

The Order of the Friars Minor Conventual (The Greyfriars)

Baseline Audit Report
July 2026

Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Methodology.....	4
3. Audit grading.....	5
4. Audit findings against each standard.....	7
5. Summary of overall findings.....	25
6. Recommendations.....	26
7. Arrangements for follow-up.....	27
8. Appendix.....	28

1. Introduction

1.1 This is the baseline audit of the safeguarding arrangements of the Order of the Friars Minor Conventual, also known as 'the Greyfriars'. This audit has been undertaken as part of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency's (CSSA) baseline audit programme of Religious Life Groups in England and Wales.

1.2 The Order of Friars Minor Conventual is a Catholic religious order founded by St Francis of Assisi under the name of Friars Minor. The English Province of the Franciscan Order was established by command of St Francis in the General Chapter of the Order in 1224. The province grew quickly to become a well-established and very well-respected Order living and working amongst some of the poorest communities, providing practical support and spiritual guidance. The Reformation saw the Greyfriars' forced disestablishment in England and Wales, and it was not until the early years of the 20th century that new foundations of the Greyfriars came into being, first in Portishead and then in Rye. The Greyfriars once again expanded their mission and now have independent parishes in Liverpool, Manchester, London and Rye. The Greyfriars' province also includes Ireland where they are established both in Wexford and in Dublin. The province is led by the Custos, who is elected at the Ordinary Custodial Chapter which is held every four years. The current Custos is Fr Maximillian Mary Martin, who is resident in Liverpool. This audit only reviews the safeguarding arrangements for the Order's presence in England and Wales.

1.3 The Greyfriars currently number ten in England and Wales, all of whom are ministering in the independent parishes listed above. Their main apostolate is the running of their parishes, however they have also been invited to provide chaplaincy at hospitals and to support by leading retreats arranged by companies who specialise in this field. Some of the friars have also been invited to provide spiritual leadership to pilgrimages arranged by dioceses. In addition, there are two Maltese friars who provide chaplaincy to the Franciscan Sisters of the Heart of Jesus mission in London where accommodation and support is provided to Maltese nationals coming to London for medical treatment. The friars are accommodated in friaries within their church buildings, with each having a guardian, nominated by

the friars. The Greyfriars employ staff to support their housekeeping arrangements and have approximately 40 volunteers who support their parish work. They also employ a designated liaison person in England and Wales on a contract basis to provide safeguarding support.

1.4 This audit seeks to assess the effectiveness of the current safeguarding arrangements by considering practice over the last 12 months. The CSSA has categorised Religious Life Groups (RLGs) on a scale from Level 1 (a small community with minimal outreach and no known safeguarding concerns), Level 2 (a medium sized community with some outreach to vulnerable populations and/or providing some diocesan activities, such as parish priests), to Level 3 (a large community and/or one with significant outreach to vulnerable populations and/or a disproportionately high number of open safeguarding cases). The Greyfriars are categorised as a Level 2 community due to the number of members and ministries, and they completed a corresponding self-assessment.

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

2. Methodology

2.1 The CSSA notified the Greyfriars of their intention to audit on the 19 January 2026. The analyst met with the Safeguarding Lead and designated liaison person on 9 February 2026. It was agreed that audit of the Greyfriars would take place on 21 April 2026 with the self-assessment and supporting evidence to be submitted by 30 March 2026. The self-assessment was returned with supporting evidence on 31 March 2026. Additional evidence was viewed during the audit visit.

2.2 The Quality Assurance Analyst visited the Greyfriars as planned on the 21 April 2026. As part of the visit, interviews were undertaken with the following:

- The Custos
- The Safeguarding Lead
- The Designated Liaison Person
- The Trustees
- A focus group of friars from across the Order
- The safeguarding consultant

2.3 The Greyfriars are members of the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS). Information shared by this organisation showed that the Greyfriars have regular and appropriate contact with them and are proactive in seeking advice and support when required. There were no concerns raised by RLSS or the dioceses who responded as to the Greyfriars' commitment to positive safeguarding practice.

