

Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Evron

Baseline Audit Report
August 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 This is a baseline audit of the safeguarding arrangements of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Evron, hereafter referred to as the Sisters of Evron. This audit has been undertaken as part of the CSSA's Baseline Audit phase of Religious Life Groups (RLGs).

1.2 The Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Evron is an international Roman Catholic religious community that supports 120 Sisters worldwide. Founded in France in 1682, the Congregation's Generalate is still based there. It is divided into three regions: Africa, France, and the Trinitas Region, which includes the UK, Peru, and Canada. The Regional Leader for the Sisters of Evron in the UK also serves as an Assistant on the Congregational Leadership Team at the international level. In England and Wales, the Congregation consists of 16 Sisters resident in six different houses. Of these Sisters, 10 are retired. Five of the houses are located in the Northwest of England, while one is in North Wales. One of the houses serves as a retirement home specifically designed to accommodate six of the senior Sisters. Additionally, two Sisters reside in two external nursing homes operated by other organisations. This audit will focus solely on the activities of the Sisters of Evron in England and Wales.

1.3 The Sisters of Evron describe their aim as "to support the religious and other charitable works carried out by the members of the congregation, to care for those members throughout their lives within the congregation. As well as ensuring compliance with the Charities Act 2011". Sisters in active ministry engage in various forms of social and pastoral work to fulfil their individual ministries. One area of their ministry involves working as parish sisters, where they actively participate in the life of the local parish. This includes regularly visiting parishioners, offering a compassionate presence, and providing spiritual care. A significant aspect of this is taking Communion to the homebound, offering support to those who are unable to attend due to age, illness, or disability. Sisters also make visits to those living in residential care homes. They assist families, particularly with catechetical programs for children, and provide pastoral care for those grieving, including funeral planning. Additionally, sisters support specific communities, such as the deaf, providing spiritual inclusion and services. They also offer administrative and

secretarial help to parishes. Some of the sisters also volunteer with charities or other organisations, contributing to social causes.

1.4 At the Sisters of Evron retirement home, two key employees, a House Coordinator and a coordinator/housekeeper, play essential roles in maintaining the facility. The House Coordinator oversees daily operations, ensuring smooth functioning of the home, while the Deputy Housekeeper assists in maintaining cleanliness and any additional needs. Personal and medical care for the sisters is provided by social services, with carers from a local domiciliary care team attending to the residents' needs. These external caregivers ensure that each sister receives the necessary care and support. However, urgent medical care or extensive medical treatment is not provided within the retirement home. For more specialised care, the sisters are referred to external healthcare providers or facilities as necessary.

1.5 The Sisters of Evron are members of the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS).¹

1.6 This audit seeks to assess the effectiveness of current safeguarding arrangements, by considering practice over the last twelve months. The Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA)² 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 Sisters of Evron have been assigned to a Level 2 audit.

1.7 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.

¹ [Religious Life Safeguarding Service \(religioussafeguarding.org\)](https://religioussafeguarding.org/)

² [Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency](https://catholic-safeguarding.org/)

2. Scope & Methodology

2.1 The CSSA analyst initially contacted the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and the Regional Leader on the 6 December 2024 to confirm a baseline audit for the week commencing the 10 March 2025.

2.2 In advance of the formal audit week, the Sisters of Evron were requested to complete a Level 2 audit self-assessment tool providing information on their adherence to the Eight National Safeguarding Standards and progress in the overall implementation of said standards. The Sisters of Evron were provided with the self-assessment tool and guidance on the 6 December 2024. The completion date for the self-assessment and supporting evidence was scheduled for the 10 February 2025.

2.3 The CSSA analyst, designated safeguarding lead and the Regional Leader spoke on the 16 December 2024 to discuss audit arrangements and further brief email communications were held between the analyst and DSL to finalise arrangements for the site visit.

2.4 This baseline audit was undertaken following the submission of the self-assessment by the DSL on 10 February 2025 and additional evidence was provided to the CSSA analyst on the 14 February 2025. Further evidence was reviewed by the auditor during a site visit on 11 March 2025.

2.5 Information from the self-assessment and supporting evidence provided by the DSL was reviewed by the CSSA analyst and this evidence was assessed against the Level 2 Maturity Matrix to arrive at ratings for each standard and a combined overall grade.

2.6 The following methods were employed:

2.6.1 Interviews

- Interviews were conducted with key individuals and groups from the Sisters of Evron on 11th March 2025:
 - The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Trustee
 - The Sisters of Evron Trustee Focus Group

- A group interview with five Sisters living within the Evron Retirement Home
- A group interview with three Sisters from the St Mark Presbytery
- Additional interviews took place online on 12th March 2025:
 - The House Coordinator
 - A further conversation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, due to time constraints on the 11th March 2025.

2.6.2 Document Review

- Review of the following key documents additionally took place
 - Self-assessment form
 - Supplementary evidence (Listed at Appendix A)

2.7 Liaison has also taken place between the analyst, RLSS and the Safeguarding Teams in Shrewsbury, Salford and Liverpool regarding the Sisters of Evron's engagement with their Safeguarding expectations.

