

Belmont Abbey

Baseline Audit Report
June 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 This is a baseline audit of the safeguarding arrangements of the community at Belmont Abbey in Herefordshire. The English Benedictine Congregation (EBC) is a group of autonomous monastic communities of Catholic monks and nuns established in 1556. The EBC has ten communities living in the United Kingdom and Ireland of which the community at Belmont Abbey is one. The Belmont Abbey community is one of 33 monks, 15 of which are resident at the abbey, nine who work externally in parishes across Herefordshire and a community of nine monks not included in this audit who reside in the community's daughter house at Lurin, just outside Lima in Peru. The community of monks welcome guests and visitors to Belmont Abbey as well as providing ministry and chaplaincy in Herefordshire and beyond.

1.2 Guests and visitors to Belmont Abbey can undertake private and group retreats and a programme of events that run annually. Guests can be accommodated in Hedley Lodge which is the Belmont Abbey guesthouse which at the time of audit was closed for refurbishments. Monastic retreats are also available for those wishing to explore a vocation. The community welcomes visitors to the abbey and can facilitate tours and activities for school and community groups. The parish church within the grounds of the Abbey comes under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Cardiff- Menevia.

1.3 The business arm of the Abbey is run through Monksoft Limited, a private company wholly owned by Belmont Abbey General Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The Abbot is the Chairman of Belmont Abbey CIO and a Director of Monksoft Ltd and, together with the Trustees and Directors, seeks to apply the values of the Catholic and Benedictine tradition to all its activities. All lay staff are employed by Monksoft Limited or Belmont Abbey Charitable Incorporated Organisation. There are two volunteers at the Abbey who act as designated safeguarding leads and volunteer in the Abbey bookshop.

1.4 This audit seeks to assess the effectiveness of current safeguarding arrangements, by considering practice over the last twelve months. The CSSA has

categorised RLGs on a scale from Level 1 (a 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), to 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 community of monks at Belmont Abbey were assessed as Level 2 for the purposes of this audit.

1.5 The CSSA recognises the rich diversity of the Religious 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 This baseline audit was undertaken following the submission of the Level 2 self-assessment by the designated safeguarding leads on 2nd February 2025 together with supporting evidence, listed in the Appendix to this report. The audit visit was undertaken on 3rd March 2025.

2.2 Audit interviews were undertaken on 3rd March with the Abbot, the designated safeguarding leads, the Prior, the guesthouse manager, the infirmarian, the Novice Master and a focus group of community members. The Abbot and the Prior are both Trustees and both are directors of Monksoft Ltd.

2.3 Liaison has taken place between the analyst and the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS)¹ and the Archdiocese of Cardiff-Menevia regarding the engagement between them and how this meets their expectations for safeguarding.

¹ 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.

3. Audit grading

3.1 Practice was assessed against the eight national safeguarding standards adopted by the Catholic Church in England and Wales² and graded in accordance with the CSSA Maturity Matrix for Level 2 RLGs.

3.2 Potential audit ratings against each standard, and the final overall ratings, are: Below Basic, Basic, Early Progress, Firm Progress, Results Being Achieved, Comprehensive Assurance and Exemplary

3.3 The overall grading for the community of monks at Belmont Abbey was Comprehensive assurance.

Overall grading	Comprehensive assurance
Standard 1 – Safeguarding is embedded in the Church body’s leadership, governance, ministry and culture	Results being achieved
Standard 2 – Communicating the Church’s safeguarding message	Comprehensive assurance
Standard 3 – Engaging with and caring for those who report having been harmed	Exemplary
Standard 4 – Effective management of allegations and concerns	Comprehensive assurance
Standard 5 – Management and support of subjects of allegations and concerns (respondents)	Comprehensive assurance

² Full details of the eight standards and underpinning sub standards are available here: The Eight National Safeguarding Standards (catholicsafeguarding.org.uk)

Standard 6 – Robust human resource management	Exemplary
Standard 7 – Training and support for safeguarding	Results being achieved
Standard 8 – Quality assurance and continuous Improvement	Results being achieved

