

# SAFEGUARDING MATTERS

in the Catholic Church in Scotland

OCTOBER 2024



## “Look deep inside - and change what needs to be changed.”

**C**lerical abuse survivor Laurence Gien appealed to Pope Francis, Cardinals, Bishops and laypeople for change as they gathered in St Peter's Basilica for a penitential liturgy ahead of the opening of the Synod.

Now a successful musician based in Germany, Laurence spoke of being sexually abused by a priest in his native South Africa when he was 11. His grim testimony was powerful:

*“Far from Rome, in a small town in Southern Africa, a predator honed in on me ... on a beautiful South African morning, he led me by the hand to a dark place where, in the screaming silence, he took from me what should never be taken from any child.”*

He explained that, for survivors, the effects of abuse are “long-lasting,” and that the “psychological toll often includes feelings of betrayal, shame, anxiety, depression.”

*Many survivors remain unnamed and unheard, their stories silenced by fear, stigma, or threats.”*

*“For decades, accusations were ignored, covered up, or handled internally rather than reported to authorities.”*

*“This lack of accountability has not only allowed abusers to continue their behaviour but has also eroded the trust that so many once placed in the institution.”*

The penitential liturgy concluded a two-day retreat for the 368 members of the Synod of Bishops on Synodality, which will run from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

During the penitential liturgy, Pope Francis and 7 cardinals read requests for forgiveness written by the Pope himself “because it was necessary to call our main sins by name.”

Fr Hans Zollner, director of the Institute of Anthropology, said that it “was a very important moment,” as it showed “that there is an awareness of the necessity to acknowledge what harm has been done to people” and “to really speak with clarity and without fussing

around about what types of crimes and sins have been committed by clergy, by religious and by lay people in the Church.”

Fr Zollner pointed out that “it is also a question of the compassion, of the empathy, of the closeness that Church leaders and Church members, all of us, show to victims of abuse because they need to feel that they are not expelled again,” but rather that the Church “is engaged in reaching out to them and not waiting until they beg for some recognition or some reparation.”

**SOURCE:** [Report by Pauline Guzik in OSV News](#) which is a national and international wire service reporting on Catholic issues and issues that affect Catholics.

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# CPD Day for Safeguarding Trainers



*"I didn't want to come today... I am now very excited to go back and share what I've learned here."*

*"They have shown us today how accommodating different learning styles makes for a very effective training experience."*

On Saturday 5th October 2024, around 50 safeguarding volunteers - joined by a further 20 online - gathered in Strathclyde University's Technology & Innovation Centre to participate in a day of CPD led by Tammy Banks and Gemma McDonald of [Taye Training](#).

Tammy introduced attendees to her award-winning training methodology - '[Training4Influence](#)' - and the values that underpin it (cf graphic below).



She and Gemma then took delegates on a journey through some of the elements of their methodology, simultaneously giving delegates the space to explore how it can be applied to the Safeguarding Induction Training which is mandatory in the Catholic Church in Scotland.

Tammy demonstrated the impact of using accelerated learning techniques such as providing attendees with pens and paper for doodling, sweets and fidget toys. She also led Trainers in exploring how well Induction Training aligns with the 'Training4Influence' methodology.

She explained that, to fully align with this methodology, safeguarding training should be standardised in its content and created by subject matter experts, while allowing trauma-informed trainers to meet individual and group needs.

Using the 'Training4Influence' methodology, delegates analysed our induction training materials and offered the following critiques.

#### **They currently provide:**

- accurate legislation and guidance
- sector-specific national professional standards and quality assurance expectations
- subject expert updates and best practice
- clear information on mission and values
- some tailoring for learning styles, including videos, music, group discussions and Q&As.

#### **They could be developed further to provide:**

- accessibility, e.g., adding subtitles to videos
- options for delivery in other languages and BSL
- pre-course information to support delegates to prepare.

