Catholic
Safeguarding
Standards
Agency

Missionary Society of St Paul

Baseline Audit Report
March 2026

Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 This report is a baseline audit of the safeguarding arrangements for the Missionary Society of St Paul[1], also known, and referred to in this report as, MSP. It is undertaken as part of the CSSA programme of baseline audits for Religious Life Groups (RLGs) in England and Wales.

1.2 The MSP UK Region is a Roman Catholic Society of Diocesan Right, established in 1977 by the episcopal conference of Nigeria to carry out apostolic missions. The Superior General and his council are based in Nigeria and oversee the MSP missions worldwide. There are 38 priests in the congregation in England and Wales all living in separate presbyteries or, in a few cases, residing together as Parish Priest and Assistant Priest. Members carry out their ministry through pastoral services in parishes, schools and hospital apostolates across a number of dioceses. Some members are Parish Priests and others are assistant Priests. There are no volunteers engaged directly with the MSP group as any voluntary roles are filled via the diocese in which the members minister. The MSP has one paid employee who works three hours per week in the Superior and Mission Development office undertaking office duties only. Their office is completely isolated from the presbytery and they have no contact with members of the public during the course of their work.

1.3 The scope of this audit includes safeguarding arrangements for the 12-month period preceding the audit week which took place in December 2025. The audit will not include comment on the safeguarding arrangements in place for the dioceses in which parish ministry is undertaken nor the members' voluntary work and employment for host organisations, such as the NHS and the education sector. Equally, the audit will cover only those MSP communities in England and Wales and no other regions or countries.

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

[1] The Missionary Society of St Paul are a registered charity with the charity number 1107997

known safeguarding concerns. Level 1 is itself divided into two categories: Enclosed and Apostolic, reflecting the nature of the RLG's ministry. Level 2 audits cover 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 MSP has been assigned to a Level 2 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 Regional Superior and the Safeguarding Lead for the MSP were initially contacted by the CSSA Analyst via e-mail on 6 August 2025 to notify them of the intention to complete a safeguarding audit and the relevant self-assessment and audit guidance documents were shared.

2.2 The self-assessment (an assessment tool which provides background information on the MSP's adherence to the eight individual National Safeguarding Standards[2]) was completed by the group and then e-mailed to the CSSA on 22 October 2025. Some evidence was provided alongside the self-assessment and some was provided via e-mail following the in-person visit.

2.3 A virtual meeting was held at the start of the audit week, 24 November 2025, between the CSSA Quality Assurance Analyst and the Regional Superior. An in-person visit was conducted on 27 November with the CSSA Analyst meeting the Safeguarding Lead at Our Lady of the Rosary Church in Bristol. On 28 November a

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

virtual meeting was held with a Trustee of MSP who is a member of the clergy but not a member of the MSP. A focus group of members of the MSP was also held virtually on 28 November. A lay Trustee of MSP was interviewed virtually on the 2 December.

2.4 The evidence provided before, during, and after the in-person visit has been assessed against the Level 2 Maturity Matrix and ratings for each standard have been assigned (see Section 3 Audit Grading), together with a combined overall grade. All the evidence considered has been included in the Appendix, Section 8.

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 MSP within the last 12 months and hence there are no current case files to pass comment on.

3. Audit grading

3.1 Safeguarding practice is graded in accordance with the CSSA Maturity Matrix for Level 2 Religious Life Groups. Each standard is graded on an ascending six point scale of *Basic, Early Progress, Firm Progress, Results Being Achieved, Comprehensive Assurance* and *Exemplary*. Grades for individual standards are combined in order to produce an overall grading for the Religious Life Group as an outcome of the audit.[3] The audit draws on evidence generated from self-assessment, interviews, supporting documentation and any other evidence as listed in the Appendix.

3.2 This report summarises the findings of the audit undertaken of the MSP and their progress towards meeting the eight National Safeguarding Standards; the grading for each, and an overall rating, are tabulated below:

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

Overall grading	Firm Progress
Standard 1 - Safeguarding is embedded in the Church body's leadership, governance, ministry and culture	Firm Progress
Standard 2 - Communicating the Church's safeguarding message	Results Being Achieved
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	Firm Progress
Standard 7 - Training and support for safeguarding	Early Progress
Standard 8 - Quality assurance and continuous improvement	Early Progress

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 MSP has an Ethical and Sexual Conduct policy which is for the whole international MSP group and serves as their safeguarding policy. The document covers sexual misconduct, definitions and terms, forms of abuse, how to report abuse, the investigation process, support for the accused and obligations and responsibilities of members. The policy is thorough and robust and although the content is aimed at the international community it is, on the whole, applicable to England and Wales. All members are issued with this booklet when they join the MSP.

