

Community of St John

Baseline Audit Report
September 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 This is a baseline audit of the safeguarding arrangements at the Community of St John. This audit has been undertaken as part of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency's (CSSA) Baseline Audit phase of Religious Life Groups (RLGs).

1.2 The Community of St John are part of the Brothers of St John, an international community who live in 50 Pories worldwide, on five continents. They number 422 Brothers, of whom 260 are Priests¹. The four Brothers in England, part of the European Province, minister in the Parish of St Antony's Forest Gate in the Diocese of Brentwood, and are expected to adhere to Diocesan safeguarding expectations. One Brother, the Parish Priest, is currently on sabbatical and another is serving as Parish Administrator in his stead. The Prior is the Religious Superior and takes a lead role for safeguarding. The Community of St John provide a Chaplain for King's College, London.

1.3 The Community of St John do not directly employ or have any volunteers. Those who are employed and volunteer in the Parish do so under Diocesan arrangements. This includes the Parish Safeguarding Representative (PSR). They have signed up to the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS)². The Parish has a Hall which is used by groups such as a Choir and provides a winter night shelter for the homeless community in conjunction with NEWdawn³. The Church is also used for a weekly Spanish Mass and a less frequent Tamil Mass.

1.4 This audit seeks to assess the effectiveness of current safeguarding arrangements, by considering practice over the last twelve months. The CSSA has categorised RLGs on a scale from Level 1 (a small community with minimal outreach and no known safeguarding concerns), Level 2 (a medium sized community with some outreach with vulnerable populations and/or providing some diocesan activities, such as a Parish Priest), to Level 3 (a large community and/or one with significant outreach with vulnerable populations and/or a

¹ [Congregation of the Brothers of Saint John: our governance](#)

² [Religious Life Safeguarding Service](#)

³ [NEWdawn | NEWway Project](#)

disproportionately high number of open safeguarding cases). The Community of St John was categorised as a level 2 community because their role is to provide Priests for a Parish and they completed a corresponding self-assessment.

2. Methodology

2.1 Initial contact with the Prior of the Community of St John was made on 5 March 2025. An in-person audit interview date of 28 May 2025 was agreed. The self-assessment was completed on 6 May 2025 and the supporting evidence provided by 10 May 2025.

2.2 Audit interviews were completed on 28 May 2025 with the Prior, the Parish Administrator and the Deacon of the Parish. The Prior also holds the role of safeguarding lead.

2.3 Liaison with RLSS and the Diocese of Brentwood about the engagement of the Community of St John took place on 30 May 2025. In the past 12 months the Community of St John have been made aware of a non-recent safeguarding concern related to a former member of the Community in England, who is now resident overseas, which they have liaised with RLSS about and will be discussed further below.

2.4 Documentary evidence provided by the Community of St John is listed in Appendix 1. Their Charity Commission report for 2023 has been read as have three websites linked to them. These are the Parish website⁴, the Community of St John London website⁵ and the international website of the Brothers of St John⁶. In response to sexual abuse committed by the founder of the Community, now deceased, and other members of the community, the Brothers of Saint John commissioned a report, To Understand and to Heal, which was completed in

⁴ [The Community of St John – ST ANTONY’S CATHOLIC CHURCH Forest Gate](#)

⁵ [The Community of St John | THE BROTHERS OF ST JOHN](#)

⁶ [Institutional website of the Brothers of Saint John: homepage](#)

November 2023. The 95 page summary is available in English via the international website.

3. Audit grading

3.1 Practice was assessed against the eight national safeguarding standards adopted by the Catholic Church in England and Wales⁷ 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 Community of St John have achieved an overall rating of Early Progress, achieving that in four of the individual standards. Standard 8 was rated at Basic whereas standards 3, 4 and 5 achieved the higher rating of Firm Progress.

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

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 Community of St John provided a Safeguarding Policy as evidence for audit. This is based on an RLSS template and was last updated in December 2023 with an expected review date of September 2024. Therefore a review is overdue. It is not yet available via any of the websites associated with the Community. However, the Community's London website has a section entitled Safeguarding Policy which contains a statement supporting safeguarding through the intention to "eradicate [abuse] and to support anyone who is, or has been, a survivor". When the website is updated, which will be examined in more detail against Standard 2, an updated statement from the Prior in support of effective and compassionate safeguarding practice should be included.

4.1.2 The Prior is the designated lead for safeguarding and the safeguarding responsibilities for both his roles are outlined in the safeguarding policy. He has distributed the pastoral standards document Integrity in Ministry⁸ to the Brothers via email. The Community of St John have recently introduced weekly Chapter meetings at which they intend to start discussing the expectations of Integrity in Ministry with the objective being that it will be fully understood and adhered to.