A summary of the feedback received on the day, as well as evaluations of the event, and information on next steps [will be published on the SCSSA website](#) in due course.

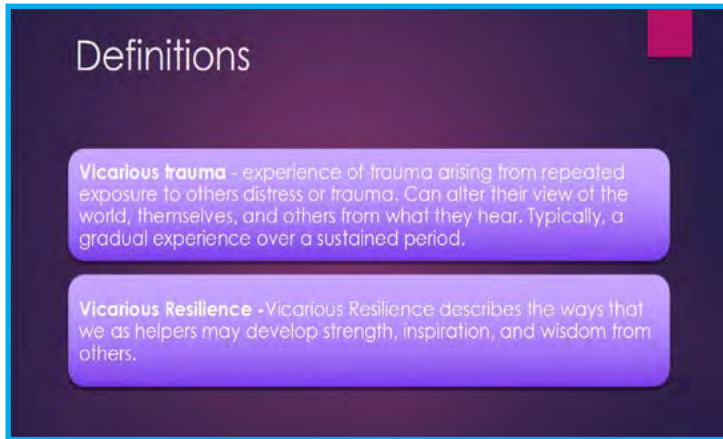
Meantime, Helena Rameckers would like to thank Taye Training, for a very informative and enjoyable event, and all delegates for their active participation and excellent contributions on the day.



# Safeguarding Training News

## STAG DEVELOPMENT DAY

On Saturday, 31st August 2024 the **Safeguarding Training Advisory Group** held its annual development day at the Gillis Centre in Edinburgh. STAG was joined for the day by **Alex O'Donnell** from *Epione*, who gave the keynote input on trauma-informed practice at the 2023 National Safeguarding Conference.



**Definitions**

**Vicarious trauma** - experience of trauma arising from repeated exposure to others distress or trauma. Can alter their view of the world, themselves, and others from what they hear. Typically, a gradual experience over a sustained period.

**Vicarious Resilience** - Vicarious Resilience describes the ways that we as helpers may develop strength, inspiration, and wisdom from others.



**Final Reflections**

Are there any key points from the presentation that might be helpful in developing the PSC safeguarding role?

The main focus of the day was on learning more about how trauma-informed principles can be applied in parishes, and in particular as they relate to the role of the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator. After a very interesting and thought provoking morning input from Alex (and an enjoyable lunch), the group then discussed in depth how to develop a new training package for PSCs.

This new training for PSCs will include a robust initial training period, including the development of an accredited training course, and an ongoing learning pathway to ensure that volunteers carrying out this vital role can be confident in their knowledge and skills. SCSSA Head of Training Helena Rameckers commented:

*"We are committed to adapting training to suit the needs of our busy volunteers, so please look out for future requests to help shape the training package as it develops. We are most grateful to those PSCs who have already signed up to participate in future focus groups."*

## NEW SAFEGUARDING WEBINAR SERIES 2024

To support training and development in Safeguarding, we are planning to provide a series of webinars in late 2024 and into 2025. These FREE webinars are intended to be of interest not only to clergy, religious and laypeople in different safeguarding roles but to anyone interested in safeguarding in Church contexts.

### SERIES 1 - THE CROSS OF THE MOMENT: 27<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER & 4<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2024

In the first series of two webinars, we will welcome two researchers involved in the recently published report *'The Cross of the Moment'* which explores how the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church in England & Wales has been experienced by different groups, most notably the survivors and victims of abuse.

You can find information on the report at <https://www.scssa.org.uk/Learning/The-Cross-of-the-Moment>.



