



THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR  
**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN**  
IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN IRELAND

**Second Review of Child Safeguarding Practice  
Order of Saint Augustine  
(OSA)**

**undertaken by**

**The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic  
Church in Ireland (National Board)**

**Date of Review Report: October 2022**

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## Background

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland, (the National Board), was established in 2006:

- To provide advice, services and assistance in furtherance of the development of the safeguarding of children within the Roman Catholic Church on the island of Ireland.
- To monitor compliance with legislation, policy and best practice.
- To report on these activities as is comprehensively set out in the Memorandum of Association of the Company.

Church authorities who have entered into an agreement with the National Board through signing a Memorandum of Understanding have committed to following *Safeguarding Children - Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*.

In order to assess compliance with the 2016 Standards, the Prior Provincial of the Order of Saint Augustine, (OSA) invited the National Board to undertake a review of child safeguarding practice in 2022. The order was previously reviewed in December 2014 under the *Safeguarding Children - Standards and Guidance for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2008*.

The report of the first Review can be found on the OSA website and on the National Board's website, [www.safeguarding.ie/publications](http://www.safeguarding.ie/publications). The recommendations from the 2014 review are available on the Order's website, along with statements about their implementation.

Recommendation	Implemented – Yes / No
<b>Recommendation 1:</b> The Prior Provincial should ensure that the 2009 policy revision is completed without delay (Criterion 1.4). This should be done as an interim measure, pending the revision of NBSCCCI's standards and the development of a common Church Safeguarding policy in 2015.	<b>Yes</b> – the Order's Policy was revised and updated as 'Interim OSA Safeguarding Policy (Jan. 2015)'.
<b>Recommendation 2:</b> The Prior Provincial should ensure that the revised policy contains his clear signed endorsement and that of the Provincial Council, (Criterion 1.2) and that it must be implemented by all members of the Order.	<b>Yes</b> - The Provincial and Council Members individually signed OSA Safeguarding Policy (22 January 2015). All Friars were provided with an individual copy, requested to read it, and then complete and return an 'Implementation Agreement' to the Provincial and/or DLP.
<b>Recommendation 3:</b> The Prior Provincial should ensure that the requirement for priests in transit from other Provinces or administrative areas to evidence <i>celebrets</i> is written into the policy in order to meet fully Criterion 1.5.	<b>Yes</b> - Individual letters based on policy extract (p.36) and copy of policy were issued to overseas Friars. Two visiting Friars requested and participated in Safeguarding Information Session in the Provincial Office (July 2015).

<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> The Prior Provincial should ensure that the internal process, including the application of canonical procedures, which will be applied to members in respect of whom child abuse allegations are made, are fully described in the policy (Criterion 1.6).</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> – Ref. Interim OSA Safeguarding Policy (pp. 22-3 &amp; 35).</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5:</b> The Prior Provincial should develop a procedure for the management of general complaints against members of the Order (Criterion 2.5).</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> – Ref. Interim OSA Safeguarding Policy (p. 18).</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6:</b> The Prior Provincial should ensure that reporting of all new allegations to the civil authorities in Ireland is prompt and in accordance with the safeguarding policy, irrespective of whether they are historical or not.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> - All post-review publication (Feb. 2015) allegations have been reported to TUSLA, Gardaí and the National Board.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7:</b> The Prior Provincial should ensure that the current role and function of the Case Management and Safeguarding Advisory Panel is kept under review, and that its evolution into separate functions is planned and achieved through the strategic safeguarding plan.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> – the Safeguarding Development Group was established in April 2016, while the Case Management Advisory Panel continued but with a single focus. Local Safeguarding Groups exist and are active in all church locations.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 8:</b> The Prior Provincial should ensure that work to create a single centralized database for vetting information is progressed, with a single nominated manager.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> - the Safeguarding Officer established a database for friars in December 2018, and a laywoman is the Vetting Co-ordinator for Friars, Volunteers &amp; Staff since February 2022.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 9:</b> The Prior Provincial should ensure that the areas of whistle-blowing, anti-bullying, guidance on dealing with unacceptable behaviour by children, and anti-discriminatory practice, are fully addressed in the review of the safeguarding policy (Criteria 3.5 – 3.8).</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> – Ref. Interim OSA Safeguarding Policy (Jan. 2015):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Whistleblowing (p.37);</li> <li>(b) and (d) Anti-Bullying &amp; Anti-Discriminatory Practices (pp. 47-9);</li> <li>(c) Guidance on dealing with unacceptable behaviour from children (p.50).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation 10:</b> The Prior Provincial should ensure that guidelines in relation to information technology (Criterion 3.12) are addressed in the revision of the safeguarding policy.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> – Ref. Interim OSA Safeguarding Policy (Jan. 2015) – (pp.43-46). <i>IT and Social Media Guidelines in a Church Context</i> was published in March 2019.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 11:</b> The Prior Provincial should ensure that a planned and needs led approach to training is developed to support the strategic safeguarding plan (Criteria 4.2 and 4.3).</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> - Annual Progress Reports are submitted by each LSG on a self-reporting basis, and these identify training needs in each location.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 12:</b> The Prior Provincial should ensure that the Province puts a communications plan in place (Criterion 5.6), including dedicated material for children and young people (Criterion 5.2).</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> - Customised materials have been made available annually since 2015 (excluding 2020).</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 13:</b> The Prior Provincial should develop a policy for engaging with survivors, to include the recruitment of a pool of lay support persons and communications material (Criterion 6.3). This should be stated in the revised child safeguarding policy.</p>	<p><b>Yes</b> - A Support Person and a Priest Advisor were formally appointed (July 2015). Contact with Complainants has primarily been through the DLP and/or the Provincial. Respondents have generally declined the offer of a Priest Advisor (other than a Canon Lawyer).</p>

The reviewers appreciate the detailed information provided by the DLP in relation to the implementation of recommendations made to the Order in 2014; and the quick completion of so many varied tasks is commended.

