

Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament

Baseline Audit Report

July 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 This is an audit of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament undertaken as part of the CSSA programme of baseline audits. The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament was founded by Peter Julian Eymard. The essence of the charism of the congregation is both contemplative and apostolic, and the website describes that, their mission *is “to assist the Church in its efforts to form Christian communities whose centre of life is the Eucharist; and this is achieved by allowing the mystery of the Eucharist to take hold of our lives so completely that we will live this mystery fully and proclaim its meaning through various apostolates; To respond to the hungers of the human family with the riches of God’s love manifested in the Eucharist; To strive to make Christ in the Eucharist better known and loved through prayer in the Presence of the Eucharist and an active apostolic life; To proclaim the Eucharist as a powerful force of renewal for Church and Society. The members commit themselves to carry out this mission in collaboration with the laity. They combine prayer and work in order that the entire world may be totally transformed into the people of God the Body of the Lord and temple of the Holy Spirit. In solidarity with those who are working for genuine human advancement, we are alert to the social implications of our actions. We carry out our Eucharistic mission especially in city-centre shrines and parishes. Our shrines are centres of Eucharistic Community and evangelisation, places of adoration, celebration and reconciliation, oases of peace in the heart of the city We make our parishes into authentic Communities shaped by the Eucharist, source and centre of their life”.*

1.2 This audit seeks to assess the effectiveness of current safeguarding arrangements of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament by considering practice against the eight National Safeguarding Standards over the last twelve months. The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament manage one Church in the diocese of Shrewsbury with two members, which is under the provincial administration of the Indian province, and the Blessed Sacrament Shrine in Liverpool city centre where there are four members. The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament oversee the implementation of safety management plans, although this is on behalf of the local dioceses and is not in respect of any members of the Congregation and there is one known active complaint against a deceased member of the community. The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament are

supported in their ministry by a small number of volunteers and a small number of employees in roles such as housekeeping and cleaning.

1.3 The CSSA devised a categorisation scheme for Religious Life Groups; this placed Groups on a scale from Level 1 (a small community with minimal outreach and no known safeguarding concerns), through 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 categorisation scheme was paired with bespoke self-assessment and grading materials that corresponded to the respective levels; The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament were allocated to Level 2 of the categorisation scheme for the current audit.

1.4 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 The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament were sent formal notification of the safeguarding audit on 19 December 2024, this was followed up with an email containing the Level 2 self-assessment document on 10 January 2025, with an agreed completion date of 24 March 2025. A list of additional required evidence and supporting documentation was also supplied by the CSSA, and an appropriate method of sharing this material was agreed. The CSSA analyst and local leader subsequently exchanged email communications to finalise arrangements for visiting the community and for audit interviews, and the audit was completed during the week commencing 31 March 2025.

2.2 The local leader submitted the self-assessment and evidence between the 19 and 28 March and further evidence was reviewed during audit week. The website for the International Congregation has also been reviewed. The Religious Life

Safeguarding Service (RLSS)¹ and the Dioceses of Liverpool and Shrewsbury have contributed to this report.

2.3 Interviews have been completed with the following:

- In person interview with a lay respondent
- In person members focus group
- In person interview with parish safeguarding representative
- In person interview with lay employee /current resident guest
- Online interview with the local leader
- Online focus group with two trustees
- Online interview with Provincial Safeguarding Lead

2.4 Document Review

- A list of evidence provided by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament is available at appendix A.

2.5 The CSSA are grateful to all the members, employees, volunteers and respondents who facilitated the completion of the audit.

3. Audit Grading

3.1. Practice was assessed against the eight safeguarding standards adopted by the Catholic Church in England and Wales. The CSSA RLG Level 2 Maturity Matrix was used to grade audit evidence, with scores from the individual sub-standards being used to calculate the overall standard gradings. Each standard was graded on an ascending six-point scale of *Basic, Early Progress, Firm Progress, Results Being Achieved, Comprehensive Assurance, and Exemplary*². Grades for individual standards were combined to produce an overall grading.

