Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency

Claretian Missionaries

Baseline Audit Report

June 2026

Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency

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1. Introduction

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

1.2 The Claretians are an international congregation of Pontifical Right present in 68 countries around the world. England and Wales fall under the Fatima Province. The group does not have a presence in Wales and reside across three locations in England: the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Hayes, located in, and owned by, the Archdiocese of Westminster, St Joseph's Parish, Leyton, located in, and owned by the Diocese of Brentwood and the Parish of St Hugh of Lincoln and the Claret Centre in Buckden which is a Retreat House and Conference Centre within the Diocese of East Anglia. In the latter case the Claretians manage the Parish on behalf of the Diocese but own the buildings and discussions have taken place to determine that the Diocese of East Anglia will remain responsible for safeguarding in the Parish. Responsibility for safeguarding within the Claret Centre itself lies with the Claretians although all visiting groups provide their own leadership and accountability for safeguarding processes.

1.3 The Claretians have 11 members in total; five members reside in the Hayes community, three in the Buckden community and three in the Leyton community. Ministry includes parish activity, prison ministry, youth vocational engagement (limited to those aged 18 and over) and hosting residential groups at the Claret Centre. The retreat and conference centre at Buckden provides the venue and facilities though the various groups attending are self-contained, provide their own programmes and leadership and operate with their own safeguarding arrangements. The Claretians have five lay employees who work at the Claret Centre comprising of a cook, three cleaners and a receptionist.

[1] The Claretian Missionaries Trust is a registered charity with charity number 234026

1.4 The scope of this audit includes safeguarding arrangements for the 12-month period preceding the audit week which took place over late February and early March 2026. The audit will not include comment on the safeguarding arrangements in place for the dioceses in which the Parish ministry is undertaken nor the members' voluntary work for host organisations, such as the prison service.

1.5 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 Claretian Missionaries have been assigned to a Level 2 audit.

1.6 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 Initial contact with the Claretian Missionaries was made on the 19 September 2025 when the Group Lead was emailed to notify of the intention to complete a safeguarding audit and the relevant Level 2 audit guidance documents were shared. Over further email contact a telephone call was arranged between the CSSA Analyst and the Group Lead for the 3 November 2025 to discuss the audit requirements and a date for the in-person visit was subsequently arranged. A further telephone call occurred on the 13 February 2025 to finalise details for the in-person visit.

2.2 The Level 2 Self-Assessment (an assessment tool which provides background information on the Claretian Missionaries' adherence to the eight National Safeguarding Standards[2]) was completed by the group and then emailed to the CSSA with accompanying evidence on the 30 January 2026. Following the review of the Self-Assessment and the supporting evidence provided, the CSSA Analyst completed the in-person visit to Buckden Towers, St Neots, on the 27 February 2026 where interviews were held with the Group Lead for England and Wales, who is also a Trustee and the Safeguarding Lead, a Local Superior who is also the secretary for the group, a Parish Safeguarding Representative and a lay employee. A further virtual meeting was held with the Youth Vocational Lead, who is also a Trustee, on the 2 March. The Youth Vocational Lead also works with the Catholic Bishop's Conference for England and Wales and is the National Lead person for Religious Life.

2.3 The evidence provided in both the Self-Assessment form and 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.

2.4 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 Claretian Missionaries 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

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

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 Claretians and their progress towards meeting the eight National Safeguarding Standards; the grading for each, and an overall rating, are tabulated below:

Overall grading	Results being Achieved
Standard 1 - Safeguarding is embedded in the Church body's leadership, governance, ministry and culture	Comprehensive Assurance
Standard 2 - Communicating the Church's safeguarding message	Firm Progress
Standard 3 - Engaging with and caring for those who report having been harmed	Comprehensive Assurance
Standard 4 - Effective management of allegations and concerns	Results Being Achieved
Standard 5 - Management and support of subjects of allegations and concerns (respondents)	Results Being Achieved
Standard 6 - Robust human resource management	Results Being Achieved
Standard 7 - Training and support for safeguarding	Results Being Achieved

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

Standard 8 - Quality assurance and continuous improvement	Results Being Achieved

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 Claretians have a comprehensive safeguarding policy in place which is aligned to statutory and Church expectations and demonstrates a clear commitment to safeguarding with a survivor-centred approach. The policy was developed using the RLSS[4] template structure and adapted for the Claretians' local circumstances and contains an overview with sections on training, roles and responsibilities, practice guidance, reporting procedures, whistleblowing, recording and storage of concerns and case files and safer recruitment. The policy was reviewed in 2026 and lists the next review date for three years' time or sooner if there are significant changes to organisational structures, processes or relevant legislation. Those interviewed during the audit were aware of the policy and either had a physical or an electronic copy stored themselves.