The purpose of this second round of reviews is to assess child-safeguarding practice against the Catholic Church in Ireland's current standards as detailed in *Safeguarding Children – Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*. The review seeks a level and quality of evidence to provide:

- Public confidence that the Church body is safe for children.
- Affirmation to child safeguarding personnel that they are doing the right things well.
- Confirmation to the Church authority that what they want to be done is in fact being done.
- Independent verification of Self-Audit – or correction and/or improvement of Self-Audit.
- Opportunities for learning.

## Introduction

A detailed history of the Order of Saint Augustine, as well as the numbers and location of the Order's personnel, can be accessed at their website.

The period covered by this Review is from December 2014 to March 2022. It has considered all child protection cases reported to the Order during this time-period, as well as cases reported earlier and still being managed at the time of the Review.

As well, the review considers the OSA's level of compliance with the seven national standards, which in turn reflects the order's culture of safeguarding and consequently its willingness and capacity to protect children, now and into the future.

Child safeguarding practice is assessed against *Safeguarding Children Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016*, which is accessible at <https://www.safeguarding.ie/policy-guidance/policy-document>

## The Order of Saint Augustine (OSA)

In preparation for this Review, the then Prior Provincial produced an information sheet on the situation of the Order as it was in February 2022.

The Augustinian Order in Ireland today has a total of 69 members, located in 11 communities (spanning 15 geographical areas), of whom all bar 3 are in Ireland. Each community is managed by a Prior and has a high degree of functional independence. Each community has an Augustinian Leader called the Prior. Governance and overall administration of the Irish Province is undertaken by the Prior Provincial, supported by a 4-person Provincial Council and a Secretary and Bursar. The Prior Provincial has a 4-year term of office, with the possibility of re-election for a second term. Fr. John Hennebery OSA is in the final year of his second term with the current Council, having assumed office in July 2017.

The average age of a friar in the Irish Province is 74.5 years. The Order estimates that most of its members have access to children and young people. The level of this access is low and mainly concerns parish ministry: altar servers, visiting families in their homes, and contact with children in school settings. In Dublin, there are parishes in Meath St, Ballyboden and Finglas, and a public Church in Thomas Street. There is a parish in St Augustine St, Galway. There are also public Churches in Limerick, Cork, Drogheda, Dungarvan, and Fethard. Public Church ministry is largely sacramental provision. The Order also holds two schools in the Augustinian Schools Trust who follow the Department of Education and Science guidelines.

In some instances, there are outreach programmes (e.g. Cork – Polish Community; Drogheda – Vocations; Limerick – Immigrants & Student Residency etc.). Other Churches may facilitate small group activities (such as scripture groups, reflection and prayer groups), and some have religious goods shops.

The Augustinians retain overall management responsibility for their two schools – St Augustine's College, Dungarvan and Good Counsel College, New Ross. These were formerly boarding schools (this function has ceased since the 1990s), and are now administered by Boards of Management and lay principals.

Augustinian Friars are involved in Pastoral Care (Chaplaincy) and as volunteers in these schools. The Order has chaplaincy positions in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda and in St. Patrick's (Mental Health Services) in Dublin. Some Friars are involved in lecturing, retreats and scripture classes etc. One friar works as Parish chaplain in Donnybrook, under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Dublin, and another as curate in the Parish in Dungarvan under the auspices of the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore.

### **Process of Review**

The OSA Review took place when Ireland was still in the grip of the Covid-19 pandemic. Much of the Order's activities, especially in relation to children, had been curtailed or ceased altogether in the two-year period from 14 March 2020, when the first lockdown commenced. Nevertheless, it is clear from the documentary evidence provided by the Order that the forward momentum of improving safeguarding practice was being maintained, primarily by creative use of Zoom technology, teleconferencing etc. by the Safeguarding Development Group (SDG) in particular, and by personnel throughout the Order in general.

For example, the Order's Safeguarding Newsletters provided a level of continuity before, during and after the pandemic, and that is a credit to all concerned. These are easily accessible online and evidence an appropriate and re-assuring level of awareness of the challenges that the OSA in particular and Catholicism in general face in their efforts to protect children's ministry in the Church.

The fieldwork was conducted in the week commencing 21 February 2022, some of it by in-person interviews, much of it by Zoom meetings or by telephone discussions, and the reviewers were given access to all relevant files temporarily located in Saint Augustine Priory in the city of Galway. With the assistance of all concerned, particularly the Prior Provincial and the Designated Liaison Person, the reviewers obtained a comprehensive picture of safeguarding policy and practice in the Order.

The following is a list of those with whom the reviewers had contact during the course of this Review:

- Prior Provincial
- Designated Liaison Person, (DLP), who is also the Safeguarding Officer (SO) and Trainer
- Safeguarding Development Group (SDG)
- Complainants
- Case Management Advisory Panel (CMAP)
- Vetting Administrator
- Priests' Supervisors X 2

The reviewers appreciated the warm welcome and hospitality extended to them by the Order's personnel and noted the extensive preparation and organisation undertaken in advance of this review. The reviewers acknowledge that the premises made available to them in which to examine file records was home to a number of friars of the Order.

## **STANDARDS**

This section provides the findings of the Review. The template employed to present the findings are the seven standards, set down and described in the Church guidance, *Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016*.

The Order of Saint Augustine agreed to adopt *Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland, 2016* as its child safeguarding policy through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding.

The Review concentrated on safeguarding arrangements and practice through evaluating written records, and meetings with Church personnel, four (4) complainants and two (2) priests' Supervisors.

An assessment of practice under each standard is set out in the following pages.



## **Standard 1 - Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments**

*Church bodies provide an environment for children that is welcoming, nurturing and safe. They provide access to good role models whom the children can trust, who respect, protect and enhance their spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development.*

The Order of Saint Augustine has a Safeguarding Statement on its website, which is also displayed in appropriate locations, as required by the Children First Act 2015 – this was signed by the then Prior Provincial on February 13, 2020 and can be accessed at <https://augustinians.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/OSA-Child-Safeguarding-Statement-Feb-2020.pdf>.