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. Their website is available [here](#)

² Where evidence does not meet the threshold for a grade of 'Basic,' a substitute grade of 'Below Basic' would be awarded.

Overall Grading	Early Progress
Standard 1 – Safeguarding is embedded in the Church body’s leadership, governance, ministry, and culture	Early Progress
Standard 2 – Communicating the Church’s Safeguarding Message	Early Progress
Standard 3 – Engaging with and Caring for those who report having been harmed	Below Basic
Standard 4 – Effective Management of Allegations and Concerns	Basic
Standard 5 – Management and Support of Subjects of Allegations and Concerns (respondents)	Firm Progress
Standard 6 – Robust Human Resource Management	Early Progress
Standard 7 – Training and Support for Safeguarding	Basic
Standard 8 – Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement	Basic

3.2 The key findings of this audit are that the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament have achieved the overall grading of Early progress, which is attributed to the work of the local leader in developing safeguarding communications within the building at the Shrine Liverpool, and the work of the local leader and provincial safeguarding lead in respect of how to support members of the congregation. There are still significant efforts needed by the leadership of the congregation in almost every standard to align practice with the expectations of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. There is a heavy reliance on outdated policies that

are not specific to the province and substantial gaps in training, and safer recruitment practices. There is an outstanding allegation of non-recent abuse that despite efforts from the local leader and provincial safeguarding lead has not been effectively addressed, which has impacted the gradings in standard 3, 4, 7 and 8.

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 Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament have a designated safeguarding lead for the province, which includes England, Ireland and Scotland. She is a member of another congregation who has experience in safeguarding and has been in post for approximately 10 years, she is a qualified social worker although no longer registered with Social Work England³. The safeguarding lead has close ties with the provincial lead for the congregation, and they are both based in Scotland and see each other most days. The safeguarding lead has shared that she completes safeguarding training on an annual basis in line with her other responsibilities in her own congregation and as a Parish Safeguarding Representative, and shares information from training with the local leader in England as and when the need arises.

4.1.2 The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament have a provincial safeguarding policy that has been in operation since November 2016. The policy highlights that *"in the province of UK/I we do not provide services specifically for children. However, our establishments are open to the public and therefore we are committed to ensuring the best possible practice in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults"*. Within the policy there are a set of appropriate standards that are akin to the Eight National Safeguarding Standards and the definition of abuse is outlined. The safeguarding policy highlights the scope of the policy and key safeguarding

³ A specialist regulator focused on enabling positive change in social work.
<https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/>

roles and responsibilities within the community are provided in detail. There is a code of good behaviour outlined for all members, employees and volunteers and confidentiality is considered within the policy as is the recording and storing of information.

4.1.3 Issues of safeguarding are discussed at the general chapter meetings (every six years) where a new guidebook *Vade Mecum* (Go With Me) has been devised and shared. *Vade mecum* is the congregation's first mandated and agreed upon accompaniment, and is a guidebook for superiors of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament In dealing with "*sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults reserved to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith*", and it is highlighted that upon approval of the guidebook it will be shared throughout the congregation. In September 2024 the protocol for volunteers and possible new Disclosure and Barring⁴ applications were a topic on the agenda at a meeting of the local community in Liverpool.

4.1.4 The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament are providing ministry in city centres Shrines and are routinely exposed to potential safeguarding risks linked to issues of deprivation, poverty, homelessness and substance misuse, and to mitigate some of these risks there are camera systems installed at the entryways and public areas as a deterrent to abusive behaviours. Confessionals whilst having separate rooms for clergy and parishioners, have panelled glass doors offering some further safety to all involved.

4.1.5 The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament have developed a community culture between members, employees and volunteers who share the practical responsibilities of day-to-day safeguarding and risk management and respond as a group, which supports the community whose members recognise their own increasing vulnerability linked to the fragility of aging. Whilst not being familiar with the pastoral standards document "*Integrity in Ministry*,⁵" a members focus group highlighted that the community understand the principles of safe ministerial

⁴ Disclosure and Barring Service: The UK government agency that handles criminal record checks. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service/about>

⁵ Integrity in Ministry is a code of conduct for Religious engaged in ministry in the Catholic Church in England and Wales

conduct, also as previously mentioned a code of good conduct is available within the safeguarding policy.

