

2024

ANNUAL REPORT



**SAFEGUARDING
COMMISSION**

safeguarding.mt

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Foreword

The Safeguarding Commission was established by the Maltese Episcopal Conference and the Conference of Major Religious Superiors in 2015. The entity replaced what was known as the Response Team, which had been handling allegations since 1999.

The Commission is tasked with fostering a culture of safeguarding within the Church in Malta. It achieves this objective by implementing preventive measures, providing training, and offering support and advocacy for victims and all involved. The Safeguarding Commission manages complaints as well as conducting preliminary investigations and risk assessments.

In 2024, the Maltese Episcopal Conference and the Conference of Major Religious Superiors introduced a new Safeguarding Policy following years of dedicated work with major stakeholders including victims and survivors, Church entities, NGOs and numerous professionals.

In addition to its investigative role, the Safeguarding Commission places significant emphasis on preventive measures to ensure that Church environments are safe. In 2024, 105 background check applications covering 3,632 individuals were submitted to the Courts of Malta to verify whether individuals being considered for positions within the Church were listed on the Offenders' Register under the Protection of Minors (Registration) Act (POMA).

Meanwhile safeguarding concerns are handled in line with an established procedure. In complaints involving minors, the Safeguarding Commission first reports the case to the statutory authorities, including the Police and the Directorate for Child Protection.

For complaints involving adults, the alleged victims are encouraged to report their case directly to the relevant authorities.

After the statutory authorities complete their investigation, the Safeguarding Commission carries out a preliminary investigation and/or risk assessment following the issuance of a decree by the relevant Ordinary (Bishop or head of a Religious Order).

In 2024, the Safeguarding Commission concluded 41 cases and received 33 new referrals.

The Safeguarding Commission maintains that safeguarding practices should be recognised as a priority by all the entities in Malta working with minors and vulnerable adults, not just by Church agencies. In pursuit of this objective, the Safeguarding Commission has worked with various organisations across Malta, offering training sessions and seminars to raise awareness about best safeguarding practices and guidelines. In 2024, around 60 training sessions and seminars were delivered, benefiting more than 2,360 individuals.



MARK PELLICANO
Head of Safeguarding

1. *New Safeguarding Policy*

A new Safeguarding Policy was published in 2024 by the Maltese Ecclesiastical Province and the Conference of Major Religious Superiors.

This new policy underscores the core values of responsibility, accountability, transparency and integrity. It emphasises the principles of mandatory reporting, a victim-centred approach, protection of the complainant, and ensuring the wellbeing of the Subject of Complaint. The policy includes five safeguarding standards to which Church entities must adhere: creating a safer Church, caring for victims, handling complaints effectively, leading with integrity, and ensuring quality of standards.

The Safeguarding Policy introduced three teams within the Safeguarding Office to ensure a holistic approach when dealing with issues regarding Safeguarding. These teams focus on prevention and training, victim care and advocacy, and investigation and assessment.

adults, they are empowered by to report the case to the police. Once the investigations by the statutory authorities are finalised, the process is as follows:

- The Head of Safeguarding receives a decree from an Ordinary to conduct a preliminary investigation and/or risk assessment.
- A safeguarding officer is then assigned to assess the allegation and compile a comprehensive report based on the information acquired from the discussions with the complainant, the alleged victim, the Subject of Complaint and witnesses, as well as any available tangible.
- The Head of Safeguarding then refers the report to the Safeguarding Advisory Board – a group of experts in psychiatry, psychology, social work, paediatrics, law, and counselling – for recommendations and conclusions.
- Following a final review by the Head of Safeguarding, the reports of both the Safeguarding Officer and of the Safeguarding Advisory Board are submitted to the relevant Ordinary, who then decides on what action, if any, is to be taken, including whether the case should be referred to the Holy See.

The Safeguarding Policy applies to all Church personnel, including priests, religious, employees and volunteers.

The Safeguarding Commission adopted its new soft branding on the same day the safeguarding policy was launched.



2. *Meetings with Various Entities*

The Head of Safeguarding held a series of meetings with various Church entity leaders to explore opportunities for enhancing safeguarding practices. Meetings were also held with members of different Provinces, where the new safeguarding policy was discussed.

In a spirit of collaboration, meetings with key stakeholders were held to strengthen the relationship between the Safeguarding Commission and other organisations. These discussions also focused on strategies to create and sustain a safe environment within the Church for everyone involved.

