

Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus

Baseline Audit Report
October 2025

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Methodology	4
3. Audit grading	6
4. Audit findings against each standard	7
5. Summary of overall findings	18
6. Recommendations.....	20
7. Arrangements for follow-up	20

1. Introduction

1.1 This report is a baseline audit of the safeguarding arrangements for the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus¹. It is undertaken as part of the CSSA programme of baseline audits for Religious Life Groups (RLGs) in England and Wales.

1.2 The Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus undertake apostolic work from communities in Westminster, Portsmouth, Lancaster, Leeds and Bradford. There are 12 Sisters in the group; one who is retired and 11 who are paid employees in occupations including National Health Service nurses, healthcare assistants, psychologist, youth coordinator, pastoral Sister, education chaplain and teaching assistant. The Sisters are also involved in voluntary work with their respective parishes. The Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus also run Ancilla soup kitchen which provides food for the homeless from a church associated with the Parish of Edmonton at Friday lunchtimes. There are 11 volunteers engaged with the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus; all of whom work at the soup kitchen under the supervision of a Sister. The food is prepared and distributed from the church hall and a register is taken of those who attend for the food. The number of homeless people attending varies depending on factors such as the weather but there can be up to 30 people present. The retired member of the group receives weekly visits from an NHS support worker but lives independently with other Sisters in the community. The group do not operate any care homes and have no paid employees.

1.3 This audit covers safeguarding arrangements for the period up to the 12 months preceding the audit week which took place in June 2025. The audit will not include comment on the safeguarding arrangements in place for the dioceses in which the voluntary parish support is undertaken nor the Sisters' paid employment for host organisations, such as the NHS.

¹ Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus registered charity number 1043448

1.4 The CSSA has devised a categorisation scheme for Religious Life Groups taking part in safeguarding audits. This categorises groups on a scale of *Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3*. Level 1 is classed as a small community with minimal outreach and no known safeguarding concerns. Level 1 is itself divided into two categories: *Enclosed* (for Enclosed Orders) and *Apostolic* (for non-Enclosed Orders). Level 2 is for Orders of medium sized communities with some outreach with vulnerable populations and/or providing some diocesan activities such as a Parish Priest. Level 3 audits cover larger communities and/or one with significant outreach with vulnerable populations and/or a disproportionately high number of open safeguarding cases. The Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus have been assigned to a Level 1 Apostolic safeguarding audit.

1.5 The CSSA recognises the rich diversity of the Religious, and acknowledges that the Religious Life Groups within any particular category may vary significantly in terms of size, ministry and safeguarding practice. Consequently, CSSA Analysts may use professional judgement to ensure that Religious Life Groups are graded against the national standards in such a way that reflects their uniqueness.

2. Methodology

2.1 The Mission Superior for the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus was initially contacted by the CSSA Quality Assurance Analyst via telephone on the 12th December 2024 to notify them of the intention to complete a safeguarding audit in March 2025 and the relevant Level 1 Apostolic audit guidance documents were shared later that day via e-mail. The date for the audit was later changed by the CSSA for operational reasons, in agreement with the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus, to the week commencing the 23rd June 2025 with an in-person visit that same week on the 24th June.

2.2 Following the e-mail correspondence the Level 1 Self-Assessment (an assessment tool which provides background information on the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus' adherence to the eight individual National Safeguarding

Standards²) was completed by the group and then e-mailed to the CSSA with accompanying evidence on the 2nd May 2025. Following the review of the Self-Assessment and the supporting evidence provided, the CSSA Analyst completed the in-person visit to the group's community in Woodstock Crescent, London on the 24th June 2025.

2.3 The evidence provided in both the Self-Assessment and the in-person visit has been assessed against the Level 1 Maturity Matrix and ratings for each standard have been assigned, together with a combined overall grade.

2.4 In the completion of this audit the Safeguarding Lead and the Mission Superior for the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus were interviewed during the in-person visit. The following evidence has also been considered in the preparation of this report in reaching decisions regarding scoring for the individual safeguarding standards and the overall grade:

- The website for the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus³
- Level 1 Self-Assessment
- Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus' Safeguarding Policy
- Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus Whistleblowing Policy
- Display posters
- The Charity Commission website for the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus⁴
- E-mail liaison with the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS)

2.5 No case audit work has been undertaken during the course of this audit as there have been no safeguarding allegations or concerns reported involving the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus within the last 12 months and hence there are no current case files to pass comment on.

² A description and full details of the Standards can be found on the CSSA website [here](#)

³ [Home - HHCJ - Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus](#)

⁴ The Charity Commission website page can be accessed [here](#)

3. Audit grading

3.1 Safeguarding practice is graded in accordance with the CSSA Maturity Matrix for Level 1 Religious Life Groups. Each standard is graded on an ascending three point scale of *Not Met*, *Met with Recommendations* and *Met*. Grades for individual standards are combined in order to produce an overall grading for the Religious Life Group as an outcome of the audit.⁵ The audit draws on evidence generated from self-assessment, interviews and the supporting documentation as listed in paragraph 2.4.

3.2 This report summarises the findings of the audit undertaken of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus and their progress towards meeting the eight National Safeguarding Standards; the grading for each of which is tabulated below. The Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus have received an overall rating of *Met with Recommendations*.

Overall grading	Met with Recommendations
Standard 1 – Safeguarding is embedded in the Church body’s leadership, governance, ministry and culture	Met with recommendations
Standard 2 – Communicating the Church’s safeguarding message	Met with recommendations
Standard 3 – Engaging with and caring for those who report having been harmed	Met
Standard 4 – Effective management of allegations and concerns	Met with Recommendations

⁵ Full information on supporting documentation in respect of the audit methodology is available here: [Quality Assurance Framework for Religious Life Groups](#)

Standard 5 – Management and support of subjects of allegations and concerns (respondents)	Met
Standard 6 – Robust human resource management	Met with Recommendations
Standard 7 – Training and support for safeguarding	Met with Recommendations
Standard 8 – Quality assurance and continuous Improvement	Met with Recommendations

4. Audit findings against each standard

4.1 Standard 1 Safeguarding is embedded in the Church body's leadership, governance, ministry and culture

4.1.1 The Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus have a Safeguarding Policy which was last reviewed and approved by the leadership team in January 2025 and has a next date of review set for January 2028 or sooner if a need is identified. The policy is on an RLSS template and contains a policy overview and scope with sections on training, roles and responsibilities, practice guidance, reporting procedures, whistleblowing, recording and storage of safeguarding concerns and case files and safer recruitment practice guidance. The policy is specific to the communities in England (there are no communities in Wales) and sets out all members' roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. They also have a standalone Whistleblowing Policy.

4.1.2 The Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus aim to have monthly House meetings but on occasion more than a month passes between meetings. They are attended by the members of each community and minutes are taken for these meetings. Although safeguarding concerns have not been raised, the meetings would offer

the opportunity to do so if the need arose. The group also have two-monthly Leadership team meetings which are attended by the Mission Superior, the Safeguarding Lead, Secretary and Bursar. The Mission Superior and Safeguarding Lead explained that since the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus joined the RLSS, and subsequently became aware of the importance of having a space in which to raise matters relating to safeguarding, they have featured safeguarding as a standing agenda item and minutes from these meetings evidence this.

4.1.3 There are three trustees for the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus all of whom are Religious Sisters. The safeguarding policy outlines their responsibility for governance and oversight of safeguarding. One of the trustees has completed the trustee training offered by the RLSS as has the Mission Superior, although she is not a trustee. The remaining two trustees are planned to attend the training. The Mission Superior advises that safeguarding would be discussed at trustee meetings if an issue arose but none have yet occurred. It is an expectation of the Charity Commission that trustees provide oversight of safeguarding arrangements and therefore safeguarding should be made a standing agenda item at all trustee meetings to allow the space to raise issues of safeguarding.

4.1.4 The Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus have General Meetings at least annually which all Sisters attend and safeguarding has become a point of discussion for every meeting as the minutes show. The group operates under a wider umbrella with their Generalate in Nigeria. Canonically, the Superior General visits the group every three years from Nigeria and meets with all members as a group and individually.

4.1.5 *Integrity in Ministry*⁶ was not a document that the Safeguarding Lead nor Mission Superior were aware of when questioned on its impact within the group. The Self-Assessment asserts that the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus' Constitutions, Customal and Directory serve as guides and offer a detailed explanation of what is expected of its members as consecrated persons. Whilst

⁶ *Integrity in Ministry* is a code of conduct for Religious engaged in ministry in the Catholic Church in England and Wales. It has been written for the guidance of those in ministry and for the information of those people with and among whom Religious exercise their ministry. A copy can be located [here](#)

this highlights the importance of members leading a virtuous life it does not specifically cover safeguarding and so the group should also be aware of *Integrity in Ministry* with copies distributed to all members and assurances sought that it is fully understood by all.

4.1.6 E-mail liaison with the RLSS⁷ evidences that the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus have availed themselves of training opportunities offered and have been in contact with the membership and safeguarding teams for general introductions and to seek advice regarding updating their Safeguarding Policy.

4.1.7 The Safeguarding Lead has previous experience in safeguarding having worked as a Pastoral Sister within the diocese and her current paid employment as a Healthcare Assistant working with vulnerable adults. She has completed Safeguarding Lead training through the diocese and the RLSS. The Mission Superior has also undertaken safeguarding training with the RLSS and is trained in adult and children safeguarding through her employment in the NHS where risk assessments and referrals to statutory authorities for the vulnerable are also part of the role.

4.1.8 A positive culture of safeguarding was evidenced during the in-person visit with an enthusiasm for safeguarding and a desire to constantly improve safeguarding knowledge. However, no Safeguarding Action Plan or Annual Work Plan has yet been agreed in order to help drive this work.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

4.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church's safeguarding message

4.2.1 The Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus do not have a Communications Plan. A Communications Plan should be agreed which is either a standalone document

⁷ RLSS are an independent team of Safeguarding professionals offering Safeguarding services to the Religious of the Catholic Church in England and Wales

or integrated into the Safeguarding Action Plan in order to outline how safeguarding messaging will take place, the intended audience and when.

4.2.2 The website for the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus⁸ does not have a safeguarding section or any reference to the subject. The site is an international one covering the group as a whole and not specific to the communities in England which may impact the practicality of editing. The group do have a website for England⁹ but this does not contain details of the Safeguarding Lead, the Safeguarding Policy/commitment to safeguarding statement or links to the support available to survivors. The Mission Superior has acknowledged that this is something they have identified as an area they intend to work on in the near future with plans to have a safeguarding section on the site.

4.2.3 The Safeguarding Lead advises that she is kept abreast of safeguarding developments through the RLSS who e-mail her with updates and the Mission Superior reports that they visit the RLSS website to check for updates. Any updates or feedback from training or attendance at conferences that need disseminating to the wider group are done so through e-mails, secure telephone messaging applications (namely WhatsApp) or during face-to-face meetings which are held two to three times per year with all members.

4.2.4 When the Safeguarding Policy was reviewed it was discussed in a meeting with all members where all Sisters were reminded of the content, who the Safeguarding Lead is and their reporting obligations and minutes were recorded to evidence this. Although the CSSA Quality Assurance Analyst did not visit every community in person themselves, the Safeguarding Lead and Mission Superior assured that a physical copy of the up-to-date Safeguarding Policy is kept in every community and posters regarding the RLSS and the eight National Safeguarding Standards are on display.

4.2.5 Due to the differing locations of its communities, and the nature of the voluntary work undertaken by the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus, the group

⁸ [Home - HHCJ - Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus](#)

⁹ <https://www.hhcjengland.org.uk/>

has involvement with four diocese across the country. They are also part of a group for Nigerian clergy and Religious who come together and the Mission Superior describes that there are opportunities for sharing safeguarding practice but the CSSA Analyst did not see evidence of this. The Mission Superior states the group also receive safeguarding best practice updates from the Conference of Religious with whom they are affiliated.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

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

4.3.1 Given that there is no previous or current experience of handling allegations of abuse the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus have a limited opportunity to evidence working practices in Standards 3, 4 and 5. In the absence of their own opportunities for learning it would benefit the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus to create links with other RLGs or organisations in order to learn from their experiences.

4.3.2 During interview with the Safeguarding Lead and Mission Superior it was evident that they and their fellow Sisters are aware of how to respond should they receive disclosures of abuse and this process is outlined in the Safeguarding Policy. The Self-Assessment also offers a list of potential external sources of support for those reporting harm. Both the Safeguarding Lead and Mission Superior understand that members of their own group may make disclosures of harm and require support. They also recognise that pastoral provision should be made available to those members receiving disclosures of harm.

4.3.3 The Sister who runs the soup kitchen checks on the welfare of the vulnerable homeless people calling for food in the open forum of the hall setting. She has received training on how to report welfare concerns and how to handle a disclosure and report abuse. All members of the group have been trained in receiving, and responding to, disclosures.

4.3.4 The Safeguarding Lead and Mission Superior demonstrated empathy and the need for respect and dignity in working with survivors during interview. The Mission Superior states the group would be able to fund appropriate external counselling for anyone that alleges non-recent or current abuse from the Sisters. Although the RLSS would be approached for advice in offering suitable support to those alleging abuse, the Mission Superior and Safeguarding Lead were also able to list other avenues for support including local council websites which could be consulted for signposting. Safe Spaces¹⁰ is not currently actively promoted to members of the group or members of the public through the group's website.

Graded: Met

4.4 Standard 4 Effective management of allegations and concerns

4.4.1 The Safeguarding Policy includes the procedures for reporting any disclosure of abuse and the importance of passing relevant details on to the RLSS. During the in-person visit the Safeguarding Lead and Mission Superior described the procedure of reporting concerns to the Safeguarding Lead who would also inform the Mission Superior, the trustees and the Superior General. They were also able to demonstrate an understanding of the need to refer any allegations of abuse to the RLSS to investigate and to work with the RLSS in managing any concerns.

4.4.2 During interview the Safeguarding Lead and the Mission Superior acknowledged the need to develop an incident report form for the soup kitchen to assist volunteers and the Sister in recording and responding to any safeguarding concerns or disclosures. At present there is a book at the hall for recording safeguarding concerns which is locked away when not in use. However, the Safeguarding Lead states this contains no prompts and has not yet been needed. Given the high level of vulnerability of those who attend the soup kitchen it is likely

¹⁰ Safe Spaces is a free and confidential support service funded by the Catholic Church for victims and survivors of abuse. Their website can be accessed [here](#)

that they would be susceptible to exposure to risks and therefore a more robust method for identifying and recording concerns should be devised. Developing an incident report form would assist in those present determining the threshold for reporting and in gleaning and recording the correct information to share with relevant people.

4.4.3 Although the process for receiving allegations would be for the Safeguarding Lead to inform the Mission Superior and then the trustees, the Self-Assessment outlines the need for any immediate risks to be reported to the police and other statutory services in the first instance and for the need to self-refer to the Charity Commission. Also evidenced in the Self-Assessment is an understanding of the group's data protection obligations in relation to the safeguarding records.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

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

4.5.1 The Mission Superior and Safeguarding Lead describe the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus as a very close community due to its small numbers. Although geographically spread around the country the group have regular contact and are able to support each other. In the event that a Sister is subject of an allegation they could receive informal support from their fellow members but more formal support in the form of the Safeguarding Lead who has received training in this area from the RLSS. In addition, the Self-Assessment outlines the professional qualifications of the Mission Superior and her training in counselling and psychology as a valid source of support. Another Sister is also trained in guidance and counselling and is soon to attend training in spiritual direction. In the event that a member of the group is subject of an allegation, the Safeguarding Lead and Mission Superior will be needed to fulfil other responsibilities and so the Sister who is due to receive training will be able to assist should support be required.

4.5.2 The safeguarding policy includes clear guidance for managing members of the community that may be subject to safeguarding allegations or concerns. The RLSS will manage any such circumstances and will advise the Mission Superior, Trustees and Safeguarding Leads on all actions that must be taken and the timeframes for these.

4.5.3 The Vicar for Religious, the Superior General and the RLSS are cited by the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus as further potential sources to approach for support or for signposting should it be required. The Self-Assessment indicates a willingness to work with the RLSS in managing and supporting respondents. An awareness of Canonical investigations and where to refer respondents for legal support was also evidenced. There is a good understanding demonstrated of the likely range of assistance that respondents may require such as spiritual, physical, financial, legal and emotional support.

4.5.4 During interview the Mission Superior advised that the group have the ability to move Sisters around communities if any allegation meant that a Sister was unable to remain in their current residence. That said, the Mission Superior remained acutely aware of the need to manage such a move and ensure the ongoing safety of the Sister and others when doing so. There is sufficient resilience within the group should a member be removed from duties pending investigation of an allegation of abuse.