4.1.6 The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in preparation for the audit have drafted a simple development plan, highlighting that through the self-assessment processes the congregation have self-identified further work is needed in standards 7 and 8 of the National Safeguarding Standards. Actions identified on the plan are aligned to the Eight National Safeguarding Standards and will support the congregation to improve safeguarding practice.

Areas for Development

4.1.7 The safeguarding policy for the province whilst appropriate is specific to children, however with minimal alterations could be expanded to include vulnerable adults. The policy is however almost ten years old and there is no evidence this has been reviewed, although included within the policy is a plan to review it every three years. Furthermore, the information contained within the policy is specific to Ireland, including the standards and links to local resources or international charities where Irish website addresses are provided. The contact details for the local representative again are specific to Ireland and therefore inaccurate for the province. It is essential that the safeguarding policy is reviewed as a matter of urgency, that correct details are provided for the local representative and that any links to resources are specific to the province in England with consideration to including the details of the RLSS. The safeguarding policy would also benefit from being aligned to the eight National Safeguarding Standard in England and Wales. Once updated the safeguarding policy needs to be made publicly available.

4.1.8 There are four Trustees who are all members of the Congregation, and include the local leader, and one member who is based in Ireland. While there have been meetings between senior leaders and members of the Trustees, there have been no formal Trustee meetings during the last 12 months. The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament are therefore not compliant with the requirements of the Charity Commission who expect that Trustee meetings take place at a minimum twice a year. It is also recommended that safeguarding is a standing agenda item on meetings of the Trustees. In the absence of Trustee meetings, the local leader organises and oversees the running of the shrine, and meets with the provincial lead and safeguarding lead on an ad hoc basis.

4.1.9 The Congregation would benefit from further promotion of the pastoral standards document “Integrity in Ministry” and the code of conduct outlined in the safeguarding policy, to ensure that standards of safe ministry are fully understood and practice is compliant with the expectations of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

4.1.10 The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament need to expand the aforementioned development plan and should align this to the Eight National Safeguarding Standards, to include self- identified areas for improvement and the recommendations from this audit.

4.1.11 There are two members of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament based in the province managing a parish for an English Diocese and accessing their training through the diocese. However, despite a close proximity to the two members, the local leader, safeguarding lead and provincial leader based within the province are not congregationally responsible for these members. To ensure effective oversight of safeguarding practice, it is recommended that consideration is given to the provincial structures within the congregation and what responsibility more local leaders should have of the safeguarding practise for members in closer proximity to enable more effective oversight.

4.1.12 Whilst there is a provincial safeguarding lead with extensive knowledge of safeguarding from previous roles, the safeguarding lead is not based in England and Wales and has extensive responsibilities within other roles. As such it is recommended that consideration is given to the recruitment of a safeguarding lead within England and Wales, who can offer more hands-on support to the congregation in England given the complexities and risks faced by members.

Graded: Early Progress

4.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church’s Safeguarding Message

Strengths

4.2.1 Statements of safeguarding developed by the congregation can be observed throughout the physical building in the Shrine, the details for the safeguarding

representative are provided at the entry to the Shrine and in some public spaces. In addition, there are posters highlighting that verbal and physical abuse will not be tolerated and that the police will be contacted if necessary. The details of support services being held in the Shrine and provided by the Samaritans⁶ are also displayed, as are the contact details for support services such as Alcoholics Anonymous. Safeguarding is also referenced on the congregational website.

4.2.2 Within the members focus group, it was reported that discussions of safeguarding can often take place informally during mealtimes. The local leader has shared that within pastoral teachings safety and safeguarding are often referenced and that previously statements have been provided to parishioners in Ireland in respect of anti-social behaviour considering practical issues such as not providing money to the homeless. The local leader is considering the use of similar statements for England.

