

Congregation of our Lady of the Retreat in the Cenacle

Baseline Audit Report
March 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 This is a baseline audit of the safeguarding arrangements at the Congregation of our Lady of the Retreat in the Cenacle in England, who for the remainder of this audit will be referred to as the Cenacle Sisters or the community, where there is reference to the congregation, this is in reference to the International Congregation. This audit has been undertaken as part of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency's Baseline Audit phase of Religious Life Groups (RLGs).

1.2 The Cenacle Sisters are an International Congregation founded in 1826 by Saint Therese Couderc and Jean-Pierre Etienne Terme in the village of Lalouvesc France, with the fundamental mission of providing accommodation for retreats and promoting spirituality. Today the Congregation has its Generalate in Rome and continues the mission of working '*for the transformation of the world by awakening and deepening faith, with and for the people of our times*'. The community in England consists of six sisters, three who reside within the Cenacle in Liverpool and three reside in a town house in London; the sisters have a variety of ministry including supporting the local parishes and supervision of clergy, offering spiritual direction, offering retreats and days of prayer in Liverpool, and upon request offering retreats and spiritual direction at other locations where children may be present. The Cenacle in Liverpool has 24 bedrooms, some of which are available to retreatants, a Prayer Enrolment office and a small chapel which is open when the office is open to the public. The Cenacle Sisters employ the Prayer Enrolment Team, Support staff, Receptionist and the Operations Manager all based in Liverpool. All the Cenacle Sisters are active, and they are not provided with any care. The role of the Support staff is to support the running of the Cenacle and support the sisters, which can include tasks such as cooking and cleaning. The sisters when previously caring for elderly members were registered as The Cenacle Convent Domiciliary Care, with the Care Quality Commission¹ (CQC) from 29 June 2022 until 3 July 2023. Sadly, the sisters who required care have since passed away, and the Cenacle

¹ CQC is the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England.

sisters did not continue with registration. The Cenacle Convent Domiciliary Care was never subject to inspection by the CQC.

1.3 This audit seeks to assess the effectiveness of current safeguarding arrangements by the Cenacle Sisters by considering practice against the Eight National Safeguarding Standards over the last twelve months. The Cenacle Sisters are not managing any casework and there are no known complaints against the community. The Cenacle Sisters do not currently own or manage any care facilities or work with any regulatory bodies.

1.4 The CSSA has devised a categorisation scheme for religious life groups taking part in safeguarding audits. This categorises Groups on a scale from Level 1 Apostolic or Level 1 Enclosed (small communities with minimal outreach and no known safeguarding concerns), Level 2 (a medium sized community with some outreach with vulnerable populations and/or providing some Diocesan Activities such as a Parish Priest) or Level 3 (a large community and/or one with significant outreach with vulnerable populations and/or a disproportionately high number of open safeguarding cases). The Cenacle Sisters have been categorised as a Level 1 Apostolic audit due to the small number of members in England, levels of outreach work and given there are no safeguarding concerns or complaints against the community.

1.5 The CSSA recognises the rich diversity of religious Life groups and acknowledges that the religious life groups within any category may vary significantly in terms of size, ministry and safeguarding practice. Consequently, CSSA analysts may use professional judgement to ensure that religious life groups are graded against the national standards in such a way that reflects their uniqueness.

2. Methodology

2.1 Initial contact was established with the Cenacle sisters on 24 September 2024, and a follow up Teams call was organised for 22 October 2024 where further clarity about the ministry of the sisters was established, and the audit was discussed in more detail.

2.2 This Baseline Audit was undertaken following the submission of the Level 1 Apostolic Self-Assessment on 9 December 2024 and supporting documentary

evidence by the Safeguarding Lead provided on 19 December 2024 and 13 January 2025. Additional evidence was reviewed by the auditor during a site visit on 21st January 2025 and the International Congregational website of our Lady of the Retreat in the Cenacle has been reviewed, as has a separate website of our Lady of the Retreat in the Cenacle, England. The Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS)² and the Archdioceses of Liverpool and Southwark and Diocese of Arundel and Brighton have been contacted regarding any contact that they have had with the Cenacle Sisters.

