



SAFEGUARDING COMMISSION

Annual Report 2019

www.safeguarding.mt

Contents

FOREWORD	2
1. NEW SAFEGUARDING POLICY	3
2. CERTIFICATE IN SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	4
3. THE PROTECTION OF MINORS IN THE CHURCH MEETING	4
4. PREVENTION OF ABUSE	5
5. STATISTICS OF COMPLAINTS	5
6. CHANGES IN SAFEGUARDING COMMISSION STAFF	6
7. INTERNATIONAL WORK	6
APPENDIX 1: 2019 SAFEGUARDING DATA FOR MINORS	9
APPENDIX 2: 2019 SAFEGUARDING DATA FOR VULNERABLE ADULTS	10
APPENDIX 3: GLOSSARY OF TERMS	11

Foreword

The Safeguarding Commission is an entity established by the Bishops of Malta and Gozo and the Religious Major Superiors. Since its inception, the aim of the Commission was to create a positive and effective safeguarding culture in the Church. This journey continued in 2019, which was a crucial year for safeguarding in the Church globally. The year started with the Meeting for Protection of Minors in the Church hosted by Pope Francis in Rome in February. This brought a lot of public attention to the issue and Archbishop Charles Jude Scicluna, who as one of the organisers, was keen to ensure the voice of victims and survivors was placed centre stage during the Meeting.

The Safeguarding Commission began a comprehensive consultation process with victims of abuse, Church entities and statutory agencies to develop new safeguarding policies for the Church in Malta and Gozo. The Commission is grateful to all those who contributed to the process, in particular the victims and survivors who shared their precious input. The Church expects to publish its new policies in early 2021.

In 2019, the Safeguarding Commission continued to investigate complaints, train personnel in various Church entities and vetting its personnel by filing Court applications under the Protection of Minors (Registration) Act (POMA).

The Commission is proud to highlight the opening of a new Certificate in Safeguarding of Children and Young People at the University of Malta in October 2020. This is the culmination of a four-year long journey spearheaded by the Safeguarding Commission to ensure there is an accredited University level course in safeguarding. The Faculty of Theology and the Faculty of Social Wellbeing will be taking a lead role to deliver this course in close collaboration with the Safeguarding Commission.

On an international level, in June 2019, the Commission attended the Anglophone Safeguarding Conference in Rome. This was another interesting opportunity to learn and network with colleagues and Church leaders. The Commission notes with disappointment the decision for the annual Anglophone Safeguarding Conference to be stopped. However, this also presented opportunity for a new journey with the International Safeguarding Conference Steering Committee which is planning to organise an annual safeguarding event for professionals and Church leaders.

As referred to in this report, the training offered by the Commission to the Fondazione Gesuiti Educazione was an excellent chance to share the safeguarding practices carried out in Malta and to hear about best practices in Catholic schools overseas. The Commission looks forward to more opportunities such as these to learn and share ways to improve and further create awareness to enhance a culture of safeguarding.



Andrew Azzopardi
Head of Safeguarding

1. New Safeguarding Policy

The Church intensified its effort to update its safeguarding policies. As part of this review, the Safeguarding Commission hosted a number of discussion groups to consult with entities forming part of the Church. Participants were asked to comment and give feedback on the new draft policies. This bottom-up approach enabled Church entities to instil a sense of ownership when it comes to safeguarding and helped develop the safeguarding culture in the many organisations run by the Church.

The key changes in the new policy include the following:

- a) Complies with the **Minors Protection (Alternative Care) Act** (2019).
- b) Implements Pope Francis' *motu proprio Vos Estis Lux Mundi* (2019).
- c) Is consistent with the Vatican's **Vademecum** (2020) which are guidelines from the Holy See on how to handle complaints of sexual abuse of minors committed by members of the clergy.
- d) A new vetting system for all Church personnel.

The Commission sought individual feedback from victims and survivors as their input is key to develop a truly survivor-centred approach in safeguarding. Service users of various Church entities were also consulted in the process.