Further discussions took place with various NGOs and a governmental entity, aiming to foster the exchange of best practices and to underscore the importance of safeguarding principles. Throughout these meetings, it was consistently emphasised that safeguarding is a shared responsibility, not only for the Church but for all organisations engaged in work with minors and vulnerable adults.

Furthermore, meetings were held with various educational entities to discuss training initiatives on safeguarding, and lectures were delivered to reinforce these principles.

Meetings were held with:

- Archbishop of Malta
- Bishop of Gozo
- Conference of Major Religious Superiors
- Administrative Secretary of the Archbishop's Curia
- Archbishop's Delegate for Work and Life in Parishes
- Church Schools' Association
- Communications Office of the Archdiocese of Malta
- Digital Presence of the Archdiocese of Malta
- DISCERN
- Episcopal Delegate for Evangelisation
- Episcopal Vicar for Clergy and Parishes
- Episcopal Vicar for Diaconia
- Franciscan Sisters of the Heart of Jesus in Malta
- Head of Safeguarding Commission Gozo
- Hospice Malta
- Human Resources Unit of the Archdiocese of Malta
- Malta Catholic Youth Network (MCYN)
- Mathematics and Beyond
- Mid-Dlam għad-Dawl
- Migrants Commission
- MUSEUM
- Pastoral Formation Institute (PFI)
- Property Section of the Archdiocese of Malta
- Province of the Franciscan Conventuals in Malta
- Rector of the Archbishop's Seminary
- Secretariat for Catholic Education
- University of Malta
- Other religious & denominations NGOs

3. International Collaborations

Lectures | Pontifical Gregorian University

The Head of Safeguarding delivered a series of lectures at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, titled "Safeguarding Codes of Conduct", for second-year students pursuing the Licentiate in Safeguarding.



Placements | Pontifical Gregorian University

The Pontifical Gregorian University also assigned two students to complete a three-month placement at the Safeguarding Commission in Malta, as an integral component of their first-year Licentiate in Safeguarding curriculum.



International Conferences



The Safeguarding Commission attended various international conferences, including "La Giustizia Penale nella Chiesa: Tutela della Vittima e Garanzie dell' Imputato" at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, and the International Safeguarding Conference at the Pontifical Gregorian University. They also attended a conference hosted by the European Conference of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors at Palazzo Maffei Marescotti in Rome.

Tutela Minorum

The Head of Safeguarding accompanied His Excellency Archbishop of Malta, Charles J. Scicluna, to the Vatican for a meeting with the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors.



4. *The Safeguarding Advisory Board*

The Safeguarding Advisory Board is composed of professionals from different fields, each bringing the appropriate specialised skills, experience, and expertise required to advise on the safeguarding of minors and vulnerable adults.

The board members discuss the reports of preliminary investigations and risk assessments presented by the Head of Safeguarding and put forward recommendations and conclusions for submission to the Ordinary. In 2024, the Safeguarding Advisory Board met on a monthly basis.

Rev. Dr Michael Farrugia O.Carm was appointed as a new member of the Safeguarding Advisory Board. Fr Michael is the General Procurator of the Carmelite Order and serves as President of the International Commission of Safeguarding of the Order. He has previously held roles as Defender of the Bond and Justice Promoter in the Ecclesiastical Tribunal and Judge of the Regional Tribunal of Second Instance. Fr Michael was also a councillor and President of the Conference of Major Religious Superiors. He holds a Doctorate in Canon Law and works on issues related to religious life and safeguarding standards within Religious Orders and Congregations.

The composition of the Safeguarding Advisory Board in 2024 was as follows:

Mark Pellicano

Head of Safeguarding and Chair

Rev. Antoine Farrugia SDB

Social Worker and Deputy Chair

Dr Roberta Attard

Clinical Psychologist

Dr Joseph Cassar

Consultant Psychiatrist

Rev. Dr Michael Farrugia O.Carm

Canon Lawyer

Dr Natalie Kenely

Senior Lecturer in Social Work

Dr Mariella Mangion

Paediatrician

The Safeguarding Advisory Board receives legal support from **Dr Nicole Briffa**.

The Safeguarding Advisory Board has traditionally been chaired by the Head of Safeguarding; however, to uphold the highest standards of impartiality and accountability, it was determined that this practice should cease. The new Safeguarding Policy therefore states that the Safeguarding Advisory Board should be chaired by a member of the Board. Dr Natalie Kenely was appointed by His Grace Archbishop of Malta, Charles J. Scicluna, and the Conference of Major Religious Superiors to assume the role of Chair.