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 Abbot promotes a culture of reporting and sharing of any information that could lead to the raising of a safeguarding concern and champions awareness amongst the community through his engagement with his safeguarding leads, RLSS and the diocese. Under his leadership the expectation set out in the safeguarding policy and staff handbook is that the community and all who work within Belmont Abbey are open, transparent, conscientious, kind, minister to a good standard, are well supported by each other and well-resourced for safeguarding. This is evidenced through the provision of two designated safeguarding leads who are responsible for the management of all matters relating to safeguarding including Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks, reporting concerns and liaison with RLSS and the Parish Safeguarding Representative (PSR)³ from the diocese. The designated safeguarding leads, who have a background in education and previous experience with safeguarding, have been in position since 2019. Their role is currently a voluntary one. The level of work, the need for resilience in the role and the importance of safeguarding would suggest an employed role rather than a voluntary one would be more appropriate in the longer term.

4.1.2 There is a robust structure for the governance of safeguarding matters. Meetings take place between the Abbot and the designated safeguarding leads monthly. Discussions showed that there were clear lines of responsibility although this has not yet been formalised by the creation of a job description or terms of reference for the designated safeguarding lead role. Outcomes from these meetings are shared with the monthly Abbot's council (a group of five members elected by both the Abbot and the community) for discussion and decision making

³ Parish Safeguarding Representatives are trained volunteers who provide assistance and support to their parish in safeguarding matters.

as a standing agenda item. Evidence from meeting minutes demonstrated that decisions are shared with the Trustees for oversight and scrutiny at their monthly meeting.

4.1.3 The community of monks follow the Rule of St Benedict and together with the Constitutions (a document which comments on the chapters of the Rule for the congregation and is more in tune with Canon law), these two documents set the tone for the community and the culture: one of protecting, loving and caring for others. Safeguarding documents that include an updated safeguarding policy reflecting this culture have been developed that are in tune with the workings and lifestyle of the community. Prior to these the diocesan safeguarding policies were used. The new safeguarding policy has been shared with the Trustees, the council and the community and sets out the roles and responsibilities for each member of the community and includes guidance and policy for responding to allegations of harm, training obligations and standards of behaviour that support safeguarding, all underpinned by Integrity in Ministry⁴.

4.1.4 The Abbot and the safeguarding team work very effectively with the diocese and RLSS. Prior to the formation of RLSS, the community adopted and used the diocesan safeguarding policies and procedures and worked with the diocesan Safeguarding Co-ordinator and their team to resolve any issues that arose, evidenced by documents seen showing this process in place and being used since 2002. There continues to be a positive working relationship between the Abbot and the diocese; community members live and work in parishes and others provide cover as required. designated safeguarding leads meet monthly with the diocesan PSR and have a reciprocal arrangement providing cover for one another during periods of absence. There are robust information sharing processes in place between the designated safeguarding leads and the PSR which are in line with General Data Protection Regulation⁵ (GDPR). The Abbot and the designated safeguarding leads have worked very closely with RLSS since its inception and have

⁴ Integrity in Ministry is a code of conduct of Religious engaged in ministry in the Catholic Church in England and Wales

⁵ GDPR governs how the personal data of individuals may be processed and transferred.

had a contract with them since 2023. During this time, they have adopted the processes and policies of the RLSS and used templates to create their own bespoke policies. They have worked with RLSS on the creation and management of safeguarding plans and on the development of risk assessments for events when the community encounter the public outside of normal ministry and pastoral care. Evidence showed routine and appropriate contacts between the designated safeguarding leads and both the RLSS and the CSSA.

4.1.5 Integrity in Ministry was provided for all members of the community who signed to say they have received the document and that they have read it and understand the content. Discussions on this document were managed and led by the Abbot. During discussions with the community, they demonstrated a sound knowledge of the content and purpose of Integrity in Ministry. Those who practice as parish priests also have copies of Caring Safely for Others⁶ described by them as 'a more practical handbook providing additional useful guidance'. The Eight National Safeguarding Standards have been used to inform and track progress on safeguarding during the preparation for the audit.

4.1.6 The community operate a guesthouse (currently closed for refurbishment) which welcomes individuals and groups for retreats and events at Belmont Abbey. Booking is done via email; references, checks and risk assessments are completed to ensure that there are no safeguarding concerns. A new safeguarding protocol for guests has been created that stipulates the conditions which must be met by all guests including access to areas within Belmont Abbey, boundaries and a behaviour code that all must adhere to. As part of the refurbishments the guest house now has separate male and female facilities and is now securely separated from the monks' private accommodation.