The Commission hosted a total of seven consultation meetings to receive feedback on the new policy, which included the following statutory agencies and key stakeholders:

- The Commissioner for Mental Health
- The Directorate of Child Protection
- The Malta Police Force
- The Office of the Commissioner for Children, and
- The Social Care Standards Authority

The new Safeguarding policies will be launched in early 2021, following the approval of the Maltese Episcopal Conference and the Council for Religious Major Superiors (KSMR).

2. Certificate in Safeguarding of Children and Young People

The University of Malta confirmed the new Certificate in Safeguarding of Children and Young People will start in October 2020. The Safeguarding Commission worked closely with the Faculty of Theology and the Faculty of Social Wellbeing to complete the accreditation from the University of Malta. This is a huge step for our local community as we will have the first safeguarding course accredited by a university. If the Certificate is a success, this course may eventually also lead to further specialised courses at post-graduate level.

3. The Protection of Minors in the Church Meeting (February 2019)

Pope Francis hosted a global meeting on the Protection of Minors in the Church in February 2019. The Presidents of all the Episcopal Conferences around the world attended as well as Religious Major Superiors. Archbishop Scicluna was one of the organisers of this meeting.

As part of the preparation for the meeting, the Safeguarding Commission completed an extensive questionnaire on the safeguarding work done locally by the Church. It also collated suggestions on where matters and processes can improve.

The aim of the global meeting was to explore concrete ways in which to improve the safeguarding culture within the Church. The meeting was characterised by testimony of victims and survivors of abuse and covered three main themes: (i) Responsibility, (ii) Accountability (iii) Transparency.

The meeting also announced three initiatives to assist the Church in safeguarding. The plan was to start the following three initiatives in the months after the meeting:

- To publish rules and regulations to safeguard minors and vulnerable adults within Vatican City State
- The distribution of a *Vademecum* (rulebook) explaining juridical and pastoral duties and responsibilities to safeguard children
- The creation of an operative Safeguarding Task Force comprised of competent experts to assist Episcopal Conferences that may lack the necessary resources or expertise to implement an effective safeguarding culture

4. Prevention of abuse

The Protection of Minors (Registration) Act (POMA) requires all employers to file a court application for any employee or volunteer who comes into contact with minors. This is part of the vetting process required by Law for any organisation working with minors to verify whether there is any relevant information on the Offenders' Register, as regulated by the same Act. In this respect, the Safeguarding Commission filed a total of 79 Court applications for **2,949** people who all received clearance to work with minors.

The Safeguarding Commission offered a number of training sessions to staff, volunteers, seminarians and members of religious orders as part of their ongoing formation. In 2019, 369 Church personnel (such as teachers, catechists, priests, religious, seminarians and volunteers) attended safeguarding specific training led by the Safeguarding Commission in Malta.

Fr Joseph Farrugia, a member of the Safeguarding Commission, delivered in-depth training on safeguarding minors to 49 Church personnel in Gozo. Fr Farrugia also delivered training to 62 members of the public (non-Church personnel) and delivered talks on safeguarding to 83 other people such as parents or school staff. The diocese of Gozo organised a safeguarding conference which was attended by 122 people.

This brings the total of **418** Church personnel trained in 2019.

5. Statistics of complaints

In 2019, the Safeguarding Commission found two allegations involving minors to be substantiated. One complaint involved alleged physical abuse. The religious priest concerned was restricted from occupying the role he had at the time. The second complaint involved an allegation of sexual abuse against a religious priest. The Subject of Complaint was restricted from pastoral ministry. The abuse allegedly took place 39 years ago and hence was now subject to the statute of limitations. Moreover, the complainant did not consent to have the allegation reported to the police.

There were no substantiated complaints involving vulnerable adults.

Between January and December 2019, 16 new complaints were received involving minors and eight involving vulnerable adults.

The Safeguarding Commission concluded eight assessments involving minors, out of which two were substantiated, two were unsubstantiated and one was not Church personnel. One more complaint involved someone who was deceased and two involved complaints where it was not possible to identify the person concerned due to lack of information.

The Commission concluded three assessments involving vulnerable adults of which two were unsubstantiated and one was unfounded.

6. Change in Safeguarding Commission staff

The team had an important change in personnel. The Safeguarding Officer left the team in April 2019 and was replaced by Ms Mary Rose Gatt, Clinical Psychologist, in June 2019.