5. *The Safeguarding Office*

The Safeguarding Office is managed by the Head of Safeguarding. It comprises three safeguarding teams, tasked with prevention and training, victim care and advocacy, and investigations and assessments.

The teams consist of full-time Safeguarding Officers who have an educational background in the psychosocial field. All safeguarding officers attend continuous professional training relevant to their work and are bound by confidentiality to protect the sensitive nature of their service.

In 2024, Mr Brandel Scicluna and Mr Peter Marc Farrugia were appointed as Safeguarding Officers within the Investigation and Assessment Team, and the Victim Care and Advocacy Team, respectively.

Mr Scicluna holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of Malta. Prior to his academic pursuits, he devoted his efforts to supporting various groups within the educational and inclusion sectors in both Malta and the UK. His background equips him with valuable insights into working with vulnerable groups from different cultures.

Mr Farrugia is a warranted Gestalt psychotherapist with expertise in trauma-informed care and psycho-spiritual therapy. He has pursued advanced studies in Divinity from the University of Cambridge and Conflict Analysis from George Mason University, bringing a compassionate, holistic approach to victim care and advocacy. Mr Farrugia's roles have included work with the Counselling & Social Work Unit, Caritas Malta, and the Malta Dementia Society's Psychotherapy Team, in addition to serving as a visiting lecturer at the University of Malta.

The Safeguarding Office consists of the following full-time employees:

Carly Zarb

Senior Safeguarding Officer,
Investigation and Assessment Team

Peter M. Farrugia

Safeguarding Officer,
Victim Care and Advocacy Team

Brandel Scicluna

Safeguarding Officer,
Investigation and Assessment Team

Kimberly Rega

Junior Safeguarding Officer,
Prevention and Training Team

6. Prevention and Training

The primary responsibility of the Prevention and Training Team within the Safeguarding Commission is to develop and deliver preventive and training programmes designed to equip personnel with the necessary knowledge and skills. Additionally, the team oversees vetting and compliance processes to ensure all Church personnel meet safeguarding requirements established by the Safeguarding Policy. The Prevention and Training Team also manages the Safeguarding Commission's online media platforms, ensuring that resources and updates are accessible to the public. The team also handles general administrative tasks that support the Safeguarding Commission's overall mission.

In 2024, the Prevention and Training Team conducted 48 training sessions – delivered in collaboration with the Pastoral Formation Institute – which reached over 2,200 Church personnel.

Lectures on safeguarding were also delivered to students at the University of Malta and Malta University Consulting. Additionally, seminars on safeguarding were also delivered to volunteers of Mathematics and Beyond, employees of WasteServ, and employees and volunteers of Hospice Malta.



As part of its vetting responsibilities, the team submitted 105 applications to the Courts of Malta to verify whether applicants for positions within Church structures were listed on the Offenders' Register under the Protection of Minors (Registration) Act (POMA). These applications covered a total of 3,632 Church personnel.

The team also vetted 38 applications for clergy visiting Malta temporarily for pastoral work within the Archdiocese of Malta, ensuring there were no prior safeguarding concerns.

Beyond training and vetting, the Prevention and Training Team actively promoted safeguarding awareness through various campaigns. Weekly posts were published on the Safeguarding Commission's official website and on multiple social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter) and LinkedIn.

Additionally, the Safeguarding Commission, through its Head, continues to contribute to safeguarding education by serving as a member of the board of studies for the Certificate in Safeguarding of Children and Young People. This programme is jointly offered by the Faculty of Theology and the Faculty for Social Wellbeing at the University of Malta.

The Head of Safeguarding also participated in various media programmes to raise awareness of safeguarding as a preventive measure. These appearances included Newsline on Radio Malta, Andrew Azzopardi on RTK103, and Awla on ONE TV.



7. Victim Care and Advocacy

The Safeguarding Commission provides care and support to alleged victims and their families. Through its Victim Care and Advocacy Team, the Commission maintains regular contact with all alleged victims who seek assistance. The team aims to create a welcoming and supportive environment while guiding them through the safeguarding process. It provides psychosocial assistance, accompanies alleged victims when engaging with relevant authorities, refers them to specialised services, including spiritual support if requested, and coordinates the reimbursement of costs related to professional care.

The team also extends psychosocial support to families, complainants, and secondary alleged victims, and offers guidance to witnesses involved in safeguarding cases. Even after investigations have concluded, the team remains committed to delivering post-investigation support, ensuring victims continue to receive the necessary care and assistance on their path to recovery.

