

REPORT OF THE NOLAN WORKING GROUP OF THE ENGLISH BENEDICTINE CONGREGATION.

The working group appointed to consider the Nolan report on Child protection included Fr. Matthew Carney as Chairman (Belmont), Abbot Martin Shipperlee (Ealing) and Fr. Mark Barrett (Worth). The remit of the group was to propose a common framework of procedures for Child protection in the houses of the Congregation in light of the recommendations of the Nolan report.

The group met between September 2001 and January 2002 a total of 4 times, 3 times at Ealing Abbey and once at Westminster Hall as part of a wider meeting of religious with the Archbishop of Birmingham. Fr. Matthew the Chairman contacted, either by post or e-mail the various representatives in each community, who had been asked to provide input and feedback from their community for the working group. They were all sent a draft version of this report in early December asking for their opinions. A number of responses were received and these were considered by the group. Very few responses were received in light of the draft report. The Abbot President also offered his advice at various stages and attended one of the working groups meetings.

This final report takes the form of,

- 1. This covering letter and introduction.*
- 2. Our brief recommendations, including*
- 3. A sample child protection policy*
- 4. A sample emergency plan of action.*
- 5. A sample prudence code.*

N.B.

It needs to be remembered that what is recommended here is dependant on the Catholic Office for Child Protection, which is in the course of being set up in Birmingham, and what it recommends; one of it's officers may well have a particular responsibility for liaison with the religious orders. This office will set up the procedures for criminal records checks, the taking up of references and the construction of a database of all priests, religious and seminaries and those who have attempted the religious life. No doubt this office will also give advice on the formulation of child protection policies, emergency planes and prudence codes, so what we suggest here may have to be altered.

INTRODUCTION and RECOMMENDATIONS IN BRIEF.

We accepted the motivations behind the Nolan Report of wishing to create best practice in the Church regarding child protection and the paramountcy principle; that the overriding concern in the protection of children and the prevention of harm to them. The report also encouraged the creation of a common system of child protection throughout the Church in England and Wales. What we have recommended, in light of the Nolan report, may not be acceptable to some, but we believe it is the best way of protecting children and also our communities. In what we do we must be absolutely clear, open and professional, especially in the way we handle disclosures of child abuse.

After all of our meetings and especially our meeting with the Abbot President it has become clear that it is impractical for either the congregation or individual communities to have it's own structures for child protection, i.e, separate Child Protection Coodinators(CPC) and/or Child Protection Management Team. The working group therefore recommends that we take advantage of the Diocesan structures and especially the Diocesan CPC. This is not a perfect arrangement, especially with a number of houses working in different communities, and the possible overlapping of roles between house, parish and school. The group recommends that each house has it's own CPR-Child Protection Representative, independent of arrangements in parish and school. His/her role is spelled out in the sample Child Protection Policy and sample emergency plan of action. We recommend that all disclosures,

allegations and suspicions, including historic ones be immediately referred to the relevant Diocesan CPC. Good links should therefore be maintained with the relevant Diocesan Child Protection Team and local Social Services.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

The working group cannot emphasise too strongly the importance of good child protection policies in our houses. These already do exist or will do in our schools and parishes, but it is vitally important not to let our houses slip through un-catered for. Providing this will take time and a commitment by each community. If a disclosure is made, there will perhaps always be confusion over exactly what to do, because of the sheer variety of possible circumstances, and the fact that matters will rarely be clear cut. But the basic arrangements that we recommend can make things much easier.

*EBC working group for child protection.
January 2002.*

The EBC response to **A PROGRAMME FOR ACTION: Final Report of the Independent Review on Child Protection in the Catholic Church in England and Wales** (September 2001)

Main recommendations to the Abbots and Abbesses for child protection in EBC monasteries: