

**St Augustine's Abbey,
Subiaco–Cassinese Congregation,
Order of St Benedict
(Chilworth Abbey)**

Baseline Audit Report
March 2025

Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Scope & Methodology	4
3. Audit Grading	5
4. Assessment against the Standards	7
5. Summary of Overall Findings	17
6. Recommendations	197
7. Arrangements for Follow Up.....	19

1. Introduction

1.1 This report is a baseline audit of the safeguarding arrangements for St Augustine's Abbey, Subiaco-Cassinese Congregation, Order of St Benedict¹, also known as Chilworth Abbey, a Benedictine Monastery and referred to as St Augustine's Abbey in this report. In 2011 the Trustees of St Augustine's Abbey took over from the Franciscans who previously owned the friary. The nine Brothers who reside there are of Monastic Life as opposed to Religious Life and are therefore autonomous with no Provincial lead within the United Kingdom. The Community holds no external ministry nor does it run a parish or undertake any parish work. However, Divine Office and Mass is held eight times per day in which lay persons are able to attend. The Monastery has a four-roomed guest house on site but completely separate from the Abbey which can sleep up to five people. This is used by people as a retreat, by family visiting Brothers or by visiting clergy and no unaccompanied children are permitted. The guest house has a designated Monk who arranges bookings and keeps a record of visiting guests and Clergy. The Monastery also has a chapel, some confessional rooms, meeting area and a small gift shop. The Abbey is also visited regularly by, and can call upon the services of, an Abbot Visitor who is specialised in safeguarding and canonical matters.

1.2 On the 9th July 2024 the CSSA contacted the Abbot of St Augustine's Abbey via e-mail to notify of the intention to complete a safeguarding audit. Over a series of e-mail communications which followed a date was agreed for the audit and the in-person visit as well as a submission date for the Level 1 Self Assessment; an assessment tool which provided background information on their adherence to the eight individual safeguarding standards², their progress in the overall implementation of these standards and evidence of how this was being achieved.

1.3 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* (a

¹ St Augustine's Abbey, Subiaco-Cassinese Congregation, Order of St Benedict. Registered charity number 245415.

² A description and full details of the Standards can be found on the CSSA website [here](#)

small community 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). St Augustine's Abbey has been assigned to a Level 1 Enclosed audit.

1.4 The CSSA recognises the rich diversity of the Religious, and acknowledges that the Religious Life Groups within any particular 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. Scope & Methodology

2.1 The Self Assessment and accompanying evidence was e-mailed to the CSSA by a volunteer for St Augustine's Abbey on the 21st September 2024. Following the review of the Self Assessment and the supporting evidence provided, the CSSA analyst completed an in-person visit to St Augustine's Abbey on the 9th October 2024.

2.2 During the in-person visit the auditor had the opportunity to meet with both the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Abbot; both of whom are also Trustees. The following evidence has also been considered in the preparation of this report in reaching decisions regarding scoring for the individual safeguarding standards and the overall grade:

- St Augustine's Abbey website³
- Abbot's Council and Chapter meeting minutes
- West Sussex County Council Advanced Safeguarding training certificate
- Display posters

³ www.chilworthbenedictines.com

- Liaison with the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS)⁴

2.3 The evidence provided in both the self-assessment form and the in-person visit has been assessed against the Level 1 Maturity Matrix and ratings for each standard have been assigned, together with an overall grade.

2.4 No case audit work has been undertaken during the course of this audit as there have been no safeguarding allegations or concerns reported involving St Augustine's Abbey and hence there are no current or previous case files to pass comment on.

3. Audit Grading

3.1 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 the supporting documentation as listed in paragraph 2.2.

3.2 This report summarises the findings of the audit undertaken with St Augustine's Abbey and their progress towards meeting the eight safeguarding standards. The overall grading for the Group is assessed as "**Met with Recommendations**" which comprises of eight separate standards; the grading for each individual standard of which is tabulated below.

⁴ The RLLS are an independent organisation that religious life groups are able to contract to provide safeguarding services. More information is available here: [Religious Life Safeguarding Service](#)

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
Standard 6 – Robust Human Resource Management	Met with recommendations
Standard 7 – Training and Support for Safeguarding	Not met
Standard 8 – Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement	Met with recommendations

4. Audit findings against each standard

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

Strengths

4.1.1 The website for St Augustine's Abbey contains a Safeguarding page⁵ which outlines a commitment to safeguarding principles, explains how to report abuse and has the website addresses for both the diocese of Arundel and Brighton safeguarding department and the CSSA. On the same page there is also a statement that the Abbey will work towards the parameters of *Integrity in Ministry*⁶ in ensuring safeguarding practices adequately protect vulnerable individuals together with a hyperlink that takes the reader directly to a copy of the document.