To strengthen its commitment to victim care, a safeguarding officer, who is also a warranted psychotherapist, was appointed within the Victim Care and Advocacy Team.

8. Investigation and Assessment

After a decree is issued by the Ordinary, the Investigation and Assessment Team carries out preliminary investigations and risk assessments related on the allegations it is asked to assess, in consultation with the Head of Safeguarding. The team liaise with outsourced experts who carry out professional assessments, and with statutory agencies. In 2024, the Investigation and Assessment Team concluded 41 cases involving 35 individuals. Detailed reports on the concluded cases can be found in section 14 of this report.

During the course of the year, a new safeguarding officer was employed within the Investigation and Assessment Team. In response to increasing demand and to further reduce waiting times, another recruitment process has been initiated. Two other safeguarding officers — Dr Patricia Bonello, a social worker, and Sharon Zammit, a psychotherapist — were engaged for a few hours per week over several months to help complete investigations in a timely manner.

9. Wellbeing of the Subject of Complaint

The Safeguarding Commission recommended a structure to provide support to the Subjects of Complaint. The Head of Safeguarding has been working closely with the Ordinaries on this matter, emphasising the importance of ensuring that individuals subject to safeguarding investigations and risk assessments receive the support they need during what can be a challenging and distressing process. This support framework includes access to psychosocial care, professional guidance, and accompaniment when engaging with the relevant authorities. Where necessary, individuals are also referred to specialised services tailored to their specific needs, such as spiritual guidance and medical assistance when required.

10. The Safeguarding Review Board

Upon request from an Ordinary, the Safeguarding Review Board reviews the facts of a case following a preliminary investigation and/or risk assessment, the procedures adopted during the investigation and/or assessment, and the conclusions and recommendations presented to the Ordinary. The Safeguarding Review Board also determines whether to confirm or amend the conclusions and recommendations, and determines whether to suggest further investigations and/or assessments.

In 2024, the Safeguarding Review Board concluded one case, which was re-investigated by professionals appointed by the Safeguarding Review Board. Within the same year, two other cases were referred to the Safeguarding Review Board.

The members of the Safeguarding Review Board include:

Prof. Nadia Delicata
Theologian and Chair

Associate Professor Maureen Cole
Social Work Academic

Rev. Dr Kevin Schembri
Canon Lawyer

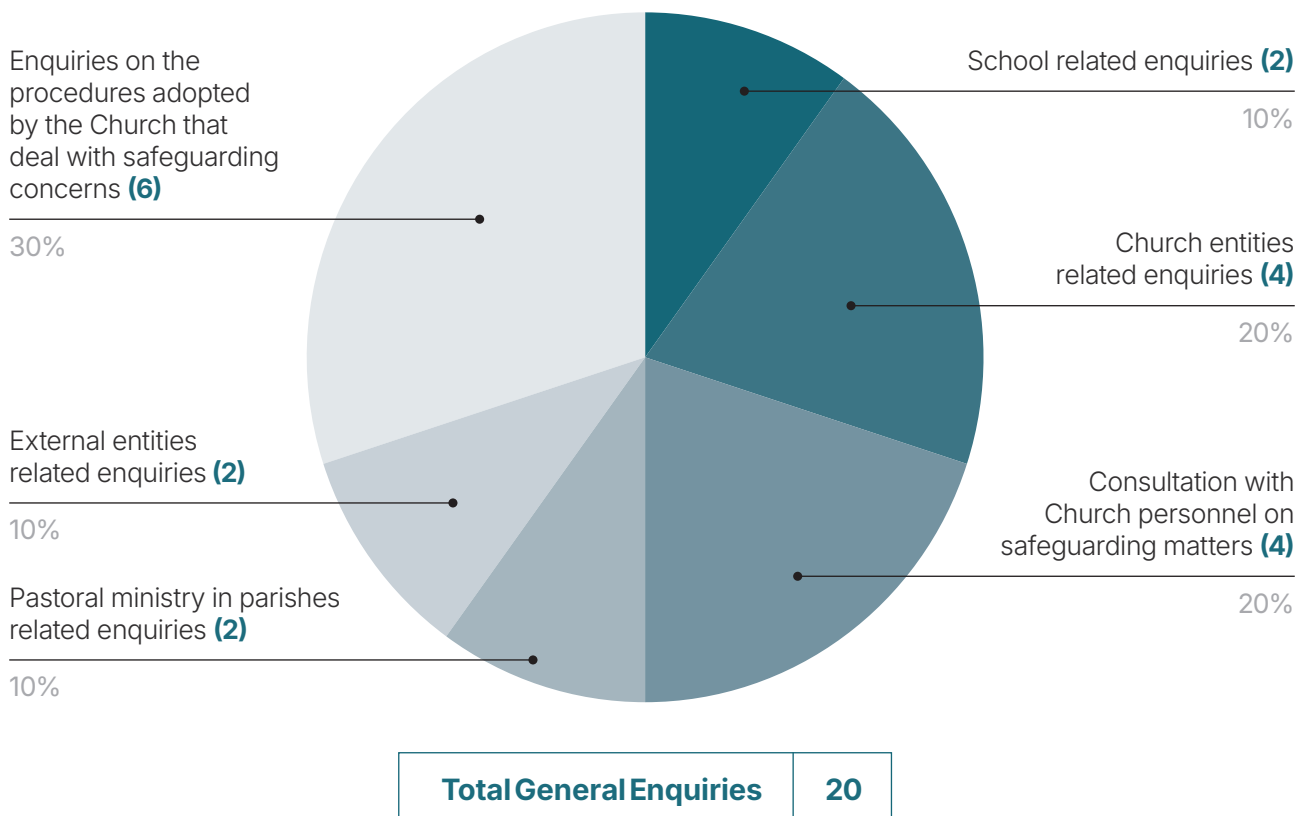
The administrator of the Safeguarding Review Board is Gillian Cachia.

