

Statement by Fr Donal Hogan, Columban Spokesperson, on the publication of the Review of Safeguarding Practice in the Missionary Society of St Columban

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland has completed its review into the Safeguarding Practice in the Missionary Society of St. Columban (the Columbans). The full review is available on our website - [Review of Safeguarding Practice in the Missionary Society of ST Columban 2014](#)

The Columbans worked closely with the National Board as part of its review process, and we welcome its detailed report. The purpose of the National Board's review was to examine how our case management practices conform to expected standards in the Church, and to evaluate the efforts that we have made to create safe environments for children. Our main reason for inviting the National Board to review our files and procedures was to ensure that our child protection practices and our pastoral outreach to victims of abuse are in line with the best practices in child protection. The Columbans are fully committed to the standards set out in the NBSCCCI's 2009 Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland. The Columbans wish to acknowledge that we have received considerable support, specialist advice and assistance from the National Board as part of their National Case Management Reference Group.

As we publish this review we offer again our unreserved apologies to anyone who has been abused by any Columban missionary. We realize that your pain continues and our words are totally inadequate in bringing healing to your wounds. We hope that along with our other efforts, this review and report process will bring you some comfort and hope for the future.

The majority of allegations made against Columbans in Ireland relate to one ex-priest featured in the Murphy report. We were shamed by those findings and have worked hard in making our procedures more robust and in reaching out to those who have suffered. The Murphy report commended the more recent work of the Columbans in managing this offender and preventing further abuse.

We are pleased that the National Board has recognised the work we have done. We are aware that we must remain vigilant to ensure that our standards are maintained and constantly improved. We acknowledge as the review states "that several processes need to be tightened to reflect the unique organisational circumstances and that more work needs to be done to develop a safeguarding culture to emphasise prevention". To that end, we welcome the National Board's findings and in particular the eight recommendations made in the Report. Seven of these Recommendations will be in place by 12 June 2014 when we launch our revised Safeguarding Policy. The remaining recommendation regarding the establishing of a 'Safeguarding Committee' is being presently addressed and will be in place by the end of July.

The Report finds that all allegations of abuse have been reported to the civil authorities (in the Republic or Northern Ireland). As the Report acknowledges, the Society works closely with, consults with, and maintains good lines of communication with Probation Officers, An Garda Síochána, and HSE/Tusla.

The National Board Report singles out the progress we have made in maintaining appropriate case files to ensure that important child safeguarding information is clearly transmitted to those who need to know it.

Representatives from the civil agencies have described the management within the community of those against whom allegations have been made as an important factor in ensuring that further abuse does not occur. The National Board has commended the Society on its commitment to the

management of these men, and has recognised that it makes an important contribution towards the reduction of the risk of re-offending.

The Report acknowledges that the Columbans have actively sought to provide outreach and support to victims, and that our files reflect our pro-active support work for victims. The Report specifically mentions that the case files demonstrate "compassionate reaching out to victims by the Columban Missionaries".

The Society has appointed an experienced counsellor to undertake victim support work, and we offer victims access to an independent counselling service to assist them in the healing process. We remain committed to this pastoral response.

As the Columban Designated Safeguarding person I invite anyone who has safeguarding concerns to contact me at 046-9021525. Also, as part of our efforts to reach out to all who have suffered, we encourage those in need of independent and confidential advice or help to contact Towards Healing, (counselling service) on their confidential helpline, free telephone 303416 (Rep. of Ireland) and 0800 9063315 (Northern Ireland and UK).