2.3 Interviews have been completed with the following:

- In person interview with the Safeguarding Lead , 21 January 2025
- In person interview with the Operations Manager for the Cenacle in Liverpool, 21 January 2025
- In person Liverpool sisters' focus group to include a trustee, 21 January 2025
- London sisters' focus group to include a trustee, 22 January 2025 via Teams.

3. Audit Grading

3.1 Safeguarding practice is assessed against the Eight National Safeguarding Standards adopted by the Catholic Church in England and Wales³. Safeguarding practice is graded in accordance with the CSSA Maturity Matrix for Level 1 Religious Life Groups. Each standard is graded on an ascending three-point scale of Not Met, Met with Recommendations and Met. Grades for individual standards are combined in order to produce an overall grading for the Religious Life Group as an outcome of the audit. The audit draws on evidence generated from self-assessment, interviews and focus groups and liaison with the RLSS. Liverpool Archdiocese has reported no contact with the Cenacle Sisters.

² The Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS) is an independent team of safeguarding professionals offering safeguarding services to the Religious of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Their website is available [here](#)

³ A description and full details of the Standards can be found on the CSSA website [here](#)

3.2 The Cenacle Sisters have achieved an audit outcome of Met with Recommendations, this is a result of the developing good practice that has been observed across all eight of the National Safeguarding Standards, particularly standard 7 which evidences the commitment that the sisters have demonstrated in respect of training and support for safeguarding. The Cenacle Sisters are astute to issues of safeguarding, they are well embedded within the communities they serve, and they recognise the benefit of engaging with appropriate services such as the RLSS to create safer environments. The further development needed by the Cenacle Sisters is to build on existing good practices, and to capture and formalise safeguarding in all areas of ministry.

Overall Grading	Met with Recommendations
Standard 1 – Safeguarding is embedded in the Church body’s leadership, governance, ministry and culture	Met with Recommendations
Standard 2 – Communicating the Church’s Safeguarding Message	Met with Recommendations
Standard 3 – Engaging with and Caring for those who report having been harmed	Met with Recommendations
Standard 4 – Effective Management of Allegations and Concerns	Met with Recommendations
Standard 5 – Management and Support of Subjects of Allegations and Concerns (respondents)	Met with Recommendations
Standard 6 – Robust Human Resource Management	Met with Recommendations
Standard 7 – Training and Support for Safeguarding	Met

Standard 8 – Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Met with Recommendations

4. Audit findings

4.1 Standard 1 Safeguarding is embedded in the Church body's leadership, governance, ministry and culture

4.1.1 The Cenacle Sisters have a designated Safeguarding Lead who is based in London and supports the sisters in England and Ireland, the Regional Superior is based in France, and the Superior General is based in Rome. The Superior General is elected to the position every six years and can serve a six-year term twice before stepping down, all other roles are appointed by the Superior General. There isn't an up-to-date job description for the Safeguarding Lead role, largely as the role has evolved over the years since the appointment of the current post holder in 1999. The International Congregation have a Safeguarding Protocol Against Sexual Abuse 2020 and there is a Safeguarding Adults Policy that has been developed by the Operations Manager in the Cenacle in Liverpool that was last reviewed in July 2024.

