



SAFEGUARDING MATTERS

in the Catholic Church in Scotland

December
2021

Former Judge will Chair new Safeguarding Standards Agency

The Hon Lady Rita Rae QC has been appointed as the first Board Chair of SCSSA - the new Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency that is being established by the Catholic Church in Scotland.

The SCSSA is being established to operate entirely independently of the Catholic Church, with its own staff and non-executive directors who will work in close collaboration with dioceses and religious communities to ensure that they are meeting safeguarding standards.

Crucially, it will develop a forum in which those who have experienced abuse can contribute their own perspectives to the development of the Church's safeguarding practice.

Bishop Hugh Gilbert (President of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland) said, "When considering a number of possible candidates for this important post, the Bishops were

united in their view that the SCSSA Board Chair must be able to act with impartiality, integrity and freedom from interference. We immediately recognised that Lady Rae's prestigious legal career, and her reputation as a Senator of the College of Justice in Scotland, offered great testimony to the rigour and the independence with which she will approach this role. We are delighted that she has accepted this appointment."

Lady Rae said, "I am honoured to undertake this role as the first Chair of the SCSSA. I recognise that, in establishing this independent agency, the Catholic Church in Scotland is taking another bold step to ensure that its safeguarding practice will meet the highest standards."

She continued, "I intend to ensure that the agency will operate with independence and that it will seek to rebuild confidence and trust, especially



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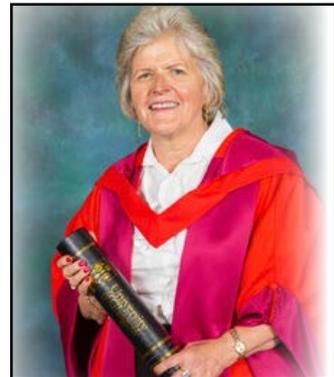
among those who have experienced abuse. I look forward to recruiting fellow Board members who will bring rigour, independence and expertise to support the work of the agency."

Lady Rae will take up her duties in January 2022 when she will lead the work of recruiting other members to the SCSSA Board, as well as planning to meet with some stakeholder groups. She will be taking account of the views expressed in the first of a number of online polls which are open to all.

The Hon Lady Rae – Biography

Lady Rae was admitted as a solicitor in 1974 and worked as an apprentice and assistant at Biggart Lumsden and Co, Balfour & Manson, Biggart Baillie & Gifford and Ross Harper & Murphy between 1974 and 1977. In 1977 she became partner at Ross Harper & Murphy, until 1981. In the early 80's, Lady Rae was on the Glasgow Bar Association Committee and served as Secretary from 1981 to 1982. She joined the Faculty of Advocates in 1982 and was appointed QC in 1992. She was a member of the Scottish Council on Human Bioethics between 1996-98; a member of the Sentencing Commission for Scotland between 2003 and 2006; the Glasgow Branch Chair of the Scottish Association for the Study of Offending from 2003 to 2014, now the Hon President of the Glasgow Branch; and a member of Glasgow University "Legal 40" from 2010 to date, mentoring diploma students. She has mentored other law students at various stages in their legal studies. She has given lectures on a variety of legal topics.

She served as a temporary sheriff from 1987-1997, a sheriff at Glasgow from 1997 and a temporary judge at the Court of Session from 2004 - 2013. From 2001-2007 she was a member (and vice-chair from 2005) of the Parole Board for Scotland.



She was appointed Senator of the College of Justice in Scotland in January 2014 (retired June 2020 but continues to sit part-time.) In 2017 she was also appointed as an Upper Tribunal Judge in immigration and asylum cases until the end of 2018. She became an Ambassador for 'Young Citizens' London from 2018. Prior to the start of the pandemic, she was the patron of the Street Project in Hamilton. In 2019 she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Law by the University of Glasgow and was elected as Rector in April 2021.

Listening to your views

In the November issue of [Safeguarding Matters](#), we invited readers to participate in an online poll to contribute their ideas on how the SCSSA should be developed - its objectives and priorities, the qualities and experiences of its Board members, who it should work, with etc. The responses we received are already being used to inform our planning and we intend to use more polls in the months ahead. [You can find a report on Poll 1 here.](#) Some of these responses are provided below.

Safeguarding is NOT about safeguarding the Catholic Church as an institution!

Leadership and transparency are essential.

The SCSSA Board members should be like Jesus in their readiness, out of humility and love, to challenge religious authorities. They should, in particular, be ready to confront any evidence of clericalism that may impact on those who are vulnerable.

Board Members . . . have to be above reproach and able to challenge constructively the internal workings of the church . . . to be credible. More importantly, the people who appoint them have to be willing to actually listen to them.

Would like this work to be better publicised as it would give the public more confidence in the agency's ability to deal with safeguarding issues.

I think that safeguarding is still low key in parishes. By that, I mean it's a policy which is there if needs be, but it is not sufficiently highlighted.

I applaud the effort invested in this initiative and its principles, including the desire for independence. I welcome a fresh approach to training resources for new and current volunteers.

A huge and welcomed opportunity, but it needs radical thinking and courageous leadership.

