

November 2023

## Safeguarding and Pathways to the Future

### Pathways to the Future (Safeguarding Committee)

You would be aware from Bishop Donal's recent Pastoral Letter "Voices of Hope" which outlines the current journey our Diocese is on.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Office embraces the Pathways journey and will engage and support each of our Parishes at whatever stage of this journey they are at.

The Diocesan Director of Safeguarding sits on the *Pathways to the Future* Steering Committee, which has been established to discern the future mission, structures, and pastoral priorities of the Diocese of Down and Connor. The Committee will shortly share its proposals for groups of parishes coming together as new "Families of Parishes". The Committee will invite conversation and comment on twenty-five [25] suggested Families of Parishes.

With regards to safeguarding, a number of Parishes have already decided to come together with regards to coordinating safeguarding. This model of safeguarding at parish level has been shown to work very effectively and there is valuable learning for the development of the suggested Families of Parishes.

The Safeguarding Office is committed to supporting all Parishes in their *Pathways to the Future* journey.

Staff from the Safeguarding Office will provide support to each of the Parishes in the reconfiguration to one Family of Parishes Safeguarding Committee.

The role of the existing Parish Safeguarding Committees does not change, creating and maintaining safe environments at parish level does not change and safe recruitment for Parish volunteers does not change.

The only thing that will change is the structure under which these activities take place.

One Safeguarding Committee including representatives from each of the Parishes in the Family, will coordinate safeguarding across the Family of Parishes.

The Safeguarding Office already has engaged with a number of the suggested Family of Parishes and we have seen the establishment of a Family of Parishes Safeguarding Committee.

Please contact the safeguarding office for support at whatever stage of the Pathway Journey you may be on.

*Phil O'Neil*