11. New Premises

Various meetings were held with the Archdiocese of Malta's Property Manager regarding the renovation of a Church-owned property in Floriana, which will serve as the Safeguarding Commission's new head office and drop-in centre. The location was chosen for its close proximity to the Archbishop's Curia, Police Headquarters, and the Courts of Justice. The premises will also be easily accessible by public transport, ensuring convenient access for both alleged victims and Subjects of Complaint.

12. Statistics of General Enquiries Addressed in 2024

The Safeguarding Commission handled **20** enquiries related to safeguarding matters in 2024. These related to procedural issues, referrals and case discussions with external and statutory entities, organisational management issues within Church entities, enquiries related to schools, enquiries related to pastoral ministry in parishes, and consultation with Church personnel on safeguarding matters.



13. Referrals Received in 2024

During the course of 2024, the Safeguarding Commission received **33** referrals. Of these, **19** involved minors (under the age of 18) at the time of the alleged abuse, while a further **14** involved adults who claimed to be in a vulnerable position when the alleged abuse took place.

For the purposes of this document, historical cases refer to the allegations that were referred to the Safeguarding Commission that involved cases that allegedly took place more than 10 years ago. Out of the **33** referrals received by the Safeguarding Commission in 2024, **5** were historical cases.

Of the **19** referrals involving minors, **one (1)** involved a diocesan priest, and **four (4)** involved Religious, while **14** involved laypersons. **Four (4) of the 19** referrals involving minors are alleged historical cases.

Among the **14** referrals involving vulnerable adults, **three (3)** involved diocesan priests, one of whom faced two allegations, **four (4)** involved Religious, and **seven (7)** involved laypersons. **One (1) of the 14** referrals involving vulnerable adults is an alleged historical case, meaning that it allegedly took place more than 10 years ago.

REFERRALS RECEIVED IN 2024			
Minors	19	Diocesan priests	1
		Religious Priests/Nuns	4
		Laypersons	14
<i>4 out of 19 were historical cases</i>			
Vulnerable Adults	14	Diocesan priests	3
		Religious Priests/Nuns	4
		Laypersons	7
<i>1 of 14 was a historical case</i>			
Total Referrals Received in 2024			33

14. Cases Concluded in 2024

In 2024, the Safeguarding Commission concluded **41** cases concerning 35 Subjects of Complaint (four of the 35 individuals were involved in more than one referral). Of these, **20** cases involved minors, while the other **21** involved vulnerable adults. Of the 41 cases concluded by the Safeguarding Commission in 2024, **6** were historical cases, meaning that the alleged concern took place more than 10 years ago.

Among the 41 cases concluded in 2024, 27 were not referred to the Safeguarding Commission in the same year but were referred in the past recent years. 14 of the concluded cases were referred in 2024.

Of the 35 Subjects of Complaint, **five (5)** were diocesan priests, **13** were religious and **17** were laypersons.