Great care must be taken during the recruitment process to ensure that the appointees have the necessary knowledge, skills, experience and expertise to create a Board with a balance of individuals who complement each other.

This needs open lines of communication and strong governance.

Why is there an annual Safeguarding audit?

reviewing and planning to improve practice

“We cannot be led into thinking that, once a policy is approved, our work has been done. Regular audits of our policies are also a key factor in communicating accountability in an open and transparent way.”

Cardinal Seán O’Malley,

President of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors

Our annual Safeguarding audits

Every year, the Church in Scotland collects information about all who work with children and vulnerable adults on Church premises across the country. Every parish, diocese, religious congregation and Catholic organisation must complete a detailed online audit form, answering questions about how they are complying with the Church’s national safeguarding standards.



What is the point of the audit?

The audit is intended to provide a transparent view of how effectively the Church is embracing a culture of safeguarding that respects, protects and nurtures the dignity of all people, keeps them safe and is compliant with legislation.

The purpose of the annual audit exercise is NOT merely to gather statistics, but to prompt those responsible for safeguarding to:

- reflect on their current safeguarding practice
- demonstrate how well they are meeting the Church’s safeguarding standards
- identify examples of good safeguarding practice that can be shared with others
- make plans to take action where improvement is required.

What is audited?

Built around the eight Safeguarding Standards of ‘In God’s Image’, the audit forms collect information on:

- » safeguarding risk assessments of premises and activities
- » the vetting of clergy, religious, employees and volunteers
- » training records of the above
- » all allegations of abuse
- » the outcomes of allegations.

How are the audit results used?

Audit results can highlight examples of good practice for sharing, as well as any potential risks in safeguarding practice for prioritised action.

Analysis of the data is used to inform ongoing safeguarding work at the local and national levels, enabling all to see what is working well, to identify what needs to be improved, to identify training needs and to plan for ongoing improvement.



Getting ready to complete your Audit

Each December, every parish, religious congregation and Catholic organisation working with children and/or vulnerable adults receives details of the particular Safeguarding Audit form specific to their context. These forms and accompanying Guidance Notes, which are designed by the Scottish Catholic Safeguarding Service, are issued directly by SCSS to religious congregations and organisations and by Dioceses to their parishes. The audits, which ask for information relating to the previous calendar year, must be submitted by the end of January.

How can you prepare to compete the audit?

Safeguarding in every Church setting should be an ongoing concern, something that is given careful and regular attention by those responsible for it. It is NOT something that should be set aside until the annual audit process begins. In this sense, preparing for the annual audit should be a continuing focus of all those who are responsible for ensuring the safety of children and vulnerable adults in church settings and activities.

What are the main steps to follow?

The safeguarding team (e.g., PP & PSC in a parish) should meet to discuss the audit, review the past year and agree:

1. What is working well?
2. What do we need to improve?
3. What support do we need - advice? guidance?
4. What further training would help?

The answers to these questions should inform your answers to the audit questions. They should also inform the plans that you will make to improve your practice for each of the standards of In God's Image.

Why does the audit ask questions about standards?

In God's Image is built around eight safeguarding standards that are expected to be adhered to in all Catholic jurisdictions in Scotland. In completing the audit, you verify how well you are complying with these. IGIv2 provides, for each standard, 'indicators of compliance' and suggests some evidence that you might use to demonstrate compliance with each.

How familiar are you with In God's Image?

IGI was first published in April 2018 and it was updated in September 2021, with some significant changes that reflect evolving practice and changes in legislation and guidance. **It is vital that all those responsible for safeguarding in any Church setting take steps to familiarise themselves with IGIv2.** The 2021 audit asks questions about what you have done to raise your awareness of IGIv2 and/or what plans you have to do so.

What kind of safeguarding PLANS should you make?

The audit asks you to outline the actions that you will take in the coming year to improve some aspect(s) of your safeguarding practice in relation to one or more of the standards. The audit asks parishes, religious congregations and organisations to outline: WHAT actions will be taken, by WHOM and WHAT IMPACT these actions are intended to have.

Example of action planned to improve Std. 2 practice:

1. *The PP & PSC will meet with key volunteers to stress the importance of completing Safeguarding Risk Assessments for parish activities involving children and/or vulnerable adults.*
2. *All group leaders will submit completed forms by Sept.*
3. *All completed forms will be verified by the PSC.*

By contrast, Diocesan Action Plans are required to be more detailed and to emerge from a process of discussion with diocesan safeguarding teams. The benefit of these plans to you is that they will enable you to monitor progress throughout the coming year and to review improvements at the end of next year.

TIMELINE FOR ANNUAL AUDIT EXERCISE

PARISH, RELIGIOUS & ORGANISATION AUDITS

by mid-December	SCSS issues Audit forms and Guidance Notes
by mid-January	Discussion to prepare for completing audit
by 31st January	Audit forms submitted online

DIOCESAN AUDITS

by mid-January	SCSS issues Audit form and Guidance Notes
by mid-February	Diocesan teams discuss audit contents
by 28th February	Audit forms submitted online
by 30th April	Diocesan Action Plans submitted

Safeguarding Contacts

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This is the **fourth** in a series of newsletters intended to inform you about developments in the Church's safeguarding practice.

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