4.1.3 The Community of St John hold a copy of the Safeguarding Policy of NEWdawn. This stipulates that volunteers from the Parish are not generally expected to engage in regulated activity with guests of the scheme. Therefore, vetting checks are not usually necessary for them. The Brothers do not directly volunteer for this work.

⁸ Integrity in Ministry is a code of conduct for Religious engaged in ministry in the Catholic Church in England and Wales

4.1.4 Since April 2025 the Community have included safeguarding as the first agenda item at their Chapter meetings. At present the Community of St John only have Religious trustees but two lay trustees, one with a background in accountancy and one in forensic science, have agreed to join but have not yet been formally appointed. They intend to have four meetings a year which exceeds the Charity Commission's minimum recommendation of two⁹. To date, trustee meetings have not followed a regular and consistent pattern of being held.

Areas for development

4.1.5 Leaders of the Community of St John do not currently have a plan to drive improvements in safeguarding practice. It is their intention to use the recommendations of this audit to form the basis of one. When they have a plan it will be important to ensure that it is regularly reviewed for progress by trustees at their planned regular meetings.

4.1.6 The Diocese of Brentwood follows CSSA policy for Creating a Safer Environment in Parishes. The guidance states that "Children, young people and adults at risk should be able to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation in a way that....offers protection to both themselves and the confessor". Currently the confessionals in the Parish church do not allow an area where either the penitent or the Priest is within sight. The Community of St John should review their confessionals to ensure that they meet the expectations of the CSSA Creating a Safer Environment Policy.

4.1.7 The Parish Administrator believed that the Parish had a Risk Register but, in the absence of the Parish Priest, was unable to locate it. Being able to promptly identify safeguarding risks associated with their ministry will allow the Community of St John to monitor and mitigate against them. The Risk Register should include occasional activities organised by the Community, such as any repeat of the Sahara Desert Retreat¹⁰ from February 2025. Safeguarding for this activity was organised this year by the Parish Administrator and a Parish volunteer.

⁹ [Charity meetings - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁰ [Sahara Desert Retreat | Catholic Pilgrimage](#)

4.1.8 There is a growing awareness of the support and training available in safeguarding through RLSS and the CSSA. All the Brothers have completed CSSA training in safeguarding at Level 3 and, the day after the audit visit, the Prior completed RLSS training in safeguarding for trustees. Some planned training through RLSS, such as Spiritual Accompaniment, was cancelled and needs to be rebooked. The Community of St John must ensure that all Brothers complete the level of safeguarding training stipulated in their Safeguarding Policy and that records are kept to demonstrate this, alongside expected refresher training dates.

4.1.9 As noted in 4.1.2, Integrity in Ministry has been shared but not widely discussed yet. Regular discussion will promote understanding of, and compliance with, expected pastoral standards.

Graded: Early Progress

4.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church's safeguarding message

Strengths

4.2.1 As they minister in a Parish in the Diocese of Brentwood, the Community of St John should adhere to the expectations of the Diocesan Safeguarding Communication Plan¹¹. This highlights that Parish websites are an expected means of safeguarding communication and that communications should "contain links with local organisations, voluntary and statutory, that are present within the community". The Parish website, which is the responsibility of the Community of St John, does not contain these elements yet but the Community of St John London website contains details of how to raise concerns to the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator and also to the SOS Abuse¹² service, set up by the international community for survivors of abuse by members of the Community to receive

¹¹ [Brentwood Communication Plan](#)

¹² [SOS Abuse Unit – Brothers of Saint John](#)

support. Telephone contact details, and the website address, for Safe Spaces¹³ are also provided. The Parish website and the London website are in the process of being updated. When they are updated they should also include contact details for RLSS who would be responsible for assessing and managing any safeguarding concerns and allegations which related directly to a member of the Community of St John.

4.2.2 Physical posters related to safeguarding are on display in various locations in the Church and offices. These posters include the contact details for the Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator, the PSR and RLSS. They do not contain contact details for Safe Spaces or the SOS Abuse Service.

Areas for development

4.2.3 When the websites linked to the Community of St John in England and Wales are updated they should include the Community of St John's safeguarding policy as well as contact details for RLSS as mentioned above. Links to the Diocesan safeguarding service complaints policy¹⁴ would enable those who receive a Diocesan safeguarding service to raise complaints.