4.1.2 The MSP has allocated one of its members to the role of Safeguarding Lead and they were interviewed as part of the audit process. The Safeguarding Lead is not a trustee of the charity but he does hold the role of Amicus Clero for the Bishop of his diocese. The Safeguarding Lead has some relevant experience in the field of safeguarding having previously been a school governor for five years and has completed role-specific safeguarding training. The Regional Superior has also undertaken safeguarding training with the Archdiocese of Southwark which is updated annually.

4.1.3 The Safeguarding Lead reports that he disseminates any relevant safeguarding messages that he receives from the CSSA, the Scottish Safeguarding Standards Agency (SCSSA)[4] and the RLSS to group members. Although no evidence was provided for the CSSA Analyst, the Safeguarding Lead reported that the Superior General for the international group also updates the Safeguarding Lead

[4] The SCSSA are an independent agency who assure compliance with national safeguarding standards across all Catholic Church jurisdictions in Scotland: SCSSA

on civil and legislative international safeguarding matters which he passes on accordingly.

4.1.4 The Charity Commission website documents that the MSP has 11 trustees and this was verified by the Regional Superior who advised that there are five clergy trustees, one of whom is not a member of MSP, and six lay trustees. Three trustees were interviewed during the course of the audit and all of them felt that the balance of lay and clergy trustees was a good one which promoted healthy interactions and productive debate. The MSP website features a Board of Trustee Members section which contains all the trustees' names, pictures and brief biography. All lay trustees have experience in safeguarding through their professions such as teaching, the NHS and justice system. The MSP has appointed a lay trustee, who has been on the Board for three years, as a safeguarding lead trustee. At the time of the audit the safeguarding lead trustee had been in the new role for approximately one month. The safeguarding lead trustee has significant professional experience in the care sector and has a background in safeguarding.

4.1.5 Trustees meet quarterly, and the safeguarding lead verbally reports any safeguarding concerns raised to them for discussion and consideration. The three trustees interviewed evidenced an understanding of their role in assuring that effective safeguarding mechanisms are in place and driving improvements in practice, together with the need to be informed of allegations and to notify the Charity Commission of serious incidents. In addition to Trustee meetings the MSP also has Regional Council meetings which are attended by the Regional Superior, the Vice Superior/Secretary and the Bursar.

4.1.6 The trustees have a UK Regional Safeguarding Committee chaired by the non-member clergy trustee and attended by the lay safeguarding lead trustee and the MSP Safeguarding Lead. The Committee can also draw upon the expertise of a civil lawyer if required although they are not a formal member of the Committee. The Committee has never met but the ability to convene as a group remains should there be a cause to do so for specialised safeguarding input.

4.1.7 During interview the lay safeguarding trustee spoke about their vision for safeguarding within the group and the importance of creating a positive culture for all members in the group and the wider community with whom they have contact. The focus group of the MSP members demonstrated that safeguarding is a given priority throughout their ministry. All those who contributed with answers were passionate about providing a safe environment and helped reinforce a positive culture of safeguarding within the group.

4.1.8 All members of MSP meet in person twice yearly at General meetings which have safeguarding as a standing agenda item. At the time of the audit "Town Hall" meetings had just been introduced with a view to being held three to four times per year which are virtual meetings for all members to attend. It is planned that every one of these meetings will feature a safeguarding scenario, presented by the Regional Superior, for discussion and problem solving between those in attendance. Group members do also come together to meet in person every January but this is in the form of a celebration for the feast of St Paul rather than a meeting for formal discussions.

4.1.9 Provided as evidence for this audit was a seven-page Safeguarding Action Plan for the MSP UK Region. The Plan details strategic aims, how these align with UK law, diocesan frameworks and the eight nationally agreed safeguarding standards. Actions are set out for each objective with a timeline for completion added.