Graded: Met

4.6 Standard 6 Robust human resource management

4.6.1 The care and support activities undertaken by the members of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus are all done so as part of their voluntary work with the dioceses and their paid employment. Therefore, responsibility falls to these host organisations for checking the roles undertaken and applying for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. All Sisters have registered for the DBS update service

but nonetheless, the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus should still keep records of this to ensure they have been completed.

4.6.2 The Safer Recruitment Practice Guidance section of the Safeguarding Policy states that all congregation members and volunteers are subject to the appropriate DBS checks in line with both statutory and Catholic Church requirements and previous employment references are confirmed as being acceptable. The opportunity to self-disclose relevant conviction information for those people applying for roles within the group is also outlined. It confirms that upon appointment, all new members and volunteers should be provided with, and sign to acknowledge an understanding of, all relevant policy and procedures. Whilst this is good practice, it is of note that there is no record that the soup kitchen volunteers have done so. In accordance with the Safeguarding Policy a record should be created which evidences that all volunteers have read and understood relevant safeguarding policy and procedures. This process should be overseen by the trustees.

4.6.3 The Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus have no records of the volunteers having signed agreement of a Code of Conduct or other similar document that outlines how they should act whilst volunteering in the soup kitchen. All volunteers should have been formally informed of expected behaviours and there should be a record to evidence this. During the in-person visit the Mission Superior advised that every Friday the group of volunteers do have a briefing prior to starting their duties in order to prepare them for the afternoon ahead. It is of note that the homeless do not eat in the premises of the soup kitchen, rather collect their food at the door and leave immediately.

4.6.4 All 11 volunteers at the soup kitchen are members of the parish and have worked at the soup kitchen for many years and the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus have not needed to recruit further support in this time. The Mission Superior confirms that all volunteers have undertaken safeguarding training as provided by the RLSS. There are no records of the safer recruitment steps that were taken when the volunteers were initially signed up for the support they offer and it is of note that there is no record of the volunteers having a DBS check or consideration given to as to whether they require one. Given the descriptions of the tasks undertaken by

the volunteers it is unlikely that they would require a DBS at a level higher than a basic check but advice should be sought to ensure that this is the case and that none of the activities fall under regulated activity given the vulnerable group they cater for.

4.6.5 Although they do not have a standalone Complaints Policy, the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus do have a Whistleblowing Policy which outlines the process for raising concerns regarding the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus or other religious institutions. The Safeguarding Policy covers the recording and storage of any members' and volunteers' personal details, safeguarding concerns and case files and the need to keep such records accurate and confidential and retained only for as long as necessary. In interview the Safeguarding Lead and the Mission Superior explained that any records would be kept securely in a password-protected computer drive but accessible by both the Safeguarding Lead and Mission Superior. The group also have a safe and a filing cabinet at their Enfield community for storing physical files.

4.6.6 At present the group have one member visiting them who is in training. This Sister attained her visa ahead of the visit and received an orientation prior to their arrival and an induction once here. The Mission Superior has created an orientation programme which she continues to develop. Safeguarding is one of the elements that is covered in the programme which involves an intensive one-to-one conversation with the Mission Superior as well as mandatory training prior to arrival. Policy ensures that visiting Sisters are not permitted to undertake any ministry until their DBS check has been completed by their host organisation with a satisfactory return and safeguarding training has been completed.

4.6.7 The Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus in England have had no new members join the communities in the last five years but the Mission Superior informs that in Ghana and Nigeria they continue to have newly professed members annually. As with visiting Sisters, any new members would be required to hold an approved DBS certificate and have completed safeguarding training ahead of carrying out any ministry for the parish. In addition, professed members from Nigeria would have already been interviewed, psychologically assessed and had live-in experience through the formation process.