4.2.4 In addition to adding contact details for Safe Spaces and the SOS Abuse Service to their physical posters, leaders in the Community of St John should liaise with leaders of the Spanish and Tamil Mass to ensure that they have safeguarding information accessible to their communities.

Graded: Early Progress

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ [Brentwood Safeguarding Service Complaints](#)

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

Strengths

4.3.1 The Safeguarding Policy details a procedure to follow in the event that the Community of St John becomes aware of a safeguarding issue. It states that they should contact the RLSS Safeguarding Team and pass the concern and all associated documentation to them immediately. This is the correct procedure to follow if the concern relates to the actions of a member of the Community. The guidance then details how either RLSS or the Safeguarding Lead should keep the Survivor informed of the next steps that will be taken, giving them options if these are possible and a timescale for the actions to be taken. In practice, the Community of St John would anticipate that their response to Survivors who had been hurt in their contact with the Community would be guided by liaison with RLSS.

4.3.2 The Community of St John also provides the internationally available service of the SOS Abuse unit. The website describes the two primary functions to be to receive testimonies and complaints about any of the Brothers and to offer Survivors the opportunity to be heard. This service has not had to be used in relation to Brothers in England and Wales but could be if necessary. The SOS Abuse unit's website states that one of its purposes is to advise the Prior General on action to be taken on disclosure of abuse. It also says that it "is up to the relevant state or canonical authority...to decide on eventual judgement or punishment". Therefore, the Safeguarding Policy of the Community should stipulate that any allegations received by them via SOS Abuse will be reported to statutory authorities in line with the policy of the Catholic Church in England and Wales¹⁵.

4.3.3 The Prior indicated that, should a Survivor approach the Community of St John and wish to meet with him then he would do so. The international Community has made changes in response to the abuse perpetrated by the Community's founder. At a General Chapter, held every three years, feedback from SOS Abuse was given

¹⁵ catholicsafeguarding.org.uk

including the testimony of Survivors. One of the interviewees completed his initial formation approximately two years ago. He said that there was an increased focus in his formation on safeguarding, with additional courses that previously were not part of formation.

Areas for development

4.3.4 When the Safeguarding Policy is reviewed it should include the fact that safeguarding concerns which are raised in the Parish, which do not relate to the Community of St John members, should be reported to the Diocesan safeguarding team. Any support for Survivors in this scenario would be arranged in liaison with the Diocese.

4.3.5 Although they have not directly received a disclosure of harm in England and Wales, the Community of St John should plan for how they would respond to Survivors if they were to receive one. This includes leaders making sure they have all relevant safeguarding training available to prepare them for a potential meeting with a Survivor and liaising with other RLGs who have had experience of engaging with Survivors to learn lessons. They should also familiarise themselves with support services available for Survivors, a selection of which are listed on the RLSS website¹⁶.

Graded: Firm Progress

4.4 Standard 4 Effective management of allegations and concerns

Strengths

4.4.1 Between November 2023 and December 2024 the Community of St John had one open safeguarding case with RLSS. This related to a non-recent allegation which took place in the UK in 2014. The Survivor and the Respondent are not resident

¹⁶ [RLSS Commitment to Survivors](#)

in the UK any longer and neither's contact details are known to the Community of St John. The allegation was reported to RLSS via the Diocese of Brentwood safeguarding team. They were provided with all the limited detail about the concern that the Diocese had received. Due to the complicated, cross-border nature, no risk assessment or support of Survivors or Respondents was possible in England and Wales. The Respondent has been living outside the community since 2019, prior to RLSS or the Community in England and Wales being made aware of the concern. He submitted a formal request to leave the Community in 2022 but this cannot be concluded until the end of ongoing investigations by French authorities. RLSS confirmed that advice was given, and followed, around reporting the matter to the Police and the Charity Commission. The Community of St John were considered to have engaged appropriately with RLSS and sought to improve their safeguarding practices as a result. Due to the limited available information a case audit has not been completed.

4.4.2 The procedure for responding to a safeguarding concern is outlined in the Safeguarding Policy. The Community of St John confirmed that they keep any safeguarding records in a securely locked location with access limited to those who need to have it, the Prior and the Parish Administrator. Interviews demonstrated that members of the Community knew when to share concerns with RLSS or the Diocese and that, in an emergency situation when there was imminent risk of harm, the police should be contacted.

4.4.3 The Prior is qualified in Canon Law and would be able to ensure that any response to allegations related to members of the Community of St John were compliant with its expectations.