4.1.10 The Constitutions for the MSP set out the governance structures for the group. Due to the international members being present in many regions throughout the world, the Superior General is only able to undertake pastoral visits every three years. However, when he does visit, he updates on any safeguarding issues for the congregation and travels the region to visit every member in person. The Safeguarding Lead reports that in between these visits the Superior General is very accessible and every member has his e-mail and telephone number as well as the contact details for his Secretary General. The approachability and ease of contacting the Superior General for relaying any concerns was corroborated by members in the focus group of members.

4.1.11 The MSP has "communities" where priests are geographically grouped together and a Superior is allocated to each group. Each community meets for peer learning three times a year to share their experiences and to offer and receive advice and encouragement. The Regional Superior advises that minutes are not taken during any meetings due to the informal nature of community gatherings.

4.1.12 The RLSS[5] has confirmed the MSP has been a member for several years and has liaised with the safeguarding team but not yet completed any training through the service.

4.1.13 Although safeguarding arrangements within parishes are the responsibility of the diocese in which they are situated, the Regional Superior advised during interview that he has visited all parishes where the MSP undertakes parish-based ministry and ensured a parish safeguarding representative[6] is appointed in each.

4.1.14 *Integrity in Ministry*[7] is given to new members during their orientation by the Safeguarding Lead who then goes through the document with the new member to ensure their understanding. The Safeguarding Lead reports that they have revisited *Integrity in Ministry* during seminars with all group members to ensure their continued awareness of the content. During the focus group members confirmed their awareness of *Integrity in Ministry* although one member reported receiving it from the diocese in which he ministers.

Areas for development

4.1.15 The MSP should have its own local safeguarding policy which is tailored for use in England and Wales. They should also have a whistleblowing policy and a safeguarding complaints policy although these could comprise part of the safeguarding policy if needed. The safeguarding action plan identifies an action to review and update the MSP UK safeguarding policy. Once a local safeguarding

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

[6] Parish Safeguarding Representatives (PSRs) are trained volunteer appointed to promote and support safeguarding within a parish by acting as the local point of contact for safeguarding concerns

[7] *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

policy has been drafted it should be approved by the Trustees and reviewed annually in line with the action plan.

4.1.16 Minutes from Trustee meetings show that safeguarding is raised from time-to-time but is not an agenda item for every meeting. To adhere to Charity Commission requirements, the MSP should make safeguarding a standing item for all Trustee meetings to enable regular oversight of safeguarding matters within the group.

4.1.17 The creation of role descriptors for crucial safeguarding roles is listed as an action in the Action Plan. Despite this, the CSSA Analyst saw no evidence of role descriptions and these should be agreed and shared with group members. It is acknowledged that the remits and responsibilities for roles are covered in appointment letters but these are not widely available to all members.

4.1.18 The MSP should devise a Terms of Reference for their Safeguarding Committee to outline the function and remit of the Committee and the roles within it. Presently the Committee exists in name only as there have not yet been any meetings and so its purpose, membership and meeting frequency should be set out.

4.1.19 The Safeguarding Action Plan outlines that an annual safeguarding report will be submitted to the MSP Regional Superior, the MSP Superior General and Council for oversight and compliance, and local diocese safeguarding offices where applicable. Whilst this would be good practice to complete there is no evidence that annual reports have been created. As a minimum an annual report should be shared with the Trustees for their oversight.

4.1.20 During audit interviews it was confirmed that neither the lay trustee nor the non-member clergy trustee have completed trustee-specific training to assist them in understanding the requirements of their role. There was no evidence to suggest that any other trustees have completed trustee training either. All trustees should undertake trustee training to provide consistency amongst the group and ensure that all understand the responsibilities of their role. This is available through the RLSS.

Graded: Firm Progress

4.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church's safeguarding message

Strengths

4.2.1 Given the nature of the ministry being carried out by the MSP, the safeguarding communications produced by the group are likely to be predominantly for its members, with some public engagement occurring through their website. It is acknowledged that public safeguarding communications will be primarily provided by members of the MSP on behalf of the diocese in which they minister.

4.2.2 The MSP has a Safeguarding Action Plan which contains a brief Communication and Community Engagement section. This outlines the objectives of the plan and the actions to be taken in achieving them. Actions include following the diocesan policies, providing safeguarding briefings at parishes at parish council meetings and integrating messages in parish newsletters. Although no physical evidence that these actions have been delivered was seen, confirmation was verbally given to the CSSA Analyst by the members in the focus group.