SCOTTISH CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS AGENCY

**The Cross of the Moment**  
**WEBINARS**

opportunities to learn from researchers involved in 'The Cross of the Moment' - a study on the impact of clerical child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in England and Wales, exploring how the crisis has been experienced by different groups within the Church, most notably the victims and survivors of abuse

27 NOVEMBER 2024 | 7 PM - 8.15 PM  
04 DECEMBER 2024 | 7 PM - 8.30 PM

SCAN to register



# View from the SCSSA Board



**Pat O'Meara** has spent the last two and a half years as a non-executive board member and the vice-chair of the SCSSA.

Pat, a retired senior officer with the Scottish Ambulance Service, reports:

"I have seen first-hand how dedicated to monitoring safeguarding within the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland the Board members are. It has been a privilege to contribute to the vital work of the agency in ensuring the safety and well-being of children and vulnerable individuals."

"My role on the Board has involved collaborating with fellow directors to oversee governance, review safeguarding policies, and ensure that robust practices are in place. The agency has engaged with stakeholders including Church representatives and safeguarding experts, and survivors of abuse, to drive accountability and maintain transparency in safeguarding procedures. This work is both challenging and rewarding, and we are committed to promoting a culture of safety and protection."

"Our focus has been on continuously reviewing and updating systems and providing support to prevent harm, ensuring that the Church is a safer place for everyone, especially those at risk. It has been a humbling and essential duty, driven by the need for change and justice".

"I want to highlight the work of the directors who chair the sub-committees that were established: [education and training](#), [survivor engagement](#), [safeguarding and audit](#), [policy and resources](#), and [finance and remuneration](#) as key to the early successes of the agency. I commend the small full-time team of Paul Donaldson, Helena Rameckers and Mary Stein as being at the core of our most important work."

## Paul Donaldson writes . . .

We are steadfast in our commitment to deliver top-tier education resources for all who are involved in safeguarding within the Catholic Church in Scotland, including the clergy, employees and volunteers. Through the work of our Safeguarding Training Advisory Group (STAG), we will develop a programme of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities with the aim of improving the skills, knowledge and confidence of those involved in working with, and facilitating activities for, children and vulnerable adults in the Church.

### **SAFEGUARDING TRAINING FOR ALL**

One critical aspect of safeguarding is identifying and managing risks effectively, in order to protect those in need of care and support. To achieve this, we want to ensure that everyone entrusted with safeguarding responsibilities receives the highest possible standard of training and opportunities for learning. While we recognise that progress on this front will be gradual, we are sure that the enthusiasm and dedication of volunteers is already setting a strong foundation for this to be achieved.

### **ONLINE LEARNING PORTAL**

We acknowledge the significant demands placed on safeguarding volunteers, who often juggle these responsibilities with their personal and professional lives. Time is a precious commodity, and we fully understand the challenges of integrating training into busy schedules. To address this, the Agency is committed to making training more accessible. So, one of our key objectives will be the development of an online learning portal. Although this will take time and resources to develop and fully implement, it is imperative that it meets the needs of all users, and that training is tailored to the specific roles and responsibilities of safeguarding volunteers.



### **POTRZEBUJEMY POMOCY (WE NEED HELP)**

If any Polish speakers would be willing to undertake training to deliver **Safeguarding Induction Training** (online or in person) to Polish-speaking volunteers, please contact Helena by email: [helena.rameckers@scssa.org.uk](mailto:helena.rameckers@scssa.org.uk)

# Safeguarding Self-Evaluation 2023

## SELF-EVALUATION SUBMISSIONS WERE RECEIVED FROM:

	DIOCESES	377	PARISHES (11 PARISHES DID NOT SUBMIT DATA)
65	RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS	40	CATHOLIC ORGANISATIONS

The 2023 safeguarding practice evaluation process commenced slightly later in the year, due to some alterations being made to the process and format used in the new self-evaluation questionnaires provided to participants.

The SCSSA's *Safeguarding & Audit subcommittee* continues to review the evaluation/audit process and intends to develop a more user-friendly and informative Quality Assurance framework in 2025. The new framework will be designed to enable practitioners to reflect qualitatively on their safeguarding processes and to identify areas of good practice, as well as where improvements can be made.