4.1.2 The charity has eight Trustees, some of whom reside in Spain, and all are clergy and members of the Claretians. The Trustees meet almost every month and minutes show that safeguarding features as a standing agenda item for all meetings. The Group Lead, in his Safeguarding Lead capacity, updates the remaining Trustees on any policy reviews and the group's Safeguarding Action Plan and would report any new safeguarding cases if they arose. The Group Lead has a

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

good understanding of the thresholds for self-reporting to the Charity Commission and, although the group has not yet had experience of doing so, he would be responsible for completing any future referrals.

4.1.3 The leadership's commitment to safeguarding is evident through a Safeguarding Statement emphasising dignity, responsibility, and a zero-tolerance approach that is posted on noticeboards in community Parishes. Those interviewed for the audit provided insight into operational safeguarding and displayed a sound knowledge of its practical implementation. All felt that safeguarding is driven by the Group Lead and shared an understanding that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. They also spoke of an existing culture of safeguarding whereby the protection of the vulnerable is a topic regularly covered and given the highest priority. The Group Lead commented that safeguarding is not a separate subject but rather an intrinsic element in all the ministry the Claretians provide. Interview evidence confirmed that safeguarding is discussed not only formally but also within community settings, reinforcing a culture of shared responsibility. The Parish Safeguarding Representative informed that she and the Group Lead work very closely together and meet often to discuss safeguarding issues and scrutinise DBS lists for parish volunteers. She comments that she feels very confident with the Group Lead's enthusiasm, knowledge and understanding of safeguarding issues.

4.1.4 Given the group's small size and limited scope it is not considered that the formation of a formal safeguarding committee or advisory structure would enhance governance oversight.

4.1.5 The Safeguarding Lead role description document and the Safeguarding Policy define the Safeguarding Lead's responsibilities, including liaison with statutory agencies and RLSS. The Safeguarding Lead was formerly the President for the Conference of Religious[5], was part of a group which developed the National Safeguarding Standards and was involved in the Independent Inquiry into Sexual Abuse (IICSA). The Safeguarding Lead has further relevant experience through their

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[5] The Conference of Religious in England and Wales represents the leaders of religious life by encouraging collaboration on the major issues facing religious today and by addressing issues from a Catholic perspective on their behalf.

previous roles as a school governor and has worked for a charity supporting disabled children travelling to Lourdes. In addition to a variety of role-specific and diocesan safeguarding training they have completed Advanced Safeguarding and Safeguarding for Religious Life Leaders training with the RLSS. Until their departure early in 2025 the Safeguarding Lead was supported in their role by a lay Safeguarding Advisor. The Group Lead advised that in his Parish he has a very experienced Parish Safeguarding Representative who worked for 15 years as a Police Detective in Child Protection and has completed Motivational Interviewing and Trauma-Informed training. The Parish Safeguarding Representative is retiring soon and so the Group Lead has been holding the Safeguarding Adviser role open for her. In the interim period, the Group Lead works very closely with the Parish Safeguarding Representative, and she has been able to advise in safeguarding matters concerning the Claretians as a whole. A job description has now been devised for recruiting the new Safeguarding Advisor imminently.

4.1.6 The importance of modelling safe behaviour, promoting professional boundaries and providing a safe environment is covered in the Safeguarding Policy. The Local Superior advised on some of the practical steps they take in fostering a culture of vigilance and ensuring a safe environment such as hearing face-to-face confessionals in open spaces and having responsible adults present when interacting with children. In addition, training delivered by the Group Lead and Parish Safeguarding Representative illustrates efforts to raise group members' and parishioners' awareness of the need to provide a safe environment.