3. Audit Grading

3.1 Practice was assessed against the eight national safeguarding standards adopted by the Catholic Church in England and Wales³ 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 Sisters of Evron have received an overall rating of Comprehensive Assurance.

³ Full details of the eight standards and underpinning sub standards are available here: [The Eight National Safeguarding Standards \(catholicsafeguarding.org.uk\)](https://catholicsafeguarding.org.uk)

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

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 Jesus safeguarding statement and contact information has been displayed in all premises. This information also includes the experience of the DSL (designated safeguarding lead) and a photograph.

4.1.2 The Sisters of Evron adopted an adult safeguarding policy in July 2023, which was reviewed, updated to include information regarding the protection of children, and ratified by the trustees in January 2025. Although the policy title remains "Safeguarding Adults Policy," it now explicitly outlines the roles and responsibilities of staff working with vulnerable adults and children. The purpose of the policy statement is "to make explicit the roles and responsibilities of staff working with vulnerable adults and children to provide support and guidance to all concerned in responding to allegations of abuse." The policy also provides comprehensive definitions of various forms of abuse, including child abuse and the abuse of vulnerable adults. It is considered that, despite its narrower title, this policy constitutes a suitable overall safeguarding policy.

4.1.3 The DSL for the Sisters of Evron was appointed in August 2024, after a comprehensive recruitment process that included reference checks, interviews, and a detailed role description. Before this appointment, safeguarding was managed by another Sister. However, in response to the aging population and the evolving health needs of the Sisters, it was determined by the trustees that bringing in an external DSL would help ensure compliance and provide the necessary support. The relationship between the DSL and the safeguarding trustee is clear and collaborative. Both individuals work closely together to ensure that safeguarding is prioritised within the Sisters of Evron. Their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, with the safeguarding trustee providing support and oversight, while the DSL takes the lead on day-to-day safeguarding matters. The DSL has a flexible working schedule that adapts to the needs of the sisters however, this is usually on

the basis of one day a week and can be increased if needed. Although relatively new to the role, significant progress has been made since their appointment to ensure that formal safeguarding processes are in place. With over 25 years of experience in education and more than 12 years as a safeguarding lead, the DSL brings extensive knowledge and expertise to her role. The DSL is also a consultant in safeguarding for religious and educational safeguarding settings, providing guidance and support to organisations and navigating complex safeguarding concerns. Additionally, the DSL serves as a non-executive director for three organisations, overseeing safeguarding matters and helping to shape best practices in a variety of settings. Her extensive experience and background in safeguarding will be invaluable in supporting the Sisters of Evron.

4.1.4 The Sisters of Evron have signed formal contracts with the RLSS and CSSA, and the DSL actively engages with the RLSS for safeguarding queries. The DSL for the Sisters of Evron also serves as the DSL for four other RLGs, which results in significant ongoing contact with the RLSS. The DSL has collaborated with the RLSS on initiatives such as Prevent and has worked closely with them on concern forms and best practice initiatives. The DSL is committed to continuing this collaboration with the RLSS to enhance safeguarding practices across all RLGs. Both the DSL and the trustee for safeguarding attend the RLSS conferences.

4.1.5 The Sisters of Evron have five trustees, all are religious. Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at the quarterly trustee meetings, where the DSL provides a report for each meeting and attends at an allotted time. The Sisters of Evron also hold monthly coordinating team meetings, which include all trustees and are attended by some of the Sisters. These meetings are also facilitated online to enable the presence of all of the members. Safeguarding is a key agenda item for these meetings, and the safeguarding trustee has described them as "the heart of care for the Sisters and the ministry we provide to others." In addition to these meetings, the trustee for safeguarding, the DSL, and the Sister who previously held the role of safeguarding lead, hold monthly safeguarding meetings. These meetings are minuted by email, and all correspondence is logged in a central drive for easy access and record-keeping. There is also frequent informal and formal communication between the DSL and the safeguarding trustee, ensuring that any safeguarding concerns are immediately brought to the attention of senior leaders.

The DSL has confirmed plans to provide an annual report to the trustees; however, as they have not yet been in the role long enough, this report has not yet been delivered. Despite this, the DSL has shared a template of these reports from their previous work with other RLGs, ensuring that the trustees are aware of the structure and content of such reports moving forward.

4.1.6 The DSL has worked closely with the Sisters of Evron to create a comprehensive action plan and risk assessments that enable the Sisters to demonstrate their progress in adhering to the eight national safeguarding standards in England and Wales. This action plan is reviewed monthly during the safeguarding team meetings and is shared with the trustees to ensure ongoing oversight and accountability. The collaborative effort ensures that the Sisters of Evron continue to improve and strengthen their safeguarding practices in line with national requirements.

4.1.7 All sisters have been provided with a copy of Integrity in Ministry, and this was last discussed with the trustees in September 2024. Furthermore, the Sisters of Evron and DSL have placed orders for printed booklets for those who may require an alternative format to the electronic copies.

