

Capuchin Franciscans of Great Britain

Baseline Audit Report
August 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 This is the baseline audit of the safeguarding arrangements for the Delegation of Great Britain of The Order of Friars Minor (Capuchin) (known hereafter as ‘the Order’), an international Roman Catholic Religious Order of men (friars) founded in Italy in 1528. The Order has maintained its essential character throughout the centuries. Friars live in communities, observing the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ. They live under vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, in accordance with the Order's own Rules (Constitutions and Ordinances). The General Minister's headquarters are in Rome where he is assisted by a General Council, governing the Order worldwide. The Order is made up of Provinces, Custodies and Delegations of which the Delegation of Great Britain is one. Responsibility for the Order in Great Britain rests with the Provincial Delegate and his Council. The Delegation is under the constitutional jurisdiction of the Province of Ireland. The Parishes are entrusted to the Order's care by the local bishop. Worldwide there are 9,731 friars in 1,542 houses spanning 117 countries. The Delegation of Great Britain numbers 25 friars living and working in four fraternities across England; Chester, Erith, Oxford and Durham and occasionally in other locations.¹

1.2 The friars who continue to be active in ministry perform several very varied roles within their communities including working as parish priests, providing ministry to schools, prisons, working in homeless centres and cafes and other charitable enterprises such as charity shops. Their roles require that they are up to date with current safeguarding practice and understand how this translates to the work they are doing. For those that work as parish priests, safeguarding support comes not only from the Order but from their local diocesan Parish Safeguarding Representatives (PSRs)² who provide a direct link into the diocesan safeguarding co-ordinators³. Those working in prisons, schools and other organisations follow the

¹ Taken from OFM (Capuchin) GB Charitable Trust Annual Report and Accounts

² Parish Safeguarding Representatives are trained volunteers who provide assistance and support to their parish in safeguarding matters

³ Diocesan safeguarding coordinators ensure that the diocese complies with the eight National Safeguarding Standards and have responsibility for the management of victims and survivors, all

safeguarding requirements of the Order but act in accordance with the individual safeguarding policies of their place of ministry. The friars live in four separate fraternities in houses within their respective communities. All fraternities have a guardian who oversees the running of the house and are a point of contact for the Provincial Delegate and provide leadership for the resident friars. The Provincial Delegate visits the fraternities every five to six weeks and in addition carries out a formal visitation annually where an audit which includes compliance with safeguarding practice is undertaken and recommendations are made. Progress on these is measured at the following year's audit. The friars living in the houses are all active and none have additional care needs. There are three friars who now reside in a local Care Quality Commission (CQC)⁴ registered care home close to the Erith Friary (Kent) who are visited regularly to ensure that their needs are being met. One friar with care needs has returned to live with a family member. The friars live in an enclosed space but are not an enclosed order. At Erith there are infirmary rooms with en-suite facilities should these be needed but no infirmarian role. The infirmary rooms can be accessed by General Practitioners and district nurses, or palliative care teams should this be required as they are separate from the main accommodation. These rooms are also used for family and friends who may visit.

1.3 The CSSA assess Religious Life Groups against a categorisation scheme based of the safeguarding risk that is likely to be associated with their activities and size, from Level 1, a small community with minimal outreach and no known safeguarding concerns known as an Apostolic or an Enclosed Order, Level 2, a medium sized community with some outreach with vulnerable populations and/or providing some Diocesan activities such as a Parish Priest and 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 Order were audited at Level 2.

safeguarding allegations and respondents, the delivery and monitoring of training and Safer Recruitment

⁴ The Care Quality Commission was established in 2009 to regulate and inspect the quality of healthcare provision in the UK

1.4 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 eight national safeguarding standards⁵ in such a way that reflects their uniqueness.

2. Methodology

2.1 The CSSA notified the Order their intention to audit on 9 January 2025. An information request was made the same day that included the provision of a self-assessment document with an agreed completion date of 19 March 2025. An initial pre-audit meeting was held between the CSSA analyst and the safeguarding lead on 27 January 2025 to discuss the audit requirements and a scheduled date for the audit of 6 May 2025 was agreed. A further email confirming the arrangements was sent by the CSSA analyst to the safeguarding lead on 5 April 2025.

2.2 In advance of the audit the Order submitted a Level 2 self-assessment tool providing information and supporting evidence on their compliance with the eight national safeguarding standards and their progress in the implementation of them.

