

Introduction

14.1 Fr Phineas served in the Archdiocese of Dublin in the 1960s and 1970s. He has been laicised for over 20 years. There are two allegations of child sexual abuse against him. These were made in 2005. However, there is evidence that concerns were expressed to the diocesan authorities and to a religious order at the time of the alleged abuse in the 1960s. Fr Phineas strenuously denies the allegations.

The allegations

14.2 Two women together made allegations to a priest in June 2005. These allegations concerned a number of priests. The priest to whom the allegations were reported contacted the Archdiocese.

First complainant

14.3 The allegations made by this complainant are not very clear. She alleged that Fr Phineas “*abused all the girls and got a nun pregnant*”. She alleged that the then parish priest of the area where the abuse allegedly occurred was aware of her abuse by Fr Phineas and was instrumental in her committal into state care. She also alleged that the nun responsible for sending children to institutional care knew about the abuse. Philip Garland, the director of the Child Protection Service in the Archdiocese met the complainant. She stated that the abuse occurred when she was six years old in the early 1970s.

14.4 The veracity of this complainant was later seriously undermined when it emerged in a later interview with the second complainant, that the first complainant had been pressuring the second complainant to say that they were both in the priest’s car when the priest abused the second complainant.

Second complainant

14.5 The second complainant alleged that she had been abused by Fr Phineas approximately 40 years previously (in the 1960s). After making her initial complaint in June 2005 she returned to the UK and was not in contact

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This is a pseudonym.

for a number of months. She contacted the Archdiocese again in November 2005. She said that the priest to whom she had reported in June 2005 had given her the number of the Church's counselling service, Faoiseamh, but that she was having trouble contacting the organisation. She also said she had made a statement to the Gardaí. Mr Garland maintained contact with her and she told him later that she was now having counselling through Faoiseamh. She also spoke of the abuse which involved touching and said it would have occurred around 1969.

14.6 In April 2006, Mr Garland met this complainant in the UK. She told Mr Garland that she had gone to the Garda Station to make a statement. She had not, in fact, made the statement as she was not ready to do so.

14.7 The Archdiocese reported the case to the Gardaí and the HSE. The matters had not been resolved by the end of 2007.

The Commission's Assessment

14.8 The priest to whom the allegations were reported and the Archdiocese dealt properly with these complaints.