CASES CONCLUDED IN 2024			
	Minors	Vulnerable Adults	Total
Total Cases Concluded	20	21	41
Historical Cases	1 out of 20	5 out of 21	6 out of 41

ROLES OF SUBJECT OF COMPLAINT IN CONCLUDED CASES	TOTAL
Diocesan priest, 1 involved in 2 cases	5
Religious Priests/Nuns, 1 involved in 4 cases and 1 involved in 2 cases and another involved in 2 cases	13
Laypersons	17
Total of Subjects of Complaint	35

CONCLUDED CASES CONCERNING MINORS

The **20** concluded cases concerning minors involved **19** individuals (since one of the Subjects of Complaint was involved in **two (2)** cases).

One (1) case concerning minors was concluded as substantiated, **one (1)** was unsubstantiated, and **one (1)** was unfounded.

Four (4) cases were investigated internally by the organisation. This means that the safeguarding concerns were investigated by the HR unit of the organisation or through a formal disciplinary procedure.

Six (6) cases, two of which involved the same person, did not require further action.

Four (4) were not a safeguarding concern, and **two (2)** were referred to third parties.

One (1) case included a Subject of Complaint with allegations concerning also vulnerable adults. The Safeguarding Commission concluded that the Subject of Complaint poses a risk.

Thirteen (13) Subjects of Complaint in cases involving minors were laypersons, **five (5)** were Religious and **one (1)** was a diocesan priest.

One (1) of the two cases referred to third parties involving a minor was a historical case (happened more than 10 years ago).

CONCLUDED CASES CONCERNING VULNERABLE ADULTS

The **21** concluded cases concerning vulnerable adults involved **17** individuals since **two (2)** individuals were involved in more than one case.

Of these, **nine (9)** cases — involving **seven (7)** Subjects of Complaint, since two were involved in more than one case — were found to be substantiated.

Four (4) of the substantiated cases were historical cases (more than 10 years ago).

Four (4) cases were unsubstantiated, **one (1)** case was unfounded, and **one (1)** case was not a safeguarding concern.

One (1) case, which involved the same Subject of Complaint who was involved in 3 other cases which were found to be substantiated, had already been investigated in previous years. This was also a historical case.

One case was investigated internally by the organisation. This means that the safeguarding concern was investigated by the HR unit of the organisation or through a formal disciplinary procedure.

Another **two (2)** cases, involving the same Subject of Complaint, were not processed since the individual concerned passed away during the investigation.

One (1) case was not processed since the alleged victim did not wish for the Safeguarding Commission to proceed further with the report.

Another case included a Subject of Complaint with allegations concerning also a minor. The Safeguarding Commission concluded that the Subject of Complaint poses a risk.

Nine (9) Subjects of Complaint involving vulnerable adults were Religious, **four (4)** were diocesan priests and **four (4)** were laypersons.

Five (5) of the 21 cases involving vulnerable adults concluded in 2024 were historical cases (more than 10 years ago).

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES ON CONCLUDED CASES

OUTCOMES			
	Minors	Vulnerable Adults	Total Cases
Substantiated	1	9 <i>1 Subject of Complaint involved in 3 cases</i>	10
Unsubstantiated	1	4	5
Unfounded	1	1	2
Investigated internally by the organisation	4	1	5
No further action required	6 <i>1 Subject of Complaint involved in 2 cases</i>	0	6
Not a safeguarding concern	4	1	5
Referred to third parties	2	0	2
A Subject of Complaint with allegations concerning also a minor and a vulnerable adult. The Safeguarding Commission concluded that the Subject of Complaint poses a risk.	1	1	2 <i>1 Subject of Complaint</i>
Already investigated in previous years	0	1 <i>same Subject of Complaint who had 3 substantiated cases</i>	1
Subject of Complaint passed away during the investigation period	0	2 <i>involving the same Subject of Complaint</i>	2
Alleged victim did not wish that the Safeguarding Commission proceeds further with the report	0	1	1

SUBSTANTIATED COMPLAINTS CONCERNING MINORS

The one substantiated case involving minors involved a Subject of Complaint who was a layperson. The case involved poor professional practice, and a partial restriction was recommended. The case was first referred to the statutory authorities before the Safeguarding Commission began its risk assessment.

