



A letter to the people of Diocese of Dromore from Archbishop Eamon Martin, Apostolic Administrator

Meeting our financial and other responsibilities for safeguarding in the Diocese of Dromore.

Dear brothers and sisters

The Diocese of Dromore is committed to bringing healing to survivors of clerical sexual abuse. Since my arrival in the Diocese as Apostolic Administrator in April 2019, one of my priorities has been to respond to survivors of abuse who continue to search for truth, healing, and restitution. In this letter to the people of the Diocese of Dromore I wish to communicate the steps that the Diocese has been taking to meet its financial and other responsibilities for the awful sins and crimes of abuse in the past.

The impact of child abuse on victims and survivors is deeply personal and is carried differently by each one, and by those close to them. The Diocese of Dromore offers and funds counselling for survivors via two independent organisations: *Towards Healing*, a free and independent counselling service; and, *Towards Peace*, an organisation which aims to provide a safe and supportive space where people who have been affected by abuse can be accompanied towards spiritual peace, one step at a time. Contact details for both organisations - which work on a confidential basis - are available on posters in the porches of parish churches or on the diocesan website.

In recent years some survivors have chosen to make claims for compensation by taking legal cases against the Diocese of Dromore on account of the abuse perpetrated against them. Others have been compensated via a Redress Scheme put in place by the Diocese in September 2021 for those survivors who wish to avail of it. As Apostolic Administrator, I have also held pastoral meetings with those survivors who request such an opportunity.

We are all aware of the terrible wrong that was done to many innocent children in the past and we want to make sure we do everything in our power to prevent anything like that happening again.

The Diocese of Dromore therefore abides fully by the Safeguarding Policy and Guidance developed by the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland. We have a Diocesan Safeguarding Committee made up of experienced lay people who oversee safeguarding arrangements in the Diocese.

The Diocese has a Safeguarding office based in Lurgan which is staffed by Mrs. Pat Carville, Safeguarding Director and Mrs. Joan Aldridge, Safeguarding Officer. The Safeguarding Director acts as the Designated Liaison Person to ensure that all concerns or complaints that are received are properly followed up and reported to the relevant civil authorities. Our Diocesan Office also ensures that all clergy, and anyone who has ministry or regular contact with

children and young people, are trained and vetted appropriately and regularly. In each of our Parishes we have volunteer Parish Safeguarding Representatives whose role is to support the Parish Priest and Clergy in implementing all safeguarding policies and arrangements.

Earlier this year the arrangements for Safeguarding in the Diocese of Dromore were independently reviewed by the National Board. The Review Report, available on the Dromore Diocesan website www.dromorediocese.org shows that the Diocese of Dromore is abiding fully with best practice in safeguarding standards. For this I am most grateful to the many lay people, religious and clergy who are engaged in safeguarding at parish and diocesan level throughout the Diocese. I encourage you to read the Review report.

It is vitally important that the Diocese has the necessary human and financial resources going forward for safeguarding best practice and for responding, via counselling, support and just compensation and redress to those who have been abused. I also wish to ensure that the Diocese of Dromore contributes its share to supporting the national safeguarding structures which ensure that our standards remain up to date.

For this reason, being conscious that remaining diocesan funds are limited, I have been in discussions over the past two years with the Directors of the Dromore Diocesan Trust about identifying any diocesan assets that could be sold in order to meet our existing and ongoing safeguarding responsibilities. Following an extensive feasibility study, the Trust has identified lands at Armagh Road, Newry, which it proposes to sell in order to finance the liabilities of the Diocese. These lands, adjacent to, and including the existing Bishop's House, are in the ownership of the Diocese of Dromore. Given their proximity to the amenities of Newry City Centre and to various educational and retail facilities, we understand that sections of the land would likely be very suitable for residential development in order to help meet the identified social and private housing need in the Newry area.

In writing this letter, I am conscious of the importance of letting you, the people of the Diocese, know how we hope to find the resources necessary to meet the ongoing responsibilities of the Diocese for the legacy of abuse and for keeping all children and vulnerable people safe now and in the future in all Church activities.

On behalf of the Diocese, I once more apologise unreservedly for the hurt and damage caused to victims and survivors of any priest or church representative acting under its authority. Such behaviour towards children and vulnerable people was and remains abhorrent, inexcusable, and indefensible. I also apologise to the people of the Diocese who have felt that their trust in the Church was betrayed and that they were badly let down. I am committed to ensuring that the Diocese of Dromore maintains the standards for which it is commended in this year's review report, and I ask for your support in ensuring that remains the case today, and in the future.

With every blessing to you and your families.

+Most Rev Eamon Martin
Apostolic Administrator

25th November 2023