Areas for Development

4.2.3 Whilst there is evidence of safeguarding communications to parishioners, there is limited evidence of senior leaders or the safeguarding lead sharing safeguarding communications to members. Safeguarding is referenced on the website for the province; however this is clearly intended for an Irish audience, and the contact persons and police information are for Irish services, with the exception of one contact number for a counselling support service in the UK which unfortunately is out of date for the service. As such, the provincial website needs to be reviewed with consideration to the needs of the congregation and parishioners within England.

4.2.4 Progress in this area could be achieved by the development of a communications plan considering the needs of members, volunteers and all those who access the Shrine for worship or group activities. The communications plan should consider what communications need to be shared, the best methods of sharing communications and with what frequency, and how often communications should be reviewed to ensure that they are up to date and relevant to the province.

Graded: Early Progress

⁶ Samaritans are a registered charity offering emotional support to those in need.

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

Strengths

4.3.1 Within the safeguarding policy is guidance to all members of the congregation, employees and volunteers in respect of *"receiving allegations and disclosures of abuse"* and it is advised that the person receiving the allegation should *"be patient, listen carefully and actively, and create a safe environment in which the person feels able to speak openly."* The safeguarding policy acknowledges that it is difficult for people to come forward with disclosures of harm and where information is received the recipient is advised *"to stay calm and take seriously what the person is saying and reassure them that they have done the right thing"*.

4.3.2 The guidance provided is of a good standard and directs those receiving the disclosure to be mindful of their reactions and emotional responses and advises that where possible notes should be taken during the conversation. Community members are advised to share concerns with the local safeguarding representative, and it was confirmed in the members focus group that they would comply with the policy and share any concerns with the local leader.

4.3.3 The Trustees and local leader have confirmed that financial resources have been made available to victims of harm to receive appropriate support, and whilst outside the timeframe of this audit, there is evidence of the provincial leader offering public support to victims and survivors on the website, acknowledging non-recent harm that has been caused by members of the congregation, and thanking the services within Ireland who have completed safeguarding reviews of the congregation. Similarly, and again outside the scope of this audit there is evidence of the provincial lead supporting a survivor of non-recent harm and issuing an appropriate apology letter acknowledging the pain and suffering caused by abuse and offering to meet with the survivor.

Areas for Development

4.3.4 The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament have failed to respond effectively to a current allegation which has been received via the RLSS of non-recent harm. Whilst the local leader and safeguarding lead for the province have responded to the RLSS, albeit with a delay, there has been no response from the provincial lead,

and therefore no resolution to the concerns raised. This has caused significant pain and upset to the survivor who continues to work with the RLSS at this time. It is imperative that significant efforts are made by the provincial leader to liaise with the RLSS and seek a resolution that is satisfactory. Upon resolution of the complaint an internal review should be completed of how better to respond to those who report harm. Lessons learned should be shared with the congregation.

4.3.5 The provincial leader and local leader should engage in bespoke training to support appropriate responses to victims of harm.

4.3.6 The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament should develop a complaints policy to include appropriate time frames for responding to complaints and ensure that the details of the RLSS and the CSSA are included within the policy.

Graded: Below Basic

4.4 Standard 4 Effective Management of Allegations and Concerns

Strengths

4.4.1 As previously mentioned within the safeguarding policy there is a procedure to follow if a disclosure or allegation is received, which provides guidance to all members who may receive an allegation or disclosure and more specific information to the local safeguarding representative and designated liaison person also known as the safeguarding lead. The local safeguarding representative is responsible for informing the designated liaison person of any allegations or concerns, and providing them all recordings, and in the event of an emergency liaising with the relevant statutory authorities. The designated liaison person is responsible for collating information and ensuring that procedures for addressing the allegation or disclosure is explained to the person raising the concern.