4.2.3 The website for the MSP features a Safeguarding section. This contains a statement of commitment from the group and lists the names and contact details for the safeguarding lead and the safeguarding lead trustee.

4.2.4 The members who attended the MSP focus group advised of a number of different creative methods employed in communicating the Church's safeguarding message. These included publishing articles in parish newsletters, relaying messages on their parish websites, communicating through their parish safeguarding representatives, making announcements during services, ensuring signage is displayed prominently and delivering talks and workshops for their parishioners. The focus group evidenced a keen willingness to try different methods of communicating safeguarding messages to reach as large and as varied an audience as possible.

Areas for development

4.2.5 Standard 1 of this report has a recommendation for the MSP to develop and agree a safeguarding policy and safeguarding complaints policy. When these have been agreed, they should be shared with all members and publicised on the website. To develop the website further it should also contain more survivor support content and showcase some of the safeguarding activities undertaken by the MSP members in encouraging survivors to report abuse.

4.2.6 There is no evidence that the Communication Plan has been reviewed. The Plan should be regularly reviewed to take into account developments in practice. Target audiences should also be consulted to help gauge the effectiveness of its delivery.

Graded: Results Being Achieved

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

Strengths

4.3.1 The MSP has not had any safeguarding cases in the last 12 months from which to evidence their approach towards responding to those reporting abuse. Therefore, Standards 3, 4 and 5 are based on reviews of policy and procedures and members' understanding of how these might theoretically be applied should a disclosure occur in future.

4.3.2 During the focus group the members who contributed demonstrated an understanding of the need for compassion and care when responding to complainants. Although the Safeguarding Lead has not directly worked with survivors, he was fully able to describe the process he would need to follow in the event of a disclosure. These related to procedural processes such as notifying the statutory services, recording information and liaising with the RLSS as well as engaging and supporting complainants and signposting them to specialist support. The Safeguarding Lead also stated that he would be keen to learn from any future experiences in order to shape his practice going forward.

4.3.3 The Ethical and Sexual Conduct policy outlines the importance of supporting and assisting those affected by abuse. This should also be reflected in the local safeguarding policy when this is agreed.

Areas for development

4.3.4 In the absence of any recent disclosures from which to draw learning from it would benefit the MSP to create links with other RLGs or organisations in order to learn from their experiences.

4.3.5 The website for the MSP should contain support details for survivors of abuse and should include the details for Safe Spaces[8] as a minimum. Currently the MSP relies on the diocese in which their priests minister to reach out to, offer support to, and signpost survivors. Its ability to connect with survivors and encourage them to report abuse would be improved if it took the opportunity to publicise support available to survivors themselves. The MSP should also consider how they might access specialised personnel for delivering professional support when required rather than depending solely on the diocese and other host organisations for this provision.

Graded: Firm Progress

[8] 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

4.4 Standard 4 Effective management of allegations and concerns

Strengths

4.4.1 None of those interviewed during the course of the audit reported any previous experience or involvement in managing safeguarding plans. Nonetheless, the Regional Superior, Safeguarding Lead and members in the focus group were all aware of the procedures for managing those subject to safeguarding plans and the need to follow the advice and guidance from the RLSS and the diocese.

4.4.2 Should any member of the MSP be accused of abuse during the course of their ministry in a parish, or in a hospital, those host organisations would be responsible for their own investigations. Nonetheless, there was an awareness demonstrated during the MSP members focus group of the need to report any safeguarding concerns regarding MSP members to the Safeguarding Lead and/or the Regional Superior and to refer to the RLSS if there was a direct allegation against one of their members. The Safeguarding Lead states that the MSP would run its own parallel investigation should it be appropriate to do so without hampering the actions of the other party.

4.4.3 Guidance on how to conduct investigations as a result of allegations is offered in the Ethical and Sexual Conduct policy. The MSP also has an Incident Report Form for recording the details of the incident, of those involved and subsequent actions taken. Although this form has not yet been used, if there was an allegation received, a hard copy would be kept in a secure cabinet in the Regional Superior's locked office.

4.4.4 During interview the Regional Superior described the process should a member of the MSP be accused of abuse which included notifying statutory authorities, liaising with the relevant diocesan Safeguarding team, seeking guidance from the RLSS and removing the respondent from ministry pending an investigation. During the focus group members advised that they would report any safeguarding concerns to their PSRs and the diocesan safeguarding team in the first instance and any allegations against themselves would also be reported to the

Safeguarding Lead. The Safeguarding Lead states that any concern or allegation against a member of the MSP would be brought to the attention of the Trustees via the Regional Superior as soon as possible. Any records made of safeguarding concerns or allegations would be stored in a safe in the Regional Superior's office which is also locked.