4.6.8 Although the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus do not have a need to process any DBS checks themselves at present, the potential for volunteers requiring DBS checks was discussed. Should this be a requirement, and should the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus receive a blemished DBS return, the Safeguarding Lead and Mission Superior described how they would consult with the RLSS for advice and refer the matter to their trustees before making a decision regarding appointment.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

4.7 Standard 7 Training and support for safeguarding

4.7.1 The Safeguarding Policy directs that all members of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus will undergo safeguarding training relevant to their role and that members and volunteers will undertake yearly refresher training. As with DBS checks covered in Standard 6 above, the host organisations in which members of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus volunteer for, and are employed by, are responsible for ensuring safeguarding training is completed to the appropriate level. That said, an electronic log of who requires what training and by when is kept by the Safeguarding Lead who updates it when members send completions certificates to her. (These certificates are also retained.) The volunteers are all trained which is arranged and facilitated through the diocese but a record is kept by the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus for their reference. Any training overdue is automatically highlighted on the training spreadsheet so that reminders can be issued by the Safeguarding Lead. The Safeguarding Lead reports that there is no resistance to safeguarding training and all members have been enthusiastic to complete what is expected of them and understand its importance. Nevertheless, the Safeguarding Lead could escalate to the Mission Superior if required who could ensure compliance. It is of note that at present the trustees do not have oversight of this training log and it is recommended that they do so.

4.7.2 The Self-Assessment mentions receiving feedback from members following the completion of training in order to assess its effectiveness. During interview the

Mission Superior confirmed that this is done through discussions with individuals after training as opposed to a more formal method of data collection.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

4.8 Standard 8 Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

4.8.1 The Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus have signed contracts with the RLSS and the CSSA and to this end are prepared to work towards review and continuous improvement of safeguarding arrangements. However, the trustees should have a more proactive overview of performance in relation to safeguarding. A clear Safeguarding Action Plan would assist in focussing on developments for continuous improvements.

4.8.2 It is acknowledged that the lack of casework and the small size of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus reduces the ability for complex internal audit and review of safeguarding arrangements. The documents reviewed by the auditor, in conjunction with the in-person visit, show that safeguarding practice is generally understood and there is a willingness from leaders to discuss and adhere to the National Safeguarding Standards of the church.

4.8.3 The Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus should remain conscious of any learning possible from their own experiences and in the absence of any such experiences, create opportunities for learning from the experiences of other RLG, agencies and organisations.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

5. Summary of overall findings

5.1 The Mission Superior and Safeguarding Lead voiced a strong desire to learn from the outcomes of this audit and implement any recommended changes. They

demonstrated a good understanding of how safeguarding is an integral part of the work they undertake.

5.2 There are some areas for attention such as following policy and safer recruitment processes by ensuring all volunteers have read and understand relevant safeguarding policy, have the correct level of DBS check for their roles and have a Code of Conduct to follow.

5.4 Despite the Met with Recommendations grade for Standards 6 and 7, there are some positive structures in place within each of these areas in particular the safeguarding training records and training completions for members and volunteers.

5.5 Trustees should have more of an oversight of safeguarding in order to assure processes and fulfil Charity Commission expectations. A Safeguarding Action Plan which incorporates the recommendations of this audit should assist trustees in assuring the group's safeguarding processes.

6. Recommendations

To support improvement, the following recommendations are made:

Within 3 months

- Safeguarding should be made a standing agenda item for all trustee meetings.
- All volunteers should read and understand the safeguarding policy and relevant procedures.
- All volunteers should be formally informed of expected behaviours at the soup kitchen and there should be a record to evidence they know and understand the Code of Conduct.
- Advice should be sought to confirm that the volunteers at the soup kitchen have been through safer recruitment processes and have the correct level of DBS check. Urgent action should be taken to address this if they are found to be in need of a check.

- Trustees should have oversight of the training and DBS logs for members and volunteers in order to assure compliance.

Within 6 months

- *Integrity in Ministry* should be shared with all members and assurances sought by leaders that it is fully understood.
- A Safeguarding Action Plan should be agreed and implemented to help drive safeguarding within the group.
- A Communications Plan should be agreed and implemented. This could be a standalone document or part of the Safeguarding Action Plan.
- The website for the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus should be updated with details of the Safeguarding Lead, the Safeguarding Policy and safeguarding statement and links to the support available to survivors who wish to report abuse such as the Safe Spaces resource.
- Another member/s of the group should receive training specific to offering support to another member in the event of an allegation.

7. Arrangements for follow-up

7.1 In line with the overall rating of Met with Recommendations, the earliest date for the next audit of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus by the CSSA will be in two years' time. However, this period may be reduced if the CSSA becomes aware of any significant concerns or allegations indicative of a weakening of safeguarding arrangements that are raised in the meantime.