SUBSTANTIATED COMPLAINTS CONCERNING MINORS			
Role of Subject of Complaint	Diocesan Priests	Religious Priests/Nuns	Laypersons
Number of cases	0	0	1
Allegation			Poor professional practice
Recommended a restriction	N/A	N/A	Partial restriction
Was the alleged victim an adult at the time of the referral?	N/A	N/A	No
Case referred to civil authorities?	N/A	N/A	Yes
Reason for no referral to civil authorities	N/A	N/A	N/A

SUBSTANTIATED CASES CONCERNING VULNERABLE ADULTS

The **nine (9)** substantiated cases concerning vulnerable adults involved **seven (7)** Subjects of Complaint.

Three (3) substantiated cases involved diocesan priests, **five (5)** substantiated cases involved **three (3)** Religious, and **one (1)** involved a layperson.

The **three (3)** substantiated cases involving diocesan priests included an allegation of emotional abuse for which a partial restriction was recommended, an allegation of breach of boundaries, and an allegation of spiritual abuse for which a restriction was also recommended.

Of the **five (5)** substantiated cases involving Religious, one faced **three (3)** separate allegations of sexual abuse, while another also faced an allegation of sexual abuse. Suspension was recommended for both Subjects of Complaint. Another Religious faced an allegation of abuse of power and restriction was recommended. The substantiated case concerning the layperson involved an allegation of breach of boundaries and restriction was recommended.

In the cases where a referral to civil authorities was merited, all of the victims were offered assistance by the Safeguarding Commission to accompany them to the police. One of subject of complaint was reported to the police, but then the victim did not want to proceed with the police investigation. The other victims did not wish to file a police report, despite an offer by the Safeguarding Commission to accompany them.

SUBSTANTIATED COMPLAINTS CONCERNING VULNERABLE ADULTS

Role of Subject of Complaint	Diocesan Priest			Religious Priests/Nuns			Laypersons
Number of cases per Subject of Complaint	1	1	1	3 <i>involving 1 Religious</i>	1	1	1
Allegation	Emotional abuse	Breach of Bounderies	Spiritual abuse	Sexual abuse	Sexual abuse	Abuse of power	Breach of bounderies
Recommended a restriction	Partial Restriction	No	Restriction	Suspension	Suspension	Restriction	Restriction
Was the alleged victim an adult at the time of the referral?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Case referred to civil authorities?	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Reason for no referral to civil authorities	Victim declined to file a police report despite an offer by the Safeguarding Commission to accompany them	Victim declined to file a police report despite an offer by the Safeguarding Commission to accompany them	Case did not merit a referral to civil authorities	Victim declined to file a police report despite an offer by the Safeguarding Commission to accompany them	Victim did not want to proceed with the police investigation	Case did not merit a referral to civil authorities	Victim declined to file a police report despite an offer by the Safeguarding Commission to accompany them

15. Glossary

SAFEGUARDING COMMISSION

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Head of Safeguarding	The person within the Safeguarding Commission who oversees and coordinates the work of the Commission within the established parameters of the Policies.
Safeguarding Advisory Board	A board within the Safeguarding Commission consisting of professionals who meet regularly to discuss and advise the Head of Safeguarding on Church safeguarding policies, prevention and training, victim care and advocacy, preliminary investigations and risk assessments, and the wellbeing of Subjects of Complaint. The board is also responsible to approve or otherwise the conclusions and recommendations of the report which is to be presented to the Ordinary following a preliminary investigation or risk assessment.
Safeguarding Commission	The entity founded by the Maltese Episcopal Conference and the Conference of Major Religious Superiors responsible for promoting safe environments in the Church mainly through preventive practices and training, victim care and advocacy, handling of complaints, preliminary investigations and risk assessments, and follow up on the wellbeing of the Subjects of Complaint.
Safeguarding Office	An office within the Safeguarding Commission, consisting of professionals employed by the Church to offer day-to-day service within the Safeguarding Teams responsible for Prevention and Training, Victim Care and Advocacy, and Investigation and Assessment.
Safeguarding Review Board	A board within the Safeguarding Commission consisting of professionals which, upon a request of an Ordinary, reviews the procedures, conclusions or recommendations of a preliminary investigation or a risk assessment.