4.1.2 The Safeguarding Protocol Against Sexual Abuse is a policy to support both *"minors and vulnerable adults"* and it contains the *Protocols* for steps to be taken in the case of a sister of the Congregation being accused of misconduct or of a sister being a victim of sexual abuse. The protocol highlights that awareness and training of the risks of sexual abuse will start *"within the initial formation stages, and highlights that all Cenacle Sisters, (including postulants and novices) and anyone working in the congregation as an employee, volunteer or collaborator is responsible for their behaviour and their respect of others"*. The Protocol advises that when someone is accused of sexual abuse, it is important to distinguish between *"rumour, allegation and accusation"*, however it is highlighted that *"Reporting the allegation is, however, mandatory and indispensable whenever there is a precise knowledge of facts constituting sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable adults"* and that *"in the presence of specific facts inform the appropriate legal authority"*. In all cases it is highlighted that the Regional Superior, and local delegate (Safeguarding Lead) must be informed without delay. It is the

responsibility of the Regional Superior or local delegate (Safeguarding Lead) to conduct a preliminary internal investigation. There is a procedural flowchart to support the Regional Superior or local delegate in the preliminary investigation stages and consequences.

4.1.3 The Operations Manager in the Cenacle Liverpool has developed a Safeguarding Adults Policy, a policy with the purpose of providing guidance to colleagues in *"keeping our people safe from harm"*. The Safeguarding Adults Policy, highlights that *"safeguarding people is the single most important aspect of the work"*, and there are many forms of potential abuse highlighted within the policy including financial or material abuse, and neglect. The policy references legislation that governs practice including the Care Act 2014, and the contact details for the Safeguarding Lead for the Cenacle Sisters is included. It is stated in the policy that if anyone is alerted to a safeguarding concern, they do not have the responsibility of assessing the validity of concerns and instead must share the information immediately with the Safeguarding Lead of local authority safeguarding team. It is stated that the policy needs to be used in conjunction with the other policies of the Cenacle, including whistleblowing and complaints.

4.1.4 There are four Trustees for the Cenacle Sisters in England, three of which are sisters, and one of which is the treasurer for the Cenacle in Liverpool. In the absence of in-person meetings the Trustees are reported to make good use of IT to discuss the management of the charity, however no minutes of Trustee meetings have been provided by the sisters, but the sisters advise that they meet a minimum of three times a year. Unfortunately, there are minimal recordings about safeguarding within the meetings of the sisters, that said, this CSSA audit is referenced in the agenda of the community meeting minutes in January 2025. It is recommended that safeguarding is a standing agenda item on all formal meetings of the community but most importantly evidenced within Trustee meetings.

4.1.5 The Cenacle Sisters have signed contracts with the CSSA and RLSS, and the RLSS have confirmed that ad-hoc safeguarding advice has been provided to the Cenacle Sisters. The Safeguarding Lead and sisters focus groups have both shared that being aligned with the RLSS has positively impacted practice. The Cenacle Sisters also reported that when they were previously aligned with the dioceses, they had excellent support from Liverpool Diocese.

4.1.6 The Safeguarding Lead acknowledges that the scope of the Safeguarding Protocol is too narrow to fully incorporate the potential safeguarding risks that are

associated with the ministry of the sisters, and discussions have commenced with senior leaders in France in respect of updating the protocol. The Safeguarding Lead has also liaised with the RLSS in respect of potential policy updates. The Cenacle Sisters have developed several policies in line with CQC registration for The Cenacle Convent Domiciliary Care, that with some adjustments and amendments could be appropriate policies to be used to govern safeguarding by the community in England. The Safeguarding Adults Policy for example could be expanded to include children and amended to cover outreach work by the sisters, although all policies will need to be ratified by senior leaders within the congregation. Standards, three, four and five of the Eight National Safeguarding Standards all require appropriate localised policies, and therefore all three standards will achieve a grade of met with recommendations.

4.1.7 The Trustees have limited oversight of safeguarding in a formal capacity, and the Safeguarding Lead given the small size of the community in England is considered responsible for safeguarding, albeit there are regular discussions within the community that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. It is recommended that the sisters develop a simple safeguarding action or annual work plan that could be used to improve and track compliance and governance against the Eight National Safeguarding Standards.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

4.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

4.2.1 The Cenacle Sisters are actively engaged with the Archdiocese of Southwark and the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, where one sister is a supervisor for clergy. The sister meets with their supervisee once a month to offer confidential support regarding ministry. The sisters are also supporting local charities, helping refugees and victims of modern slavery. The sisters report that they have engaged in training opportunities offered by the charities they work with.