2.2 Information provided within the self-assessment was analysed by the CSSA, alongside additional documentary evidence provided by the community together with that provided on the community's website⁶. Further confirmation of engagement was sought from the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS)⁷ and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark. This evidence was assessed

⁵ Full details of the eight standards and underpinning sub standards are available here: The Eight National Safeguarding Standards (catholicsafeguarding.org.uk)

⁶ [Capuchin Franciscans of Great Britain](#)

⁷ 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.

against a bespoke Level 2 Maturity Matrix⁸ to arrive at ratings for each standard and a combined overall grade.

2.4 The following methodology was used to complete the audit

2.4.1 Interviews were held on 6 May with the following:

- The Provincial Delegate (also acting safeguarding lead)
- The Trustees
- The PSR for the parish in Erith
- A face-to-face focus group of the friars in Erith
- Focus groups via Microsoft Teams⁹ with friars from Chester and Oxford

An additional interview was held with the guardian of the house in Durham on 7 May via Microsoft Teams.

2.4.2 A comprehensive document review was carried out of all supporting evidence listed in the Appendix to this report.

2.4.3 No new allegations or concerns have been reported to, or about the Order within the previous 12 months therefore it was not possible to examine casework during this audit or assess some aspects of direct safeguarding practices.

3. Audit grading

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

⁸ [APPENDIX-5-LEVEL-2-MATURITY-MATRIX-FINAL.docx](#)

⁹ Microsoft Teams is a platform developed by Microsoft that supports video conferencing.

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 OFM(Capuchins) have been graded as Exemplary.

Overall grading	Exemplary
Standard 1 – Safeguarding is embedded in the Church body’s leadership, governance, ministry and culture	Exemplary
Standard 2 – Communicating the Church’s safeguarding message	Comprehensive assurance
Standard 3 – Engaging with and caring for those who report having been harmed	Comprehensive assurance
Standard 4 – Effective management of allegations and concerns	Exemplary
Standard 5 – Management and support of subjects of allegations and concerns (respondents)	Exemplary
Standard 6 – Robust human resource management	Exemplary
Standard 7 – Training and support for safeguarding	Exemplary
Standard 8 – Quality assurance and continuous Improvement	Exemplary

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 Order is led by the Provincial Delegate who has been in post for the past three years. This is the fourth time the Provincial Delegate has held this role and between posts he has gained a vast amount of safeguarding knowledge and experience working for the Conference of Religious¹⁰ adapting the Australian document 'Integrity in Ministry'¹¹ for use in the United Kingdom, advising on safeguarding matters and attending conferences and national inquiries. This extensive insight into safeguarding has been a significant advantage to the Order as they have established their own safeguarding ethos, strategy, policies and codes of behaviour. Under normal circumstances the Provincial Delegate is supported in the management of the safeguarding agenda by a designated safeguarding lead. At the time of audit, the previous lay designated safeguarding lead had just retired, and the Provincial Delegate had stepped into the role whilst recruitment of a replacement was underway to ensure the continuity of safeguarding management and oversight. The Order have a clearly written safeguarding policy that reflects the requirements of the eight national safeguarding standards. The policy describes the roles and responsibilities for the leadership team and the friars as well as any staff that may be employed by the Order. In addition to this the 'Capuchin Delegation of Great Britain Administration- A Handbook of Financial Administration and Current Norms' sets out expected standards of behaviour and includes guidance on ensuring the safety of the friars and those they provide ministry for. The Provincial Delegate has set out a clear vision for safeguarding for the Order and this statement is available on the Order's website and includes a commitment to embedding the eight national standards

¹⁰ [Conference of Religious](#)

¹¹ [Integrity in Ministry – Religious Life Safeguarding Service](#)

into safeguarding practice. All policy documents and additional evidence seen supported this vision with the three-year strategic plan detailing the actions required to achieve their aims. This plan is reviewed every six weeks at Provincial Council meetings and progress is reported on to the Trustees by the designated safeguarding lead who is responsible for its implementation.