4.1.7 The Claretians have been members of the RLSS since 2022, and the Group Lead described a good working relationship with regular contact. There is evidence of close engagement with the RLSS through their involvement in past case files which is supported through email evidence. The Group Lead also describes previous interactions with the CSSA and diocesan safeguarding teams during his role in the Conference of Religious including policy development and training support and email evidence was provided.

4.1.8 A hard copy of *Integrity in Ministry*[6] is located in a folder in each of the Claretians' communities. An electronic version of the document was shared with all members via email from the Group Lead in December 2025. This was confirmed by the Local Superior who stated they have re-familiarised themselves with the document since its circulation.

4.1.9 A Safeguarding Action Plan is in place, demonstrating structured planning, alignment with National Standards, an awareness of areas for improvement and a commitment to ongoing development. The plan lists what needs to occur, the action to be undertaken, the person responsible, timescales and is RAG rated. This has been shared with each community, so they are aware of the details.

Areas for development

4.1.10 While the competence of the individual is not questioned, the current combination of the Group Lead and operational Safeguarding Lead roles reduces the scope for leadership oversight and challenge of safeguarding decision making. While it is acknowledged that this has come about as a result of the departure of the previous lay Safeguarding Advisor, the Claretians should identify a longer-term structure that separates strategic and operational responsibilities.

4.1.11 The group's international website contains a Safeguarding section featuring a Care and Safe Environments statement and an up-to-date international safeguarding Vademecum. The Fatima Province website features the Safeguarding Policy for England and Wales, but the version is dated September 2020. This should be updated with the current Safeguarding Policy, or the policy should be made publicly available through other means.

4.1.12 Trustee meeting minutes and previous versions of the Safeguarding Policy show that it is reviewed every three years and approved by the board of Trustees. It

[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

is recommended that the Safeguarding Policy is reviewed and approved by the Trustees on an annual basis.

4.1.13 The Group Lead and the Youth Vocational Lead, who are also both Trustees for the Claretians, have completed Trustee training with the RLSS. The remaining Trustees should also complete Trustee training and annual safeguarding refresher training in line with the expectations set out in the Safeguarding Policy. This has also been identified as an action to complete in the group's Safeguarding Action Plan. Whilst it is acknowledged that some of the Trustees are based in Spain, they should ensure they align themselves with safeguarding training and Charity Commission expectations and best practice in England.

Graded: Comprehensive Assurance

4.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church's safeguarding message

Strengths

4.2.1 As viewed by the CSSA Analyst during the in-person visit, and through photographs provided as evidence, safeguarding messages are displayed in parish churches and noticeboards. The PSR interviewed plays a key role in communication and safeguarding visibility in their Parish for the group. They confirmed they are asked by the Group Lead to address the parishioners about safeguarding matters. During the in-person visit the CSSA Analyst saw evidence of diocesan safeguarding posters and those in a Claretian format advising of safeguarding contact details and a noticeboard in the kitchen area of the Claret Centre advising of reporting processes and reminding of the Safeguarding Lead and PSR's contact details.

4.2.2 During interview the Group Lead advised that from time-to-time they bring safeguarding into their preaching or read notices at the end of Mass. He informed that he asks people if they know who the Parish Safeguarding Representative is and how they can report concerns and reminds them to refer to the safeguarding poster for further details.

4.2.3 Provided as evidence for the audit was a Communications Plan last revised in January 2023. The plan contains an introduction which sets out the safeguarding ethos of the group, who the stakeholders are, the key safeguarding messages to be relayed, how and by whom and contains an action plan with allocated tasks for completion. The plan is of good quality and lays out a clear scheme for the communication of safeguarding messaging but has not been reviewed since its inception. In addition, the Claretians have a standalone Communication Policy which, at the time of the audit, was due to be reviewed. The policy outlines reporting and information sharing, external communications, digital and social media and training expectations and appropriate detail is set out in the Communications Plan.