During the last semester of 2019, the Safeguarding Commission welcomed a student on placement from the Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome). The student, a diocesan priest from Ghana, was reading a Masters in Safeguarding and completed a practical placement as part of his tertiary education.

Mr Andrew Azzopardi, Head of Safeguarding, was also appointed to head the safeguarding of Caritas Internationalis, the Catholic organisation based in the Vatican City focused on humanitarian action and development in the poorest countries in the world.

7. International work

Anglophone Conference 2019

The team attended the annual Anglophone Safeguarding conference in Rome organised by the Episcopal Conferences of Ireland and New Zealand. The conference took place from 1 – 5 July 2019 at the Pontifical Irish College and the Notre Dame Global Gateway Centre in Rome. The purpose of the Conference was to address relevant issues concerning the abuse of children at risk, and the means by which the Church can play an effective role in their protection. The Conference was attended by Church Leaders and officials engaged in safeguarding on behalf of Episcopal and Religious Conferences from 13 countries around the world.

The focus of the conference in 2019 was Child Safeguarding Formation. The conference also included people from key Church offices who answered participants' questions and concerns. These people included Ms Teresa Kettlekamp, a member of The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay and a member of the eight-person Council of Cardinal Advisers to Pope Francis and Monsignor John Kennedy, Head of Discipline Section, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the Vatican.

This was the 16th and final Anglophone Conference. With the increasing recognition that Safeguarding was an issue of the whole Church, and not just of Anglophone countries, a decision was taken to discontinue the annual Anglophone Safeguarding Conferences, making space for something different to emerge, such as the International Safeguarding Conference (see below).

International Safeguarding Conference

The Anglophone Safeguarding Conference was a popular annual event within the safeguarding community in the Church. Since this event was discontinued, a group of committed professionals came together to form the International Safeguarding Conference (ISC). The ISC is another annual event which allows safeguarding professionals and Church leaders to engage with safeguarding matters. The aim is to build a safer Church.

The ISC Steering Committee and the Committee members are:

- **Dr Alessandra Campo** - Network Coordinator, Centre for Child Protection (PUG)
- **Mr Andrew Azzopardi** - Head of Safeguarding Commission, Maltese Ecclesiastical Province and Coordinator of the Vatican Safeguarding Taskforce
- **Fr Hans Zollner SJ** - President, Centre for Child Protection (PUG) and Member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors
- **Mr Simon Davies** - Director of Professional Standards, Society of Jesus (Jesuits) Australia
- **Ms Tina Campbell** - National Safeguarding Coordinator, Catholic Bishops' Conference Scotland

Fondazione Gesuiti Educazione training

The Fondazione Gesuiti Educazione invited the Safeguarding Commission to provide an intensive training programme to 35 leaders of Jesuit Schools in Malta, Italy and Albania.

The safeguarding training took place in Gressoney, Italy in November 2019. The Centre for Child Protection of the Gregorian University (Rome) and the Albanian Church Schools legal advisor on safeguarding also contributed to this training programme.

The participants were given the opportunity to reflect on key safeguarding themes and make personal observations on how they can make their schools safer for children. They were also given the opportunity to become familiar with recent developments in the field of safeguarding and reflect on how to develop or improve their school's safeguarding policy. The contributions from three different countries made for a very rich and diverse training event.

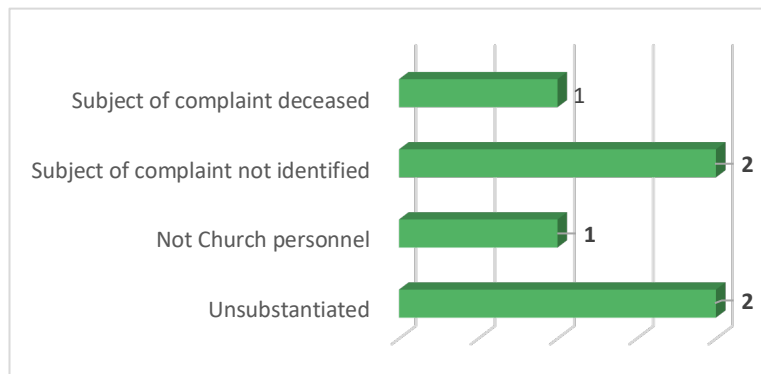
Appendix 1: 2019 Safeguarding Data for Minors