4.1.8 Within all interviews Sisters demonstrated an understanding of the need to address low level concerns and share information with the DSL and the RLSS. The Sisters, DSL and employees also recognised that on occasion statutory agency referrals may be made.

Areas for Development

4.1.9 The Safeguarding Action Plan should continue to receive formal reviews to demonstrate ongoing adherence to the eight Safeguarding standards in England and Wales.

4.1.10 For clarity, the Sisters of Evron should consider updating the title of their current safeguarding policy to ensure it reflects both adult and child safeguarding responsibilities. This would help provide clearer understanding and alignment with the comprehensive scope of the policy. This policy may also be placed on the Sisters of Evron website, which is further discussed in Standard 2.

Graded: Comprehensive Assurance

4.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

Strengths

4.2.1 A safeguarding communication plan was drafted in January 2025 and is currently awaiting ratification from the trustees. The communication plan states its purpose is to ensure that all members, lay staff, and volunteers are fully informed about safeguarding arrangements, policy updates, and training requirements. The plan discusses communication through email, notice boards, monthly meetings, surveys and feedback forms.

4.2.2 As mentioned previously the safeguarding statement and DSL contact information are present in all Sisters of Evron premises. These buildings have limited public access and therefore the notices are specifically intended for the Sisters. Individual laminated copies are placed in each private room of those living within the retirement home for the Sisters. The notice includes a summary outlining the type of information to record in the event of a safeguarding concern. It also details how the DSL will assist in any safeguarding situation. Additionally, the statement provides guidance on what to do if someone is at immediate risk of harm and information on how to contact the DSL. The DSL has confirmed her availability for contact at the provided telephone number 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Sisters of Evron review this safeguarding information every three months to ensure it remains up to date.

4.2.3 The DSL creates monthly safeguarding newsletters that provide tailored information from both local and national organisations. Each month, the DSL highlights safeguarding issues that are particularly prominent across England and Wales, tailoring the newsletter to address these concerns. The newsletter is distributed to trustees monthly, and trustees are expected to share the information with members. Recent newsletters have covered topics such as online safety, supporting the elderly in the community, mental health, addiction, and child protection. The DSL has stated that the Sisters of Evron plan to share these newsletters with the wider community in the future.

4.2.4 The DSL confirmed that a questionnaire will be distributed to the Sisters of Evron in June 2025 to gather their feedback on the work conducted by the DSL. The questionnaire will include questions related to safeguarding communications as part of the feedback process.

Areas for Development

4.2.5 The Sisters of Evron should formally ratify their draft communication plan to ensure that it is officially adopted and implemented. This will provide a clear framework for effective communication within the RLG, ensuring that information is shared efficiently and consistently across all levels and stakeholders.

4.2.6 The Sisters of Evron should provide documentation in a variety of formats to ensure accessibility for all members, as different individuals may have varying needs. This may include larger print, audio formats, or digital versions that can be easily read or heard, ensuring that all members can access important information regardless of their needs.

4.2.7 The Sisters of Evron currently do not have a website. Having a website would provide a platform for sharing important information, including their mission, values, services, newsletters and policies (such as the complaints and whistleblowing policies). It would also allow stakeholders, including the community, to easily access relevant documents, contact information, and updates and allow for feedback on policies or general experiences with the Sisters of Evron. By establishing an official website, the Sisters of Evron would significantly improve their visibility, enhance transparency, and foster stronger communication with their community, stakeholders, and peers. However, it is recognised that launching and maintaining a website requires careful consideration of various factors beyond safeguarding. Therefore, it is important that this matter be discussed thoroughly by the trustees and the Sisters of Evron as a whole, to assess whether creating an official website is proportionate to the Sisters' needs, priorities, and capacity.

4.2.8 The Sisters of Evron should display information about external support services and organisations for survivors or those at risk of abuse, ensuring that these resources are readily available to those in need. While the Sisters are aware of Safe

Spaces⁴ and the DSL holds a central list of support agencies for various forms of abuse, this important information is not currently displayed around the premises. Additionally, the lack of a website further reduces the opportunity for individuals to easily access this support. Although contact information for the DSL is displayed throughout the premises, the Sisters of Evron should ensure that contact information regarding the RLSS and external sources of support are also available to allow survivors a means of accessing services without the need for them to engage directly with the Sisters of Evron.

4.2.9 Completion of the June 2025 questionnaire will allow the Sisters of Evron to gather valuable feedback on the work conducted by the DSL, particularly in relation to safeguarding communications. This will help identify areas of strength, highlight any gaps, and inform future improvements in safeguarding practices and communication.

Graded: Results Being Achieved

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

Strengths

4.3.1 The Sisters of Evron have not received any disclosures or safeguarding concerns in the last 12 months and therefore have not had any experience of engaging with those who report having been harmed. Assessment in this area is reliant on policy review, evidence and theoretical discussions in interview.