4.1.2 A Designated Safeguarding Lead has been appointed who has experience in working alongside vulnerable people and is qualified to do so, being a member of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). Their name and telephone number is recorded on the website which also has the facility to send a direct message via e-mail. The Abbot has also completed safeguarding training through the diocese, although not recently. However, throughout interview with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Abbot it was apparent that both have a sound understanding of safeguarding practice and of their legal responsibilities to uphold the same.

4.1.3 Contracts with both the RLSS and the CSSA have been agreed and signed and the RLSS have confirmed that the community have been in contact with their membership, training and safeguarding teams.

4.1.4 During the in-person interview the Abbot described Benedictine life as an autocracy with room for consultation. In terms of safeguarding governance arrangements, the auditor was advised how governance structures are in place via

⁵ www.chilworthbenedictines.com/blank-page

⁶ Integrity in Ministry is a code of conduct for Religious engaged in ministry in the Catholic Church in England and Wales

the Abbot's Council and Chapter meetings and trustee meetings and that they had the facility to consider safeguarding matters if they were raised, although this was not a routine item on the agenda. The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Abbot are the two trustees of the community and confirmed in interview that they meet formally for trustee meetings and they have minutes to evidence this. Formal Trustee meetings are held at least twice annually in line with the Charity Commission guidelines⁷. In addition to scheduled formal face-to-face meetings the trustees have very regular informal contact as they see each other daily. Not only would safeguarding issues come to their attention through the course of their daily life but could also be raised formally in Abbot's Council and Chapter meetings or trustee meetings. It is considered that the high frequency of contact between the Abbot and the Brothers and the closeness of their relationships would also facilitate the reporting or detection of any concerns relating to the welfare of the Brothers.

Areas for Development

4.1.5 Although the St Augustine's Abbey website links to the CSSA and the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton's safeguarding team websites for those who wish to report abuse, there is no explicit mention that the Group intend to adhere to the safeguarding policies and procedures of these organisations. The community should adopt their own Safeguarding policy in line with the Charity Commission's expectations⁸.

4.1.6 Whilst it has been confirmed by the RLSS that St Augustine's Abbey have signed contracts and had provisional conversations with the membership, training and safeguarding teams, it is of note that they have not attended any training offered by the service or had a presence at the safeguarding conferences. Such links and networking may prove useful to them in the future.

4.1.7 The Group should have Safeguarding as a regular feature on their Abbot's Council and Chapter meeting and/or trustee meeting agendas. Even if nothing is

⁷ Guidelines specified by the Charity Commission can be found on their website [here](#)

⁸ The Charity Commission's expectations can be viewed here: [Safeguarding for charities and trustees - GOV.UK](#)

discussed, it could offer the space to raise any issues and to track items such as safeguarding training if required.

Graded: Met with recommendations

4.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

Strengths

4.2.1 During their in-person visit to St Augustine's Abbey the auditor saw evidence of safeguarding messaging communicated to Brothers and to members of the public via posters explaining that no form of abuse is tolerated within the community and how people should report abuse. A poster is also on display in the guest house for visitors to see. As mentioned in paragraph 4.1.1, the Website also contains a commitment to safeguarding.

4.2.2 The Brothers at this Benedictine Monastery form an enclosed community and it is recognised that as a consequence there may be limited opportunity for close working with other church bodies or local organisations. Nonetheless, it is apparent through interview that the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Abbot have a close working relationship with the Arundel and Brighton Diocese safeguarding team as well as the Abbot Visitor who has regular contact. The Abbot reports that he also feels confident he can approach the CSSA with any issues regarding managing a safe environment.

Areas for Development

4.2.3 St Augustine's Abbey does not have a formal Safeguarding Communications Policy in place. That said, due to the small size of the community it is felt that a Safeguarding Communication's plan could form part of an overarching Safeguarding policy.

4.2.4 When asked how the importance of safeguarding is communicated the Self Assessment indicated that this is an area of work in progress. Although it is acknowledged that the Brothers have no active safeguarding cases and very limited ministry or exposure to vulnerable groups, they may still wish to consider

raising the profile of safeguarding within the Monastery through other forms for members of the public, those visiting the guest house and the Brothers of the Abbey.