4.2.3 There is evidence of safeguarding communications on the Cenacle Sisters community website where the issue of violence against women is highlighted. The website however does not make any reference to safeguarding within the

community or the congregation. Contact details for the Safeguarding Lead have been observed within the Cenacle in Liverpool in the bedrooms of retreatants. Within the wider building the details of the Safeguarding Lead are displayed but not in areas accessed by the public, when highlighted to the Safeguarding Lead it was shared this would be rectified immediately by moving existing communications to public areas.

4.2.4 All the sisters are registered with the RLSS and receive monthly updates, which the sisters shared they receive via email. The Safeguarding Lead also shares information via email, for example training opportunities. Focus group participants reported that the Safeguarding Lead will share safeguarding updates verbally, which works best given the small number of members. There is a Provincial Assembly planned for February 2025 in Rome, the Safeguarding Lead reports that updates about safeguarding within the congregation will be discussed within this assembly.

4.2.5 The Cenacle Sisters are all equal members and whilst the Safeguarding Lead hold the title, safeguarding is the responsibility of all members. It is reported that the Cenacle Sisters enjoy evening meals together where there are often discussions about safeguarding, as are the plans of each sister for the following day, supporting the development of safer environments. The Safeguarding Lead and focus group participants shared that they are aware of the importance of safeguarding and that it is ever evolving, the sisters reported that they read articles and books and discuss any potential impact updates may have upon them as a community, the Cenacle Sisters describe themselves as “conscious” about safeguarding and report to be aware of the subtleties of abuse.

4.2.6 Whilst the Cenacle Sisters do not have a formal plan of safeguarding communications, the Safeguarding Lead has highlighted that she and the other sisters would like to make better use of the community website to highlight safeguarding communication. The sisters will need to ensure that the community website includes an appropriate safeguarding policy and complaints policy about the sisters. The Cenacle Sisters would also benefit from capturing formally some of their informal discussions and considerations about safeguarding within meetings and ensuring that records are kept of any safeguarding communications which are shared with them or by them.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

4.3 Standard 3 Engaging with and Caring for those who report having been harmed

4.3.1 The Cenacle Sisters do not have any previous experience of, and therefore there is no practice evidence available that would enable a direct assessment of how the sisters care for those who report having been harmed. However, all the sisters have completed basic safeguarding training with the RLSS and have shared their understanding that a reassuring and caring approach would be needed to support anyone who reports having been harmed.

4.3.2 The Safeguarding Lead shared that in the absence of experience of caring for those who report having been harmed, if she was approached by a survivor of abuse, she would contact the RLSS and relevant local diocese for advice and guidance. The sisters also report having good community connections, and all the sisters have smart phones and shared that they would seek out local support services. The Safeguarding Lead shared that resources could be made available as per the safeguarding protocol to support a survivor of harm, if harm had been caused by a member of the community. Similarly, support can be made available to a sister that receives a disclosure as it is acknowledged that this could be a difficult experience.

4.3.3 The sisters' focus group participants have shared that confidentiality is implied in spiritual direction sessions, however during initial meetings with a directee it is highlighted that any information that suggests someone is at risk of harm then this would need to be appropriately reported. However, if something is disclosed during spiritual direction then the sisters would not break this confidentiality, but as per the safeguarding protocol would encourage the directee to share their concerns with the Safeguarding Lead and statutory authorities. The Safeguarding Lead shared that she recognises the importance of feedback from those who report having been harmed, however she has not as yet had the opportunity to do this.

4.3.4 As highlighted in standard one, it is recommended that the community gives consideration to using the existing policies and protocol to develop localised policies to include a section on working with those who report having been harmed, and the support that can be made available to them.