4.3.2 The central register of local and national support organisations, maintained by the DSL and available on Google Drive, includes a variety of support services covering areas such as mental health, abuse, substance misuse, victim support,

⁴ 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 Catholic Church of England and Wales, the Church of England, or the Church in Wales. <https://safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk>

dementia and elderly care. The DSL also confirmed having an extensive network of contacts across religious, care, and education sectors, providing access to a broad range of national and regional support. Furthermore, the DSL attends quarterly or bi-annual meetings with local safeguarding teams for the local authority which allows the sharing of good practice arrangements and common trends that affect safe arrangements for all.

4.3.3 The safeguarding notice displayed in all premises provides a brief summary of the actions to take when a concern arises. It emphasises the importance of recording factual information and reporting to statutory agencies if someone is at risk of serious harm. The safeguarding policy outlines the procedure to follow if the Sisters become aware of a safeguarding issue. This includes ensuring that the person raising the concern understands confidentiality and the process of sharing information, and, when necessary, referring concerns to the appropriate statutory agencies.

4.3.4 During interviews, all leadership, including trustee, members suggested that they would meet any survivor who comes forward with “compassion, empathy, understanding, and a non-judgmental attitude, while remaining mindful of boundaries. They would listen carefully, engage in conversation, assess the level of support required, and consider statutory referrals, if necessary, all while empowering the survivor to make their own decisions.” They will also ensure that the person reporting having been harmed is kept aware of the next steps that will take place and, wherever possible give them options and timescales for when things will happen. The designated safeguarding lead is suitably trained to receive and respond to disclosures of harm and has established connections with the RLSS. Additionally, the DSL is familiar with organisations outside of the RLSS and statutory agencies that may be contacted for support. The DSL also stated that she would be able to coordinate with national and local support services, referring to safeguarding hubs or Prevent hubs if required. All members and staff in leadership positions recognise the importance of sharing information with the RLSS when necessary and informed the CSSA analyst that they would work closely with the RLSS for support whenever they become aware of any safeguarding concerns. The Sisters collectively feel confident that the existing policies and procedures enable them to engage appropriately with those who have been harmed.

4.3.5 The designated safeguarding lead confirmed that, when necessary, the Sisters will direct survivors to appropriate support services.

4.3.6 All participants, from focus groups and one to one interview, stated that in the event of receiving a disclosure, they would listen to the individual with care and consideration and offer support either pastorally or by appropriate referrals. All members were aware of the need to contact the DSL or safeguarding trustee in the event of a safeguarding disclosure. The Sisters also understand the importance of documenting appropriate information in writing and sharing all concerns, including low level concerns, with the safeguarding lead.

Areas for Development

4.3.7 Direct learning from Survivors, or through engagement with Religious Life Groups who have engaged with Survivors, has yet to take place. Leaders should review whether bespoke training on engaging with Survivors would enhance the current provision and could impact on the review of the Safeguarding policy when it occurs.

4.3.8 Similarly to 4.2.7, creating a website and displaying information on the premises would make it easier for survivors to access services directly, ensuring they can reach out for support confidentially and without barriers.

4.3.9 The Sisters of Evron should consider updating their safeguarding policy to more clearly define their expectations and commitments to survivors of abuse. This would improve transparency and help survivors understand the support and actions they can expect throughout the process. The revised policy should include specific details on the support services available, including formal arrangements for counselling, to ensure survivors receive appropriate care. It should also outline the steps for supporting survivors from initial disclosure through to ongoing support, creating a safe and compassionate environment for them. Furthermore, the policy should establish clear procedures for accessing these support services, enabling the Sisters to respond promptly and effectively to survivors' needs, while ensuring that the services provided align with recognised national standards to ensure that survivors receive the care and support they need in a timely and professional manner.

Graded: Results Being Achieved

4.4 Standard 4 Effective Management of Allegations and Concerns

Strengths

4.4.1 There have been no Safeguarding concerns or disclosures involving the Sisters of Evron in the last 12 months. Therefore, assessment in this area is reliant on policy review, evidence and theoretical discussions in interview.

4.4.2 The Sisters of Evron have carefully considered the abilities of the Sisters and the need to ensure data protection and confidentiality in their process of reporting and recording to concerns. When a concern is raised, the DSL is contacted. The DSL then provides an electronic copy of the concerns form, which has been developed in collaboration with the RLSS. This form is stored securely on Google Drive. If the individual is unable to complete the form independently, the DSL works with them to do so. The DSL then assumes responsibility for managing the concern and, if necessary, reports it to the RLSS. In practice, the DSL would address an allegation of abuse against a member, in conjunction with RLSS, and the relevant Dioceses would manage allegations related to Parishioners or other concerns involving lay people.

4.4.3 The Safeguarding trustees have oversight of any disclosures received. The trustees have demonstrated a clear understanding of their responsibilities to manage safeguarding concerns and the importance of ensuring that such information is shared with them. Currently, the Sisters of Evron do not have any open cases and have not received any safeguarding concerns or complaints in the past 12 months.