Areas for development

4.4.5 As with Standard 3, given the MSP has no recent experience of managing an allegation of abuse or a safeguarding concern, they should seek to draw learning from other sources. To this end it is recommended that the MSP links in with other groups to share learning as a way of developing practice.

4.4.6 Members attending the focus group, the Safeguarding Lead and the Regional Superior all gave thorough responses to questions regarding their approach to working with survivors and those accused of abuse and who and when to report concerns to. However, the process for reporting concerns, including internal reporting, should be set out in the local safeguarding policy when this is developed.

Graded: Firm Progress

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

Strengths

4.5.1 The Ethical and Sexual Conduct policy contains a section on *Care and Discipline of Accused* which describes how respondents can expect to be supported if they are the subject of an accusation of abuse. This details internal support structures for MSP members. When a local safeguarding policy is agreed this should contain specific detail for members in England and Wales and external support available to them.

4.5.2 During interview the Regional Superior advised that the MSP has three members who are trained as psychologists or psychiatrists who would be able to assess the needs of, and offer support to, any members accused of abuse. The congregation also have an appointed Spiritual Director who could offer assistance as required. The Regional Superior states that funding would be sourced for a Retreat or other intervention to support those alleged to have caused abuse.

4.5.3 During the focus group some MSP members commented that although they did not know what specific support might be available to them, they were confident that welfare support would be provided for them in the event an allegation was made against them. They understood that legal advice from canon and civil law would be available to them and that they would be allocated a support person to liaise with in confidence.

4.5.4 Should a Priest need to move from an area whilst an investigation is undertaken the MSP does not have provision of their own to house him but the Regional Superior advises that they could source accommodation at Regional House in Southwark. From here the Regional Superior would be able to offer in-person engagement and monitoring if required. During interview the Safeguarding Lead advised that they would be available to support any member accused of abuse but would also ensure that they had alternative sources of support available to them.

Areas for development

4.5.5 Messages around what support is available to those accused of committing abuse and those who are being investigated should be communicated to the members in the group so they are clear what is available to them should they require it.

Graded: Firm Progress

4.6 Standard 6 Robust human resource management

Strengths

4.6.1 During the in-person visit the CSSA Analyst was shown a Central Safeguarding Compliance Register, stored in a secure electronic folder, which contains the names of all members, the diocese in which they minister, the level of DBS check they require, the current check outcome and registration number, and the expected renewal date. In line with the Action Plan and national guidelines the register tracks members' DBS checks to ensure they are updated no more than every three years. The MSP has one employee who works three hours per week in an office and only has contact with the Regional Superior and none with members of the public. The Regional Superior evaluated the role to ensure that no DBS check is required to perform the duties.

4.6.2 Celebrets for members of the MSP need to be renewed annually by the local diocesan Bishop and every Priest is required to produce this when they go to a different diocese to minister. Whilst the MSP does have visitors from overseas, these are clergy who come to the UK on holiday and do not provide any ministry or have any contact with vulnerable adults or children and so there is no requirement to undertake training or provide criminal record checks in advance.

4.6.3 The MSP has recently received two members who are new to the UK region and are expecting a third imminently. The Regional Superior described the procedure for new members as an induction over a three-day period which includes a cultural element and a two-to-three-hour safeguarding element. This is in addition to the enculturation processes that many dioceses offer priests new to England and Wales. An overseas police check is completed ahead of their arrival into the country and then a DBS check is undertaken once the new member has been assigned a diocese to minister in. When the orientation induction has been completed, the new members complete safeguarding training through the diocese before they are assigned to any ministry. A personnel file accompanies each new member when they come into the country and would contain any information including concerns that did not result in criminal proceedings. If any adverse information was received from these files or through the overseas police check the Regional Superior would liaise with the diocese to discuss appointment to ministry. However, the Regional Superior advises that the Superior General would not assign anyone from abroad with a criminal record to active ministry in the UK.