Concluded assessments

Substantiated complaints

Role	Allegation	Restriction in place	Referred to civil authorities
Religious priest	Physical abuse	Yes	Yes
Religious priest	Sexual abuse	Yes	Yes

Other complaints



Risk assessments

Substantiated	2
Other complaints (including unsubstantiated, unfounded and referred to 3rd party)	6
Ongoing	22

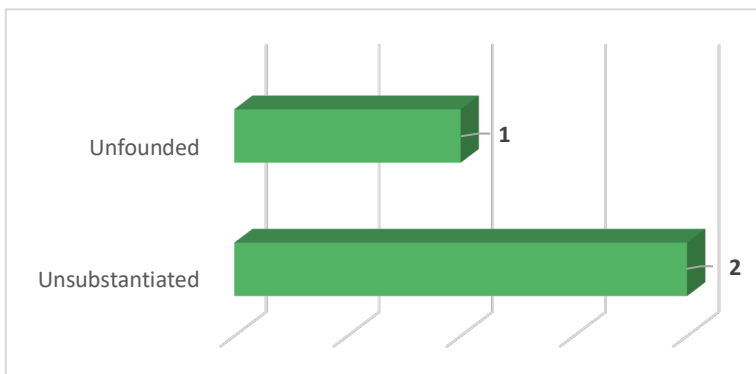
Appendix 2: 2019 Safeguarding Data for Vulnerable Adults

Concluded assessments

Substantiated complaints

None

Other complaints



Risk assessments

Substantiated	0
Concluded (including substantiated, unsubstantiated, unfounded and referred to 3 rd party)	3
Ongoing	8

Appendix 3: Glossary of terms

<i>Term</i>	<i>Description</i>	
Church personnel	Refers to clergy (bishops, priests and deacons), consecrated persons, members of apostolic life and lay people (employed or volunteers) appointed to work in pastoral activity or in supporting the Church's mission.	
Conclusion of a complaint	<i>Refer to 3rd Party</i>	Complaints which do not relate to safeguarding concerns but still need to be dealt with by other entities, both within and outside of the Church.
	<i>Substantiated</i>	Evidence was able to prove that the allegation did happen.
	<i>Unfounded</i>	Evidence was able to prove that the allegation was false.
	<i>Unsubstantiated</i>	It cannot be proven if the allegation did or did not happen
	<i>Poor practice</i>	Where the behaviour of Church personnel may be causing distress to a child or vulnerable adult or any behaviour that conflicts the standards of behaviour expected or which infringes an individual's rights.
	<i>Pastoral activity</i>	Any activity that involves the Catholic Church or its mission.
Protection of Minors Act (POMA) Court Application	A request from the Voluntary Jurisdiction Section of the Civil Court (First Hall) for information which may be registered in the Register in respect of any applicant, or person who is employed, or holds any position with the same institution, establishment or organisation whether such employment or position is against payment or otherwise. This is regulated by the Protection of Minors (Registration) Act of the Laws of Malta.	
Restriction from pastoral ministry	A temporary or permanent decision to suspend personnel from some or all pastoral activity.	
Safeguarding-specific training	Training to raise awareness of the responsibility of Church personnel to identify signs of abuse and report concerns. The training also gives tools to personnel to create a safe environment for minors and vulnerable adults.	
Types of abuse	<i>Bullying</i>	Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Kids who bully use their power such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity to control or harm others.
	<i>Emotional</i>	Minors who are emotionally abused are subjected or exposed to behaviour that may result in psychological trauma including anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress disorder.
	<i>Exploitation</i>	The act of using a child for profit, labour, sexual gratification, or some other personal or financial advantage.
	<i>Neglect</i>	Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs. It's dangerous and minors can suffer serious and long-term harm.
	<i>Physical</i>	Physical abuse is deliberately or neglectfully hurting a child causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.
	<i>Sexual</i>	A child is sexually abused when they are forced, persuaded or threatened to take part in sexual activities. There is usually a power difference between victim and perpetrator; as well as a significant disparity between their intellectual capacity or maturity.