4.2.4 Within the past year a safeguarding event was planned and delivered by the Group Lead and the Parish Safeguarding Representative for the St Hugh of Lincoln Parish for parishioners. The slides provided as evidence for the audit show this Safeguarding awareness training entitled *Parish Life and Safeguarding* included definitions of safeguarding, the different types of abuse, case studies, the responsibilities of the parish to create a safe environment, how to respond to a disclosure and a reminder to participants of the group's commitment to safeguarding. The session was delivered in-person on a Saturday afternoon in the hall at the Parish and repeated on-line on a weekday evening for those who could not attend the in-person session. The event was well-attended and served to raise awareness of safeguarding issues and reporting mechanisms within the community and communicate the group's safeguarding commitments. The Parish Safeguarding Representative advised during interview that she plans to deliver more of these sessions. In addition, the Group Lead has also delivered Safeguarding Awareness training and messaging to Parishioners of the Hayes community as part of Catechist training. These sessions are recognised as a distinct and effective method of raising the profile of safeguarding.

4.2.5 Every month the Claretians have a prayer day. During interview the Local Superior informed of a recent prayer day in which all three communities met together and that was based around safeguarding. This is identified as an example of good practice in relation to communicating the Church's safeguarding message.

Areas for development

4.2.6 There is limited evidence of the evaluation of the effectiveness of safeguarding communications. Both the Safeguarding Action Plan and the Self-Assessment identify communication development and evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding communication as an area requiring attention. The system of planning and reviewing communications could be developed and feedback should be sought from target audiences in order to assess the effectiveness of safeguarding communications. For instance, the views of those attending safeguarding awareness sessions should be heard and changes made to future communications based on the feedback received.

4.2.7 The Claretians have a Province website and an international website which feature a safeguarding commitment and, as covered in Standard 1, an outdated Safeguarding Policy. As a communication platform the safeguarding page on the Province website should be updated and should provide the details of support organisations for survivors, such as Safe Spaces[7].

4.2.8 The Claretians should review their Communications Plan, and the actions contained within it, so that the right safeguarding messages are sent to intended audiences in clear and effective formats. The views of the stakeholders mentioned in the plan from 2023 should be sought to ensure that messages are being heard and actions taken on any improvements required.

Graded: Firm Progress

[7] Safe Spaces (Home - Safe Spaces England and Wales) are 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.

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

Strengths

4.3.1 The Claretians have a good policy framework in relation to engaging with those reporting having been harmed and offering support to those who receive disclosures. In the event of any allegations of abuse involving members of the Claretians, the Group Lead is responsible for responding to, and supporting, the complainant and the group's Provincial would hold overall responsibility for supporting the respondent.

4.3.2 There are no current or open cases, but the Group Lead was able to draw on previous experience in offering examples of working practice. During interview the Group Lead gave an anonymised example of a disclosure he had received over the telephone. Although the disclosure was unrelated to the Claretians the Group Lead advised of the action he took in recording the details, supporting the person reporting the abuse and the onward reporting of the information. In recent years the Group Lead has responded to several non-recent complaints and described his liaison with the RLSS, correspondence with the complainants and the provision of counselling support from external services. Records were provided as evidence of these interactions and the Group Lead explained the need for sensitivity, compassion, and respect for confidentiality when working with survivors.

4.3.3 As seen by the CSSA Analyst during the in-person visit and via photographs provided as evidence for the audit, Safe Spaces posters are displayed on public noticeboards within the parishes. As covered in Standard 2, the training provided for parishioners raised awareness of the signs of abuse and also the sources of support open to those who have suffered harm.

4.3.4 The Safeguarding Lead role description document explicitly includes the responsibility for ensuring survivors are listened to and supported. The Safeguarding Policy also demonstrates a clear survivor-centred approach, including access to independent support and pastoral care. Leadership demonstrates a strong pastoral and survivor-centred approach, evidenced

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through previous management of non-recent cases. An example was offered in interview by the Group Lead regarding their previous experience of approaching the Trustees to approve funding for a complainant who required counselling. This was approved and the Group Lead requested the invoice be sent to them personally to maintain the complainant's privacy. The Group Lead described further steps he took to learn from the survivor's experiences and the close working with the RLSS in seeking the survivor's feedback. Responsivity to survivor's needs was also evidenced through working examples of consideration given to complainants' personal preferences in communication methods. The Group Lead emphasised his desire to respond pastorally where possible and tailor support to the individual, with a willingness to offer apologies on behalf of the group where needed.