4.6.4 The Regional Superior reports that all members are required to sign an Indemnity form which acts as a Code of Conduct. Although the CSSA Analyst did not see any of these forms during the audit the Safeguarding Lead advised that all copies are stored at the group's headquarters.

4.6.5 Given that the diocese in which the members minister process the DBS checks, they would be the first to receive any blemished DBS return. The Safeguarding Lead states that in this event, the diocese would contact him and he and the Regional Superior would have input as to the member's suitability to continue in their role. The Safeguarding Lead also reports that the Society would withdraw a member from active ministry whilst an assessment took place to consider the information in their blemished return. He advised that the action taken would depend on the level of concern/s raised.

Areas for development

4.6.6 Despite the diocese being responsible for processing DBS checks for the Priests within the MSP it is positive that the group have a log of the information and the anticipated renewal dates for checks. There should be evidence that the Trustees have oversight of this record for their own assurance and that there is a process in place for addressing any shortfalls or delays.

4.6.7 A safeguarding complaints policy and a whistleblowing policy should be agreed and published and made available to those who may wish to use it (or included within the broader safeguarding policy).

Graded: Firm Progress

4.7 Standard 7 Training and support for safeguarding

Strengths

4.7.1 During interview the Regional Superior explained that all Parish Priests and Assistant Priests must undertake safeguarding training in accordance with their diocesan expectations. In addition to the safeguarding training that members must complete with their diocese, the Regional Superior and Safeguarding Lead self-reported that they organise virtual safeguarding and pastoral ministry seminars for all members delivered by Southwark archdiocese at least annually.

4.7.2 Prior to any new members taking up ministry in parishes they are required to complete mandatory safeguarding training by the diocese in which the parish is situated. They also have a three-day induction which includes safeguarding training delivered by the Safeguarding Lead who is able to assess understanding and tailor training to need.

Areas for development

4.7.3 Training records for members are kept by the Safeguarding Lead but these are ad-hoc and have only been recorded when the member has provided the certificate rather than being proactively sought by those responsible for the data entry. The training element of the Compliance Register is not routinely scrutinised for accuracy and completion dates and expected refresher dates are not recorded. The reason stated is that safeguarding training is obligated for all Priests by the diocese in which they minister. To assure themselves that all members have completed safeguarding training appropriate to the ministry they are providing, training records should be maintained for all members and be readily available for Trustees to view and action in the event of anything falling short of expectations. If training is to be provided by the dioceses then checks should be made with them to ensure that training expectations are being met.

4.7.4 The Central Safeguarding Compliance Register has a column for recording safeguarding training certificates for MSP members. However, this is not up-to-date and the Safeguarding Lead reports that there is an assumption that training has been completed because the diocese would contact him if a member failed to undertake mandatory safeguarding training. Training records should be current and proactively driven by those responsible for the register.

4.7.5 The part-time employee is not required by the MSP to complete safeguarding training given that they have no contact with any members of the public or other members of the MSP besides the Regional Superior. Although this is not a public-facing role, some basic safeguarding awareness training should be provided.

Graded: Early Progress

4.8 Standard 8 Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Strengths

4.8.1 A Safeguarding Action Plan for the MSP has been agreed and provided as evidence for the safeguarding audit. The Plan is of good quality in regard to setting out strategic aims and seeking to embed a consistent safeguarding culture across the group. It covers governance and leadership, safer recruitment, safeguarding training, safe environments and risk management, case management and survivor support, collaboration and external partnerships, communication and community engagement and quality assurance and sets out actions to be taken in achieving the aims.

Areas for development

4.8.2 The Safeguarding Action Plan provided as evidence for the audit is dated January 2022 and hence needs updating or reviewing. Although the Plan is clear and specific and would serve as a driver for improving safeguarding standards in the group, there is no evidence to suggest that Trustees are aware of the Plan or have reviewed the MSP's progress against it. It is also not clear who has contributed to the Plan. This should be reviewed and key roles within the MSP should be given the opportunity to contribute towards it and be involved in its implementation. The

Plan includes key deliverables with a timeline for completion and some of these objectives have been completed, but it is not clear who was responsible for completing them or whether the Trustees were aware they have been achieved.

4.8.3 The Safeguarding Action Plan sets out an action for the Safeguarding Lead to conduct annual internal safeguarding reviews. There is no evidence to suggest this has occurred but conducting self-audits would assist in the quality assurance of safeguarding throughout the group and so these annual reviews should commence as planned.