Areas for development

4.4.4 Whilst safeguarding is intended to be prioritised as the first agenda item for trustees at their meetings, the Community of St John have not yet decided what will be reported to them for their consideration. They should always have oversight of any open safeguarding concerns and a mechanism for making all trustees aware of new concerns outside the usual meeting timetable should be developed. This will be of particular importance when lay trustees are formally appointed as

they will not have the day to day involvement in the Community that the Brothers do. The Safeguarding Policy should be reviewed to reflect the expectation that trustees will be informed of all new allegations in a timely manner and how they will maintain oversight whilst a case remains open.

Graded: Firm Progress

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

Strengths

4.5.1 In interview, the Community of St John said that the international community has a designated Brother whose role is to support Respondents to allegations and signpost them to necessary sources of support. This would include mental, spiritual, legal and practical sources. The Community would also liaise with RLSS to ensure that a Respondent was risk assessed and monitored appropriately. There are no Safeguarding Plans currently in place in the Community but they are aware that if there were these would need to be regularly reviewed, in conjunction with RLSS, to ensure they remain effective.

4.5.2 Decisions around stepping an individual down from ministry and sourcing accommodation elsewhere would be made in conjunction with a General Prior from the Province of Europe. A Bishop in France is the Ordinary of the Community and would be involved in any process to laicise a Respondent.

Areas for development

4.5.3 The Safeguarding Policy does not stipulate what support a Respondent to allegations should expect to receive whilst a safeguarding allegation or concern is open. Formalising the expectation that they would be allocated a support person and signposted to various sources of support as necessary would alleviate concerns that Respondents may hold whilst being subject to allegations or concerns.

4.5.4 It should also be made clear in the Safeguarding Policy how and when a Respondent to an allegation would be informed that a concern had been raised against them. This should include the proviso that informing the Respondent would only take place with the express consent of any statutory agencies investigating the allegations.

Graded: Firm Progress

4.6 Standard 6 Robust human resource management

Strengths

4.6.1 The Community of St John do not employ anyone or have direct volunteers. Employees and volunteers linked to the Parish are engaged under Diocesan expectations. Despite this, their Safeguarding Policy does contain “Safer Recruitment Practice Guidance” which, in the event of the Community of St John directly recruiting, would require a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service¹⁷ (DBS) check and acceptable references from a previous employer.

4.6.2 The Diocese of Brentwood have confirmed that members of the Community of St John are compliant with their vetting expectations for Parish ministry. As noted above, increased training in safeguarding takes place during Formation which takes place outside England and Wales. Once in the UK it is expected that there would be compliance with Diocesan safeguarding training expectations. This will be addressed in Standard 7.

4.6.3 The Safeguarding Policy contains a section on whistleblowing which aims to enable anyone to raise a serious concern without fear of victimisation or disadvantage. It allows for investigations following whistleblowing to be delegated to RLSS which would give whistleblowers greater confidence in the impartiality of any investigation. As they have no employees or direct volunteers the

¹⁷ [Disclosure and Barring Service – GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/disclosure-and-barring-service)

whistleblowing policy is only applicable to members of the Community. Parish employees or volunteers would need to raise concerns via the Diocesan whistleblowing policy, available via the safeguarding pages of the Diocesan website, unless they related directly to the Community of St John and its members.

Areas for development

4.6.4 Whilst they are compliant with Diocesan vetting and training expectations, and hold certificates to confirm this, the Community of St John do not hold records themselves. If they did so, they could track whether they were in full compliance with the training expectations of their own Safeguarding policy and ensure that trustees had oversight of expected renewal and refresher dates for DBS and training.

4.6.5 It is likely that complaints about any Safeguarding Service received would relate to the Diocese of Brentwood. Therefore, the updated websites should contain links to enable individuals to access the Diocesan complaints procedure. However, the Community of St John still need a mechanism for individuals to raise a complaint so should have their own complaints procedure. RLSS provide templates which can be used to facilitate this.

Graded: Early Progress

4.7 Standard 7 Training and support for safeguarding

Strengths

4.7.1 The Diocese of Brentwood confirmed that members of the Community of St John comply with attendance at the annual safeguarding training events. In addition, they have all completed CSSA Level 3 Safeguarding Training online. The Prior has also now finished RLSS training for trustees. The other trustees, including those in the process of joining, should now also complete the same training and comply with the expected refresher training expectations of the Safeguarding Policy.

4.7.2 Given the small size of the Community it has been relatively simple to keep track of training compliance. However, the Leadership acknowledged that it is important to formally make all trustees aware of the level of training compliance so that any training failures can be identified and actions set to address them as necessary.