4.3.5 Those interviewed for the audit demonstrated an awareness of recording and reporting processes in the event of a disclosure and the need for caring and compassionate communications. All confirmed that they had received training on how to respond to disclosures and were aware of their obligations under the group's Safeguarding Policy. The Local Superior states that any non-electronic notes they make following a concern or a disclosure of abuse would be stored in a lockable cabinet and passed to the Group Lead or the Parish Safeguarding Representative as soon as possible. In addition, those within the group who were interviewed knew how to report a concern about themselves or another group member and expressed confidence that any concerns would be responded to seriously and effectively.

Areas for development

4.3.6 Although the Group Lead has actively sought the views and feedback of survivors, there is limited evidence of formal feedback mechanisms or survivor engagement in shaping practice. The Claretians' Action Plan highlights further development required in reflecting and learning from disclosures both within, and external to the group. Work on developing mechanisms for engaging with survivors and incorporating feedback into practice should continue.

4.3.7 The Claretians should advertise the Safe Spaces resource on their website. Featuring the service in a prominent position in the Safeguarding section would be advantageous in reaching a wider audience.

4.3.8 At present the Claretians are likely to experience an issue in managing a concern or an allegation against the Group Lead given that he also holds the Safeguarding Lead role. It is therefore recommended that the group prepares for such a scenario by pursuing their plans to recruit a Safeguarding Adviser or by making alternative arrangements.

Graded: Comprehensive Assurance

4.4 Standard 4 Effective management of allegations and concerns

Strengths

4.4.1 Clear procedures for reporting concerns and escalation to statutory agencies are outlined in the Safeguarding Policy. As stated in the Safeguarding Lead Roles and Responsibilities document, the Safeguarding Lead has responsibility for case management and referrals. The Self-Assessment states that the RLSS would be contacted as soon as consent was obtained to do so and that where consent has not been obtained, consideration would be given to an anonymous discussion for guidance and specialised support in any subsequent investigation.

4.4.2 Those interviewed during the audit demonstrated a good awareness of reporting processes. For example, the cook demonstrated clear understanding of how to respond to disclosures and reporting pathways, despite not having direct contact with service users. The Group Lead was aware of reporting pathways and escalation processes including referral to the RLSS and how and when to report to statutory agencies.

4.4.3 A Safeguarding Incident Report form was developed and approved by Trustees in February 2023 and shared with members. The form is comprehensive

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and has sections for dates and details of those involved, who the concern was passed to and what action was taken as a result but has not been required to date. The Claretians also have an Excel document which records the details of allegations that are received and tracks their progress, offering dates, current situation and actions taken/to be taken.

4.4.4 The Safeguarding Policy includes a section on recording and storage of safeguarding concerns and case files and highlights what information should be retained and where. The Claretians have a cloud drive for recording information. Any sensitive data pertaining to complainants or the management of respondents would be stored in this electronic filing system and the Group Lead demonstrated a good understanding of data protection during interview.

Areas for development

4.4.5 At present only the Group Lead has the access password for the electronic storage files but has acknowledged the need for another relevant member of the group to have access in the event that he was not able to retrieve information.

4.4.6 At present the Safeguarding Lead is also the Group Lead and a Trustee which is likely to cause complications should he become the subject of an allegation. To achieve an impartial approach to managing allegations it is recommended that plans to recruit a new Safeguarding Adviser are expedited or another group member takes on the Safeguarding Lead role. Should the Safeguarding Lead role be undertaken by a group member other than the Group Lead or a Trustee, the Safeguarding Policy outlines the procedure for informing the leadership of allegations.

Graded: Results Being Achieved

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

Strengths

4.5.1 Clear structures exist for managing allegations against clergy within the group including escalation to the Provincial and the instigation of canonical processes. The Self-Assessment outlines that all safeguarding allegations received by the group to date have been non-recent in nature and the respondents were deceased at the time the allegation was received so no support was required and no risk assessments or safeguarding plans were necessary. However, in the event of any future cases involving members, guidance from the RLSS would be sought and support for respondents including spiritual and pastoral care and access to therapy and legal advice would be offered.

4.5.2 Members interviewed during the audit expressed confidence that they would be supported by the group should they be subject to an allegation and demonstrated awareness of the structures in place should they require them including canon law advice and pastoral and therapeutic support. Spiritual direction, funding for therapy and legal advice, and canonical legal provision were some of the examples offered as potential sources of support. During interview the Local Superior advised that he felt that he would be well supported by the group if he were subject to an allegation and would have therapy funded should he require it and financial and canonical support would be available.