Graded: Met With Recommendations

4.4 Standard 4 Effective Management of Allegations and Concerns

4.4.1 The Cenacle Sisters do not have any experiences of and therefore there is no evidence available that would enable a direct assessment of the management of allegations and concerns, however, focus groups participants have all shared that in line with safeguarding protocol and policies operational within the congregation they would not assume responsibility for making enquiries about a disclosure and would ensure that all information was shared with the Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible. The Safeguarding Lead is clear that she would follow the congregational protocol and Adults Safeguarding Policy for any and all disclosures of abuse irrespective of what harm had been alleged, and that she would also seek support from the RLSS.

4.4.2 The Safeguarding Protocol provides guidance on how to manage allegations and concerns and it is highlighted that the Safeguarding Lead must make preliminary enquiries and then share information with the local authorities, it is also highlighted that *“doing nothing is not an option”* and that ensuring compliance with the *“local laws”* is required. The Safeguarding Adults Policy contains a list of do’s and don’ts for anyone receiving a disclosure, and there is guidance for the *“alserter”* the person who has witnessed the abuse, or has been informed about the abuse and the *“responsible person”* aka delegate/ Safeguarding Lead.

4.4.3 Sisters’ focus group participants evidenced that they had considered the types of disclosures that they might receive, highlighting that when working with people any type of abuse is possible, although it is noted by the sisters that spiritual abuse may be more likely given their type of ministry.

4.4.4 The Safeguarding Adults Policy provides guidance on recording allegations and concerns, highlighting that facts must be recorded and not assumptions, and that it is recommended to use the words and phrases of the person making the disclosure. It is also advised that dates, times and locations are recorded and that a note is made of anyone else present. It was observed in the Cenacle in Liverpool that there are lockable cupboards to store files and similarly the sisters all have the use of a computer and are able to record and safely store information. Training

records evidence that staff are asked to attend training in respect of General Data Protection Regulation⁴ (GDPR).

4.4.5 The Safeguarding Lead has shared that she is confident in identifying and responding effectively to low-level disputes between members of the community and more serious concerns such as an allegation of abuse. The Cenacle Sisters also have a facilitator that comes to the community between two and three times a year and helps the sisters to reflect on their lives and ministry and their priorities moving forward. The Cenacle Sisters sourced the facilitator through the Conference for Religious.

4.4.6 The Cenacle Sisters have all shared that they feel well supported by the community in England and by the International Congregation. The community can make their own decisions on where and how they live and are largely self-governing. The Regional Superior may seek to understand actions and decisions made by the sisters but is unlikely to interfere. Finances are overseen centrally, and the sisters have to budget plan each year, and may receive questions around spending, which reduces concerns in respect of financial exploitation. The sisters receive spiritual guidance once a month from a spiritual director that they self-source, it is an expectation that all sisters will have a spiritual director. The sisters can visit family members and there is free time for the sisters to see friends and engage in the local community. The Sisters in England are all from either England or Ireland and have been with the Cenacle Sisters for many years and have established treasured relationships within the congregation.

4.4.7 To ensure that any allegations were managed in line with Canon law expectations the Cenacle Sisters would liaise with the international congregation to provide the accused sister with any *“legal or canonical assistance that she may need”*.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

⁴ The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a legal framework that sets guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information from individuals who live in and outside of the European Union (EU).

4.5 Standard 5 Management and Support of Subjects of Allegations and Concerns (Respondents)

4.5.1 The Cenacle Sisters do not have any experience of, and therefore there is no practice evidence available that would enable a direct assessment of the management or support of a sister who might be the subject of an allegation. However, within the safeguarding protocol there is a section dedicated to the support that will be offered to an *“accused sister”* and it is highlighted that *“it is important for the congregation to care for the sister against whom an allegation is made”* and it is outlined what that support will entail at each point of an inquiry.