4.4.2 The safeguarding policy provides guidance to all members in respect of record keeping, in which it is recommended that wherever possible and practical notes of discussion are taken during the conversation, and where this is not possible, notes should be made as soon as possible and always before the end of

the day. It is advised that the following data be recorded, time, date, and location of when and where the allegation or disclosure was received and also, time date and location of where the alleged incidents occurred. It is highlighted to the person receiving the allegation to *"not select what is to be recorded- a detail which may seem irrelevant may be in fact significant."* There is also guidance on recording suspicions of abuse, and it is advised that "full details are recorded about the circumstances which led to the suspicions". All original records and rough notes must be immediately passed to the designated liaison person.

4.4.3 The local leader has shared that whilst there have been no concerns or disputes between members of the community that could be considered bullying, or indicative of a safeguarding concern, in the event that there were concerns he would listen to all parties and make judgements on the information provided, giving consideration to the circumstances of the problem and utilising the skills of listening and analysing accumulative information. The safeguarding lead has advised that she would expect to be informed of any concerns that were tantamount to bullying and she would make efforts to complete in person visits to individuals concerned to complete any necessary investigations.

4.4.4 On a practical level focus group participants have shared that the local leader is responsible for safeguarding and any concerns would be shared firstly with the local leader and if appropriate with the lay safeguarding representative. If there were any disputes between the community members and the local superior, members shared that they would feel confident to contact the provincial lead, it was also highlighted to members that the RLSS could be contacted to offer support.

4.4.5 The local leader has contacted the police on previous occasions when necessary in line with safety concerns and the need to remove individuals who pose a risk to others being in the Shrine.

Areas for Development

4.4.6 There are concerns that a current allegation of non-recent abuse has not been effectively responded to, ultimately impacting the grading in this standard. Furthermore, there have been numerous incidents that have occurred at the Shrine some of which have been reported to the police, however some have not, which appears to be linked to the ability of members of the congregation and members of the public to manage and resolve incidents safely. That said, members of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament have shared their feelings of vulnerability

and whilst most of this is in respect of what happens outside of the Shrine, there is also an awareness of risks within the building, some of which the Congregation are attempting to deter by security cameras. It is recommended that the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament report all incidents of anti-social behaviour to the police, provincial safeguarding lead and Trustees so that informed decisions can be made about any measures needed to mitigate risks to members of the congregation and members of the public.

4.4.7 Whilst it is reported by the local leader that the provincial lead makes the decision on when to contact the Charity Commission in respect of serious incident reporting, as the Trustees are equally responsible a clear process is needed for escalating safeguarding concerns efficiently.

Graded: Basic

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

Strengths

4.5.1 The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament do not have any recent experience of, and therefore there is no practice evidence available that would enable a direct assessment of the management or support of a member who might be the subject of an allegation or concern. However, the document *Vade Mecum* has been developed and is a comprehensive guide to superiors to be used when “*there is a case against a religious member who has allegedly committed a crime of sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable adults*” and there is consideration throughout to canon law.

4.5.2 Within *Vade Mecum* are templates of letters that are to be used should there be the requirement to seek “administrative leave” which appears to be removal from ministry whilst a preliminary investigation is undertaken. In the template it is clear that those accused of causing harm whilst subject to restrictions will continue to receive support including sustenance and benefits as entitled as a member of the religious congregation, and that a delegate will be appointed to assist with sustenance and social assistance.

4.5.3 The local leader has shared that responses to members accused of harm will be individualised based on the concerns raised, the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament do have residential facilities that could be used to support a member and also offer companionship whilst reducing the risks of further concerns or allegations arising. The safeguarding lead has advised that whilst outside the timeframe for this audit the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament have previously consulted with forensic psychologists to identify appropriate support for members of the congregation who have required extra support.

4.5.4 The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament have established relationships with Canon lawyers, who would be consulted to ensure that any allegations were managed in line with Canon law expectations.

4.5.5 The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament are overseeing the implementation of lay safety management plans on behalf of their local dioceses. It has been reported by one lay respondent that the congregation have been welcoming of him and his experience with the Blessed Sacrament has been wholly positive, he is able to access masses and there has been flexibility in respect of the activities that he can engage with and there is a “real sense of belonging”. The respondent has shared that he is happy with how his information has been managed and shared within the congregation.