TYPES OF SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Abuse of Power	When Church personnel uses one's position of trust to cover up abuse, avoid or interfere with justice, or to bully, coerce, undermine, intimidate, manipulate, or abuse a minor and/or vulnerable adult who view that Church personnel as someone to be trusted.
Breach of boundaries	When Church personnel crosses an emotional or physical line that must be maintained in order to ensure order, safety, transparency, and predictability within the Church.
Bullying	When Church personnel repeatedly threatens or undermines a minor and/or vulnerable adult through various forms of verbal or physical behaviour, including but not limited to, spreading rumours, name calling, purposeful exclusion, making threats, and physical or verbal attacks.
Cyberbullying	When Church personnel engages in any form of bullying that occurs through and within the digital realm.
Emotional	When Church personnel emotionally or psychologically mistreats a minor and/or vulnerable adult through deliberate acts of humiliation, scare tactics, threats, ignoring, isolating, or other similar actions.
Exploitation	When Church personnel takes advantage of an imbalance of power to control, coerce, manipulate, deceive, or simply take advantage of a minor and/or vulnerable adult.
Grooming	When Church personnel forms a connection, builds trust, and establishes an emotional bond with a minor and/or vulnerable adult with the intention of manipulating, exploiting, or abusing them, even if that abuse, in whatever form intended, does not actually take place.
Harassment	When Church personnel engages in a course of conduct which can be reasonably be deemed as unwelcoming behaviour, which makes a minor and/or vulnerable adult feel offended, humiliated, degraded, or intimidated.

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Neglect	When Church personnel repeatedly fails to meet the physical and emotional needs of a minor and/or a vulnerable adult under one's care and responsibility.
Online Abuse	When Church personnel engages in any type of abuse that happens through and within the digital realm, including cyberbullying, emotional abuse, grooming, sexting, sexual conversations, sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation. Such abuse can occur anywhere within the digital realm, including but not limited to, social media platforms, text messaging and messaging apps, emails, online chats, online gaming, live-stream sites, etc.
Physical	When Church personnel physically maltreats in any way a minor and/or vulnerable adult.
Poor practice	When Church personnel does not meet the expected behaviour set out in this Safeguarding Policy and/or the particular policies of Church entities.
Sexual	When Church personnel leads, persuades, coerces or intimidates a minor and/or a vulnerable adult into engaging in a sexual activity that involves nonphysical, physical non-penetrative and/or physical penetrative contact.
Spiritual	When Church personnel engages in a systematic pattern of coercive, harmful, or controlling behaviour in a spiritual or religious context. This may include but is not limited to manipulation and exploitation, superiority or elitism, coercion to conform, control through the use of sacred texts or teachings, isolation as a means of punishment, or the requirement of obedience to or by that Church personnel, suggesting that the Church personnel has some kind of 'divine' authority.

CONCLUSION OF A COMPLAINT

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Investigated internally by the organisation	When a safeguarding concern is investigated by the HR unit of the organisation or through a formal disciplinary procedure.
No further action	The case does not require further action or recommendations by the Safeguarding Advisory Board after the case is presented to them.
Not a safeguarding concern	When the case presented to the Advisory Board is deemed as not falling within the remit of the Safeguarding Commission.
Partially substantiated	Evidence was able to prove that one or more of the alleged incidents did take place, but other allegations cannot be established.
Refer to 3rd Party	Complaints that do not relate to safeguarding concerns but still need to be dealt with by other entities, both within and outside of the Church.
Substantiated	Evidence was able to prove that the allegation did take place.
Unfounded	Evidence was able to establish that the allegation was false.
Unsubstantiated	It cannot be proven if the alleged incident did or did not take place.

OTHER DEFINITIONS

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Church personnel	Any member or members of the clergy (bishops, priests, deacons), of consecrated life or of an equivalent status, of societies of apostolic life, of the faithful who enjoy a dignity or perform an office or function within the Church, including lay people duly appointed or commissioned to work in the areas of administration, pastoral ministry and care, employees and volunteers engaged in all the various activities within Church entities, staff members engaged with a Church entity through another entity, or seminarians and Religious students in formation.
Historical Cases	Cases that involve allegations which took place more than 10 years ago.
Minor	Any person under the age of 18. Equivalent to a minor is any person who has the developmental age of a child or habitually lacks the use of reason.
Pastoral activity	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 Chapter 518.
Restriction from pastoral ministry	A temporary or permanent recommendation to suspend personnel from some or all pastoral activity.
Safeguarding 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.
Subject of Complaint	A person against whom a safeguarding concern has been raised.

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Suspension	A permanent recommendation to suspend personnel from all pastoral activity.
Vulnerable adult	Any person in a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, even occasionally limits their ability to understand or to want or otherwise to resist the offence.
Witness	A person who may provide additional inculpatory or exculpatory evidence to a preliminary investigation or risk assessment.



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