4.1.2 The Order have five Trustees, two of whom are appointed by the Provincial Delegate and three who are voted into position by the friars, all of whom are religious. The Provincial Delegate is the head of the Trustees. The Provincial Council meet every six weeks and provide the strategic management of the Order. The Trustees are responsible for the oversight of safeguarding and have received Trustee training from the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS) to enable them to fulfil this role. The Trustees have safeguarding as a standing agenda item for their meetings as evidenced by the minutes and any decisions made or changes in policy or practice are shared with the friars at monthly house meetings, annual Chapter of Mats meetings and three yearly Assemblies. The Trustees receive an annual safeguarding report from the designated safeguarding lead providing them with assurance on safeguarding practice including safer recruitment, training and the management of any safeguarding concerns, both current and historical. All Trustees spoken to were aware of their reporting responsibilities to statutory authorities, the RLSS, the CSSA, the Charity Commission and the Order's insurers should a significant safeguarding incident occur in line with their safeguarding policy and with statutory requirements. The Trustees along with the Provincial Delegate work towards creating a positive culture of safeguarding through their messaging to the friars, by ensuring that the friars understand and comply with the systems that have been put in place to safeguard themselves and others, through their scrutiny of training, safer recruitment and by having one to one and group discussions with the friars on a regular basis.

4.1.3 At present the designated safeguarding lead role is being covered by the Provincial Delegate. The Order was, at the time of audit, undergoing discussions with two other Religious Life Groups (RLGs) looking at the possibility of sharing the post between them. This innovation has come about due to the difficulty all three have faced in recruiting an experienced and suitably qualified designated

safeguarding lead into a part time role. The intention is that the individual will act as designated safeguarding lead for the three RLGs sharing their time according to need, based on a memorandum of understanding between all parties. The Provincial Delegate and the Provincial Council value the input of a lay safeguarding expert in this role and appreciate the insight and resilience this brings for the Order.

4.1.4 Integrity in Ministry is a core document that underpins the Order's approach to delivering safeguarding practice that aligns with the eight national safeguarding standards. Adapted from the original Australian document by the current Provincial Delegate, copies have been given to all friars along with the Order's safeguarding statement and policy and all have signed to say that have read and understood the content of them. All houses have hard copies of safeguarding resources for the friars to refer to and which can support them in their ministry including information on RLSS, Safe Spaces¹², local authority services and charitable organisations that specialise in safeguarding issues including domestic abuse or child safeguarding. There is an awareness of safeguarding risks, and mitigations have been put in place to prevent any issues arising, for example the public areas of the church and friary in Erith have Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) monitoring and there are notices making people aware of this. Children are not allowed in the friary or church areas unless they are supervised by their parents or a responsible adult. There is a separate area where 'Little Church' services for children are held under the supervision of accredited parish volunteers¹³, and these are also monitored by CCTV. All areas where priests may meet parishioners are open to view with glass panelled doors in place. These actions have been taken in collaboration with the PSR and the diocese. The Provincial Council review and update the risk register at their meetings and share changes in practice with the friars. Lay people are not allowed in the other fraternity houses and the parish churches in these areas make their own safeguarding arrangements to mitigate any identified risks. The Order

¹² 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

¹³ To be accredited, parish volunteers must have up to date Disclosure and Barring Certificates and references of suitability for the role. This is the responsibility of the PSR.

have established positive working relationships with their respective dioceses and with RLSS, and all friars are encouraged to seek advice and work proactively with these external organisations to ensure high safeguarding standards in their practice.

Areas for development

4.1.5. No areas for development were identified at audit

Graded: Exemplary

4.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church's safeguarding message

Strengths

4.2.1 The sharing of safeguarding messages is a key component of the safeguarding plan. Safeguarding messages are shared with the friars via the house, Chapter and Assembly meetings. A programme of safeguarding sessions is held at Chapter meetings created by the Provincial Delegate and designed to ensure that the friars are kept up to date with current safeguarding practice and can also reflect and self-evaluate their own knowledge on topics as they complete the sessions. All sessions are evaluated at point of delivery for their effectiveness in communicating safeguarding messages.

