



25th May 2006

Dear Bishop/Congregation Leader,

RE: SELF AUDIT OF CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

I am pleased to enclose for your attention a copy of the final version of the self audit instrument, and to introduce the self-audit process of Child Protection systems agreed by the Bishops' Conference and CoR.

The Purpose of an audit

An audit is a systematic method of reviewing and monitoring the extent to which agreed activities are taking place within an organisation. The audit is an important method of ensuring that a process of continuous improvement takes place and of demonstrating accountability and transparency.

The Benefits of the self-audit to Dioceses and Religious Congregations

The purpose of this particular self audit is to enable you to inform yourself of how far the agreed child protection policies and procedures are being carried out within your Diocese/Religious Congregation, and to assist in identifying, through the required action plan, what steps need to be taken to ensure that national policies are being implemented in practice.

How the Self-Audit will work

The audit instrument has been the subject of wide consultation and the process was piloted in the early part of 2006 with 2 Dioceses and 2 Religious Congregations. Feedback from this pilot has been incorporated within the instrument and in the planned process of the audit.

NOTES FOR COMPLETION OF THE AUDIT INSTRUMENT

1. Please refer to the National Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults Policies and Procedures and to the Polices, Procedures and Codes of Practice for Criminal Records Bureau Disclosures when completing the audit instrument.
2. Please indicate, for each question, the source of the information on which your response was based.
3. Please note that an action plan section is attached at the back of the instrument and this requires the inclusion of timescales for each action and the identification of any assistance that might be needed from COPCA or elsewhere.
4. Please note that the instrument should be co-signed by the Chair of the Child Protection Commission and by the Bishop/Congregation Leader.

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THE NATIONAL PROCESS OF SELF AUDIT

1. The frequency of audit will be once every 3 years. All Dioceses and a selection of Religious Congregations will be audited in 2006 as the first year. After this first year, a proportion of Dioceses and Religious Congregations will be audited in 2007 and another proportion will be audited in 2008.
2. Unless otherwise indicated the audit response will apply on the date when the audit was carried out.
3. The audit should be completed within a common agreed time period for those Dioceses and Religious Congregations who will be audited in that year.
4. Independent scrutiny of the results of the audit will be undertaken by COPCA to whom audit reports should be sent.
5. The results of the audit will be collated by COPCA and will be contained within the Annual Report for 2006.
6. Where the completion of an audit instrument and/or action plan gives rise to any significant issues, this will be discussed with the Diocese or Religious Congregation in question in order to establish what additional help or support may be needed; in some cases a follow up self audit process may be required the following year.

If you have any queries about this process please do not hesitate to contact me at COPCA.

Yours sincerely,



Eileen Shearer
Director, COPCA

cc. All Child Protection Co-ordinators