



# annual report 2002

## summary

COPCA has had an extraordinarily busy first year establishing itself and starting its work...there is no doubt that a good start has been made on the process of implementing the recommendations of *A Programme for Action*. (1.3)

- The key aim of COPCA's work is to create a culture of vigilance and awareness, which will both prevent child abuse from occurring, and enable anyone who has suffered abuse to come forward and be confident that his or her concerns will be dealt with promptly, sensitively and appropriately (2.3)

- In October 2002, the COPCA Management Board issued a Statement of Intent clearly laying down its aim to address protection issues for vulnerable people of all ages throughout the whole Church community in England and Wales. (3.5)

- During 2002 COPCA experienced teething problems in finding permanent offices and administrative staff. COPCA is confident it can improve its performance in this respect in the coming 12 months, now that it has an established office base and skilled and committed staff in place. (4.2 and 4.3)

- Creating a single approach across very different organisational arrangements on the ground raises issues around creating policies and procedures which are workable and suit all those involved (5.1c)

- The varied organisational structures within the Catholic Church, coupled with initial shortcomings in effective administration within COPCA, at first made progress difficult and challenging...The culture and values of the Church in dioceses and parishes are inevitably very different from the formal, systematised bureaucracy that underpins child protection practice in statutory agencies and voluntary social work organisations. We need to work together to achieve the necessary minimum standard of systems and timely communication to support best practice at an organisational level in this different context. (5.1f and 5.1g)

- In the past, there is no doubt that survivors of abuse have at times experienced a lack of empathy and understanding of the effects of abuse on their lives and in their dealings with the Church. There are

clearly tensions between the responsibility of Church leaders to act prudently in relation to Church resources where compensation claims may be made, and the need to respond in a pastorally-sensitive manner which respects the voice of survivors of abuse. (5.1i)

- Some of the issues which are now apparent will only begin to be effectively addressed once an agreed national policy and procedure is in place. (5.2c)

- Criminal Records Bureau Disclosures processed through COPCA became available from 1 January 2003. (6.9)

- Within the Catholic community, plans for a computerised national database were moved swiftly forward through COPCA, with the help of senior staff at the National Catholic Fund. The database will be held centrally at COPCA's office, and accessed by PC terminals in every diocese and at the Counter-signatory Office at the Conference of Religious. (6.15)

- All 22 dioceses submitted an annual report based on a pilot format which will be amended for future years in the light of experience from 2002. Substantial progress has been made in a short time in the implementation of child protection policies, reflecting great credit on those working for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. (7.3 and 7.4)

- At local level, tremendous progress has been made in recruiting and training Local Child Protection Representatives. In 2,663 Parishes, a total of 2,428 Representatives have been appointed. (7.4)

- All 22 dioceses of England and Wales reported case information to COPCA. Between January 1 and December 31, 2002, dioceses received a total of 148 reports requiring action. 132 reports related to sexual abuse and the remaining 16 reports to physical abuse. (8.1)



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