4.5.3 The group's Provincial maintains overall responsibility for supporting the respondents to allegations. The Provincial resides in Spain and so their role would be more of a coordinator than personal support, but they would be available for written communications, telephone and virtual conversations. The Group Lead does not have authority over membership, hence the Provincial being responsible for managing any accused members.

4.5.4 The Group Lead feels that the provision of support for those accused of harm could be improved and hence states he would be conscious to ensure that he support any members as best as he can. He has personal previous experience of working with the subject of an allegation and sourced canonical and therapeutic support for them in conjunction with the diocesan safeguarding team.

4.5.5 The Group Lead advised that the group has the ability to move accused members between communities if required. However, he acknowledged this would only be done if appropriate following an assessment and would need to be facilitated in a carefully managed way.

Areas for development

4.5.7 Despite those members interviewed having a good understanding of some of the support available to them in the event they were subject of an allegation, there is limited explicit mention of support processes for respondents in formal documentation. It is recommended that this is included in existing policy.

4.5.8 At present there are no members trained in the supervision and management of offenders or those subject to safeguarding plans. Whilst the Self-Assessment commits to training a member/s if the need arose, the Claretians should prepare in advance for such a scenario and ensure that there is a suitably trained person/s available in the group.

Graded: Results Being Achieved

4.6 Standard 6 Robust human resource management

Strengths

4.6.1 The Staff Handbook includes safer recruitment, supervision and disciplinary processes, and a bullying and harassment policy, as well as a commitment to supporting those who may wish to report abuse within the group along with the details of who to contact if concerns arise. The group's Whistleblowing Policy and procedures support transparency and accountability. Staff and members are issued a copy in their staff and member's handbooks when they join or are recruited. The Safeguarding Policy also contains a whistleblowing section which outlines the process for reporting and contains a clear statement that those raising issues will be enabled to do so without fear of victimisation or disadvantage.

4.6.2 An Excel document tracks the DBS certificate checks for all those who require one. For members who have their checks facilitated through host organisations the Group Lead sees a physical copy of the DBS certificate before logging it on the tracker and setting a maximum expected date for renewal. For any DBS checks that the Claretians are responsible for, the Group Lead encourages registration under the DBS update service and then logs the due date for re-checks. The log shows that all checks are within their anticipated renewal date. Leadership oversight of DBS processes is evident through Trustee meeting minutes and proactive management where delays occur. During interview the Group Lead reported that in the event of a blemished DBS return they would contact the RLSS for advice. The Self-Assessment also outlines that depending on the information, the applicant would be spoken to and a risk assessment completed prior to any decision of appointment being made by leaders.

4.6.3 Safer recruitment practice guidance is set out in the Safeguarding Policy and directs that no appointments will be commenced until the satisfactory return of references and DBS checks. It sets out that all new employees should be provided with, and sign to acknowledge receipt and understanding of, all relevant policy and procedures. The Group Lead retains a record of inductions, and these are stored securely.

4.6.4 The employees were required to provide references at the time of their recruitment and undergo ID verification and right-to-work checks. Due to the nature of their duties none of the employees require a DBS check to fulfil their roles but records have been kept of the provision of the Safeguarding Policy and other relevant induction policies and documents.

4.6.5 The Claretians have a Code of Behaviour Policy for members and staff which includes their responsibility to ensure that everyone participating in the Claretians' activities, particularly children, young people and vulnerable adults, must be protected from harm.

4.6.6 If family members come to visit members at any of the communities their ID is checked upon arrival and a record made. The Claretians do, from time-to-time, receive visits from members of the international congregation studying in Rome. The visitors come to the UK for up to two weeks to improve their English but do not undertake ministry. Ahead of their arrival the Provincial completes overseas checks and ensures compliance with safeguarding awareness training and whilst in the Province the visitors are expected to adhere to the Safeguarding Policy. Each community has an induction pack that contains safeguarding information within it. The group is not expecting any new members. If new members were to join they would undertake formation in Spain or elsewhere in the first instance.

Areas for development

4.6.7 The Claretians have a safeguarding Complaints Policy which is suitable for purpose and aims to resolve complaints as early as possible. However, this is not available to the public and has been self-identified as an area of development in the Self-Assessment development plan. The Safeguarding Complaints Policy should be published in accessible locations for those who may wish to use it.