4.2.2 The Order work collaboratively with the RLSS and with diocesan PSRs to ensure that all messaging is in line with best practice and is current. The Order have a safeguarding information board in the main public entrance of the church buildings and posters and information sources are also in situ throughout all the different areas of these buildings, including the corridors, meeting spaces and community hall. Information sources include the Order's safeguarding statement, the details of the Order's designated safeguarding lead as well as information on how to contact RLSS and Safe Spaces. Diocesan safeguarding information is also

on display on an adjacent notice board and periodically throughout the building. In addition, there are notices reminding adults that children must not be unaccompanied in the buildings and in those areas affected there are notices informing people of the presence of CCTV monitors. Private areas of the friary are clearly marked with notices. The services held at Erith are sometimes screened live for parishioners to attend virtually. The areas where people can sit and not be filmed are clearly marked, however the cameras point towards the altar and would capture people as they returned from receiving communion. The Provincial Delegate will discuss this with the PSR and ensure that parishioners are fully aware of the risk to their privacy.

Areas for development

4.2.3 The Order have worked hard to ensure that all key safeguarding messages are shared with the friars and with the communities they serve. The next step in this process is to evaluate the effectiveness of their communication with the recipients. This will help with assurance that the key messages are being heard and inform their future communication plans.

Graded: Comprehensive assurance

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

Strengths

4.3.1 The Order have formal processes in place for those who reach out to say they have been harmed. These processes have not had to be used by the Order in the past 12 months. All friars have undertaken training in how to engage with and care for those who report harm and have access to support from the Provincial Delegate, the designated safeguarding lead and the RLSS. In addition, the parish priests work very closely with the diocesan PSRs who provide practical support in the management of a disclosure. Any disclosures of harm would be shared with the Provincial Delegate and the Trustees and would be discussed at an

extraordinary meeting should this be required. The Provincial Delegate would work with the RLSS, or diocese dependent on the source of the allegation to ensure that the person reporting harm is provided with all the support they need in terms of counselling and access to any additional services they might need. There is a recognition that harm may occur within the Order and all friars have access to support from their house guardian, the Provincial Delegate and other Trustees should they need to raise a concern. There is a whistleblowing policy within the safeguarding policy that describes the actions that should be taken in this event.

4.3.2 The Order proactively reach out to those who may have been harmed through providing the contact details for the designated safeguarding lead and the Provincial Delegate on their website and through their promotion of additional organisations that work with victim survivors such as RLSS and Safe Spaces. Posters are in situ in all public places that have these details plus those of the respective diocesan PSRs and safeguarding coordinators.

4.3.3 The friars have not had the opportunity to learn from those who have reported harm directly however the Provincial Delegate has experience in this area that is shared with them and informs the safeguarding sessions that have been created. The Order utilise the training on offer from RLSS which covers how to support those who make a disclosure.

Areas for development

4.3.4 The Provincial Council and designated safeguarding lead should consider how they could broaden the experience of the friars through engaging with survivors of abuse who could be invited to speak with the friars. In addition, sharing the learning from the experiences of other RLGs would help the friars develop their skills in how victim survivors are supported to make a disclosure of harm and inform their own practice should the situation arise.

Graded: Comprehensive assurance

4.4 Standard 4 Effective management of allegations and concerns

Strengths

4.4.1 The Order have clear processes within the safeguarding policy that must be followed in the event of allegations being raised. All friars have undertaken training in the management of an allegation and were able to demonstrate that they understood the actions they would be required to take in the event of either witnessing a safeguarding concern or having one disclosed to them. The friars were able to describe different types of abuse or harm that they might witness and were aware of their reporting responsibilities including the need to take notes that record the words of the individual or reflect their observations in their own words. All friars were able to articulate who they would need to report their concerns to depending on the setting they were in including those working with charitable organisations and those working in schools and prisons. They spoke of how concerns about the friars would be for the order to manage and how lay concerns would be managed with the support of the PSR through the diocese. They also demonstrated the need to summon help from the Police in the event of immediate risk of actual harm.

4.4.2 The safeguarding policy details the roles and responsibilities of the leadership as well as the friars in the event of a safeguarding incident or allegation. The Trustees were able to articulate their reporting responsibilities to statutory authorities, CSSA and the Charity Commission, and were aware of the need to work collaboratively with statutory authorities and other safeguarding organisations including RLSS and the respective dioceses to ensure that any allegation is managed in an open and transparent way. They also demonstrated the need for any individual witnessing or receiving an allegation of harm to receive support and as leaders make themselves available to provide a de-brief and organise additional counselling if required. Any allegation or safeguarding incident reported to the Order would be discussed by the Trustees and they take full responsibility for the ongoing management of the issue, led by the Provincial Delegate. The Trustees discuss all low-level concerns that might be raised by the friars and make recommendations to address any identified issues. The Trustees ensure that all

practice is in line with Canon law and have access to civil and canon lawyers if required. Any actions taken because of any concern raised are evaluated for their effectiveness and any learning from the whole process is shared with the friars.