The Order has procedures in place for safe recruitment of both paid staff and volunteers. A recruitment checklist is completed for all recruitment exercises. An application process for volunteers is in place, including references and vetting, together with safeguarding training. The document, *Guidance for Ministry Volunteers - OSA Ministries & Recruiting Volunteers* is available on the Order's website. This is a very user-friendly and informative five-page leaflet, and it contains an important statement about the values that the OSA espouses:

Respect is at the heart of all caring roles that involve working with children, young people, or vulnerable adults. A core set of values and attitudes must be demonstrated by all volunteers who wish to work with vulnerable groups. To promote these values all suitable volunteers must complete Safeguarding Training and commit to the OSA Code of Adult Behaviour. Separate skills training for a particular ministry may also arise (e.g. Readers; Eucharistic Ministers).

Vetting is completed regularly; and is moving from being completed on a four-year cycle to a three-year cycle. This information is held on a central database, updated by a Provincial vetting administrator, based in Ballyboden, Dublin 16. She has the role of organising the vetting of all OSA friars in all locations in Ireland, and sending out vetting reminders to each site, receiving the returns and sending them off to the relevant diocesan vetting administrator - OSA are not official affiliates of National Vetting Bureau. She also updates the database at the end of each month. Approximately 80 friars are vetted; but some of the most elderly members of the Order are classed as 'vulnerable adults', which can be an obstacle to vetting. Due to her location, the vetting administrator does the vetting for Ballyboden parish volunteers; and she liaises with the relevant dioceses regarding the vetting of volunteers for local OSA ministries and other Church-related activities, which applications are sent to her.

The database was seen as part of the fieldwork, and the reviewers established that vetting of all relevant personnel is up to date. The vetting administrator securely stores all vetting documentation.

Since 2013, work continued in establishing a Local Safeguarding Group in each church location throughout the Province. The Order has a Safeguarding Development Group (SDG) in place since early 2016, in which year it met on five occasions. This is comprised of six (6) Local Safeguarding Representatives, a school chaplain, and the Prior Provincial. The Safeguarding Officer / Trainer attends SDG meetings in an *ex officio* capacity. These two measures ensured that the OSAs had the required structures in place to roll out their implementation of *Safeguarding Children 2016* when it came into operation. The SDG has adopted and integrated appropriate National Board guidance, and has enabled its appropriate distribution, both on-line and in hard copy. The Order has generated a range of its own forms and explanatory documents, all of which can be accessed on its website. Many of these will be referred to under Standard 6 later in this report.

The OSAs have developed a phrase to describe what they want to achieve through effective child safeguarding within their Church body - *Promoting Safe and Sacred Spaces* – and this informs their safeguarding initiatives.

Because of the pandemic, the involvement of children in the life of the Order for the past two years has been limited, and the reviewers could not meet with children and young people engaged in Church activities, as most of these had been paused. Nevertheless, through its Newsletter, and through the work of its Safeguarding Development Group (SDG), child safeguarding across the Order's sites has remained a priority. Since the outbreak of Covid-19, the Order has published seven OSA Safeguarding Newsletters, in February 2020, May 2020, February 2021, June 2021, October 2021, April 2022, and July 2022. The first of these set out a number of events that were being planned, but it was clear by the May 2020 edition that face-to-face meetings had stopped and that the exploration of other ways of supporting the safeguarding ministry were being explored.

The reviewers had the opportunity to meet with the SDG online via Zoom. Four (4) of the seven (7) committee members attended, while two further members who were unavailable at that time subsequently spoke with the reviewers. The committee does not have representation from all Augustinian locations, which is an issue that is being addressed within the Order.

Among the matters addressed by the members who spoke with the reviewers were that the SDG

- Members received National Board training in April 2016, before they started working on the development of planned safeguarding; and again in 2022, when three new members joined;
- Has generated and maintains a corporate sense of 'we'; all members 'contribute equally' and have good communication with the Augustinians; and discussions can be robust – 'we are not engaged in a box-ticking exercise';
- Is effective by convening approximately four (4) times per year to develop child safeguarding within the Province and to drive good practice;

- Gives members an understanding of the wider OSA safeguarding agenda, along with the responsibility to communicate this back to their local areas.
- Allows individual members to become involved in areas of personal interest;
- Assists in raising safeguarding awareness at local level – examples provided included safeguarding being mentioned on the parish Facebook page, and how in one parish, a lay-reader reminds parents before Mass begins that safeguarding guidelines are being followed;
- Oversees the local implementation of the Order’s child safeguarding policy;
- Has continued to adapt the local progress report (annual audit form) to the profile of the various locations, which has increased the response rate;
- Agenda changes from meeting to meeting, but that it is always driven by the annual work programme, informed by the current Safeguarding Development Plan;
- Will have to meet the challenge of getting things up and running again following the pandemic;
- Is very well supported by the Provincial and the DLP, who are both readily available if needed;
- Succession planning is a priority as the original members have been involved for six years.

To give an idea of the ministries involving children and young people that were active pre-pandemic, the following template is useful.

<b>OSA Churches (*Parish)</b>	<b>Family Mass + Children’s Choir</b>	<b>Special Liturgy of the Word - Children’s Catechesis - Sacramental Preparation</b>	<b>Altar Servers</b>	<b>Number of Volunteers involved with Children/YP.</b>	<b>Number of Volunteers involved in Church</b>	<b>No of Active Friars</b>	<b>Local Volunteer Safeguarding Reps.</b>
Drogheda	X	X	✓	1	215	3	3
John’s Lane	X	X	X	0	78	10	3
Fethard	✓ + (with parents)	X	X	0	88	4	3
Dungarvan	X	X	✓	0	87	5	4
Cork	✓ (Polish Community)	✓ Catechism & Youth Prayer Group	✓	10	43	7	4
Limerick	X	X	✓	1	92	5	4
Finglas South *	✓ (on occasion)	✓ Children’s Catechesis - Sacramental Preparation	X	1/2	50	3	4

Good Counsel Ballyboden*	X	✓ (Sac. Prep.)	X	1	110	3	2
St. Catherine's Meath Street *	X	X	X	0	81	3	2
Galway *	X	✓ (Children's Catechesis)	X	3	89	4	4
<b>Totals</b>				<b>17/18</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>29</b>

These numbers, gleaned from Local Safeguarding Progress Reports 2019 – 2020, indicate that there is a lot of scope for further development in these ministries.