Given the importance of engaging with users during the design of the new framework, we shall ensure that the views of users are considered, whilst balancing the need to demonstrate scrutiny and oversight of safeguarding practices within the Catholic Church in Scotland. Whilst the new framework is being designed, we plan to embark on a much lighter evaluation process in early 2025 for the purposes of collecting the key safeguarding data.

We anticipate that, by early 2026, we will begin the journey towards a more risk-based and thematic safeguarding evaluation process that is guided by the general themes highlighted in the most recent evaluation exercise.

## Learning from Self-Evaluation

### LACK OF CONSISTENCY

It is clear that there are some inconsistencies in how information and data is recorded, collected and managed by the SCSSA, and within the parishes, dioceses, religious congregations and Catholic organisations. Evidence of this was found in the responses provided within submissions in respect of:

- ◇ the completion, recording and retention of *Safeguarding Risk Assessments*<sup>1</sup>
- ◇ the understanding within many parishes of the process attached to *Safe Worship Plans*<sup>2</sup>
- ◇ the recording of employees and volunteers with PVGs and Letters of Approvals within some parishes
- ◇ the inconsistencies attached to the details and records being maintained around Visiting Clergy.

It is recognised that it will take time and considerable effort to bring about more consistency across the Church safeguarding structures in respect of the collections and recording of data, a deeper understanding of some safeguarding concepts and improved systems to aid the collection and recording of data. Central to this will be ensuring there are strong communication processes within and between dioceses, religious congregations and Catholic organisations which will help reduce the possibility of inconsistencies and discrepancies.



1 Safeguarding Risk Assessment is a procedure to assess potential safeguarding risks in certain environments and activities and to identify actions to mitigate such risks.

2 An agreed and documented plan that enables individuals who are under supervision and may present a continuing risk to the community (including sex offenders) to participate in public worship safely.

# Learning from Self-Evaluation (contd.)

## IMPROVING PRACTICE

Whilst **67%** (n252) of parishes feel that safeguarding practices have improved, many reported not having a Safeguarding Action Plan, or appreciating its benefit, as a means of reflection with the aim of identifying good practice or specific areas that might need attention. It is noted that many parishes were still in a post-Covid recovery phase, with unanticipated changes in safeguarding personnel and people moving away from volunteer roles, affecting how safeguarding is practised.

Many parishes stated a commitment to rectify the situation and to communicate with their respective dioceses to develop Safeguarding Action Plans. It is also clear that an increased appreciation and understanding of the benefits of maintaining Action Plans is advantageous, but recognition of geographical and demographical variances will need to be considered.

## GROWING CONFIDENCE

**70%** (n 263) of parishes indicate having confidence in dealing with safeguarding issues, with some expressing a desire to learn more about Trauma-Informed Practice, Action Planning and responding to disclosures of abuse. This suggests the commitment of parish volunteers to keeping their parish communities safe.

## GOOD COMMUNICATIONS

It would seem that communication within parishes, and between parishes and dioceses, is good:

- ◇ **77%** (n287) of parishes held discussions on completing the self-evaluation questionnaire
- ◇ **64%** (n238) of parishes stated their Safeguarding Action Plans (SAPs) were developed by more than one person, suggesting good co-operation
- ◇ **92%** (n342) stated that the Parish Priest (PP) and Parish Safeguarding Coordinator (PSC) would meet regularly to discuss safeguarding matters within the parish.

## TRAINING

- ◇ **53%** (n198) parishes requested more online guidance and training
- ◇ **50%** (n188) requested more communication generally from the SCSSA and their dioceses
- ◇ **36%** (n137) requested more communication with Diocesan Safeguarding Teams
- ◇ **19%** (n70) requested more communication between the PP and PSC
- ◇ **37%** (n139) wanted to share more best practice
- ◇ **27%** (n101) wanted more networking opportunities.