4.4.3 The Order have not had any allegations made against them in the previous 12 months and have no ongoing cases. The Trustees hold an archive for deceased friars that has been independently audited by the Society of Jesus (Jesuits)¹⁴ at their request to ensure that nothing had been missed that needed action. All safeguarding records are kept in a locked cabinet in the office of the Provincial Delegate and are managed in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)¹⁵.

Areas for development

4.4.4 No areas for development were identified at audit.

Graded: Exemplary

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

Strengths

4.5.1 The Order have two friars who are subjects of safeguarding plans. The safeguarding plans were originally created by the diocese and updated with RLSS when they took this role over from the diocese. One safeguarding plan has very limited restrictions and is updated as required and reviewed annually. The other has more restrictions and has required more input from the Order and RLSS. A psychological assessment for the individual concerned was carried out at the point of transfer to RLSS, a risk assessment was conducted, and the risks were agreed. The individual had an additional psychological assessment prior to his move from

¹⁴ [Home | Jesuits In Britain](#)

¹⁵ [Data protection: The UK's data protection legislation - GOV.UK](#)

one community house to another. A further risk assessment was completed at this point as well. The individual has been fully compliant with the plan and to date has not been involved in any ministry and must get permission to attend weddings and funerals. The current safeguarding plan is reviewed every six months, and the individual has an allocated and specially trained personal support person (a friar from the Order). Their house guardian understands their role and responsibilities toward the individual in ensuring that they remain compliant with the requirements of the plan. At the time of audit, a recently proposed change to the plan, following a further risk assessment, was under discussion. The plan is for the RLSS to speak to the individual together with their personal support person, the guardian and the Provincial Delegate to say what their duties are in maintaining safety and what the parameters will be.

4.5.2 In addition to the processes in place to manage an individual on a safeguarding plan, there are clearly defined actions to be taken to manage and support any individual who is the subject of an allegation. The Order have access to both civil and Canon lawyers and can provide physical, psychological, spiritual and financial support for any friar who might need it. The friars believe that any member who is the subject of an allegation should be treated with compassion and care. There is an option for respondents to take leave from the Order should this be required. All subjects of an allegation would remain in contact with the Provincial Delegate and would be provided with a specially trained friar to support them through the process of investigation. Any Canonical investigation would be overseen by the Trustees.

Areas for development

4.5.3 No areas for development were identified at audit

Graded: Exemplary

4.6 Standard 6 Robust human resource management

Strengths

4.6.1 The Capuchin Delegation of Great Britain Administration- A Handbook of Financial Administration and Current Norms clearly states the Order's commitment to ensuring safer recruitment and robust human resource management. Along with others who serve in the community, the Trustees recognise the absolute necessity of ensuring the protection and safety of all those the charity serves. In practice this requires that all brothers who are in any kind of ministry in Great Britain must obtain Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)¹⁶ clearance with 'Enhanced Disclosures'. This requirement is echoed in the safeguarding policy. Currently all friars in active ministry are up to date with their DBS certificates as evidenced by the DBS register. There are three friars who are resident in a nursing home and one friar living with a relative for whom there is no DBS check requirement on the advice of RLSS, and in addition one friar who lives in the United States of America who also does not require a current DBS certificate. DBS oversight is the responsibility of the Trustees and is managed by the designated safeguarding lead. DBS status is reviewed annually at the friar's individual personal formation plan meeting with the Provincial Delegate.

4.6.2 The commitment to safer recruitment throughout the Order extends to those who may be employed by them. These requirements by the Order are specified in the safeguarding policy and include the need to acquire references and for the individual to undergo a DBS check (dependent on role) before commencing employment. There is also a requirement for the individual to sign to say that they have read and understood the policies of the organisation and agree to abide by them. The Capuchin Delegation of Great Britain Administration- A Handbook of Financial Administration and Current Norms details the process for the recruitment of lay staff and stipulates that this must be done in line with the requirements of employment law. To assist with recruitment, the Order employ the services of

¹⁶ [Disclosure and Barring Service – GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service)

Peninsula¹⁷ employment consultants. They also have access to RLSS for advice on safer recruitment and support in obtaining DBS checks, including advice should a blemished DBS check be returned. The Order have eight employees; six have basic DBS Certificates (recommended level for their positions) and two employees do not require a DBS check for their roles.