The Augustinian Province of Ireland has recently developed a comprehensive Whistle Blowing Policy. As a charity and an employer, this is drafted to be compliant with the Protected Disclosures Act, 2014.

The Province has also developed a simple Complaints Policy. The SDG has also re-familiarised itself with the National Board's Guidance on 1.6 (whistleblowing), and 1.7 (complaints procedure).

It would be prudent for the DSG to review the Province's Whistle Blowing and Complaints Policies, and to make these available to the Local Safeguarding Groups. Links to these policies could also be included as links on the Safeguarding page of the Order's website.

The reviewers were unable to examine any local risk assessments, as all ministries with children and young people were suspended at the time of the Review fieldwork. However, the OSAs have an excellent 8-page document, OSA Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment available on their website Safeguarding page. This includes a template to be used in the conduct of an assessment. It also has developed an Accident Guidelines information sheet. All safeguarding children OSA information and guidance documentation is listed at the end of this section. In anticipation of Church re-activating ministry with children or young people following the pandemic restrictions, a Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment Workshop was provided in November 2021 via Zoom. Representatives (10) from four church locations participated. A second workshop will be provided in early autumn 2022 for representatives of the other six OSA communities.<sup>1</sup> These workshops are being held to remind local OSA communities of the necessity of completing risk / hazard assessments as a core safeguarding children planning exercise.

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<sup>1</sup> Two OSA church locations were closed in May 2022, so this will become representatives of four OSA communities.

Guidelines for the use of I.T. and electronic media guidelines were published by the OSAs in March 2019. Since then the Safeguarding Officer has received no queries regarding the implementation of these; but it is probable that the suspension of ministries during Covid-19 lockdowns has been a factor here.

Under the GDPR tab on the OSA website, links to the following documents are available:

- Augustinian Website Policy 2021.pdf
- Augustinian Streaming Policy 2021.pdf
- Augustinian Facebook-Twitter-Instagram Policy 2021.pdf
- Augustinian Electronic Data Management Policy 2021.pdf
- Augustinian Records Management Policy.pdf
- Augustinian CCTV Policy.pdf

The reviewers have seen correspondence from the Provincial to an OSA member regarding the requirements for him to minister in a diocese. This demonstrated the procedure that is in place for all friars who minister outside of the Augustinian community.

The reviewers are satisfied that a culture of safeguarding has been developed throughout the Augustinian Order, and that structures and procedures are in place to safeguard children who have contact with the Order.

OSA Information and Guidance available on its website Safeguarding pages

The Order has developed a range of its own good quality information and guidance documents, which are available on its website. These are listed below. They comply with the National Board's Guidance.

- |   |
|---|
| Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment Template.pdf                 |
| Guidance Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment. pdf                |
| Guidance Dealing with Accidents.pdf                             |
| Guidance Developing a Code of Conduct for Children 6-12 yrs.pdf |
| Guidance Developing a Group Code or Contract 13-18yrs.pdf       |
| Guidance Volunteers Working with Children.pdf                   |
| Guidance Volunteer Recruitment.pdf                              |
| Guidance Visiting Family Homes & Vulnerable Adults              |
| OSA Accident Incident Report Form.pdf                           |
| OSA Child Guardian Joint Consent Form.pdf                       |
| OSA Facilities Use by External Groups.pdf                       |
| OSA Friars Working External Agencies.pdf                        |
| OSA Network GDPR Consent Form.pdf                               |
| OSA Volunteer Application Form.pdf                              |

**Publications**

OSA Adult Code of Behaviour Insert Jan 2018.pdf

OSA Adult Code of Behaviour Jan 2018.pdf

OSA Child friendly Leaflet Jan 2018.pdf

OSA IT Guidelines for use in a Church Context Mar 2019.pdf

OSA Local Safeguarding Progress Report April 2020-April 2021.pdf

OSA Ministries Promotion Leaflet Mar 2019.pdf

OSA Safeguarding Poster 'Heart' May 2022.pdf

OSA Safeguarding Poster 'Welfare' May 2022.pdf

OSA Safeguarding Leaflet 13-16 yrs. May 2022.pdf

**This Standard is met.**

**Standard 2 - Procedures for Responding to Child Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations**

*Church Bodies have clear procedures and guidance on what to do when suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations arise regarding a child’s safety or welfare that will ensure there is a prompt response. They also enable the Church to meet all national and international legal and practice requirements and guidance.*

The Order of Saint Augustine employs a Designated Liaison Person (DLP). This person also acts as the Safeguarding Officer and the Trainer for the Order, and he works across all three roles on a 3 to 4-day week basis. There is a deputy DLP as well who is a member of the Order and who attends the meetings of the Case Management Advisory Panel. We note that the Prior Provincial maintains an active involvement in respect of case management decision-making. The DLP and the Prior Provincial meet regularly to discuss cases, share information and agree actions.

The 2014 Review Report was critical of the OSAs in relation to case management, especially as it was conducted prior to 2013. It is clear from the current Review, both through the examination of annual Case Management Reports by the DLP to the Provincial, and through a close reading of case management files, that very significant improvements have been made, and this is commended. During 2015, all cases were reported to the Gardai and to Tusla, and if appropriate, to the National Board. This was to address the fact that some cases had historically not been reported. This matter was already commented on in the first Review Report, so lessons were learnt. The new Provincial, who was appointed in June 2013 and the current DLP who was employed in the same year can be credited with the clear and steady improvements in case management since the previous Review.

Incidents or notifications of allegations since the last Review

According to the records shared with the reviewers, three (3) allegations were received by the Order since the last Review in 2014 against three (3) OSA members.

**Table 1 – Number of allegations against friars received by the Augustinian Order since previous Review**

OSA member	Current Status	Number of Complainants	Gardai notified	Tusla notified	National Board Notified	Appropriate and timely Canonical action taken
1	Living	1	Next day	Next day	Next day	Yes
2	Living	5	Within 1 month	Within 1 month	Within 1 month	Yes
3	Living	1	By Tusla	Tusla notified the Order	No	N/A

In the first case, a first, retrospective allegation had been made in 2006, but the complainant did not make a statement to the Gardai or the relevant health board. The Provincial was in the process of offering a return to ministry, taking account of the advices received from the CDF and from the Papal Nuncio, when the second allegation arose.