4.1.7 The community has an Infirmarian who takes responsibility for the support required to the more elderly, frail and vulnerable community members, assisted and supported by the wider community. Additional measures have been taken

⁶ Caring Safely for Others Pastoral Standards and Safe Conduct in Ministry published by the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/04/Caring-Safely-For-Others.pdf

including the provision of a lift to provide a safer and more accessible environment for everyone. The Infirmary has established good links with the local NHS primary and secondary care services and is able to facilitate additional support for the community as required.

Areas for development

4.1.8 There has been a period of change within the community of monks at Belmont Abbey through the recent appointment of the new Abbot. This change has included the further delegation of some additional safeguarding responsibilities to the designated safeguarding leads. The role and responsibilities of the designated safeguarding lead are not currently formalised and the creation of terms of reference or a job description is therefore recommended.

4.1.9 Meeting minutes for the Trustee and council meetings are kept, however to date, there have not been formal minutes kept from the safeguarding meetings held between the Abbot and the designated safeguarding leads. It is recommended that this process is introduced to ensure a robust audit trail for decision making.

4.1.10 There is currently no formal safeguarding implementation plan to monitor the changes made and actions taken to meet the safeguarding policy requirements. The development of a safeguarding implementation plan would enable the Abbot and Trustees to effectively assure that safeguarding practice undertaken at the Abbey aligns with and supports the policy and the Eight National Safeguarding Standards in a structured and cohesive way.

Graded: Results being achieved

4.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church's safeguarding message

Strengths

4.2.1 There is a formal communication plan within the safeguarding policy document which clearly sets out the requirements to ensure clear lines of communication. This plan is reviewed annually and as required in the event of change. Communication between the designated safeguarding leads and the community is through the Abbot and in his absence through the Prior.

4.2.2 The communication plan requires that safeguarding information is shared as widely as possible within Belmont Abbey in all public and private areas, including the guesthouse and the church, and with the parishioners they provide ministry for through the provision of information for parish notice boards and through monthly newsletters. All forms of communication are reviewed annually to ensure that they contain contemporaneous information. Posters and further information were seen in the public areas of Belmont Abbey, including the parish church. Information included the details of the designated safeguarding leads plus the contact details of the PSR for Belmont Abbey church which comes under diocesan oversight. Safe Spaces⁷ was also promoted through the siting of posters in all public areas.

4.2.3 The communication plan determines the need for the website to be maintained and annually reviewed and that it contains all the details a person would need to report a safeguarding concern. The information on the website is easily accessible and very comprehensive. The website also shares links to Safe Spaces and the RLSS, as well as contact details for the diocesan safeguarding coordinator and his team. All contact details for the senior leadership team are on the website.

⁷ Safe Spaces is a free and independent support service, providing a confidential, personal, and safe space for anyone who has been abused by someone in the Church or as a result of their relationship with the Church of England, the Catholic Church in England and Wales or the Church in Wales

Areas for development

4.2.4 The communication of safeguarding messages is a particular strength however to date there is no evidence that its effectiveness has been formally reviewed. This should be considered as it will strengthen the assurance that all messaging is being received and meeting the needs of both the community and the people they encounter. This may be something the community could do jointly with the diocese.

Graded: Comprehensive Assurance

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

Strengths

4.3.1 The safeguarding policy comprehensively and clearly defines the procedures to be followed in the event of a member of the community receiving a disclosure of harm. In addition to their basic safeguarding training, all community members and the designated safeguarding leads attended the Archdiocese of Cardiff-Menevia safeguarding conference in October 2024 during which responding to and managing a disclosure was taught and discussed. There are established channels of communication between the community and RLSS, and evidence demonstrated appropriate and timely contacts with them on the receipt of allegations of non-recent abuse.

4.3.2 The Abbot has been involved in managing two allegations, both of which were raised before he was installed as Abbot, but whilst he was a member of the council and a Trustee. Documentation seen showed that due process was followed and a record of the correspondence between the survivors and the Abbot demonstrated the tone and content of the correspondence was aligned with the Abbot's stated values of openness and transparency. For both survivors, the Abbot had written a letter of apology and offered the opportunity to meet as well as the services of the

RLSS by way of initiating any counselling or support they might want. One of these cases has since been closed and the other is still being managed with the support of RLSS.