4.5.2. The Cenacle Sisters have shared that they have strong links with the RLSS and would seek advice from them and the International Congregation to ensure that those subject to allegations or concerns were appropriately risk assessed, managed and supported. The community have recognised that where a sister could no longer remain within the community, they would need to seek the support of the congregation to facilitate a change in address, evidently the safeguarding protocol highlights that such decisions are the responsibility of the Superior General. The safeguarding protocol also contains guidance around the canonical procedures, and how a sister may appeal any decisions that are made.

4.5.3 The Safeguarding Lead has completed Safeguarding Lead training with the RLSS, and whilst she has not completed any training in respect of managing a safety plan, she would seek this training if it became necessary.

4.5.4 The Safeguarding Lead and focus group participants have all shared that they feel they would be effectively supported by the congregation if they were to be the subject on an allegation and are aware that they may need to be moved, however were confident that the Safeguarding Lead and superior general would support them appropriately.

Graded: Met with recommendations

4.6 Standard 6 Robust Human Resource Management

4.6.1 All members of the Cenacle Sisters in England have an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service certificate (DBS)⁵ and all the sisters except for one are registered with uCheck⁶.

4.6.2 There are 15 staff members who are employed in Liverpool, all have valid DBS certificates, several of which will require updating this year. The Operations Manager and many of the existing staff were previously employed with the St John of God Hospitaller Services⁷ (SJOG) who previously facilitated the management of the Cenacle Convent Domiciliary Care in Liverpool. The Operations Manager has an extensive background in caring roles, before progressing to a senior carer, care coordinator, and now Operations Manager, where she has been in post for 4 years. The Operations Manager takes a suitable lead on staff management and the running of the Cenacle in Liverpool and will liaise with the Safeguarding Lead as and when appropriate, the Safeguarding Lead does not formally supervise the Operations Manager.

4.6.3 The Operations Manager manages a spreadsheet detailing the induction offer for staff. Although not in the last 12 months, the sisters have had experience in assessing an employee with a blemished DBS. The Operations Manager at Liverpool used a DBS risk assessment form from SJOG to assess the suitability of an employee and made a recommendation to the Safeguarding Lead. The assessment and outcome were suitable and proportionate to the blemish.

4.6.4 The Cenacle Sisters do not employ any volunteers or staff in London, and in Liverpool the Safeguarding Adults Policy which has a section on safer recruitment is used to support the safer recruitment of employees, there are no volunteers within Liverpool. Safer recruitment practices are also evident in the spreadsheet held by the Operations Manager which can be referred to, to check where a candidate is up to in the recruitment process. The Operations Manager, in line with the safeguarding policy, ensures that references are provided in writing and followed up verbally. The Operations Manager has highlighted that references can

⁵ [Disclosure and Barring Service – GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service)

⁶ <http://www.ucheck.co.uk>

⁷ <https://sjog.uk/>

sometimes be minimal, but she will seek further information to ensure the suitability of a candidate, and no one is employed until a DBS certificate has been secured. Staff are provided with supervision by the Team leader or Operations Manager and anonymised supervision notes dated September 2024 highlights that safeguarding has been discussed. Similarly, safeguarding has been observed as a standing agenda item on staff team meeting minutes dated August 2024.

4.6.5 The Cenacle Sisters do not have anyone in Formation in England and Wales and they do not anticipate any new arrivals. The sisters do receive visits from other sisters within the wider congregation usually when one of the sisters wants to improve their English. A sister will come for a time limited period, although will not minister when visiting. Any sister visiting the community will only be allowed to visit if they have the blessing of the Superior General. The Regional Superior visits with the sisters on an annual basis.

4.6.6 The communities in London and Liverpool both offer spiritual direction in their homes, and there has been extensive discussion with the sisters about how they ensure the safety of themselves and the public. The sisters advise that the community are usually recommended to a directee by another person within the faith, that enables some basic knowledge about the person to be known, and where a meeting is taking place for the first time another sister will be available in the property. Within the retreat in Liverpool the sisters advise that retreatants are usually those who have been known to them for some time, and retreatants who plan on sleeping at the Cenacle are asked to fill in an application and provide references, again which is usually provided by someone from within the faith who has an established relationships with the sisters. Within working hours staff are available on site at the Cenacle in Liverpool and at least one member of support staff is on site for waking nights with the sisters. The sisters all have lockable bedroom doors as do retreatants, and as previously highlighted the contact details for the Safeguarding Lead has been observed in at least one retreatment bedroom.