In the case of the OSA member 2, the allegations relate to the 1960s in a distant jurisdiction, so some time was spent in attempting to obtain accurate information before making the required notifications. In addition, it had to be determined in which country the notifications needed to be made. Immediate restrictions were imposed on the elderly friar involved to ensure that he had no contact with children.

In the case of the third member, the complaint was made to Tusla, who looked after the notification to the Gardai. Tusla undertook an assessment and deemed the allegation not credible. The DLP liaised with Tusla throughout and they agreed that he would not do anything until the Tusla assessment process had been completed. The Order did not report the allegation to the National Board, as it was deemed 'unfounded' by Tusla's Special Inquiry Team.

The reviewers are satisfied that cases are currently responded to and managed appropriately. From what is recorded on the case management files examined, there is good collaboration between OSA safeguarding staff and statutory agencies. The Order is spread across 10 separate locations,<sup>2</sup> which involve dealing with different Tusla offices and Garda districts, so the reviewers could not speak with representatives of the statutory agencies in every OSA location. An officer from each agency was interviewed, and they both commended the availability, helpfulness and openness of the Order's DLP in their dealings with him in the course of investigation and assessment of cases and in case management. It is clear that confidence and trust exists between the Order and the statutory services.

The reviewers examined the case management files of 14 members of the OSA, living and deceased, and further comments about the Order's responses to complainants and its management and support of respondents are made under Standards 3 and 4 below.

**This Standard is met.**

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<sup>2</sup> Two OSA church locations were closed in May 2022, after the fieldwork for this Review had been completed.



### **Standard 3 - Care and Support for the Complainant**

*Complainants who have suffered abuse as children receive a compassionate response when they disclose their abuse. They, and their families, are offered appropriate support, advice and pastoral care.*

The support to complainants that is discussed in this section includes those whose complaints were described in the previous Review Report but who have received a service from the Order – or from an agency paid for by the Order – since December 2014. A lay Support Person was appointed in late 2014 with a view to assisting complainants, and although each complainant was informed of the person's availability, none took up the offer, and they have subsequently been stood down.

In a number of cases in which retrospective reports were made of alleged abuse in another country, the Order has not been successful in identifying victims. There are cultural considerations to be factored in when dealing with some jurisdictions where any involvement with local police can be dangerous, or where being identified as a victim of sexual abuse can have very negative consequences. More positively, through inter-Province liaison, it has been possible elsewhere to ensure and verify that complainants have been responded to and supported.

Two separate allegations had been made against a friar who had died before the previous Review following his death. One complainant who spoke with the reviewers was very positive about the response they received from the Provincial who took over in June 2013. Contact was made with the DLP, which has been maintained since; and the complainant believes that this consistency in contact has been very important. The then Provincial also organised practical support for this complainant, and they benefitted from several years of counselling, paid for by OSA. They said that they were responded to with compassion by the DLP and the then Provincial, who also assisted them spiritually.

The second complainant in this case received a prompt response from OSA, and counselling and other practical supports were put in place without undue delay. The case management file records a lot of engagement with both complainants.

A complaint was made about a friar who had died prior to the first Review, twelve years later. The then Provincial arranged for the complainant to receive counselling from Towards Healing. He also undertook an internal investigation to develop a better sense of the deceased friar; and this informed his decision to engage in an external mediation process to reach agreement about how to provide appropriate supports to the complainant.

There is written evidence on another case management file of the use of external mediation in responding compassionately and practically to a complainant, and this approach is commended.

The reviewers also spoke with the parent of an abused young person. It is important for the reviewers to hear directly from those affected by abuse, and the National Board appreciates this family sharing their painful experiences of the abuse, and its management by the Order. There are issues of confidentiality that restrict what can be stated about this case, due to a concern about inadvertently identifying the victim. The parents were disappointed that the response that they received from the Order did not meet their needs. The Order worked closely with another Church body that initially took on the lead role of supporting this family. The National Board has discussed with the Order how they intend to engage with this family into the future.

A third Augustinian respondent priest died since the previous Review. The complainant in this case lives in another jurisdiction. The complaint was made eleven years before the priest's death, but not a lot was done concerning it until the new Provincial and the current DLP were in place in 2013. The incoming Provincial decided to undertake a complete review of the management of the case up to that time, following which restrictions were placed on the respondent, and contact with the complainant was established. They had not and still did not want to make a statement to the statutory authorities, but they were relieved that action had been taken regarding the respondent. There is evidence on the case management file of courteous and informative correspondence between the DLP and the complainant. The complainant made the statement that they trusted that appropriate action was being taken by the then Provincial.

In a further case in which the respondent had died since the previous Review, the new Provincial decided in 2014 to reopen the case, which had previously been closed, as he had concerns that not everything that required attention had been fully dealt with. This led to the case being reviewed at both the Order's own Case Management Advisory Panel and at the NCMC of the National Board. The complainant was subsequently contacted in 2015 by the DLP, but they decided not to engage with the Order.

Another complainant in the case of a deceased friar was supported in very practical ways by the Order.

Two complainants who had separately made allegations against a deceased friar after his death were engaged with by the then Provincial in a compassionate manner, and practical supports tailored to their individual and family circumstances were provided. The Provincial made full apologies to both complainants on behalf of the Order.

Overall, the reviewers are satisfied that the Augustinians have met their responsibilities in relation to complainants, which has been evidenced in the case management files examined, and supplemented by interviews with complainants.

**This standard is met.**

## Standard 4 - Care and Management of the Respondent

*The Church Authority has in place a fair process for investigating and managing child safeguarding concerns. When the threshold for reporting has been reached, a system of support and monitoring for respondents is provided.*

The Augustinian Order has maintained its own five-member Case Management Advisory Panel (CMAP), which has the following objectives:

1. To advise and support the Provincial and his Council in fulfilling their child protection responsibilities.
2. To oversee the work of the DLP in giving advice, instruction and consent, as appropriate.
3. To ensure that all allegations against OSA friars are properly managed in compliance with Civil Law and Canon Law based on best practice and professional advice.