4.3.3 There is documentary evidence that feedback was sought from survivors following their engagement with the Abbot and the designated safeguarding leads. The feedback received was positive about the speed of response and the letter of apology received from the Abbot. One survivor gave positive feedback about the outcome and the management of his disclosure. Feedback from this now closed case was shared with the community, the council and the Trustees. The one ongoing case is one of non-recent abuse initially closed in 2002 but has been re-opened to ensure that the survivor is able to access the necessary support and counselling that they now require through liaison with RLSS.

Areas for development

4.3.4 No areas for development were identified.

Graded: Exemplary

4.4 Standard 4 Effective management of allegations and concerns

Strengths

4.4.1 The practice guidance and procedures sections of the safeguarding policy provide explicit information on what processes need to be followed in the event of an allegation of harm being made to or witnessed by a member of the community and comply with the stipulations of Article 19 of Vos Estis Lux Mundi (2019, revised 2023) ¹. All community members, employees and volunteers have received training in this and report being confident to do so. The policy details how a disclosure of harm should be managed compassionately and with respect and how any information received should be clearly documented in line with national guidance and in such a way as to not compromise any statutory investigation.

The procedure takes the person they disclose to through the steps that will need to be taken to report and ensure an optimum outcome, clearly stating the responsibilities of the Abbot, his leadership team and the designated safeguarding leads. Reference is made to the requirement for the safeguarding leads on behalf of the Abbot to contact RLSS and statutory authorities as required as soon as practicably possible.

4.4.2 There have been no recent allegations of harm against any members of the community and no recent disclosures of harm. Evidence from earlier cases demonstrate that the policies are followed, information is accurately recorded in a timely manner and all correspondence is kept providing an audit trail for case management. The ongoing management of these cases is overseen by the Abbot and the Trustees with support from external specialists (previously the diocesan safeguarding coordinator, now the RLSS). All responses to allegations come directly from the Abbot. The Abbot and Trustees all demonstrate awareness of their reporting responsibilities towards the Charity Commission, CSSA and statutory authorities for investigation. The Abbot has himself completed additional training and has identified a need for further training that would support the other Trustees to discharge these duties and has requested that the safeguarding leads action this on his behalf

4.4.3 All safeguarding documentation is kept in named files within a locked storage cabinet in the Abbot's office. Access to these files is restricted with keys being held by the designated safeguarding leads and the Abbot (or the Prior in his absence). Records are managed in line with GDPR requirements. There is an awareness of the need to redact and to password protect information shared electronically.

Areas for development

4.4.4 The completion of additional Trustee training to support the Trustees in discharging their duties by raising awareness of these to a higher degree of confidence and to build resilience into the system.

Graded: Comprehensive Assurance

4.5 Standard 5 Management and support of subjects of allegations and concerns (respondents)

Strengths

4.5.1 There is currently one individual safeguarding plan in place at Belmont Abbey. The plan has been in place for more than ten years and was rewritten with support from the RLSS when they took over the support for safeguarding from the diocese. Changes and updates were made via a series of online meetings between the RLSS, the Abbot and the designated safeguarding leads. Once finalised the Abbot, the Prior and the Infirmarian met with the individual concerned and it was signed and witnessed. The plan is reviewed annually and if any exceptional circumstances or changes are required. Recently the plan was revised, and a risk assessment was completed to enable the individual to travel accompanied to the funeral of a close relative.

4.5.2 The community of monks at Belmont Abbey have offered hospitality to another individual from outside their community who was the subject of an allegation of abuse. The individual stayed at Belmont Abbey whilst investigations were taking place at his own diocese and was accommodated within the monastery. Essential information was shared with the community regarding the temporary accommodation, and he was provided with listening ear support only from the community. His wellbeing support person was from his diocese and provided formal support for him until his return to his own diocese. At this point, no safeguarding plan was in place, as the allegation was under investigation. A reciprocal arrangement could be made if the circumstances required it.

4.5.3 There is a clear understanding amongst the leadership of Canonical investigations and the community have access to a Canon lawyer should the need arise. Formal processes are in place to support individuals and there is evidence through the existing individual safeguarding plan that these work well. Appropriate and timely advice is sought from RLSS for the ongoing management of the existing safeguarding plan and the community have access to the specialised services of RLSS to conduct risk assessments and advise on actions accordingly.