4.6.7 The sisters are aware of the need to ensure the safety of one another and those who come into the Cenacle, and a signing in sheet is provided, although it has been observed that day retreatants have signed in as a group, it is reported that this is not usual practice and for fire safety regulations people are asked to sign in individually. The sisters have shared that they will communicate their whereabouts to one another if going out, and within London where there is

significantly more public outreach, it is reported that there is a timetable of the sisters in a communal area.

4.6.8 There is a complaints policy in place for the staff within the Cenacle, highlighting that complaints will be accepted from sisters, staff and members of the public. However, this policy is not aligned to the work of the sisters and as such the sisters would benefit from a policy that includes complaints, in respect of the ministry they provide. The policy should outline who will be responsible for managing complaints and the time frames for responses, highlighting that the CSSA will be the final port of call for complainants that are not resolved within the internal structures of the community or congregation. The sisters may wish to adapt the current complaints policy within Liverpool or liaise with the RLSS about templates that are available. Similarly, whilst there is a Whistleblowing Policy for staff in Liverpool, again this needs to be developed and adapted to be fit for purpose for the ministry of the sisters.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

4.7 Standard 7 Training and Support for Safeguarding

4.7.1 The Cenacle Sisters have completed a range of safeguarding training with the RLSS specific to their roles, completing 13 in total as a community. The Safeguarding Lead has attended safeguarding young people, and adult safeguarding training. One of the sisters has completed both basic and advanced safeguarding training, and spiritual direction training, which was also accessed by the Safeguarding Lead and two other sisters. Two of the sisters have also completed Trustee training. The Safeguarding Lead also reports attending lead safeguarding training on many occasions throughout her time in role. Focus group participants shared that they appreciated the quality of the RLSS training and the sisters who have good mobility and are able to travel have all attended the RLSS Annual Conference in March 2024 and are booked to attend again in March 2025. One of the sisters following the RLSS conference in March 2024 has purchased the book of one of the keynote speakers in respect of spiritual abuse (*Escaping the Maze of Spiritual Abuse, Justin Humphreys and Lisa Oakley.2019*) and reported that the sisters as a community had discussed the quality of the RLSS conference and were looking forward to attending this year.

4.7.2 Focus group participants shared that they have also previously completed diocesan training. Recently the Safeguarding Lead has also completed safeguarding training with a charity for whom she volunteers.

4.7.3 The Operations Manager in Liverpool maintains a comprehensive record of staff training compliance, including course provider details, completion and expiration/renewal date and it is highlighted in green whether the course is completed. The Safeguarding Adults policy highlight that all staff will be provided with appropriate training, but the minimum training expectations are not outlined. Within the training records there is evidence of staff completing a variety of training included but not limited to Safeguarding and Protection of Adults, Mental Capacity, Moving and Handling, Fire Safety and GDPR 1 and 2. All Support staff are expected to have a National Vocational Qualification⁸ (NVQ) Level 2 Carers certificate.

4.7.4 Developments in standard seven will be for the sisters to develop mechanisms to evaluate training and consider further suitable training opportunities, and for the Trustees to evidence their consideration to training and support for safeguarding.

Graded: Met

4.8 Standard 8 Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

4.8.1. The Cenacle Sisters have shared that whilst it is likely they have had copies of integrity in Ministry historically, this is not something that has been regularly reflected upon recently to guide and support ministry, however moving forward in line with the Eight National Safeguarding Standards the sisters will review how compliance with the pastoral standards might be identified and monitored and that similarly, this will be evidenced more thoroughly within Trustee minutes.