3. Audit grading

3.1 Practice was assessed against the eight national safeguarding standards adopted by the Catholic Church in England and Wales¹ and graded in accordance with the CSSA Maturity Matrix for Level 2 Religious Life Groups.

3.2 Potential audit ratings against each standard, and the final overall rating, are: Below Basic, Basic, Early Progress, Firm Progress, Results Being Achieved, Comprehensive Assurance and Exemplary.

3.3 The Greyfriars have received an overall audit grading of comprehensive assurance, achieving this grading in five of the eight standards. The Greyfriars should be commended on achieving exemplary in the other three standards.

¹ The eight standards lay out what CSSA expects in terms of level of safeguarding practice in church bodies (that is, dioceses and religious life groups) A description and full details of the Standards can be found on the CSSA website [here](#)

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

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 Greyfriars have demonstrated their commitment to safeguarding through the development of a suite of safeguarding policies that underpin a clear and unequivocal statement on their belief that they have a duty to value all people and to support them and protect them from harm². The Greyfriars have publicly committed to observe and implement the safeguarding policies of the Catholic Church in England and Wales as well as those for the other jurisdictions where they are present in the United Kingdom and in Ireland. The full suite of safeguarding policies can be found on the Greyfriars' website. To ensure that these policies are widely understood and implemented the Greyfriars have appointed amongst their number a safeguarding lead who takes responsibility for ensuring that all safeguarding work is done to a consistently high standard. The Greyfriars have employed a designated liaison person for safeguarding in England and Wales and one in Ireland to support the safeguarding lead and to provide lay expertise in terms of safeguarding legislation and practice. They have also secured the services of an external safeguarding consultant who is providing mentorship to the designated liaison person and external review of safeguarding actions and processes. In addition, the Greyfriars are members of the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS)³ and the Conference of Religious (COR)⁴.

² The Greyfriars safeguarding statement can be found at [Safeguarding | The Greyfriars Web](#)

³ The RLSS is a team of independent safeguarding professionals offering safeguarding services to the Religious of the Catholic Church in England and Wales [Religious Life Safeguarding Service – Religious Safeguarding](#)

⁴ 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 [Conference of Religious](#)

4.1.2 In 2022, when the current Custos had assumed his role and brought together his Definitory Council, they began the process of reviewing the trustees and safeguarding in general. A new Board of Trustees was established in 2023/24, and the Greyfriars requested an external audit of their safeguarding practice which was completed by the safeguarding team of the Archdioceses of Southwark where the order was affiliated at the time. This audit identified areas of strength as well as areas for development and provided recommendations. The Greyfriars used this review and its recommendations to create a safeguarding three-year strategy which was supported by a safeguarding implementation plan. The initial three-year plan has been further developed, and an updated further three-year strategy was agreed by the Board of Trustees and implemented in March this year. Again, this safeguarding strategy is underpinned by a clear safeguarding implementation plan with actions identified and nominated to individuals, review dates and records of progress. This progress is reviewed by the Board of Trustees at their quarterly meetings and is overseen by the Greyfriars safeguarding committee.

4.1.3 The Greyfriars have introduced robust governance arrangements for the oversight of safeguarding in the Order. The Board of Trustees hold the ultimate responsibility for safeguarding matters, and all members of the board have undergone both safeguarding training and trustee training. Discussions with the trustees showed that they all understood their responsibilities in terms of safeguarding oversight and decision-making, as well as their reporting responsibilities to external organisations including statutory authorities, the Charity Commission⁵ and the CSSA. Internal processes were also understood, including obtaining Canon Law support and reporting issues to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF)⁶. The Board of Trustees receive reports and updates on safeguarding from the safeguarding lead for the Order who is the Trustee for safeguarding and who chairs the safeguarding committee. The safeguarding committee is made up of the designated liaison persons for England and Wales and

⁵ The Charity Commission for England and Wales register and regulate charities in England and Wales to ensure that the public can support them with confidence. [The Charity Commission - GOV.UK](https://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/)

⁶ The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) is a department of the Roman Curia in charge of the religious discipline of the Catholic Church.

