

DIOCESE OF PAISLEY SAFEGUARDING OFFICE

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Annual Safeguarding statement from Bishop John Keenan – October 2022

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we approach the Solemnity of All Saints, I want to update our Parish communities of the steps that have been taken within the last year to grow and strengthen our Safeguarding procedures in line with Church policies, procedures and legislation.

The aim of these endeavours is to promote a 'culture of care' within our Diocese, where everyone works together to create a safe & protected environment, and to care for our survivors so that people can participate in Parish life to the fullest extent.

Since our last annual announcement our Diocesan safeguarding procedures have been subject to independent audit by the Social Care Institute for Excellence, who provided an assessment that the Paisley Diocese has a well embedded culture of safeguarding, which is apparent theologically, strategically and operationally. Overall, the results of the audit are very encouraging; however, this is not something that is taken for granted and we will continue to work towards several areas identified for development in the forthcoming year.

I am hugely grateful to all our clergy, parish safeguarding co-ordinators and the Diocesan safeguarding team for the contribution they made to the audit, and more so in the daily work they undertake to make sure our parishes are as safe as humanly possible. Working together like this is one of our key strengths and one which is valued greatly by me as Bishop.

Starting from next year, the newly formed independent Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (SCSSA), will begin to undertake this crucial role and is currently working with Dioceses across Scotland to refresh and improve standards to a national consistency. The establishment of the agency is another positive step in our safeguarding journey and one which I believe shows great promise in building trust and confidence in our approach and particularly as that relates to supporting anyone who has experienced abuse.

In a local context, we offer our sincere thanks and best wishes to Mary Kearns our former Safeguarding Advisor, who has now moved on to a new role and welcome her successor, Gerry McBride who will continue the good work Mary and the safeguarding team have started.

The contact details for this role have not changed and are available, along with your Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinators, on posters in each Church and also via the Diocesan website. We are here to help and will always deal sensitively with anyone raising a safeguarding concern.

Links to the full report of the Diocesan Safeguarding audit and the SCCSA website are also available from this location along with the current version of 'In Gods Image', our national Catholic safeguarding manual, which fully outlines our policy, procedures and standards for safeguarding.

Thank you for listening today and for keeping all our parish safeguarding coordinators, volunteers, priests, deacons and religious in your prayers. We also thank everyone who volunteers their time, expertise and skills to build up our parish community.

Please also continue to keep in your prayers anyone who has been affected by abuse. We pray for a generosity of spirit to ensure the vulnerable are protected and for a compassionate heart so that we can reach out to those who have been wounded by such terrible acts.