This panel continued to meet during the pandemic, with two (2) meetings in 2019, three (3) in 2020, and five (5) in 2021. It has its own written Charter, which sets out the principles on which its work is based and by which its members sign up to abide.

In addition, the Augustinians occasionally use the services of the National Case Management Committee (NCMC) for guidance and advice. According to the DLP, 'this facility is availed off when the complexity of a case goes beyond CMAP expertise'. The cases of three members have been referred to the NCMC since January 2015.

The reviewers met with the Case Management Advisory Panel (CMAP), which is comprised of five members. The DLP attends, but he acts as Secretary and is not involved in decision-making about cases. The Deputy DLP is a full member, as is the Provincial, another OSA priest who is a parish priest in an Augustinian-run parish within the Dublin Archdiocese, a lay therapist and a Religious Sister who is a canon lawyer.

The members spoke of the committee as being a collective decision-making group. The DLP presents each case for discussion, but remains outside of the decision-making process. They reported that practical decisions are arrived at, often after much discussion /debate. They are happy for the NCMC to look at a case about which they want additional input. The Order's CMAP has developed its own protocol to cover such instances, the *National Case Management Committee Protocol*, which sets out the type of circumstances that can lead to a request that the NCMC advises on a particular case. These include that:

- appropriate canonical procedures may not have been followed correctly when the case first came to light; or
- the substance of the allegation is 'grey' or has apparently been withdrawn, though a risk to children may still exist; or
- discerning the appropriate level of supervision of a friar vis-à-vis the actual and/or potential risk he may pose; or

- identifying the most suitable Care and Safety Management Plan for a friar, including a rehabilitative programme, and where this may be best sourced.

The canon lawyer member spoke of their conscientious efforts to ensure that the process of dealing with complaints is canonically sound, and suggested that canon law can best be understood and applied pastorally. The CMAP members believe that their work allows the OSA to 'stand over our procedures and processes'.

This group meets as frequently as is needed. In the past, this was sometimes every month, but such frequency is generally only required when a new case needs urgent attention.

This group is also very mindful of the importance of succession planning, as members will be coming to end of their term during 2022. The then Provincial said that he had the names of two possible future members to refer to the incoming Provincial.

The Order had selected a Priest Advisor in 2015 and they undertook National Board training for this role. They were to work with members who were out of ministry due to a safeguarding concern. However, these members opted to be supported by confreres of their own choosing, and the advisor role was not developed any further. However, the OSAs have Priest Supervisors in place whose role is to assist in the implementation and oversight of a friar's 'Care and Safety Management Plan', and to oversee compliance with the day-to-day restrictions contained in it. The Order has a detailed role description in its document, *OSA Case Management - Role of Supervisor*. This is a well-considered development, which is currently in place with three friars who are subject to a Management Plan.

The DLP and the individual Supervisors liaise with each other on a regular basis, and reports and updates are shared with the CMAP at the next meeting. In the interim, Supervisors consult with the DLP when they have a concern about the situation of the friar they are supervising.

The reviewers spoke to two friars who acted as Supervisors. Both identified the very lengthy legal and canonical processes as a challenge for the respondents. More training for Supervisors would, they said, be welcome, as perhaps would more liaison with colleagues elsewhere in similar positions.

The reviewers examined 14 case management files in total during the Review fieldwork, in eleven (11) of which there is recorded case management activity since January 2015. Arising from the previous review, the Order's Prior Provincial re-activated incomplete canonical processes that had not been completed. He then submitted votums to the CDF, while implementing individual action plans for the relevant respondent friars. This was all done in consultation with the Order's CMAP, the NCMC and, where a return to ministry was being proposed, with the Papal Nuncio.

Irish Augustinian friars have ministered overseas, and where child-safeguarding concerns have arisen regarding any of these men's previous overseas appointments, pro-active inter-Province sharing of information led to the Order reporting all retrospective disclosures to the statutory authorities, whether the members were alive or deceased. For any such members who continued to live in Ireland, appropriate restrictions have been applied to them. This thoroughness of approach is commended.

Some examples of case management by the Order are described here.

In the case of an elderly friar, no new allegations were received since the previous Review. However, it was the view of the CMAP that his situation would be looked at again, as no canonical action had been initiated when the allegations against him were first reported to the OSAs. The Order sought advice from the National Board about how to bring a practical focus onto the case. A canonical investigation led to the sending of a votum to the CDF, and on its advice, a Precept and Covenant of Care (behaviour contract) were issued, a June 2021 signed copy of which is on file.

An older friar is living in an Augustinian friary under supervision. He is subject to a Precept and Covenant of Care, which were put in place in 2015. The then Provincial referred the matter to the CDF, sending his votum, but in this case the CDF referred the matter back for local determination. This friar had been stepped aside from all ministries. Due to breaches of his Precept, supervision and monitoring have been stepped up.

A friar about whom a retrospective allegation had been received in 2015, and who was to have been adequately supervised, sexually abused again. There was a failure in the local supervisory regime caused by the non-sharing of essential information between people in positions of responsibility. Despite appearing to comply with the conditions of his Care and Safety Management Plan, this friar spent a period of months in grooming and subsequently sexually abusing his victim. His despicable behaviour caused grave harm to the victim and their family. It also significantly damaged the work that had been done by the Order in creating safety for children and young people taking part in ministries and in Church related activities. This Standard cannot be met because of this failure in local supervisory arrangements.

This friar was charged and convicted, and he received a two-year suspended sentence. He was placed on the Sex Offenders' Register for five years, which period has now expired. He has since been dismissed from the clerical state (laicised). However, following a great deal of discussion and consideration within the Order, he remains a member of OSA, the belief being that this very difficult decision provides a level of supervision that he would not receive if he left the Order. The level of supervision of this man has been increased, and he has no access to children or young people.

An OSA member whose situation had been described in the 2014 Review Report left the Order subsequently when his application for laicisation was accepted and he was dismissed from the clerical state.

