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08 May 2019

To all Diocesan Bishops

Dear Father

I am writing to you as there have been some queries from individuals within a couple of dioceses about the attached letter sent to Pilgrimage Directors. It has come to light that some parishes may arrange their own pilgrimages and not go through established Directors. I have agreed with the proposal that I send a copy of this letter to all Bishops so that they can inform parish priests within their diocese and to also send a copy to safeguarding coordinators, so all are aware of the necessary safeguarding arrangements to be put in place. My apologies that this information is only being shared with you now.

To put all the issues into context, the NCSC is not privy to the detail, but it has been brought to our attention of allegations of abuse being made and that they have been reported to the Police and Statutory Authorities. Other situations have also occurred where children have not been adequately prepared for or supervised during the experience of using the baths. One case is too many and the priority and best interest and paramount chief principle of safeguarding in the Catholic Church in England and Wales is the protection of children, hence the advice given in the letter issued to all Lourdes Pilgrimage Directors. The NCSC is aware that cases were shared at the recent Pilgrimage Directors Conference.

The crux of the matter is that those arranging a pilgrimage to Lourdes and to the Baths have undertaken a risk assessment to ensure all means are taken to keep children safe. If a parent decides to make an adult sibling or grandparent responsible for their child and agrees to use the Baths, that is a matter for the parent and yes, children should be accompanied by the parent throughout the process, for their own safety. For those children unaccompanied by a parent, sibling or other relative, then those responsible for the pilgrimage need to ensure parents are aware of the safeguarding arrangements put in place to keep their child safe. A similar risk assessment needs to be in place for adults at risk, especially those who are deemed to lack capacity to agree to use the Baths.

The NCSC and CSAS are aware that the Lourdes authorities are revising their guidelines and we await a copy of these. However, regardless of the legislation in France and procedures in Lourdes, it is the responsibility of the pilgrimage taking children to ensure their safety. We

are therefore pleased to know that they are undertaking a risk assessment and the safeguarding and well-being of all pilgrims are paramount to ensure a beneficial experience.

If you have any further queries in relation to this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me or Dr Colette Limbrick for any further advice.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Pearson". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Chris" and the last name "Pearson" clearly legible. A horizontal line is drawn under the name "Pearson".

Chris Pearson

Chair, NCSC

Encl: Letter to Pilgrim Directors 11 February 2019