4.6.3 The Order have two individuals in formation at the time of audit. As aspirants, men visit the friary several times over a variable period to understand the life of the friars and to explore their faith and their decision to enter the Order. The next stage, postulancy can be between eight months and one year and leads to a pre-novitiate period which takes place in Ireland with postulants away for two months. Following this the men will be novitiates for one year prior to taking their first vows and moving to Oxford or London to study. They continue there for at least five years before taking their final vows. Not all friars become priests, some remain as brothers. All of those entering formation undertake psychometric testing a process that has been in place in the Order for the past 40 years. All postulants have DBS checks and must provide letters of recommendation and references to be considered. Safeguarding training is completed during postulancy. The Order is currently experiencing some difficulty obtaining the international DBS certificates due to the service being withdrawn by the diocese and not being available through RLSS. To ensure that they remain compliant, the Order are obtaining these through the Home Office which is a protracted process leading to delays in friars being able to minister in the UK. All friars from overseas complete safeguarding training as part of their induction into ministry in the UK.

4.6.4 The Order has a whistleblowing policy within its safeguarding policy. There is a clear process to follow in the event of one of the friars or members of staff wishing to raise a concern. The friars and staff have access to any member of the leadership team so can speak out regardless of who the concern may be about. In addition, the Order have a formal complaints policy that is available to all who may encounter the Order. There have been no formal complaints or whistleblowing incidents in the past 12 months.

¹⁷ [Employment Law, HR & Health and Safety Services | Peninsula](#)

Areas for development

4.6.3 No areas for development were identified at audit

Graded: Exemplary

4.7 Standard 7 Training and support for safeguarding

Strengths

4.7.1 The oversight for ensuring that all training has been completed by the friars is the responsibility of the Trustees. Training compliance is reported to them by the designated safeguarding lead who holds the responsibility for ensuring that all friars have undertaken the correct level of training as set out in the safeguarding policy. The evidence shows that all friars have undertaken basic safeguarding training and annual updates and all are current. In addition to this the training register shows that extensive additional training has been undertaken by those who hold roles with added and specific responsibility including the Trustees and house guardians, those working as parish priests and those working with children or vulnerable adults. Examples of the additional training undertaken includes the following: safeguarding for volunteers in the Catholic Church; online safety; mental capacity; child exploitation; domestic abuse (children and young people); advanced safeguarding (children and adults); child protection and Prevent¹⁸. All Trustees have completed Trustees training. Certificates for training undertaken are held in the individual records for each friar.

4.7.2 The designated safeguarding lead ensures that all friars have access to training and promotes training opportunities from sources including RLSS and Charism Consultants¹⁹ who are a private company providing training and

¹⁸ Prevent is one part of the government's overall counter-terrorism strategy; the aim of Prevent is to tackle the ideological causes of terrorism, intervene early to support people susceptible to radicalisation and enable people who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate.

¹⁹ [Charism Consultants – Turning values into action](#)

consultancy services and who have experience working within the Church. In addition to a training needs analysis that has identified training requirements, friars are encouraged to identify their own additional training needs, and these are discussed at their regular one to ones with their house guardians or can be raised at their annual personal formation plan meeting with the Provincial Delegate. This is also their opportunity to discuss the effectiveness of the training they have undertaken during the past year and how they have used it in their ministry. The Provincial Delegate and designated safeguarding lead attend external conferences to enhance their knowledge and feedback these experiences to the friars.

4.7.3 In addition to annual refresher training and the opportunity to develop additional knowledge and skills in safeguarding, the Provincial Delegate has introduced a safeguarding training element to all assembly and chapter meetings which is evaluated at point of delivery. For those unable to attend, the training is available online with a quiz used at the end to gauge understanding of the content of the session, which can be accessed at any time. Oversight of completion of these sessions is monitored by the designated safeguarding lead. In addition, outside speakers are invited to speak on safeguarding at assembly and chapter meetings. This has included a speaker from RLSS. All friars have access to additional resources on safeguarding (both hard and online copies) including Integrity in Ministry, all policies and procedures, information on Safe Spaces and all spoken to reported feeling confident that they are kept up-to-date and well informed with changes and developments in safeguarding practice. Friars working as parish priests all had access to diocesan training with some dioceses opening their training days to all community members, not just their parish priest.