Areas for development

4.5.4 The community has a wide range of experiences in supporting and caring for individuals in times of need and have demonstrated that through their support of individuals who have been the subject of allegations of abuse. There has however been no formal training for those who might be assigned to support a respondent, and this is something that the Abbot and his leadership team could consider.

Graded: Comprehensive assurance

4.6 Standard 6 Robust human resource management

Strengths

4.6.1 All lay staff are employed by either Belmont Abbey Charitable Incorporated Organisation or Monksoft Limited, a company set up to manage the running of the business elements at Belmont Abbey. The company employ a Human Resources (HR) director that oversees all the recruitment and management on behalf of the Abbot, who is the company director. The HR director ensures that all staff are subject to the appropriate DBS checks (including enhanced DBS) in line with both statutory and Catholic Church requirements.

4.6.2 Appointments are based on the person's experience, skills and ability to meet the set criteria and job specification for the specific role; all documentation relating to the applicant is stored in a secure place and remains confidential. Appointment to a role requiring a satisfactory DBS Disclosure check will not be completed until this has been received and previous employment references confirmed as being acceptable. On appointment, all new employees are provided with a staff handbook, and sign to say they understand, all relevant policy and procedures pertinent to their role.

4.6.3 Employment policy set out in the staff handbook states that 'all persons seeking to work with children or vulnerable adults whether in a paid or unpaid capacity must be provided with the opportunity to self-disclose relevant conviction

information'. This is a DBS Code of Practice requirement and applies to anyone being asked to have an Enhanced Disclosure. The handbook contains, safeguarding, behaviour, HR, complaints, whistleblowing and disciplinary policies and procedures as well as an outline of the standards of behaviour and expectations of working in the environment of Belmont Abbey.

4.6.4 All members of the community of monks at Belmont Abbey have undergone DBS checks and all but one is current in line with policy. The outstanding DBS is being reviewed as to whether it remains a requirement due to the role the brother has which does not put him in contact with children or vulnerable adults.

4.6.5 Vetting for those that are contemplating a vocation has both informal and formal processes. Initially the individual will be invited to come and visit as a guest, joining the community in its working life and daily rituals. If the individual wishes to continue and the Novice Master and Formation group (committee) approve, then a more formal process will take place. At this point references will be requested, a DBS check will be performed, and background checks will be undertaken including scrutiny of their social media history to ensure they are who they say they are. If there have been indiscretions, these will be assessed by the Novice Master and the Abbot to determine whether they are insurmountable, and if so, the process will go no further. If they do not reach this threshold, which is determined on a case-by-case basis, then progression will continue. Any doubts or concerns are always discussed with the Formation group, and this continues throughout the postulant and novice periods. Psychological assessments are also carried out on postulants and although there is a cost implication the Novice Master values the insight into personality and characteristics that this gives and feels this has a greater bearing on safety and safeguarding than DBS alone. All these processes are completed for both overseas and UK based applicants.

4.6.6 The whistleblowing policy is available in both the staff handbook and the safeguarding policy providing clear guidelines on the processes to be followed should a concern be raised. Community members, staff and volunteers report being confident to raise concerns should they arise and feel safe to do so. There have been no complaints in the past 12 months, however the Abbot and leadership

team are fully cognisant of the need to inform and seek advice from the RLSS and CSSA should this be required.

Areas for development

4.6.7 No areas for development were identified.

Graded: Exemplary

4.7 Standard 7 Training and support for safeguarding

Strengths

4.7.1 All the community members and volunteers have undertaken basic online training in safeguarding. For new members, this is completed when they enter the monastery as a Postulant and then again as a Novitiate. The Novice Master ensures all in formation have completed their training. There is currently no formal training record kept for the community for basic safeguarding training as it is considered business as usual. The Abbot has completed basic safeguarding training and in addition has undertaken Trustee training. All community members are now required by the Abbot to attend an annual safeguarding training day that is held at Belmont Abbey and run by the diocese. The last one of these was in October 24 and an attendance record shows full compliance.