A friar who is now deceased had voluntarily stepped aside from ministry when an allegation was made against him. The complainant made no formal statement to the statutory agencies, so no criminal investigation could take place. A Care and Safety Management Plan was put in place in 2014, and file records indicate that this was reviewed on a six-monthly basis. He was allocated a Supervisor, and his situation was overseen by the CMAP. The Provincial submitted his votum to the CDF in 2016, following a canonical investigation, which led to the friar officially retiring from all public ministry.

A member of OSA was accused of abuse, but the Order was not informed of what was alleged until Tusla had assessed the credibility of the allegation. The assessment was that the allegation was unfounded. This friar remains in good standing.

A friar was returned to ministry following a canonical process, and he died some years later as a priest in good standing.

Another friar who disclosed having abused was subject to a canonical process, and he was allocated a Supervisor who oversaw the implementation of a Care and Safety Management Plan, which was based on the outcome of a risk assessment and the determination of the CDF. This friar is now deceased.

The services of a Forensic IT Analyst were enlisted to ensure the phones and laptops provided by the Order to two separate friars would be monitored externally lest Child Sexual Exploitation Materials were being or would be actively sourced and/or re-distributed. In both cases on-going contact with the Gardaí and Tusla have taken place. During the period under review, the DLP submitted a Mandated Report in the case of one of these friars, related to these concerns.

The absence of thorough monitoring and supervision of a friar in 2015, against whom a previous allegation was known to the Provincial and the DLP, clearly fails to meet this Standard.

In making this finding however, the reviewers need to acknowledge and commend the pro-active work undertaken since then. The reviewers are satisfied that risk assessments have been conducted, canonical precepts have been issued and Care and Safety Management Plans have been appropriately used and are evidenced on the case management files examined by them. Priest Supervisors are currently working with three members.

**This standard is not met.**

**Standard 5 - Training and Support for Keeping Children Safe**

*Church personnel are trained and supported in all aspects of safeguarding relevant to their role, in order to develop and maintain the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to safeguard and protect children.*

The Augustinian Order has one National Board registered trainer, various members of the Order’s safeguarding personnel attend National Board training, and local friars and volunteers attached to Augustinian parishes take part in relevant safeguarding training in their respective dioceses.

The Order’s website Safeguarding page provides access to both the OSA Child Safeguarding Development Plan 2017 – 2019,<sup>3</sup> and the OSA Child Safeguarding Development Plan June 2020 – May 2023.<sup>4</sup> Both these macro plans contain a section on *Training & Support for Keeping Children Safe*. They are set out in a tabular format with the following headings:

5.	Training & Support for Keeping Children Safe	Who Leads?	Timeframe	Performance Indicators	Progress Update
5.1					

The various training targets set for 2020 to 2023, the timeframe for which some will have to be adjusted due to the pandemic are:

- 5. 1 - To ensure that Friars, Volunteers and Staff are inducted into Safeguarding Children: Policy, Standards and Guidance (2016);
- 5. 2 and 5. 3 - To complete a Province training needs analysis in consultation with LSGs, design appropriate training responses, and implement accordingly;
- 5. 4 - To avail of relevant NBSCCCI training in support of OSA Safeguarding and Child Protection roles;
- 5. 5 - To ensure the provision of targeted training for parents/guardians and children, when identified; and
- 5. 6 - To provide information and advice to all Priors/PPs and Local Safeguarding Representatives.

There is evidence from the Annual Reports on child safeguarding to the Provincial Council that safeguarding training for volunteers and friars was delivered through 2018 and 2019, as is shown in the table overleaf.

<sup>3</sup> <https://augustinians.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/OSA-Child-Safeguarding-Development-Plan-17-19.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://augustinians.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/OSA-Child-Safeguarding-Development-Plan-2020-2023.pdf>

## Review Report on the Order of Saint Augustine 2022

Dates 2018		Location	Info Session	Full Day	Volunteers	Friars
1.	27 Sept.	Limerick*	✓		38	5
2.	10 Nov.	Limerick		✓	7	4
3.	22 Nov.	Ballyboden	✓		26	4
Dates 2019						
1.	27 Feb.	St. Catherine's & John's Lane	✓		45	5
2.	5 Mar.	Galway	✓		40	4
3.	2 April	St. Catherine's & John's Lane	✓		25	2
4.	22 May	Drogheda	✓		45	3
5.	12 June	Drogheda	✓		25	2
6.	21 Sept.	Cork		✓	23	3
7.	25 Sept.	Finglas South*	✓		58	2
8.	16 Oct.	Fethard	✓		20	2
9.	12 Nov.	Limerick*	✓		12	
<b>Participant Totals</b>					<b>364</b>	<b>36</b>

[Note: \* refers to Diocesan Trainers]

One particularly relevant training workshop facilitated by the Order was held in November 2021, on Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment. This addressed risk assessment as it applies to Safeguarding Statements and to Standard 1. The workshop was held online and was attended by 10 representatives of four OSA sites in the Augustinian Province in the Republic of Ireland. It will be repeated during 2022 to allow the rest of the sites to have their representatives participate.

The reviewers were satisfied that the Order was fully aware of the necessity of ongoing and appropriate training for friars and laypersons involved with the Order's ministries. Training was interrupted by the onset of the pandemic and the initial lockdown. However, the OSA, with the specific encouragement of the DLP and the Prior Provincial, adapted to remote methods of training. The intention is to continue offering post-pandemic hybrid training models (a mix of in-person and video conferencing methodologies), which help to mitigate the challenges of distance between the order's various sites throughout Ireland.

**This standard is met.**



## Standard 6 - Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

*Church Bodies appropriately communicate the Church's child safeguarding message*

The National Board's Safeguarding Review was advertised on the Order's website.

February 4, 2022

### **Safeguarding Review, February 2022**

The Order of Saint Augustine, the Augustinians, have invited the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) to conduct a Review of our Child Safeguarding & Protection practices between 2015 and the present day.

If you have any views about the care and safety of anyone participating in our church ministries, we openly invite you to come forward. You may contact Fr. John Hennebry, Prior Provincial (01 4851516), 16 Zion Road, Rathgar, Dublin, D06FA30 or the NBSCCCI (01-5053124).