4.4.4 All Sisters and employees, regardless of their leadership position, are aware of their responsibility to support individuals who make disclosures and to listen to their concerns. They also understand the importance of referring any safeguarding concerns to the DSL or their line manager. The Sisters currently residing in the retirement home expressed appreciation for the support they receive from leadership, including the house coordinator and housekeeper. They identified key leaders who they could approach for support if they had concerns about their own or other residents' welfare and confirmed that they would feel comfortable raising any concerns with leadership if needed. This is further supported by the

implementation of the Whistleblowing Policy in January 2025 which states "This policy document clarifies that employees and others may raise such concerns without fear of reprisals. It also aims to encourage and enable such serious problems to be raised internally within the Charity so that appropriate action can be taken to address the issues highlighted as soon as possible". While the policy is specifically for employees and volunteers, the Sisters are also able to make use of this policy should they need to raise any concerns.

4.4.5 The DSL has created a concern log to document all concerns presented to the Sisters of Evron, in line with the RLSS mandatory reporting guidance. The log is used for both low-level concerns and allegations. For cases that require more extensive attention, the details are recorded on the log with a reference number, and a separate chronology and case file are maintained on Google Drive. This process ensures that all concerns are properly documented and managed, with higher-level cases receiving the appropriate level of attention and support. The concern log is accessible to the DSL and safeguarding trustee, however, currently there have been no concerns for the DSL to utilise this.

4.4.6 In their role as DSL for other religious life groups, the DSL has direct experience in managing an allegation against a member. Through this experience, the DSL understands the importance of reflecting on lessons learned and has created a "lessons learned" template to be used if the Sisters of Evron encounter an allegation. The DSL confirmed that once a case is concluded and an outcome is reached, the safeguarding team will meet to discuss any lessons learned, and the template will be used to document this. The information will then be shared with the trustees, informing the action plan and prompting any necessary changes to policies or procedures.

4.4.7 The safeguarding policy for the sisters of Evron states that records should be written in an official file, dated and signed, and kept securely. All documentation is securely stored on Google Drive, with access restricted solely to the DSL and safeguarding trustee. Any written or paper documentation for the Sisters of Evron is kept in a confidential and securely locked cabinet within the Sisters of Evron premises, which is only accessible to the safeguarding team previously mentioned.

4.4.8 The current Safeguarding Policy outlines the procedures for reporting abuse and includes direction on when information must be shared with statutory agencies, particularly in cases involving criminal acts such as suspected sexual abuse. It specifies that, where appropriate, referrals should be made to the police and other responsible agencies (e.g., Social Services). The policy also states that there may be circumstances in which the individual's consent is superseded if there is physical danger to the person, issues with their capacity to make an informed decision, or if others are at risk of harm. The policy may benefit from clarifying the legal basis for sharing information without consent.

Areas for Development

4.4.9 The Sisters of Evron safeguarding notice states that when a safeguarding concern is raised, the individual should inform the DSL about "what they heard, saw, or witnessed, ensuring that the information is shared in the strictest confidence". The DSL should adjust this message to include a summary of the necessary information, including details of what occurred, where it happened, who was involved, and when it took place. This approach can help ensure that those receiving disclosures have a clear understanding of the key facts that should be recorded, which is essential for effective response and action.

4.4.10 The DSL has the necessary safeguarding experience and understands the importance of not jeopardising an ongoing investigation. However, the safeguarding policy should clearly outline that it is everyone's responsibility, to avoid involvement in matters that could jeopardise an ongoing investigation. This includes ensuring that all staff and members understand the importance of maintaining appropriate boundaries and refraining from actions or discussions that could compromise the integrity of the investigation process.

4.4.10 The current safeguarding policy references the Data Protection Act 1998. It is important to ensure that the safeguarding policy is in line with the most up-to-date data protection regulations, in this case the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Continued regular reviews of the safeguarding policy to ensure compliance with current legal requirements are recommended.

4.4.11 The Sisters of Evron should consider engaging stakeholders and other religious life groups to help quality assure their policies. This collaborative approach

would ensure that the policies align with best practices, reflect the values and needs of the broader community, and are continually improved through feedback from various perspectives.

Graded: Comprehensive assurance

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

Strengths

4.5.1 The Sisters of Evron have no experience of managing respondents. As a result, the assessment in this area is based on a review of policies, available evidence, and theoretical discussions during interviews. The Sisters of Evron have strong links with the RLSS for support and they have confirmed that they would contact the RLSS regarding accessing Canon Law advice, if this is required.

4.5.2 The Sisters of Evron understand the importance of maintaining appropriate levels of confidentiality in respect of allegations. They also understand the difficulties that respondents may face when an allegation is made and that there may be a need for mental health, emotional, physical and legal support. While the Sisters were not familiar with the specific support they would receive if an allegation were made against them, they expressed confidence that the leadership team and the DSL would be able to offer support and provide this information if necessary.