Graded: Met with recommendations

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

Strengths

4.3.1 St Augustine's Abbey have no historic or current case work from which to pass comment on in relation to Standards 3, 4 or 5. That said, the information attained during the in-person meeting with the Abbot and Designated Safeguarding Lead evidenced that the leadership understands the impact of abuse on victims and would demonstrate compassion and sensitivity in their pastoral duties towards anyone reporting abuse. They know how to refer and report onwards appropriately and to contact the police and other statutory services in the event of an emergency and in the case of an alleged offence being committed. An awareness that support for victims and survivors would need to be bespoke to the individual's needs was also demonstrated as well as some knowledge of where to seek this support.

4.3.2 Despite not having any current or previous case work to draw upon in regards to evidencing this Standard, the Abbot and Designated Safeguarding Lead were able to envisage potential scenarios in which they may need to take action and offer pastoral care to those who have been harmed. In terms of managing an allegation against the Abbot the Designated Safeguarding Lead confirmed that they would deal with it in consultation with the Abbot visitor, the Arundel and Brighton Diocese safeguarding department and the RLSS.

4.3.3 The website safeguarding statement outlines the expected process when disclosures of abuse are made. In interview the Abbot and the Designated Safeguarding Lead were able to illustrate what to do in the event of a disclosure of harm from both members of the public and from members of their own congregation. They report fostering a caring role for each other and that they would be in the position to offer tailor-made support to a Brother should the need

arise. Although there are no particularly elderly or frail Monks within the Abbey, the Abbot described a close community whereby each other's needs can be tended to should the need arise.

4.3.4 The Designated Safeguarding Lead is a qualified Counsellor and Psychotherapist and as such is well-positioned to handle disclosures from members of the public or from Brothers in St Augustine's Abbey should they arise. They also have a close working relationship with the Abbot Visitor and the Arundel and Brighton Safeguarding team and expressed a willingness to engage with the RLSS for support if required.

Areas for Development

4.3.5 Although the website contains a statement on safeguarding along with a link to *Integrity in Ministry* St Augustine's Abbey would benefit from having a dedicated document which outlines to those being harmed, and to members who receive a disclosure, the formal process in place for support.

4.3.6 The auditor could not see evidence that all members are aware of, and have the means to, report concerns about themselves or another member within or outside the Group.

Graded: Met with recommendations

4.4 Standard 4 Effective Management of Allegations and Concerns

Strengths

4.4.1 There is no current or previous casework available to assess direct practice in this area. Nonetheless, the Abbot and Designated safeguarding Lead demonstrated in interview that they are aware of how to respond to allegations of abuse and commented that they would also be able to seek the advice of their Abbot Visitor who is based in Portsmouth diocese only 30 minutes away from the Abbey in Chilworth. They relayed how if an allegation was made against the Abbot it would be handled by the Designated Safeguarding Lead in conjunction with the Abbot visitor and the RLSS. An understanding of the support the RLSS would offer in

the event of any allegations being received was also apparent. The Abbot and Designated Safeguarding Lead state they are confident in their knowledge of how and when to notify statutory agencies and provided some examples. The website also outlines reporting obligations and who should be informed. As covered in paragraph 4.1.4 the Abbot feels that he would be kept updated of any safeguarding concerns in the course of his daily interactions with Brothers in the small and close community but asserts that there is also the ability to hear matters in trustee and Abbot's Council and Chapter meetings and that concerns would be escalated if necessary.

4.4.2 When meeting with the Abbot and the Designated Safeguarding Lead it is clear through verbal discussions that a sound awareness of safeguarding matters is present. A thorough understanding of the RLSS's role in composing safeguarding care plans was demonstrated through discussion on the topic in interview.

4.4.3 Although residing in a Monastic community means that St Augustine's Abbey is the sole residence for the Brothers who live there, the Abbot states that should an accusation of abuse mean that a Brother can no longer reside in the Abbey, there are other Monasteries which could be considered for a safely managed move if needed.

4.4.4 St Augustine's Abbey have not yet needed to record any concerns or allegations against their members. However, should this need arise in the future the Designated Safeguarding Lead has a computer file in which records can be secured securely and password protected without the need for paper records to be locked away. The Designated Safeguarding Lead is aware of Data Protection legislation and of the need to consult guidelines in regards to the retention of specific data should the need to record details arise.

Areas for Development

4.4.5 Reports and concerns, including low-level issues, should be recorded as well as any subsequent action taken as a result. During the in-person meeting the Abbot and Designated Safeguarding Lead stated they were uncertain of the threshold for recording low-level concerns but were willing to receive guidance and implement this into practice. In describing their response to a low-level concern which was eventually resolved with a positive outcome the Abbot and Designated safeguarding Lead asked the auditor whether notes should have been recorded.