If you wish to report a child protection concern, please contact Mr. Tony Murphy, OSA Designated Liaison Person (087 2211235 or [Safeguarding@augustinians.ie](mailto:Safeguarding@augustinians.ie)) or Garda National Protective Services Bureau (01 6663445) or TUSLA (01-7718500).

The OSA website has a dedicated section for safeguarding, which is easily navigated and can be accessed at <https://augustinians.ie/promoting-safe-and-sacred-spaces/>.

There is a specific section for anyone who has a safeguarding concern, at <https://augustinians.ie/do-you-have-a-concern/>. The current configuration of the Order's home page could be slightly amended by moving all tabs at the top of the page to the left and so to bring the Safeguarding tab out from the right-hand corner where it is a little hard to see. The order regularly produces its Safeguarding Development Newsletter, at least two or three times annually. The newsletter promotes safeguarding throughout the order, includes contact details for the DLP and statutory authorities. Nineteen (19) issues are available online, which are dated from September 2016 through to July 2022. This is a very professionally produced, attractive - in colour and illustrated - and informative bulletin, which is commended.

The Augustinian Order has held Safeguarding Weekends from 2015 through 2019, which had to be suspended in 2020 during the recent pandemic. However, it was held again in 2021, and planning is at an advanced stage for the 2022 event on September 24 and 25, 2022 across all of the Order's locations.

The OSAs have an annual Network meeting for friars and volunteers, established in 2017, which takes the form of a conference with keynote speakers. This event facilitates people involved in safeguarding within the Order to meet and share ideas and experiences. The 2021 Network took place on May 7 and it is described in the latest Newsletter.

Up to 25 participants took part in the virtual gathering from across the Province. A varied programme included keynote speakers and the launch of Safeguarding resources: Guidance for Recruiting Volunteers, and Guidance for Volunteers Visiting the Homes of Vulnerable Adults & Families; two Safeguarding Posters, and a new Information Leaflet for Young People.

<p>The annual Progress Report was explained, and a commitment given to produce materials to support the OSA Safeguarding Weekend 24/25 Sept. 2022.</p>
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The two posters referred to are very colourful and eye-catching, and are for use in all OSA locations. The themes of the posters are *Augustinian Safeguarding – At the heart of our communities and ministries*, and *Augustinian Safeguarding – Looking out for the welfare of others*.

The Information Leaflet for Young People is explained in the same Newsletter as follows:

As well as providing basic information suited to the 13 – 16 yrs. age group, this leaflet combines images from the previous two posters. Older adolescents may also find it useful. However, it is not intended for primary school children. Local Safeguarding Groups will know best how to use and distribute the leaflet.

The key message is: *Your safety matters to us. Our friars, volunteers and staff have made a commitment to treat every person with respect and dignity.*

Different categories of abuse are explained. Readers are provided with a range of contexts in which abuse does and can happen. Some helpful advice is given by way of 'Things to do' if you have to face any of these situations. Underlying all of this is the important message: *Abuse is NEVER your fault.* So this is about raising awareness and letting people know: *Help is at hand, if needed.* Four sets of contact details are listed.

The order's Communication Plan is a section of the OSA Child Safeguarding Development Plan-2020-2023. Seven relevant targets have been set for the period involved, which include an upgrade to the Order's Safeguarding website pages, and further improvements to communication from the SDG to the local Safeguarding Groups.

It is clear that there is a very significant effort being made within the Augustinian Order to communicate the child-safeguarding message.

**This standard is met.**

### **Standard 7 – Quality Assuring Compliance with the Standards**

*The Church Body develops a plan of action to quality assure compliance with the safeguarding standards. This action plan is reviewed annually. The Church body only has responsibility to monitor, evaluate and report on compliance with the indicators under each standard that apply to it, depending on its ministry.*

The reviewers were provided with written evidence of the annual internal self-assessment progress reports (audit) that is conducted across the OSA sites. This is analysed by the Safeguarding Officer, and is worked on and subsequently assessed by the Safeguarding Development Group, and the information compiled is fed into the Order's child safeguarding planning process.

In September 2019, the Safeguarding Officer completed an audit verification exercise in every OSA location, which involved him checking every return against hard copy evidence. The reviewers inspected the documentation generated by this process, and remark on the *Notes, Actions & Follow-up* list drawn up and fed back to each location by the SO following his visit. The implementation of all standards was verified, and therefore issues such as the need for updated vetting, training needs and safeguarding materials required were all responded to. This arduous close examination indicates a commitment to internal quality assurance, and it is commended.

Two comprehensive three-year Child Safeguarding Development Plans for the periods 2017 to 2019, and 2020 to 2023 have been examined and are commended.

The Order is up to date in informing the National Board of its completion of its annual audit report.

The DLP, who is also the Safeguarding Officer and Trainer, compiles written reports on all case management and child safeguarding activities during the reporting period, which on the recommendation of the CMAP and SDG respectively are presented to the Provincial Council. Reports covering the period 2016 to 2021 were examined by the reviewers and are of a good quality in terms of the information contained and the accountability demonstrated.

The Provincial of the Order has invited the National Board to conduct this Review, and he and his colleagues and safeguarding staff have provided the reviewers with all of the information they have needed to complete this task.

**This standard is met.**

## **Conclusion**

The National Board notes and welcomes substantial improvements by the Augustinian Order's Irish Province in its compliance with the Church's Standards since the previous Review. While acknowledging the impact of pandemic restrictions, the reviewers had sight of records of the engagement of children and young people in Church related activities and in ministries. The Order completed a full implementation of the recommendations made in the first Review, and it now has the structures and processes in place to continue to improve and develop.

The reviewers want to commend the work undertaken by the Prior Provincial, the Order's DLP, the two committees, and the local Safeguarding personnel in the much-improved response to complainants, including the use of mediation in the development of fair and balanced outcomes for them.

A breakdown in the local supervisory regime for one respondent friar has been acknowledged by the Order as a significant cause of regret. It therefore must be treated as an on-going priority for the Order in respect of pro-active risk management, and in responding sensitively, as appropriate, to the family's needs.