## EMERGING THEMES TO BE ADDRESSED

Whilst we say that communication is good, it is clear that practitioners would welcome more opportunities to engage with training and opportunities to learn from best practice. This is an area that the Agency is looking to develop through increasing the availability of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities, and through the provision of good quality safeguarding conferences for safeguarding practitioners in parishes, religious congregations and organisations.

The themes that have emerged during this year's process will form part of the future examination of safeguarding practice with the purpose of identifying where good practice exists and where improvements may be necessary. This evolving process will require time and the involvement of all those with safeguarding responsibilities within the Church.

Whilst this may seem like a daunting task, it does open up an exciting opportunity to design a framework that gives confidence, both to communities and practitioners, that safeguarding practices within the Church prioritise the wellbeing and safety of all children and vulnerable adults who participate in Church activities.



We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to completing the 2023 self-evaluation questionnaires. Your participation is deeply valued and appreciated, and your input will play a vital role in enhancing safeguarding practice moving forward.

# Research on Abuse Crisis Impact

## AN ECCLESIAL TRAUMA

The disclosures of the abuse crisis in the Catholic Church in England & Wales have had a traumatic effect on victims and survivors. Their impact on the wider Catholic community has been researched by a team working within Durham University's Centre for Catholic Studies (CCS) through the *Boundary Breaking Project* undertaken between 2019 and 2023.

The main research report based on *qualitative* work, entitled '[The Cross of the Moment](#)' was published in April 2024. A supplementary, *quantitative* report [Attitudes of Catholics in England and Wales to Child Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church](#)<sup>1</sup>, using data from a YouGov survey of 3,000 self-identifying Catholics, was published in October 2024.

While the *Boundary Breaking* project only considered data from the Catholic Church in England & Wales, undoubtedly this research offers important learning points for other Church jurisdictions.

1 Marcus Pound and Gregory A. Ryan, '[Attitudes of Catholics in England and Wales to Child Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church](#)', Durham University, April 2024



## Seven Key Findings from the quantitative research data.

### OVERALL

1. Regular Mass-goers (attending at least once a month) are better informed about the Church's handling of child sexual abuse cases, hold significantly more positive attitudes regarding the Church's response to the crisis, and are more likely to view the extent of abuse in the Church to be of similar levels to other parts of society than self-identifying Catholics who attend less often or not at all.

Regular Mass-goers have also changed their practice significantly less than occasional or non-attenders. Within each of these broad classifications of Mass-going, the same correlation occurs at a finer level of detail. For example, weekly Mass-goers consistently hold more positive attitudes towards the Church than monthly attenders.

### ATTITUDES

2. A majority of Catholics view child sexual abuse as an ongoing issue for the Church; only a quarter believe it to be a thing of the past. More than three-quarters think that the Church must change a great deal to prevent further cases in the future.
3. Around half of all Catholics consider the Church to have experienced a similar level of child sexual abuse to other parts of society, or do not know. However, among those believing there to be a difference, it is considered more common in the Catholic Church.

### AWARENESS

4. Most Catholics received their information about child sexual abuse in the Church from mainstream media such as television, radio, and newspapers, with social media a significant but less widespread source for younger age groups.
5. Initiatives by Pope Francis to handle child sexual abuse cases are better known and viewed more favourably than the handling of cases by the local diocesan bishop, or the bishops of England and Wales as a whole.

### IMPACT

6. As a result of child sexual abuse in the Church, a third of Catholics who previously attended Mass reduced their Mass attendance or stopped attending Mass altogether. This figure is echoed in a reduction in financial donations to parish or diocese giving by a third of Catholics who previously donated.
7. Despite low levels of awareness and/or participation to date, there is a widespread desire for a Day of Prayer for Survivors of Abuse, especially among younger Catholics.

"Real damage has been done to the corporate Body of Christ in addition to the primary wounding of abuse victims. ... Parish communities may need to be realistic that they are likely to have lost people, fully or in part, as a result of the abuse crisis, regardless of whether there were cases in the parish."