4.7.2 The designated safeguarding leads have undertaken basic safeguarding training, CSSA audit training, RLSS safeguarding leads/ representatives training, have attended the RLSS conference in 2024 and the October 2024 safeguarding conference at the Abbey. Not all training has included the provision of certificates however attendance lists are held and for those that have certificates, the certificates are held by the individuals.

4.7.3 There has been no formal training needs analysis conducted. Training has only recently been handed to the designated safeguarding leads to manage, and they are in the process of working with the Abbot to formalise an approach to this. The designated safeguarding leads are aware of training opportunities provided

by RLSS, the diocese and external organisations and share these opportunities with the Abbot so that community members can be allocated places if required.

4.7.4 Feedback on training was given during the focus group meeting with the community feeling well supported and informed. In addition to the annual training, the Abbot holds chapter groups where issues including elements of safeguarding are discussed with the whole community. Ten of these have been held since he became Abbot in June of 2024 which the community report as being of value to them.

4.7.5 Training for staff employed by Monksoft Ltd is overseen by the HR director and compliance reported to the Abbot at meetings of the Board of Directors.

Areas for Development

4.7.6 The community of monks at Belmont Abbey would benefit from the completion of a training needs analysis to ensure that all the community members have access to the appropriate training for the additional roles they hold.

4.7.7 A formal record of all safeguarding training undertaken would enable the Abbot and his leadership team to have assurance and understanding of the training that members of the community have received out with that provided internally. Examples include safeguarding training for school governors and additional training provided within their parishes. This would facilitate the planning of future training needs.

4.7.8 There is currently only informal evaluation of the training provided which if formalised would inform and be of benefit to the Abbot and the designated safeguarding leads as they put together a robust training plan for the future.

Graded: Results being achieved

4.8 Standard 8 Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Strengths

4.8.1 The community of monks at Belmont Abbey demonstrate a good understanding of the need to review and improve their safeguarding practice. An audit initiated by the previous Abbot and undertaken by Praesidium⁸ took place in 2020 which made recommendations and identified actions to improve the safeguarding practice at Belmont Abbey. Correspondence following a subsequent follow up audit shows that all recommendations were followed, and the appropriate actions had been taken to rectify the issues raised. By 2022, these actions were shown to be embedded in practice.

4.8.2 Belmont Abbey has now transferred all its safeguarding advice and support to RLSS with whom they have had a contract with since the beginning of 2023. They have acted on feedback given by RLSS to improve practice, including the creation of a more bespoke policy and risk assessments for the safe management of their interactions with the public at events held at Belmont Abbey. They have engaged fully with the CSSA and have adopted the Eight National Safeguarding Standards as a benchmark for safeguarding practice. Adherence to these standards is discussed and monitored at Trustee and council meetings.

4.8.3 Although many positive steps and actions have been taken to improve safeguarding practice as recorded in meeting minutes, there is no formal safeguarding implementation plan at present that brings all these changes together in a cohesive way. There is the recognition that an implementation plan is needed to record and monitor the effectiveness of the improvements made that formally demonstrates adherence to policy and standards, providing assurance for the Abbot and the Trustees.

4.8.4 Examples of improvements in safeguarding practice are plentiful with the creation of a bespoke policy that reflects the unique life of the community of monks

⁸ Praesidium is a private company that provides assessment analysis and support for organisations in the prevention of sexual abuse of children.

at Belmont Abbey, the introduction of a letter of apology that is sent to all those who raise allegations of abuse, a comprehensive safeguarding protocol for guests who come to Belmont Abbey guesthouse and the introduction of an annual safeguarding conference at Belmont Abbey. The next steps will be to evaluate the effectiveness of all those measures that have not already been reviewed.

Areas for Development

4.8.5 The development of a safeguarding implementation plan would enable the Abbot and Trustees to effectively assure that safeguarding practice undertaken at the Abbey aligns with and supports the policy and the Eight National Safeguarding Standards in a structured and cohesive way.

Graded: Results being achieved

5. Summary of overall findings

5.1 The community of monks at Belmont Abbey demonstrate a commitment to ensuring the highest standards of safeguarding practice. They have an open and transparent culture that provides the foundation for people to share concerns and disclose abuse. Individuals that have reported concerns or made allegations have been welcomed, listened to, apologised to where appropriate and every effort has been made to support them in moving forward with their lives. The community has demonstrated a willingness to re-engage with survivors even when cases have been closed.