4.6.8 The Whistleblowing Policy, although comprehensive and relevant, was created and approved by Trustees in May 2021. It should therefore be reviewed to ensure that all contents remain current. It is acknowledged that email evidence suggests this is due for approval by the Trustees in March 2026.

Graded: Results Being Achieved

4.7 Standard 7 Training and support for safeguarding

Strengths

4.7.1 Role-specific safeguarding training requirements and annual refreshers are clearly defined in policy. Training is delivered through diocesan safeguarding teams, RLSS engagement and internal sessions delivered by the PSR and Group Lead. The Group Lead advised that regular safeguarding discussions within the group further reinforce learning and awareness. Although no records or minutes were taken of these verbal discussions, the Local Superior and Youth Vocational Lead confirmed they occur.

4.7.2 The Group Lead maintains a training record. When the group members complete safeguarding training with external providers they share the certificate with the Group Lead who makes a note of the course undertaken and the date. Any shortfalls in training expectations would be flagged by the tracking system, and the Group Lead would be able to support compliance. However, given that all priests are also expected to fulfil their safeguarding training obligations by the diocese they are ministering in, the Group Lead has not yet had to address any shortfalls.

Areas for development

4.7.3 Minutes from Trustee meetings show that training needs are discussed at leadership level. However, there is no Training Needs Analysis or Training Plan for the group. This has been identified as a need for the group within their Self-Assessment and remains an action for completion within the Safeguarding Action Plan that should be undertaken to ensure that all training needs are identified. The Safeguarding Policy outlines the expectation for safeguarding training for the various roles within the group and the designated levels are appropriate for the duties undertaken and the exposure to vulnerable groups. However, it does not set out if, or how often, refresher training should be completed for employees.

4.7.4 At present the members of the Claretians receive their training through a variety of different means. However, it has not been established whether this is meeting the needs of the recipients or whether learning has been adequately absorbed. A method of determining effectiveness and seeking the feedback of those receiving training should be devised.

4.7.5 The employees have not been offered formal safeguarding training but have been advised what steps to take in the event of a disclosure. The cook confirmed that they were trained in disclosures, identifying safeguarding concerns and how to record and report them by the Group Lead when they commenced employment. Although employees do not come into direct contact with visiting groups or members of the public during the course of their duties, they should undertake basic safeguarding awareness training and refresher training thereafter.

Graded: Results Being Achieved

4.8 Standard 8 Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Strengths

4.8.1 The Claretians have a Safeguarding Action Plan which demonstrates an awareness of development needs, assigns responsible parties for completion of tasks, allocates timescales and tracks outstanding actions. The document is reviewed frequently and hence maintains a "live" status. Previous iterations of the plan provided as evidence for the audit show that progress has been made in terms of identifying, tracking and completing actions.

4.8.2 Email evidence of liaison with the RLSS shows that engagement has supported improvements. Anonymised case examples given by the Group Lead demonstrate that the group have listened to complainants in the past and been responsive to the feedback given in the way in which they communicate and the support they have offered.

Areas for development

4.8.3 The Safeguarding Action Plan demonstrates an intention to improve practice in quality assurance with some actions remaining incomplete. For example, an action to undertake an annual safeguarding audit and report for the trustees has been identified as an action in the Safeguarding Action Plan that is yet to be completed. At present there is limited evidence of systematic auditing, monitoring, or evaluation of safeguarding effectiveness. The Claretians should ensure full implementation and regular review of the Safeguarding Action Plan.

4.8.4 The Self-Assessment, and the Group Lead in interview, both state that consideration for another Religious Life Group to undertake a peer audit of safeguarding processes within the group will be given. Such a peer review is encouraged and if not possible, another approach to evaluating the quality of safeguarding practice and receiving feedback outside of CSSA audits should be sought.

4.8.5 In 2024 the Trustees received an annual safeguarding report prepared by the Group Lead. The report content was informative and beneficial in summarising the safeguarding highlights and occurrences of the year. However, there have been no further reports to Trustees since this time, and this has been self-identified in the Self-Assessment development plan as requiring action. An annual safeguarding report should be presented to the Trustees.