Areas for Development

4.7.4 No areas for development were identified at this audit

Graded: Exemplary

4.8 Standard 8 Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Strengths

4.8.1 The Order have demonstrated at audit their commitment to proactively engage with safeguarding expectations and to manage their practice in an open and transparent way. The three-year strategic plan clearly sets out their aspirations and intentions and progress on this is reviewed at every monthly Provincial Council meeting. The Order have established positive links and relationships with the RLSS and the respective diocesan safeguarding co-ordinators in the communities where they reside and work. The Order are active members of the Conference of Religious and look to other outside organisations who are specialists in the field of safeguarding to enhance their knowledge and understanding. All policies and procedures have been overtly aligned with the eight national safeguarding standards and these together with other key documents including Integrity in Ministry underpin the actions taken by the Provincial Delegate and his Council to meet the challenges they face. All policies, training needs and safer recruitment activities are reviewed annually and changes made if required to align them with new legislation or a change in best practice. The Trustees maintain clear oversight of all safeguarding practices and proactively seek to learn from concerns when they arise. The Order have the benefit of being led by a Provincial Delegate who has a great deal of experience in working with survivors and in hearing their voices. It is clear from his leadership that this is brought into how safeguarding practice is implemented, taking his experience and using it to ensure that there is zero-tolerance to non-compliance with policies and processes.

4.8.2 The Order have proactively reviewed their safeguarding history employing external auditors to examine the records of deceased friars from the order to ensure no safeguarding issues have been missed. Learning from this review was discussed at the Provincial Council and shared with the friars. There are processes in place to monitor safeguarding practice with internal annual auditing of compliance taking place at each house and recommendations and required actions from these being assured at following visitations. The Order have worked closely with RLSS on matters pertaining to their safeguarding practice and have

engaged well with the CSSA. The Provincial Council seek feedback from the friars and those with whom they engage and act on this as evidenced by the changes seen at audit in how aspects of safeguarding have been managed and will be managed as they continue with the implementation of their strategic plan.

Areas for Development

4.8.3 No areas for development were identified at audit

Graded: Exemplary

5. Summary of overall findings

5.1. The Order have demonstrated at this audit their commitment to creating a safe environment for their friars and all they interact with. A three-year strategic plan to maintain and improve on their safeguarding practice is underpinned by robust policies and procedures, a drive to learn and improve, and a programme of training and engagement with external experts and safeguarding organisations to support them to do so. The Provincial Delegate and his Council have a zero-tolerance approach to non-compliance with safeguarding standards and proactively monitor activities, carrying out risk assessments and reviewing changes in practice for their effectiveness. All friars and staff spoken to have engaged with the aspirations of the Provincial Delegate and his Council and work hard to ensure that through their compliance those who meet the Order feel safe, cared for and protected from harm.

6. Recommendations

To support improvement, the following recommendations are made:

Within 3 months

- Liaise with the PSR at Erith in regard to the placement of the live stream cameras in the church to ensure parishioners' privacy is protected when they are receiving communion.

Within 6 months

- Develop and implement a process to evaluate the effectiveness of the communications and safeguarding messages shared both internally and externally
- Seek engagement from survivors or survivors' organisations to speak with the friars to broaden their knowledge in this area.

Within 12 months

- A review and self-assessment of the progress made against the safeguarding strategy using the CSSA Level 2 Self-assessment document will enable the Order to monitor and evaluate progress and identify new challenges.

7. Arrangements for follow-up

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

8. Appendix

Documents reviewed as part of the audit process as follows:

- CSSA Level 2 self-assessment
- Three-year safeguarding strategy
- Training records for the Order
- DBS Certification register for the Order
- Safeguarding Policy that included the communication policy and whistleblowing policy (2025)
- The Complaints policy (2025)
- The Capuchin Delegation of Great Britain Administration- A Handbook of Financial Administration and Current Norms (2024)
- The Annual Report (2024) of the OFM (Capuchins) GB Charitable Trust
- Training packages from Charism Consulting on safeguarding
- The Safeguarding Plan and annual reviews (redacted)