5.2 The Abbot and his Trustees and council provide strong leadership for the community and ensure safeguarding is a high priority for them. Through his leadership, the community have had access to an annual safeguarding conference and the opportunity to learn from each other and others from the diocese. The leadership have positive and close working relationships with the diocese, with RLSS and with the parishes they work in.

5.3 The role of designated safeguarding leads has enhanced the management of safeguarding especially as they have worked hard to establish a very positive

working relationship with the diocesan PSR which has improved information sharing and oversight. Their input into the formalising of training through a training needs analysis and recording system will greatly enhance these elements of safeguarding practice.

5.4 The community of monks at Belmont Abbey have an established record of providing good quality safeguarding practice and from learning from incidents as well as acting when recommendations are made. This willingness to reflect and adapt is shown in the many quality improvements it has made to its safeguarding practices.

6. Recommendations

To support improvement, the following recommendations are made:

Within 3 months

Create a job description or terms of reference document for the designated safeguarding leads

Publish the new safeguarding protocol for guests on the Belmont Abbey website in preparation for the re-opening of the guest house

Ensure copies of all safeguarding communications are placed within the guest house in preparation for re-opening

Within 6 months

Complete the development of a safeguarding implementation plan that will enable the Abbot and the designated safeguarding leads to record and plan improvements in safeguarding practices formally

Develop a training needs analysis to help to identify and fill gaps in training especially for those with additional roles such as Trustees

Create a methodology for recording all training undertaken both within and without Belmont Abbey to inform the need for additional training

Ensure that all Trustees have completed Trustee training

7. Arrangements for follow-up

7.1 In accordance with the overall rating of Comprehensive Assurance, reaudit by the CSSA should take place after a three-year period, subject to no new risk factors arising.

8. Appendix

CSSA Audit English Benedictine Congregation at Belmont Abbey March 2025 supplementary evidence list

Standard 1: Safeguarding is embedded in the RLG's leadership, governance, ministry and culture

- Website with statement on safeguarding, contact details and signposting to resources for victim-survivors
- Draft Safeguarding Policy (replacement for Diocesan safeguarding policy)
- Membership of English Benedictine Community
- Trustee meeting minutes
- Chapter minutes
- Novitiate handbook
- Staff handbook from HR Monksoft Ltd
- Draft Safeguarding protocol for guests
- Programme from October 2024 Safeguarding Conference at Belmont Abbey
- Certificates of attendance at courses
- Membership of RLSS
- List of DBS holders
- Charity Commission
- Risk assessments
- Case management documents from disclosures

Standard 2: Communicating the RLG's Safeguarding message

- Membership of RLSS
- Website
- Draft safeguarding policy that includes a communication strategy
- Newsletters x 3 that evidence communication of safeguarding messages and contact details
- Posters and contact information for safeguarding leads and diocesan PSR

Standard 3: Engaging with and caring for those who have been harmed

- Enquiry form on website
- Details of Safe Spaces and other support available on website
- Membership of RLSS
- Communication between victim-survivors and the Abbot and RLSS
- Email correspondence including letter of apology and signposting to support services as well as the offer of additional support financially with counselling

Standard 4: Effective management of allegations and concerns

- Enquiry form and additional information on website
- Newsletter
- Files documenting process as being followed correctly (historical allegations received > 12 months ago)

Standard 5: Management and support of subjects of allegations and concerns (respondents)

- Membership of RLSS
- Correspondence between RLSS, the Abbot and the safeguarding leads
- Safeguarding plan for one member of the community
- Correspondence regarding the provision of accommodation for a temporary visitor from the diocese who was under investigation

Standard 6: Robust human resource management

- Staff handbook from Monksoft Ltd detailing policies and procedures for safeguarding, personnel issues, communication, behavioural expectations, whistleblowing, complaints and disciplinary management
- DBS records and follow up process
- Novitiate handbook

Standard 7: Training and support for safeguarding

- Draft Safeguarding policy outlining expectations for training
- Programme for October 24 Safeguarding conference and attendance list

- Certificates for training undertaken by the community

Standard 8: Quality assurance and continuous improvement

- Praesidium Certificate and correspondence
- Letter of Apology
- Draft safeguarding protocol for guests
- Risk assessments for annual fete, welcoming expected guests and welcoming unexpected guests