



SAFEGUARDING MATTERS

in the Catholic Church in Scotland

January
2022

Lady Rae looks forward to forming the SCSSA team



The Hon. Lady Rae has now taken up her post as Board Chair of the new **Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (SCSSA)** that will oversee the safeguarding practice of the Catholic Church in Scotland.

She will act as Chair of the Board of non-executive directors who are being recruited to bring relevant experience and skills to the work of the agency.

Upon commencing her duties, Lady Rae said, "In undertaking this role as the first Board Chair of the SCSSA, I recognise that, in establishing an entirely independent agency, the Catholic Church in Scotland is taking another bold step to ensure that its safeguarding standards are as high as they can be. As a Catholic, I have been pained by the failings of the past and I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the culture of safety and integrity which the Church now fosters.

I intend to ensure that the SCSSA will operate entirely independently of the Catholic Church, with its own staff and non-executive directors who will maintain regular contact with dioceses and religious communities. I earnestly wish to rebuild confidence and trust, especially among those who have experienced abuse. I look forward to recruiting fellow Board members who will bring rigour, independence and expertise to the work of the agency.

Lastly, I believe that we must provide a forum in which people who have experienced abuse in the Church can bring their own perspectives to inform the development of the Church's safeguarding policy and practice. I am determined that we will listen to and learn from them."

Lady Rae has already commenced the task of recruiting other members to the SCSSA Board, with the support of *Aspen People*. She intends to embark on meetings with relevant groups and individuals to learn from their experience and to listen to their views. Work has begun on an induction process that will help to familiarise Board members with safeguarding policy and practice in parishes, dioceses, religious congregations and Catholic organisations in Scotland.

If you wish to offer your views on how Safeguarding can be improved in the Catholic Church in Scotland, please email Lady Rae:

chair@scssa.org.uk

What will be the SCSSA's main functions?

After reflecting on advice from various sources, including the Independent Review Group (IRG), the Bishops decided to establish a new agency that will provide independent scrutiny of safeguarding practice across the Church in Scotland. Each diocese, religious congregation and Catholic organisation will continue to be responsible for its own safeguarding arrangements and for responding to any safeguarding allegations or concerns, as required by the Bishops' instruction, 'In God's Image'. The role of SCSSA will be to oversee compliance with the safeguarding standards set out in that document. (N.B. The IRG is in the process of completing its remit and will stand down as the SCSSA takes up its oversight role.)

Key function 1: To take account of the perspectives of survivors of abuse in the development of safeguarding policy and practice.

The SCSSA will make efforts to engage in a sustained way with those who have experienced abuse, with a view to learning how the Church's safeguarding practice can be improved.

Key function 2: To promote national safeguarding standards

The SCSSA will provide strategic leadership and direction in safeguarding to all components of the Catholic Church in Scotland. It will be responsible for promoting and advising on national standards. It will be available, when called upon, to provide informal advice on case management.

Key function 3: To monitor, review and report on compliance with safeguarding standards

The SCSSA will monitor and report on compliance with safeguarding standards through developing effective systems of quality assurance, promoting expertise in self-evaluation and action planning, and supporting the identification of strengths and development needs in dioceses, parishes, religious institutes and Catholic organisations. The SCSSA will publish recommendations as part of its reports, following completion of audits and other quality assurance checks. In the event of a Church body being unable to comply with any recommendation, they will have the right to provide a formal explanation of the reasons behind their decision.

Key function 4: To lead safeguarding learning

The SCSSA will lead on the development of safeguarding learning for professional and volunteer safeguarding personnel, as well as clergy and religious. It will do this through designing training courses, developing trainers who will deliver courses and developing a Safeguarding Learning Network in collaboration with key partners.

Key function 5: To develop processes to deal with whistle-blowing and with complaints about responses to safeguarding allegations

The SCSSA will lead on the development of a transparent process that will enable 'whistle-blowers' to report concerns about safeguarding practice. It will establish an escalation process for dealing with complaints about responses to safeguarding allegations, ensuring that a final process of independent adjudication is available.

Key function 6: To manage communications on national safeguarding policy and practice

The SCSSA will lead on the communication of the Church's national safeguarding strategy as it develops. In relation to safeguarding, it will act as the first national point of contact for relevant bodies, other churches and voluntary organisations.



KEY PRINCIPLES underpinning SCSSA work

CONSISTENCY: The national safeguarding standards detailed in 'In God's Image' provide clear expectations of how effective safeguarding measures should be adopted consistently across all Church activities and settings. SCSSA will monitor compliance with these national standards and will develop policies, resources and training that will help to deliver consistency of safeguarding practice.

TRANSPARENCY: Through the publication of reports and recommendations, SCSSA will attempt to build public confidence and trust in the transparency of the Church's safeguarding practice.

ACCOUNTABILITY: All Church jurisdictions in Scotland must commit to respond to SCSSA's recommendations on non-compliance with national standards. Thresholds will be established to trigger intervention when evidence of non-compliance is identified and SCSSA will follow agreed stages of escalation to challenge non-compliance.

AUTHORITY: While the autonomy of Dioceses, Religious Institutions and Catholic organisations is not compromised by the role of the SCSSA, they will be expected to respect the expertise of SCSSA staff and Board Directors and to respond to their recommendations. Thus, service level contracts will specify that, when advice is provided and specific recommendations are made by the SCSSA to ensure compliance with national standards, appropriate actions will follow, with Bishops, Religious Superiors and organisation leaders retaining autonomy in their decisions.

INDEPENDENCE: The establishment of the SCSSA as an independent organisation, governed by a Board comprising expert directors, will ensure objective scrutiny of safeguarding practice. It will also provide reassurance that an independent body is dedicated to ensuring that safeguarding concerns and allegations are being responded to consistently across the Church.