⁸ NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications) are based on national occupational standards. These standards are statements of performance that describe what competent people in a particular occupation are expected to be able to do

4.8.2 Whilst there is no evidence of quality assurance of the work of the sisters, there is evidence that the work of staff within the Cenacle Liverpool is subject to regular monthly audit by the Operations Manager, who focuses upon key themes including but not limited to, safe staffing levels, budgets and fire procedures, this information is entered into a data base which provides a score to support the Operations Manager to understand areas for improvement.

4.8.3 The sisters have shared that the outcome of this audit will become the plan for safeguarding improvements for the work of the sisters moving forward.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

5. Summary of Overall Findings

5.1 The Congregation of our Lady of the Retreat in the Cenacle have evidenced their awareness of the importance of safeguarding, demonstrated by their commitment to training and the value placed on relationships with appropriate safeguarding services to create safer environments. Also, the employment of a caring professional as the Operations Manager in Liverpool has resulted in the appropriate management of staff and suitable accompanying safeguarding policies and practices that have formalised expectations around staff recruitment, training, behaviour and safeguarding responsibilities.

5.2 There is recognition from the Safeguarding Lead that the congregational policies need to be expanded to include all forms of abuse and harm and then localised in accordance with local statutory expectations and timeframes. The Safeguarding Lead has commenced these discussions with senior leaders within the congregation and has sought advice from the RLSS. Similarly, the Safeguarding Lead has reported that the sisters would like to make better use of the community website to include safeguarding communications. The community website is also an opportunity for the sisters to publicise a complaints policy and whistleblowing policy, once these have been agreed by the International Congregation.

5.3 The Cenacle Sisters have no frame of reference for supporting those who have been harmed, or of the management of allegations and concerns or of supporting

the subjects of allegations, however the Safeguarding Lead has demonstrated that there have been considerations to how the sisters would practically manage if there were any concerns of this nature, and focus group participants have shared their understanding that a caring approach is needed.

5.4 The Cenacle Sisters will benefit from either adapting existing policies in use by the International Congregation for staff within Liverpool, or by developing new policies that better align to the ministry of the sisters. It is also essential that further consideration is given by the sisters to how they can formally capture their compliance with the Eight National Safeguarding Standards, for example by ensuring safeguarding is a standing agenda item on minutes of meeting of the community and Trustees, and by ensuring that Trustees have the appropriate oversight of safeguarding practices by the sisters, and staff at the Cenacle.

6. Recommendations

To support improvement, the following recommendations are made:

- Develop a simple safeguarding action or annual work plan to improve and track compliance and governance against the Eight National Safeguarding Standards
- Develop an appropriate localised safeguarding policy that aligns with the ministry of the Cenacle Sisters and expectations of practice in England, and includes consideration to working with those who report having been harmed, effective management of allegations and concerns and Management and Support of Subjects of Allegations and Concerns (Respondents)
- Develop an appropriate localised complaints policy that aligns with the ministry of the Cenacle Sisters and expectations of practice in England
- Develop an appropriate localised whistleblowing policy that aligns with the ministry of the Cenacle Sisters and expectations of practice in England
- Ensure safeguarding policies are included on the community website
- Develop mechanisms to evaluate training and consider further suitable training opportunities

- Ensure minutes of Trustee meeting include consideration of safeguarding to include training and support for safeguarding
- Ensure that discussions of safeguarding are captured formally within meeting minutes at least monthly
- Ensure that contact details for the Safeguarding Lead are displayed in public placed in the Cenacle in Liverpool and London
- Ensure the appropriate maintenance of a register for people entering the building to ensure that it is known who is on premises

7. Arrangements for Follow-up

7.1 In line with an overall rating of met with recommendations, the earliest date of the next audit of the Congregation of our Lady of the Retreat in the Cenacle by the CSSA is within two years. If the CSSA becomes aware of a significant Safeguarding concern or allegation in the intervening period, then an earlier audit will be required.