Areas for Development

4.5.6 The local leader has extensive commitments to the congregation that impacts upon his presence within the Shrine, and so it is recommended that the local leader share with other members of the congregation the requirements of safety management plans, so that safe supervision can be provided to those subject to the plans in his absence. The local leader and all members of the congregation would therefore benefit from training in respect of managing a safety plan.

4.5.7 The local leader needs to ensure that he has a thorough understanding of any licence conditions for respondents to ensure that risk management is fully understood and complied with, particularly if there is consideration to organising inclusive events of more than one respondent.

Graded: Firm Progress

4.6 Standard 6 Robust Human Resource Management

Strengths

4.6.1 The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament are receiving new members and use a formation itinerary known as *"Follow Me"* which has sections for Aspirancy, Postulancy, Novitiate, Scholastic, P4 and Permanent Formation Level 1. Within the document there is guidance for new members throughout the process and guidance for formation directors also known as formators. Members of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament can become brothers or priests, and either role can hold any office within the congregation.

4.6.2 The local leader for the congregation in England is the newly appointed novice master for the congregation, and it has been approved that the Liverpool Shrine will become an "indication" *"meaning that in canon law the novice facility in Liverpool is not a canonically erected novice community, but solely for the purpose of accommodating candidate(s) for a two-year (2) period"*. The local leader acknowledges that the novice facility will become a priority for the congregation and as such his responsibilities and commitments may need to adjust.

4.6.3 The local leader has completed DBS certificates through the RLSS for the members in England and there are two volunteers who also have up to date DBS certificates. The local leader assumes responsibilities for overseas visitors and advises that police checks are always completed, and a testimony of suitability is sought from the provincial superior. The priests who are managing a parish in Shrewsbury have attended training with the local diocese.

4.6.4 The local leader meets with new volunteers and advises them of what is expected and provides an opportunity for volunteers to ask questions. The local leader has developed a volunteer agreement which advises volunteers of what is expected of them, and also what they can expect from the congregation. The volunteer agreement asks for a signature and highlights that any complaints will be facilitated by the local superior. The agreement is clear that it is not a legally binding document. The local superior and all members of the shrine have highlighted their appreciation of the work of volunteers.

Areas for Development

4.6.5 The local leader has Garda clearance from his previous role in Ireland but does not have a DBS and has reported that there is no one within the congregation who can approve his documents. A DBS for the local leader is needed this needed as a matter of urgency and discussion with the RLSS is recommended to resolve any difficulties.

4.6.6 Whilst the local leader completes DBS vetting there is no procedure for the safer recruitment of employees, volunteers or new members and so it is recommended that a safer recruitment policy is developed and ratified and subsequently implemented for anyone working for the congregation. The safer recruitment policy should include the roles that will require DBS clearance to ensure any ad-hoc practices by volunteers, for example supporting the congregation to provide the Eucharist to vulnerable groups in their own homes is subject to sufficient vetting. The safer recruitment policy should also consider who can provide a reference, and how reference checks will be completed and by whom.

4.6.7 The local leader has described safeguarding practices within south Asia from where many new members are joining are different to England and Wales and as such the congregation need to develop robust policies for the recruitment of overseas members to include expectations of training and an induction to safeguarding expectations and practices in England and Wales.

4.6.8 The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament need a safeguarding complaints policy and whistleblowing policy. A Complaints Policy should highlight to members of the public how they can make a complaint, what the process will be and what time frames responses will be provided in. Consideration should be given to publication of the complaints policy on the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament's provincial website as well as providing hard copies on display in buildings owned or operated by the congregation.

4.6.9 The provincial safeguarding lead should have oversight of safer recruitment practices and training for all new members, volunteers and employees and will need to be central to any risk assessments for candidates with a blemished DBS. Similarly, Minutes of meetings by the Trustees should include oversight of safer recruitment practices, to include DBS and training compliance. The local leader has acknowledged that a blemished DBS policy and procedure would be necessary if

there concerns. The Trustees should have oversight of any decision making regarding a blemished DBS.