This would be a recommendation for future concerns in order to capture patterns of behaviour and build potential pictures of concern.

4.4.6 As covered in paragraph 4.1.6 above St Augustine's Abbey does not have its own formal written policy beyond the safeguarding statement featuring on their website. A policy composed in-line with National policies and guidelines would assist in instructing members how to respond to allegations of abuse and effectively manage concerns.

Graded: Met with recommendations

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

Strengths

4.5.1 During interview the Abbot and Designated Safeguarding Lead identified the need to provide pastoral support to members of their own community who may be accused of abuse (respondents) in addition to those who report abuse. They are aware of some of the internal and external types of support that respondents might receive as well as places to go to seek advice should this be needed including their Abbot Visitor, the RLSS, Arundel and Brighton Diocese Safeguarding team. The RLSS have confirmed that an introductory conversation has been held between the RLSS safeguarding team and the Group.

4.5.2 Although there are no previous or current experiences to draw any learning from it was clear from the in-person meeting that the Abbot understands the need to take prompt action in responding to accusations and consult with the RLSS should a member of the community be accused of abuse. The Abbot demonstrated a willingness to report allegations to the RLSS and engage with their support in monitoring and managing any potential risks posed by Brothers within the community and to seek advice from a Canon Lawyer if necessary.

4.5.3 The Abbot and Designated Safeguarding Lead asserted that should an allegation be received about one of their members they would seek advice in relation to standing them down from any public-facing roles and consider moving

the respondent to another Monastery if necessary to do. They state that although small in member numbers, the facility to run the functions of the Abbey would still exist should one of their members be re-homed pending an investigation. Equally, the leadership would be prepared to work towards supporting any respondents who had to leave in returning to life within the Monastery where appropriate to do so. A full acknowledgement of the need to support respondents was made.

4.5.4 It is considered that the Designated Safeguarding Lead's professional skills and qualifications stand him in a strong and able position for supporting and managing any future respondents and being a contact for the RLSS and any statutory agencies involved.

Areas for Development

4.5.5 The introduction of a safeguarding policy for the community which includes expectations for managing and supporting respondents would strengthen current practice. It would also help re-assure Brothers and members of the public of the spiritual, emotional, financial and legal support available to those subject to allegations.

Graded: Met

4.6 Standard 6 Robust Human Resource Management

Strengths

4.6.1 The Brothers at St Augustine's Abbey undertake no external ministry nor participate in regulated activity which might require a DBS check. The Abbot describes the Abbey as the Brothers' home and the doors are closed. Divine Office and Mass is held 8 times a day where members of the public are welcome to join. Members of the public sit in the body of the Church and the Brothers sit in the Choir and Confession is held. Following Sunday Mass members of the public are invited to join the Monks for tea and coffee in a public meeting room at the rear of the Church.

4.6.2 There is one lay volunteer who assists the Brothers with administrative tasks and their role does not bring them into contact with vulnerable groups. Visiting

Priests who may stay in the guest house do not carry out any services but are nonetheless asked to provide their celebret. Visitors and Clergy are always chaperoned and never left alone with any members of the public.

4.6.3 Although a Safer Recruitment policy does not exist, it is clear from discussions with members of the Group that they are aware of the need to ensure people are correctly vetted and are able to effectively manage selection and screening should the need occur. The Abbot advised the auditor that although the survey return states the community very much welcomes and encourages visitors, pilgrims and men thinking of becoming a Monk, they have not had any new members in over 13 years. Despite this the Abbot was able to list safer recruitment measures they would put in place, including reference checks, should a person approach them wishing to join as a member. The Brothers receive no overseas visiting Clergy.

Areas for Development

4.6.4 There is no safer recruitment, whistleblowing or complaints policy in place. St Augustine's Abbey should develop these or incorporate into a wider safeguarding policy to outline how grievances or concerns can be raised by members of the public and members of the community and ensure that Brothers are aware and understand this.

4.6.5 An event is held every three to four months in the grounds of the Abbey where members of the public are invited to come and pray and participate in other activities. The Brothers may wish to consult with the RLSS to seek reassurance that no roles fall under the scope of regulated activity and if they do, that DBS certificates are pursued, recorded and have oversight from leaders.

