by the Bishops' Conference of Scotland (in 2004), to lead the Church's strategy for developing effective Safeguarding arrangements. Its primary role is to support the Safeguarding work of Dioceses, Religious Institutes and Catholic organisations that interact with vulnerable groups. SCSS provides support and training to Diocesan & Religious Institute personnel to ensure that Safeguarding standards are met consistently across the country. SCSS offers support through the collation of PVG applications, the design and provision of training, the development of guidance and the facilitation of an annual Audit to check compliance with national Safeguarding standards.

The National Safeguarding Co-ordinator is also expected to offer advice and counsel to Safeguarding staff in Dioceses and Religious Institutes as required by the Bishops' Conference of Scotland.

Within our parishes and ministries across Scotland, there are over 9,000 volunteers, 8 Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Groups, 72 Safeguarding Trainers, over 900 Priests, 400 Religious Brothers and Sisters and more than 500 Parish Safeguarding Coordinators.

The call for evidence

The Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service is pleased to be able to offer a response to the call for evidence in relation to the Disclosure (Scotland) Bill 2019. As National Safeguarding Coordinator, I am also the Lead Collator for PVGs for the Catholic Church. The process and systems are managed professionally, and we are supported in this role by the team at Volunteer Scotland Disclosure Services.

The simplification of the Scheme provision is welcome, and the identification of roles will assist in clarifying any potential misunderstanding of the requirements for PVG Scheme membership.

The change to PVGs only lasting five years will align itself positively with our current system. Towards the end of 2016, I began a consultation with the eight Bishops of Scotland to ask that consideration was given to the updating of Existing PVG Members every five years. The reasons for this were focussed around the high threshold which exists in relation to Disclosure Scotland alerting SCSS about any convictions. The fact that this notification only related to more serious offences and consideration for Listing and Barring, left a potential gap in the information sharing and therefore a risk to the children and vulnerable adults we care for. There are certain roles (for example, driving vulnerable young adults to a weekly activity) would require risk assessment if the volunteer driver was convicted of significant driving offences (whilst already a PVG Scheme member). There might be circumstances when the Diocesan safeguarding personnel might not be notified. Since 2017, the Catholic Church in Scotland has introduced mandatory Existing Member Updates for all PVG Scheme members every five years.

The Disclosure (Scotland) Bill 2019 brings the requirement for PVG membership to be renewed every five years. SCSS welcomes this and it will assist the work of the respective Safeguarding personnel locally and nationally that the Scheme member will be automatically notified of the requirement to renew. Further, the extended and then discretionary periods for renewal will place an additional emphasis on the importance of safe recruitment which is an important strand in our current safeguarding training on prevention.

The proposed change of language from 'regulated work' to 'regulated roles' will also assist our work.

SCSS would like further clarity about the proposal that Ministers will have powers to impose conditions on those who are being considered for Listing and Barring. We already have within our process that if anyone is being considered that the individual should step aside from their role until a decision is made. Even if the person is not Listed the Diocesan safeguarding personnel would still risk assess suitability for the person to continue in their role.

Tina Campbell

National Safeguarding Coordinator

25th September 2019