4.8.6 The Safeguarding Action Plan features an incomplete action to create a safeguarding working group to discuss learning and how this can be embedded into practices. This is considered to be good reflective practice in assuring the quality of safeguarding processes within the group and should be pursued.

Graded: Results Being Achieved

5. Summary of overall findings

5.1. The Claretians demonstrate a clear commitment to safeguarding, underpinned by a comprehensive policy framework aligned with the national safeguarding standards and a strong, survivor-centred ethos. Leadership engagement is a notable strength with safeguarding being embedded in governance structures, regularly discussed at trustee level, and supported by an experienced Safeguarding Lead with relevant expertise and external connections. The group's small size and limited scope of activity also contribute to a manageable safeguarding environment, with no reported cases in the previous 12 months.

5.2 Some trustees have not completed safeguarding training, and there is limited preparedness for potential future safeguarding cases, such as having trained personnel to manage respondents or ensuring shared access to safeguarding records. Overall quality assurance processes can be developed further with annual reporting and reviews outside of the CSSA's involvement.

5.3 Relevant policies and plans exist although they are not always regularly reviewed or fully implemented. Training provision would benefit from a more structured approach, including a formal training needs analysis, clearer refresher requirements, and mechanisms to assess impact.

5.4 In practice, safeguarding awareness and culture are well established. Members and staff show a good understanding of procedures, including reporting concerns and responding to disclosures. Communication of safeguarding messages is visible in parish settings, supported by training sessions and community engagement initiatives that help raise awareness among parishioners. The group also benefit from strong relationships with the RLSS and demonstrates a willingness to learn from past cases and improve practice. Additionally, structured tools such as the Safeguarding Action Plan indicate an ongoing commitment to development and accountability.

6. Recommendations

To support improvement, the following recommendations are made:

Within 3 months

- The most recent Safeguarding Policy, the Safeguarding Complaints Policy and the Safe Spaces provision or other support resources for survivors should feature on the website or be publicised elsewhere
- Another appropriate person should have access to the electronic safeguarding files
- The review and approval of the Whistleblowing Policy is carried out as planned

Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency

Within 6 months

- The Communications Plan is reviewed, and the views of stakeholders are sought in both the Communication Plan and the Communications Policy in order to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding communications and messaging
- As identified in the Safeguarding Action Plan, work on developing mechanisms for engaging with survivors and incorporating feedback into practice should continue
- The views of those attending safeguarding training should be sought to assess effectiveness
- Policy should outline an expectation for employees to undertake refresher training in basic safeguarding
- The support processes for respondents should be formally documented

Within 12 months

- The Safeguarding Policy is reviewed at least annually
- In line with the expectations set out in the Safeguarding Policy all Trustees should complete Trustee training and annual Safeguarding training
- A member/s of the group should receive training in the supervision and management of offenders or those subject to safeguarding plans
- A Training Needs Analysis or Training Plan is undertaken
- As identified by the Claretians, a peer review should be sought and if not possible, another approach to evaluating the quality of safeguarding practice and receiving feedback outside of CSSA audits should be sought
- An annual Safeguarding report is prepared and presented to Trustees

7. Arrangements for follow-up

7.1 In line with the overall rating of Results Being Achieved, the earliest date for the next audit of the Claretians 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 in the meantime.

8. Appendix

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

- Self-Assessment form
- The Claretian Missionaries' Fatima Province website[8]
- The Claretian Missionaries' international website[9]
- Email liaison with the RLSS
- The Charity Commission website for the Claretian Missionaries[10]
- Communication Plan
- Communications Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Safeguarding Complaints Policy
- Code of Behaviour Policy
- Claretian Missionaries Activities document
- Safeguarding cases log
- Evidence of email engagement with the RLSS

[8] SAFEGUARDING - Misioneros Claretianos

[9] Safeguarding | Claretian Missionaries

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

- Safeguarding Lead roles and responsibilities document
- Safeguarding Adviser Job Description
- Trustee meeting minutes
- Safeguarding Action Plans
- Safeguarding Report from February 2024
- Staff handbook
- Safeguarding training slides
- Claretian Missionaries Safeguarding Statement
- Safeguarding contact lists for each community
- DBS tracking spreadsheet
- Safeguarding training spreadsheet
- Training attendance lists