# National Safeguarding Conference 2024

## Have YOU booked your place at this year's National Safeguarding Conference?

As bookings close at the end of October 2024, please **BOOK NOW** to ensure your place (in person or online.)

**Date:** Saturday 16th November 2024 (10am - 3.30pm)

**Place:** University of Strathclyde, TIC, Glasgow G1 1RD

This year's theme - *'Preventing Abuse in faith organisations'* - is of great relevance to all in the Church - bishops, parish clergy, religious sisters, priests & brothers, staff, and volunteers with responsibility for keeping everyone safe while they are involved in Church activities or on Church premises.

**We are keen for every Deanery, every Religious Congregation and every lay Catholic organisation in Scotland to be represented by at least one person participating - ideally in person, but at least online.**

## PROGRAMME

Our keynote speaker is **Stuart Allardyce**, Director of the Lucy Faithful Foundation. Stuart has extensive experience in offering practical advice on how 'situational prevention' can play a key role in preventing child sexual abuse, how we all can identify risks in everyday situations, and how we can take the necessary steps to keep children safe from harm.

Participants (in person and online) can enrol for 2 of the 4 **'Tasters' sessions** that will focus on various ways of keeping people SAFE in different contexts. These sessions will be led by the Moira Anderson Foundation, Break the Silence, Police Scotland and some Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors.

## NETWORKING

Each year we receive positive feedback from Conference participants who speak about how much they have valued the opportunity to meet others in the same roles as themselves. Not only will the Conference provide good networking opportunities; it can help to affirm and support everyone who is carrying safeguarding responsibility in their roles. So, come early if you can and chat over tea/coffee and at the lunchbreak.

## COST

The subsidised £40 Conference fee covers the cost of hiring accommodation at the University of Strathclyde's Technology & Innovation Centre, of providing materials and catering for those attending in person and of purchasing secure online access for those who will participate via Zoom throughout the day.



The poster features a yellow background with a blue vertical banner on the right. At the top, it reads 'national SAFEGUARDING CONFERENCE' in blue and white. Below this, it says 'for all responsible for safeguarding in Catholic parishes, dioceses, religious congregations and lay organisations'. Two circular images show a church interior with people seated in pews. The blue banner on the right contains the text 'PREVENTING ABUSE in faith organisations' in white. At the bottom, it lists the keynote speaker 'Stuart Allardyce (Lucy Faithfull Foundation)' and the theme 'learning about prevention strategies in the setting of faith organisations'. It also lists 'TASTER sessions - in person & online' with four categories: #SAFE WORDS, #SAFE HANDS, #SAFE SPACES, and #SAFE ONLINE. The date and location are 'Saturday 16th November 2024, 10 AM - 3.30 PM' at the 'Univ. of Strathclyde, TIC, 99 George Street, GLASGOW G1 1RD'. The cost is '£40' and the booking link is 'bit.ly/4bTXNyZ'. A QR code is also present.

## TASTER SESSIONS

You may participate in TWO of the Taster sessions described below, whether you are attending in person or online. Please respond to our emailed request for you to indicate your choices in order of preference (1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th choice) and we shall try to accommodate you.

### Safe WORDS

'Break the Silence' will lead on:  
what work we need to do to make our communities safe spaces for people to talk about their traumatic experiences.

### Safe HANDS

The Moira Anderson Foundation will lead on:  
promoting personal safety strategies that can contribute to the prevention of abuse.

### Safe ONLINE

Police Scotland will lead on:  
how perpetrators of online abuse might operate, how the rapidly evolving world of Artificial Intelligence can create harm, and what this might look like in our communities.

### Safe SPACES

providing an opportunity to discuss the range of issues and needs associated with assessing potential safeguarding risks in Church spaces and activities.

This newsletter provides information about the work of the SCSSA in monitoring 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)