Areas for Development

4.7.3 As in 4.6.4, central records of training and vetting compliance, with expected refresher dates, should be compiled and shared with trustees prior to their meetings. In addition, training opportunities offered by RLSS¹⁸ should be examined and shared across the Community. The safeguarding lead and trustees should identify the safeguarding training which they would expect members to complete according to their roles in the Community. Members should then be facilitated to attend and records kept of completion.

Graded: Early Progress

4.8 Standard 8 Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Strengths

4.8.1 The leadership of the Community of St John intend to use the recommendations of this CSSA audit to provide the framework for driving improvements in safeguarding. They have engaged with RLSS for practical safeguarding support, for training and to develop their related policies and procedures.

Areas for Development

4.8.2 The Community of St John should decide what safeguarding information should be provided to trustees for each of their meetings. This will include information on how they are compliant with the expectations of the eight

¹⁸ [RLSS Training](#)

safeguarding standards. In this way, if deficiencies are identified, then actions can be set and tracked for completion at subsequent trustee meetings.

4.8.3 The recommendations of this audit and any other identified improvements made by leaders or in liaison with RLSS should form the basis of a safeguarding action plan. This plan should allocate the actions to individuals or groups, allocate resources to ensure completion and track them for progress so action owners are accountable.

Graded: Basic

5. Summary of overall findings

5.1. The members of the Community of St John minister in the Parish of St Antony's, Forest Gate in the Diocese of Brentwood. They are part of an international Community which has had significant experience of dealing with abuse and has taken steps to support Survivors and Respondents whilst also seeking to understand the causes of the abuse. One allegation related to a now former member of the Community has been managed, in conjunction with RLSS, over the last 12 months. It is now closed.

5.2 The primary safeguarding expectation for the Community of St John is that there are compliant with the Diocese of Brentwood regarding vetting, training and communications. Liaison with the Diocese has demonstrated that they complete vetting and training as directed and physical communications, in the form of posters promote a safe environment in the Church. The Parish has a Diocesan PSR to liaise with the Diocese in all safeguarding matters related to Parishioners or Diocesan activities. To fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities as an RLG, the Community of St John have created a Safeguarding Policy and are members of RLSS.

5.3 Further developments in safeguarding practice can and should be made. This includes creating a safeguarding action plan with trustee oversight to drive improvements. The websites that the community have in England and Wales need

to be updated to reflect current expectations and an updated safeguarding policy should be made available to the public there. The Community of St John should also keep internal records of safeguarding training and vetting and decide what information on safeguarding needs to be regularly reported to trustees.

5.4 Overall the evidence gathered for this audit demonstrates that the Community of St John have achieved an overall rating of Early Progress against the eight safeguarding standards of the Catholic church in England and Wales.

6. Recommendations

To support improvement, the following recommendations are made:

Within 3 months

- Update the Parish and the London community websites. Include the Safeguarding Policy when it is reviewed and a statement in support of safeguarding from the Prior. Link to RLSS, Safe Spaces, SOS Abuse and relevant Diocesan safeguarding pages
- Discuss the expectations of Integrity in Ministry at regular Chapter meetings
- Create an internal vetting and training record with completion and renewal dates
- Decide what safeguarding information will be reported to trustees for their regular meetings
- Create a Community of St John complaints procedure

Within 6 months

- Create a Safeguarding Action plan, incorporating the recommendations of audit
- Review the Safeguarding Policy. Include when the Diocesan team should be contacted, what support Respondents can expect and how they will be informed of an allegation
- Locate or create a new Parish Risk Register identifying potential risks and how they will be mitigated

Within 12 months

- Review the CSSA Creating a Safer Environment Policy and ensure that the Parish Church is compliant
- Ensure that the Tamil and Spanish communities who use the church are communicating safeguarding information to their congregations

7. Arrangements for follow-up

7.1 In accordance with the CSSA pathway for RLG with an overall grading of Early Progress (or lower), the Community of St John will be requested to produce an action plan to implement the recommendations of this report. The RLSS will be advised of the outcome and requested to support the Community accordingly. The CSSA will request an update from the Community in six months and will undertake a re-audit in one to two years subject to progress made. If the CSSA becomes aware of a significant Safeguarding concern or allegation in the intervening period, then an earlier audit may be required.

8. Appendix

- Community Training Completion Certificates
- To Understand and to Heal Summary
- Minutes of Trustees' Meeting 20.12.2023
- Community Chapter Minutes 04.04.2025, 11.04.2025 and 02.05.2025
- Planning of the Year Chapter Minutes 25-26.09.2024
- Signed Services Contract with RLSS
- Safeguarding Policy December 2023
- Serious Incident Report to the Charity Commission
- Community of St John Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for year ended 31.12.2023