4.5.3 The DSL has significant experience from her background in education and safeguarding roles and from the considerable amount of training that she has completed. This will allow her, in conjunction with support from RLSS, to manage Respondents and ensure that liaison with statutory authorities takes place as expected. As previously stated, trustees would have oversight of any cases and have demonstrated in the interviews that they will quality assure their own practice and improve policies and procedures where necessary.

4.5.4 There is an awareness across leadership that there may be occasions when respondents need to be stepped down from ministry and there would be ongoing

support for the respondent in this circumstance, through the DSL, the other Sisters and the RLSS. The trustees also confirmed that funding would be provided should a respondent be asked to leave their accommodation during an investigation.

Areas for Development

4.5.5 The trustees and DSL acknowledged that, while they are aware of the support a respondent may require and how to manage respondents, there is currently no formal guidance or process in place. They noted that it would be beneficial for the Sisters to have clear, structured information regarding the process and what to expect should such a situation arise. Having this information would ensure that everyone involved understands their rights, responsibilities, available support and the steps that will be taken. This would not only provide clarity but also reassurance during what can be a challenging and uncertain process.

4.5.6 The Sisters of Evron should consider whether their policies and procedures would benefit from liaison with other Religious Life Groups that have had recent experience of supporting Respondents to ensure they are as effective as possible.

Graded: Results being achieved

4.6 Standard 6 Robust Human Resource Management

Strengths

4.6.1 The Sisters of Evron have a standalone Safer Recruitment Policy, agreed in January 2025, and their general Safeguarding policy also includes references to recruitment expectations. The safer recruitment policy also includes the requirements for those travelling from overseas, stating that overseas checks are conducted through receipt of police or authority reports before ministry is permitted. The DSL maintains a detailed record of DBS checks for the Sisters, which includes the date when the DBS was issued, the certificate number, and whether the individual is part of the update service. The records clearly indicate that some of the Sisters do not hold DBS checks because their current role or circumstances do not require them. This is due to them being retired and no longer carrying out a

ministry, or a level of ministry, that would necessitate a DBS check, making this approach appropriate. The DSL also holds consent forms for all Sisters, ensuring that necessary permissions to store and process their data are recorded. These forms are securely kept in a locked cabinet and are also stored on the Google Drive for easy access and safekeeping. The DSL confirmed that if a blemished DBS were received she would contact the RLSS for advice on how to proceed.

4.6.2 The Sisters of Evron have employed a house coordinator and a house coordinator/housekeeper within the retirement home for the Sisters of Evron. The house coordinator has ensured that appropriate policies are in place for the protection of those within the home such as moving and handling, risk assessments and cleaning policies. The house coordinator also oversees the line management of the deputy housekeeper. The House Coordinator manages additional duties, including arranging health appointments, organising recreational activities, overseeing shopping, and coordinating travel arrangements. The Housekeeper focuses primarily on cleaning tasks, though their roles may occasionally overlap. Both employees have appropriate DBS checks and have completed the training requirements relevant for their role, with the RLSS.

4.6.3 The House Coordinator is responsible for ensuring the safety of all visitors to the retirement home, including contractors and carers. The care provision for some of the Sisters living within the retirement home is provided by a local domiciliary care agency, which was arranged by social care. The Sisters and their employees do not provide any personal or medical care. The carers who attend to the Sisters adhere to their own safeguarding policy, and the House Coordinator holds a copy of this policy for reference. Any contractors visiting the site are supervised at all times, and lone working is strictly prohibited to ensure the safety of the Sisters. Family visits are allowed, but these visits are facilitated in a designated room. Visitors are not permitted to enter the private rooms of the Sisters and must remain on the ground floor of the premises to maintain safety and privacy.

4.6.4 The Safeguarding Lead acknowledges the need for a formal complaints policy, which is currently in draft form and awaiting review by the trustees. The DSL confirmed that this will be discussed at the upcoming trustee meeting. Additionally,

a Whistleblowing Policy is already in place and is referenced within the Safeguarding Policy.

4.6.5 The Sisters of Evron trustees have routine oversight of recruitment processes and non-compliance is actively addressed during trustee meetings and during monthly meetings.

Areas for Development

4.6.6 The Sisters of Evron should adopt and implement the draft complaints policy at the next trustee meeting. The CSSA Policy “Making a complaint to the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) about a diocese, eparchy or religious life group in England and Wales” states that “The CSSA will investigate complaints about the Catholic dioceses, eparchies, and religious life groups” and “The CSSA is the final stage for unresolved complaints”. Therefore, the Sisters will need to ensure this is fully incorporated into any complaints policy to reflect that the CSSA will investigate unresolved complaints by the Sisters of Evron.

4.6.7 In reference to 4.2.7, the Sisters should consider publishing the complaints policy online to ensure they are easily accessible to their target audiences and the wider community. Additionally, they should establish a clear mechanism for receiving feedback on these policies, allowing for continuous improvement and ensuring that they meet the needs and expectations of those who may need to use them.