CAPACITY-BUILDING: There is a need to build improvements steadily, to ensure that everyone is engaged in "growing" the culture of care that must characterise the Church's safeguarding efforts. Consequently, some new measures may take longer to implement than others, with more time required to develop expertise and capacity.

SUSTAINABILITY: While it is acknowledged that the resourcing of the Church's safeguarding provision requires a significant commitment from parishes, dioceses and religious institutes, this expenditure should be recognised as necessary, proportionate and cost-effective in providing assurances that Church activities, places and personnel are safe.

How will the SCSSA work with others?



PARISHES

The 'front line' of safeguarding is found in parishes, religious communities and Catholic organisations where many thousands interact with children and vulnerable adults on a daily basis. The clergy, religious and volunteers responsible for keeping others safe from harm in these settings are expected to follow what they have learned in their training and to comply with policies and procedures that have been designed to keep everyone safe.

DIOCESES

Each diocese supports its parishes with guidance on how to recruit volunteers and how to conduct safeguarding risk assessments for parish premises and activities. It also provides training opportunities for clergy, religious and parish safeguarding co-ordinators, using resources that are developed nationally. Crucially, dioceses respond to safeguarding allegations, liaise with the Police, support those who have experienced abuse, and manage those who are responding to allegations.

RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS

A Safeguarding Link Co-ordinator in each congregation is expected to keep members of Religious communities informed about safeguarding developments and policies.

CATHOLIC ORGANISATIONS

A trained senior member of each organisation that works with children or vulnerable adults is expected to brief members on safeguarding policies and procedures.

THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCE (BCOS)

The Bishops of the eight Scottish dioceses have issued 'In God's Image' as an instruction on the safeguarding standards that must be complied with in each jurisdiction. BCOS retains authority over the contents of 'In God's Image', while being open to advice and recommendations about how it might be further developed and revised in time, as practice evolves.

SCOTTISH CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS AGENCY

❑ The SCSSA will establish a forum in which those who have experienced abuse can offer their perspectives on how safeguarding practice can be improved. Beginning with conversations with individual survivors, this may move towards the establishment of a Survivor Reference Group, if survivors think this will be helpful to them.

❑ The SCSSA will monitor how well safeguarding standards are being complied with in parishes, religious congregations, Catholic organisations and dioceses. While this will be done mainly through audits of safeguarding practice in all these settings, thematic reviews may also be used. Analysis of completed audits and of diocesan action plans will inform its recommendations and advice to dioceses, religious congregations, organisations, and to the BCOS. The SCSSA will publish its recommendations and will expect Church bodies to respond to these.

❑ The agency will play the lead role in establishing a network of professional safeguarding learning in which senior personnel will share good practice, develop resources and learn from research in the UK and beyond.

❑ The SCSSA will constitute a Safeguarding Training Advisory Group to advise on the design of training courses that will meet needs identified by various groups. It will ensure effective systems for evaluating the impact of training on safeguarding practice.

❑ Working with Dioceses, Religious Congregations, and Catholic organisations, the SCSSA will establish an escalation process for dealing with a complaint about the response of a Church body to a safeguarding allegation. This process will include a final tier of independent adjudication. It will also lead on the development of a process that will enable 'whistle-blowers' to report concerns about safeguarding practice.

How will the the SCSSA be governed?

BOARD CHAIR

BOARD DIRECTORS

Director of
Safeguarding

Head of Training

Admin. Assist.

SCSSA BOARD

The SCSSA is an organisation that will operate independently of the Catholic Church. Its Board of Directors will be the main decision-making body of the agency and they will lead in the development of its culture, values and standards. The perspectives of victims and survivors will help to shape the development of the agency. The Board will meet formally in full session at least 4 times per year, but Directors will also be involved in working groups for specific purposes. Reports of Board meetings and other relevant business will be published.

WHO APPOINTS BOARD MEMBERS?

The Board Chair will appoint all the Board Directors who will be expected to have relevant experience in areas such as working with children or vulnerable adults, legal and regulatory compliance, governance, human resources, strategic planning and oversight. Above all, they will be required to show a commitment to protect children and vulnerable people. They will serve an initial term of 3 years, with the possibility of one further term. They will be asked to commit the equivalent of 8-10 working days per year. They will not be remunerated.

HOW ARE BOARD MEMBERS RECRUITED?

The recruitment agency *Aspen People* will work with Lady Rae to manage the process of recruiting directors. In addition to these 'recruited directors', some 'nominated directors' will be selected by Lady Rae from a list of Church nominees with relevant experience. All directors will be required to act independently. To find out more about how directors can apply to be recruited, click here: <https://aspenpeople.co.uk/microsite/scssa/>

WHO APPOINTS THE STAFF?

One of the first tasks of the Board Directors will be to recruit and appoint two full-time professionals: a Director of Safeguarding and a Head of Training. The Admin. Assistant will transfer from the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service when it is replaced by SCSSA. Staff will be line-managed by the Board Chair.

INDICATIVE RECRUITMENT TIMELINE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

w/b 17th January	Recruitment of Board Directors begins
28th February	Closing date for applications
w/b 14th March	Interviews begin
w/b 4th April	Lady Rae announces appointments
w/b 2nd May	first meeting of SCSSA Board

SCSSA STAFF

by late April	Director of Safeguarding post advertised
by late June	Interviews held and appointment announced
by late August	Head of Training post advertised
by late October	Interviews held and appointment announced



This is the **5th** in a series of newsletters that provide information about national developments in the Church's safeguarding practice.

If you have suggestions for topics to be covered in future issues, please email these to: comms@scssa.org.uk

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