Graded: Early Progress

4.7 Standard 7: Training and Support for Safeguarding

Strengths

4.7.1 The provincial safeguarding lead has reported attending extensive safeguarding training on an annual basis and has a professional background in social work. The local leader also has a professional background in social work and has completed safeguarding training whilst being a member of the congregation.

4.7.2 Members of the congregation who manage a parish are receiving support and have attended training from the local diocese.

4.7.3 The local leader has acknowledged the need to prioritise effective safeguarding training for all members and volunteers and has tentatively suggested a 12-month period to ensure effective compliance and to liaise with senior leaders. There are currently no employees with safeguarding responsibilities working with vulnerable groups.

Areas for Development

4.7.4 The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament's safeguarding policy highlights that *"whilst the congregation do not provide services specifically for children, the establishment are open to the public and therefore we are committed to ensuring the best possible practise in safeguarding children and vulnerable adult's"*. However, there is a significant training deficit for members, which is not aligned with the training expectations of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

4.7.5 The congregation are overseeing the implementation of safety management plans and therefore all members should access the appropriate training in addition to advanced safeguarding training.

4.7.6 All volunteers and employees in line with the potential risks and vulnerable groups at the Shrine should complete basic safeguarding training.

4.7.7 The provincial safeguarding lead should perform a skills assessment of all volunteers currently in roles with safeguarding responsibilities. The leadership and Trustees need to assure themselves of the capabilities of all individuals ministering, working and volunteering for the congregation and a central training list should be kept and reviewed.

Graded: Basic

4.8 Standard 8 Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Strengths

4.8.1 Through preparation for this audit the local leader has identified further work needed to improve safeguarding practice and has devised a simple development plan to address both standards 7 and 8 and also to improve communications with the RLSS at local level. The local leader is also committed to implementing any recommendations from the CSSA audit.

Areas for development

4.8.2 There is no recorded oversight by the leadership or the Trustees of the safeguarding practise of the congregation in England, and whilst based in Scotland the provincial leader has been contacted but has not engaged in this audit. The provincial safeguarding lead, also based in Scotland, has engaged in this audit but there is limited evidence of the impact of this role in developing safeguarding practise. Furthermore, there has been limited engagement by the provincial leader with the RLSS, which is of concern as there remains an allegation that has not been effectively addressed and cannot be resolved by either the local leader or provincial safeguarding lead who have both evidently responded to the RLSS.

4.8.4 Developments in this standard will be to create a safeguarding action plan, establishing a small number of specific key performance indicators which will support the Trustees to have an overall understanding of safeguarding practice

and enable regular oversight of progress in all Eight National Safeguarding Standards.

Graded: Basic

5. Summary of Overall Findings

5.1 The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament are predominantly based in a city centre and have been exposed to significant risks, and so it is essential, as it is with any Church body, that safeguarding practice is of a good standard in order to protect the public and those in ministry, employment or volunteering. However, before this can be achieved the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament have several areas to address to ensure effective compliance with the eight National Safeguarding Standards.

5.2 All members, employees and volunteers must receive the appropriate training and vetting, and an assessment is needed of the skills and capabilities of those in key safeguarding roles. The safeguarding policy needs to be updated to ensure that it is fit for purpose in the province, and other essential policies including the safer recruitment policy and complaints policy need to be developed and embedded.

5.3 The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament have been subject to a review of safeguarding practices from The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI), a province that shares the same leadership as England and Wales. The 2016 review found that the congregation were not fully compliant with the safeguarding standards in Ireland and a series of recommendations were made, the sentiments of which are echoed in this report in relation to the creation of safer environments and training and communication, and so it is essential that any learning or good practice is embedded throughout the entire congregation with consideration to any differences in the safeguarding standards.

5.4 The work of the CSSA is informed by the experiences of those who have been abused by their contact with the Catholic Church, and it is disappointing that despite previous public commitments to survivors of abuse from the leadership of

the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, an allegation of abuse has not been appropriately responded to and this must be rectified immediately.