Graded: Met with recommendations

4.7 Standard 7 Training and Support for Safeguarding

Strengths

4.7.1 The Self Assessment states that the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Abbot receive Diocesan training. The Abbot attended some in-person training and the Designated Safeguarding Lead has also completed safeguarding training in

the course of their counselling/psychotherapy role. However, there is no record of the remaining Brothers completing any safeguarding training.

Areas for Development

4.7.2 An area for development in relation to training will be a more robust method of recording training completion and the inclusion of oversight of all aspects of safeguarding training from Leaders and trustees.

4.7.3 Once initial safeguarding training has been delivered the Brothers would benefit from regular refreshers to keep up-to-date on safeguarding practices. In interview the Abbot acknowledged that completion of further training would help affirm existing safeguarding knowledge.

4.7.4 The Group would benefit from having a presence at RLSS training which may also provide a networking opportunity. All Brothers should complete some form of safeguarding training in order to understand how to respond to disclosures and how to report abuse and the trustees may also wish to undertake the RLSS training for trustees.

Graded: Not met

4.8 Standard 8 Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Strengths

4.8.1 It is acknowledged that the opportunity for learning in relation to case work is minimal given that St Augustine's Abbey have no historic or current cases or active concerns. There have been no known incidents of non-compliance with the National Standards and so it is not possible to assess the Group's effectiveness in identifying them and relaying them to the RLSS and/or CSSA. In interview the Abbot asserted that when e-mails informing of safeguarding updates are received from the CSSA and the Diocese, these are shared with the Brothers.

4.8.2 During the in-person visit to the Abbey the Abbot and Designated Safeguarding Lead voiced a willingness to use the feedback from this audit to learn more about their processes and improve on their safeguarding practice.

Areas for development

4.8.3 Although both the Abbot and Designated Safeguarding Lead expressed a desire for continuous improvement, at present there does not appear to be any facility with which to learn from any safeguarding issues that may arise. The Leaders and trustees should consider making safeguarding a regular feature on their meeting agendas so that lessons learnt and changes adopted can be formally recorded and any responses to audit recommendations could be tracked. At present there is little evidence that safeguarding as a topic is spoken about between the Brothers.

4.8.4 Engagement with the RLSS and a presence at RLSS training and annual safeguarding conferences will allow St Augustine's Abbey to network with other organisations and to learn about best practice in order to further develop their own standards.

Graded: Met with recommendations

5. Summary of Overall Findings

5.1 It is clear that St Augustine's Abbey understand the core principles of safeguarding with a particular strength in the field of support for, and management of, respondents. The Abbot welcomes the feedback from this audit and is keen to use it to develop the community's safeguarding practices. Although there is no previous or current experience of handling disclosures of abuse or supporting those who suffer abuse or are subject to allegations, the leaders demonstrate a sound understanding of what to do and where to go for support should the need arise in future.

5.2 The Designated safeguarding Lead's professional skills and background places them in a strong position for carrying out their role and it is felt that being a trustee will also help to raise the profile of safeguarding within the Abbey.

5.3 The knowledge around safeguarding and the procedures and processes in place would benefit from being formalised in a Safeguarding Policy that is available for all to view.

5.4 Although some safeguarding training has been completed by some members of the Abbey the Group would benefit from a record of the training completed, for training to be updated periodically, and for any deficits to be overseen by the leaders.

6. Recommendations

6.1 To support improvement, the following recommendations are made:

Within 3 months

A safeguarding policy is constructed or adopted from the RLSS suite of policies which outlines training expectations, roles and responsibilities, practice guidance and procedures for reporting abuse, safer recruitment, complaints/grievance and whistleblowing. This should be approved by trustees and publicised on the website with copies made available to the Brothers in the Monastery and assurance sought that every member has read and understands the document.

Any safeguarding concerns that are brought to the Brothers' attention should be recorded along with the action taken.

Ahead of the next "family" event there is some consultation with the RLSS to seek reassurance that no roles fall under the scope of regulated activity and therefore require a DBS check.

Make safeguarding a regular feature on meeting agendas to raise the profile of safeguarding and offer an opportunity for feedback, oversight and learning.

Within 6 months

Consider ways of raising the profile of safeguarding within the Monastery.

Within 12 months

All Brothers should have attended introductory safeguarding training and for there to have been some representation from the Group at the RLSS conference to network if practicable. A record of the training completed should be made and kept up-to-date with oversight from leaders.

Put in place some mechanism for measuring the effectiveness of the training received by all parties.

7. Arrangements for Follow-up

7.1 The overall grading of *Met with Recommendations* has been made for the audit of St Augustine's Abbey. In line with this grading the minimum period of re-audit by the CSSA will be within 2 years.