4.6.8 Given that the Safer Recruitment policy is a newly created document, the Sisters should plan to review and update it based on feedback and quality assurance, annually. This review process will help ensure that the policy remains effective, relevant, and in line with best practices, incorporating any lessons learned or improvements identified through feedback

Graded: Results being achieved

4.7 Standard 7 Training and Support for Safeguarding

Strengths

4.7.1 There is a clear expectation of safeguarding training for the Sisters and the staff that support them, with detailed records kept by the Safeguarding Lead. This includes copies of safeguarding training certificates and a central log that tracks the level of training completed based on each individual's role and when this was undertaken. The Sisters currently access safeguarding training through the RLSS, though they have noted that availability can be limited, as courses often have capped numbers and reach capacity quickly. To ensure continuous learning, the DSL offers tailored awareness sessions called "Safeguarding: Back to Basics," which are specifically designed for the Sisters and their roles. Additionally, the DSL has committed to holding awareness coffee mornings for those in retirement, who may not need extensive training but would benefit from discussing recent issues and concerns. Interviews with the Sisters in the retirement home showed that these sessions would be welcomed, with a clear interest in ensuring safeguarding within their community. While the trustees and DSL have not encountered any compliance concerns, they are prepared to address any issues through reminders and ongoing conversations about the importance of safeguarding. The trustees confirmed that they reinforce expectations by encouraging peer support, organising group training sessions, and recognising positive engagement. All trustees have completed the safeguarding training for trustees.

4.7.2 The RLSS has confirmed that the Sisters of Evron have accessed training. The DSL receives communication regarding upcoming training by the RLSS through email and provides this to the trustees. This is then communicated to the Sisters by the safeguarding trustee through email or meetings.

4.7.3 Feedback from the RLSS training is sought by the RLSS, and the DSL has requested that this feedback be shared with the Sisters of Evron to actively address any concerns or areas for improvement. In addition, the DSL has created a training questionnaire to gather further feedback from the Sisters. This questionnaire is designed to assess the effectiveness of the training, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that the Sisters' needs are being met in terms of safeguarding

education and awareness. The DSL states that this questionnaire will be distributed bi-annually and the first distribution will be in June 2025.

Areas for Development

4.7.4 It is noted by the Auditor that the DSL is relatively new to the role, and as a result, the opportunity for a thorough feedback process and a comprehensive training needs analysis has not yet been possible. Further time in the role will allow the DSL to gain a deeper understanding of the needs and challenges within the Sisters of Evron, enabling a more effective feedback process and the development of a comprehensive training needs analysis. This will ultimately strengthen safeguarding practices and ensure that training is tailored to the specific requirements of the Sisters and staff.

Graded: Results being achieved

4.8 Standard 8 Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Strengths

4.8.1 Safeguarding expectations are considered at every Trustee and Leadership meeting. Any developments in policy and procedure are brought by the Safeguarding Lead to trustees to make sure that they are compliant with the eight Safeguarding Standards of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

4.8.2 The Leaders of the Sisters of Evron acknowledged the importance of engaging with Survivors of abuse and would meet with any Survivors who came forward if the Survivor chose to do so. They have also joined and actively engaged with RLSS.

4.8.3 A Safeguarding Action Plan is in place and is reviewed monthly by the coordinating team. All actions are allocated to either the DSL, or DSL and trustees, ensuring clear responsibilities. The Safeguarding Lead oversees the implementation of the plan and has developed a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating system to track progress. This system helps to monitor the status of each action, providing a clear visual indication of areas requiring urgent attention, those on

track, and those that are progressing well. This approach ensures accountability and facilitates action when necessary.

4.8.4 The Sisters of Evron fully engaged with the CSSA Baseline Audit process. It is their intention to update the current action plan based upon the recommendations of this audit with a view to improving their Safeguarding practice and ensuring their adherence to the eight Safeguarding standards of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

Areas for development

4.8.5 The Safeguarding Lead has developed annual safeguarding reports for their other roles within the RLGs and has provided evidence of a draft template for these reports. The annual report for the Sisters of Evron is due in August 2025. Once completed, it should reflect the level of compliance with the safeguarding standards and, if any concerns are identified, outline how these have been addressed. This will ensure a transparent review of safeguarding practices and highlight any areas requiring improvement or attention.

4.8.6 The Safeguarding Lead (DSL) brings extensive experience from working with safeguarding across four other RLGs. However, she is still relatively new to her role with the Sisters of Evron. Therefore, it is recommended that the Sisters of Evron provide the DSL with the necessary time and support to become fully familiar with the specific safeguarding policies, procedures, and culture of the Sisters. As the DSL becomes more integrated into the role, regular reviews and adjustments to safeguarding practices should be considered to strengthen monitoring and ensure more robust compliance over time.