6. Recommendations

6.1 To support development in identified areas, the following recommendations are made:

Immediate

- The provincial leader must respond to the RLSS email regarding an allegation of non-recent abuse

Within 3 months

- The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament should utilise the skills and experience available within the RLSS to consider existing policy updates and the development of new policies and overall safeguarding practices
- A safeguarding action plans needs to be developed and aligned with the eight National Safeguarding standards
- A DBS check for the local leader should be completed. In the interim, liaison should take place with the RLSS to discuss any necessary mitigations in their work.
- Trustees should meet at a minimum twice a year, and minutes of meetings to be formally recorded and include safeguarding as a standing agenda item
- Ensure correct details for the local leader are on the provincial website
- Ensure correct information is available for local services within England
- The details of safety management plans to be shared with all members who are overseeing their implementation, either during mass or at other times
- The local leader needs to ensure that he has a thorough understanding of any licence conditions for respondents
- The provincial safeguarding lead should perform a skills assessment of all volunteers currently in roles with safeguarding responsibilities.

- The leadership and Trustees need to assure themselves of the capabilities of all individuals ministering, working and volunteering for the congregation and a central training list should be kept and reviewed.

Within 6 months

- The provincial leader and local leader should engage in bespoke training to support appropriate responses to victims of harm
- All volunteers to complete basic safeguarding training
- All members to complete advanced safeguarding training and training in the implementation of safety management plans
- Update or develop a new safeguarding policy, that is inclusive of vulnerable adults and the province within England, ensuring correct contact detail of the local representative
- Safeguarding policy to be made publicly available
- The pastoral standards document “Integrity in Ministry” and the code of conduct outlined in the safeguarding policy to be shared with all members and to be fully understood
- Develop a safeguarding action plan that is aligned to the Eight National Safeguarding Standards in England and Wales
- Consideration to be given to provincial structures and what responsibility more local leaders should have for members in closer proximity to ensure effective oversight of the practise of members
- Consideration to be given to the recruitment of a safeguarding lead within England and Wales, who can offer more hands-on support to the congregation in England given the complexities and risks faced by members.
- Develop a communications plan that considers
 - the needs of members and local leaders
 - the needs of volunteers
 - the needs of parishioners
 - what communications need to be shared
 - the best methods of sharing communications

- the frequency of sharing communication
 - review communications to ensure that they are up to date and relevant to the province.
- Report all incidents of anti-social behaviour to the police, provincial safeguarding lead and Trustees
- Safer recruitment policy to be developed for employees, volunteers and new members, with consideration to
 - clear role descriptions
 - the DBS requirement for each role
 - who can provide a reference
 - how references can be provided
 - how references will be vetted and by whom
 - testimonials of suitability for members
 - training expectations
 - induction processes
 - self-declaration of previous offences
 - blemished DBS process to include oversight from provincial safeguarding lead and Trustees

Within 12 months

- Develop an induction process for overseas members
 - include expectations of training prior to arrival in the UK
 - an induction to local cultural safeguarding expectations and practices

7. Arrangements for follow-up

7.1 In accordance with the CSSA pathway for RLG with an overall grading of Early Progress (or lower), the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament will be requested

to produce an action plan to implement the recommendations of this report. The RLSS will be advised of the outcome and requested to support the Congregation accordingly. The CSSA will request an update from the Congregation in six months and will undertake a re-audit after a minimum one year period subject to progress made. If the CSSA becomes aware of a significant Safeguarding concern or allegation in the intervening period, then an earlier audit may be required.

8. Appendix

Evidence provided

- Self-Assessment
- Notification of report of harm
- Notification of report of harm
- [Redacted] Email
- RLSS0187/24
- Funding for Therapy email
- Therapy Proposal
- The Gathering 2025: Team reference request
- [Redacted] Police require your assistance
- Safeguarding Plan [date redacted]
- The Formation
- Novice Rationale 2025
- Draft Apology
- Initial bills of cost
- Letter to [redacted]
- Consent Order
- 2323461 Invoice
- Vade mecum
- Provincial Safeguarding Policy
- Safeguarding Posters
- Lay safety Management plans x 2