4.8.4 The *Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Safeguarding MSP Priests* document has been created by the Regional Superior and the Safeguarding Lead as planned in the Safeguarding Action Plan and includes targets for training completions, DBS compliance, Quality Assurance and Reviews and Reporting and Case Management and Culture and Awareness. The performance indicators are linked to the eight national safeguarding standards and have targets set for each. However, this document has not been followed up and so there is nothing to suggest that these KPIs have been achieved, what oversight trustees and leaders have of them, and what is being done with the outcomes. To drive safeguarding within the group, the KPIs should be effectively tracked and evidence recorded of consideration by trustees.

Graded: Early Progress

5. Summary of overall findings

5.1 There has been no safeguarding casework over the last 12 months from which to examine for this safeguarding audit and therefore grading is based on the MSP's policy arrangements, conversations with members and liaison with RLSS and Southwark Diocese.

5.2 It is clear that there has been activity to align the safeguarding practices of the MSP with the eight national safeguarding standards as evidenced by the Safeguarding Action Plan and the *Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for*

Safeguarding MSP Priests document. Both of these documents provide a sound foundation for improving safeguarding practice within the group and now require a formal plan for implementation with regular review and oversight from trustees.

5.3 The MSP has professionals experienced in safeguarding and other fields on their Board of Trustees and there is a good blend of lay and clergy representation. Key safeguarding roles are filled and there is a newly created position of safeguarding lead trustee.

5.4 Developing and approving a UK-specific safeguarding policy, a safeguarding complaints Policy and a whistleblowing policy will support the delivery of effective and robust safeguarding practice within the MSP. Further developments such as improving training records, ensuring all trustees attend dedicated trustee training, enhancing survivor support information, and undertaking annual internal safeguarding reviews will help to strengthen safeguarding processes and the service to survivors.

5.5 At present the MSP assumes that training has been completed by members on the assumption that their diocese would not allow them to minister if this was not the case. Nonetheless, the MSP should take steps to assure themselves that all necessary training and checks are in place rather than relying on the diocese to inform them of what is not present.

6. Recommendations

To support improvement, the following recommendations are made:

Within 3 months

- Agree a safeguarding policy which is specific for use within England and Wales and is reviewed annually and approved by Trustees, whistleblowing and safeguarding complaints should be included within this policy or agreed as standalone policies
- Safeguarding should be a standing agenda item for all Trustee meetings

- The Safeguarding Action Plan is updated/reviewed with input from key safeguarding personnel and shared with Trustees
- Devise a Terms of Reference for the Safeguarding Committee to outline the function and remit of the Committee and the roles within it

Within 6 months

- Share the safeguarding policy and the safeguarding complaints policy (if a separate document) with relevant stakeholders and publish on the MSP website
- Role descriptions for key safeguarding roles within the MSP should be agreed
- The website for the MSP should contain information on sources of support for survivors, including the details for Safe Spaces
- Trustees evidence that they have oversight of the Central Safeguarding Compliance Register and have a process in place for ensuring any deficits in relation to DBS checks and mandatory training are followed up
- All employees have basic safeguarding awareness training
- The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Safeguarding MSP Priests document should be tracked and provided to the Trustees for their assurance

Within 12 months

- An annual safeguarding report is prepared and submitted to the Trustees for their oversight
- All Trustees should undertake Trustee training
- The Communications Plan should be reviewed annually and approved by Trustees. There should be evidence that key stakeholders have contributed towards the Plan.
- In line with the Safeguarding Action Plan, annual internal safeguarding reviews should be undertaken
- Create links with other RLGs or organisations in order to learn from their experiences of engaging with survivors and managing allegations

Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency

7. Arrangements for follow-up

7.1 In line with the overall rating of Firm Progress, the earliest date for the next audit of the MSP 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.

8. Appendix

The following documentary evidence has been considered in the preparation of this report in reaching decisions regarding scoring for the individual safeguarding standards and the overall grade:

- The Missionary Society of St Paul website[9]
- The Charity Commission website for the Missionary Society of St Paul[10]
- Ethical and Sexual Conduct policy for the Missionary Society of St Paul
- Safeguarding Action Plan
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Safeguarding MSP Priests document
- Central Safeguarding Compliance Register
- Incident Report Form

[9] https://www.mspfathers.co.uk/

[10] The Charity Commission website page can be accessed here