Graded: Comprehensive Assurance

5. Summary of Overall Findings

5.1 Those Sisters of Evron in active ministry serve in various roles within their local parishes, providing spiritual care through home visits, Communion to the homebound, and support for families, including catechetical programs and grief

care. They also work with specific communities like the deaf, offer administrative help, and volunteer with charities to support social causes. The basic safeguarding expectation placed upon them is to comply with the individual diocesan safeguarding arrangements and the evidence seen demonstrates that they fulfil this. As a separate charity from the Diocese, they also have Safeguarding expectations placed upon them across the eight Safeguarding standards of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. They have been rated as achieving comprehensive assurance against three of the standards and results being achieved against a further five standards. This gives an overall rating of results being achieved.

5.2 There are some areas where improvements can be made, the most significant of which is the creation of a website for the Sisters of Evron.

5.3 The Sisters of Evron have demonstrated that their current practice exceeds minimum safeguarding practice expectations such that an overall rating of results being achieved is warranted.

6. Recommendations

To support improvement, the following recommendations are made:

Within 3 months

- The Sisters of Evron should consider whether they wish to establish a website to support transparency, communication, and safeguarding visibility. This reflection should include discussion about the potential purpose and scope of the site, such as sharing their mission and values, providing safeguarding lead contact details, publishing key policies (e.g., safeguarding, complaints, whistleblowing), and offering opportunities for feedback on policies or general experiences. This decision making process should involve leadership, safeguarding and trustees to assess feasibility and alignment with the Sisters' capacity.
- To update information on displays (to include areas visible to the public) to include Safe Spaces and support organisations.

Within 6 months

- The Sisters of Evron should formally ratify their draft communication plan to ensure that it is officially adopted and implemented.
- The trustees should ensure that the safeguarding policy is in line with the most up-to-date data protection regulations, including the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR.
- The draft complaints policy should be adopted and implemented at the upcoming trustee meeting, ensuring it includes a provision that any unresolved complaints may be investigated by the CSSA.

Within 12 months

- The Safeguarding Compliance Action Plan should continue to receive formal reviews to demonstrate ongoing adherence to the eight Safeguarding standards in England and Wales.
- The Sisters of Evron should make adaptations to their safeguarding display information to include other languages or adjustments that may be relevant to the local community and the Sisters.
- The Sisters should consider whether their policies and procedures would benefit from liaison with other Religious Life Groups that have had recent experience of supporting respondents and survivors to ensure they are as effective as possible.
- The Sisters of Evron should develop a formal comprehensive training needs analysis.
- The Sisters of Evron should ensure the Annual report is available to all members and consider its inclusion on the website to ensure transparency and accountability and allow feedback from stakeholders.
- If the Sisters of Evron decide to proceed, a website should be developed and launched. The site should include clear sections for safeguarding policies and contact information, and enable access to documents such as newsletters and complaints procedures. Where feasible, a feedback mechanism should be incorporated to strengthen community engagement.

- On the next scheduled review of the Safeguarding Policy, the Sisters of Evron should make the following amendments:
 - the expectations and commitment to survivors with feedback from Survivors where possible.
 - the expected support for those who are subject to an allegation.
 - to consider updating the title of their current safeguarding policy to ensure it reflects both adult and child safeguarding responsibilities.

7. Arrangements for Follow-up

7.1 In line with an overall rating of Results Being Achieved, the earliest date of the next audit of the Sisters of Evron by the CSSA is within two years in March 2027. If the CSSA becomes aware of a significant Safeguarding concern or allegation in the intervening period, then an earlier audit will be required.

8. Appendix

Evidence Provided

Religious Newsletter No 5 May 25
Risk Assessment – January 2025
Annual Safeguarding Arrangements Report 2025
Communication Plan – Draft
FINAL SOE – Whistle Blowing Policy 29_01_25
FINAL SOE – Conflict of Interest Policy – 29_01_2025
FINAL SOE – GDPR Policy 29_01_25
FINAL SOE – Safeguarding Adults Policy 29_01_25
Religious Newsletter – August 2024
Religious Newsletter – December 2024

Religious Newsletter – November 2024
 Religious Newsletter – October 2024
 Religious Newsletter – September 2024
 Religious Newsletter N0 1 January 25
 Religious Newsletter N0 3 March 25
 Religious Newsletter No 2 February _25
 SMA Annual Safeguarding Arrangements Report 2023
 Religious Questionnaires
 Risk Assessment – February 2025
 RSoC Annual Safeguarding Arrangements Report 2023
 Safeguarding Action Plan – February 2025 – Action Plan
 Safeguarding Action Plan – January 2025 – Action Plan
 Safeguarding Adults Policy 29_01_25
 Safeguarding Folder Index
 Safeguarding Notice – DSL Oct 24
 Safer Recruitment Policy – January 25
 Self Assessment – Level 2 SoAvron
 Sisters of Charity Annual Safeguarding Arrangements
 Report 2023
 Sisters of Evron Evidence List
 Sisters of Evron Final Draft
 Sisters of Evron Final Version for publication
 Safeguarding – Back to Basics
 Central Register – Sisters of Our Lady of Evron
 Safeguarding Concern Log
 Lessons Learnt Template – Catholic Safeguarding
 Arrangements