Ireland, two friars and the parish safeguarding representatives (PSRs)⁷ from each of the parishes the Greyfriars run in England and Wales. The safeguarding committee has terms of reference which include the requirement to develop and oversee the safeguarding strategy and safeguarding implementation plan as well as having oversight of case management, the annual safeguarding audits, training and safer recruitment compliance and safeguarding communications. New formal reporting processes are being developed by the safeguarding committee so that reports to the trustees are provided by the committee as an independent collective, as to-date this reporting has been the sole responsibility of the trustee for safeguarding.

4.1.4 The Greyfriars have five trustees. Alongside the Custos, who is the chair of trustees, and the safeguarding trustee, there are also two friars and an external trustee, who is a Christian Brother⁸, brought in to share his extensive experience as a trustee and to provide objective scrutiny. The Greyfriars employ a private company, L&P (a subsidiary of Cantor Fitzgerald⁹) who review the charity's governance and finance arrangements, clerk and minute the Board of Trustee meetings and provide advice on governance and legal issues as required. The trustees meet a minimum of quarterly. Recently, meetings have been more frequent as the current Greyfriars board have needed to address some non-recent issues with financial oversight that had come to light during internal audits. These have now been fully addressed by the board working closely with the Charity Commission. At audit, evidence demonstrated that they have met the expectations of the Charity Commission and continue to accept their support as new, robust systems of governance and financial management are embedded. Financial oversight is provided by the Greyfriars financial committee and is reported into the Board of Trustees meetings.

4.1.5 As well as having a Board of Trustees the Greyfriars also have the Definitory Council which is the operational arm and oversees the day to day running of the

⁷ A Parish Safeguarding Representative is a volunteer who supports their Parish in Safeguarding matters such as Safer Recruitment of volunteers and liaison with Diocesan safeguarding teams.

⁸ The Christian Brothers are Roman Catholic lay congregations dedicated primarily to education, founded to serve underprivileged youth. There are two main groups: the Irish Christian Brothers (founded by Edmund Rice in 1802) and the De La Salle Brothers (founded in France, 1680).

⁹ [Our Business - Cantor | Cantor](#)

Order. Members of the Definitory Council are selected by the Custos and also act as trustees. The Definitory Council meets eight times per year and receive updates and reports from each friary chapter meeting. Safeguarding is on the agenda for both Definitory Council meetings and for friary chapter meetings as was demonstrated at audit by the minutes and agendas shared from these meetings. Each friary has a friary chapter every four to six weeks. The governance of the friary is discussed at this meeting. Each friary has a guardian rather than a prior as the Greyfriars constitution requires that each friary runs as a democracy. This is done to ensure that any actions are only completed with the agreement of all the friars. The Definitory Council is in the process of updating and standardising the agendas and minutes of these meetings. Each Greyfriars parish must also hold a parish council meeting quarterly. Some of these had not been in place when the current Definitory Council took over in 2022, but they are all now scheduled and these again will have standardised minutes and agendas. The parish priest brings all the parish updates to the friary chapter meetings, and these are fed into the Definitory Council meetings by the friary guardians.

4.1.6 The Greyfriars leadership demonstrated at audit that they model a positive, proactive culture of safeguarding. They have engaged and worked closely with experts in the field to ensure that the actions that they are taking to improve their safeguarding practice are in line with the eight national safeguarding standards and reflect current best practice. They have used guidance such as Integrity in Ministry¹⁰ to inform their own codes of conduct for the friars as well as staff and volunteers and have sought external review and recommendations for policies, self-assessments, safer recruitment and training from recognised organisations such as RLSS. All those spoken to during the audit were aware of their safeguarding policies and the expectations placed on them to comply with them.

4.1.7 The Greyfriars have introduced systems and processes to promote safe ministry in practice and safe environments in their churches, church buildings, friaries and when they visit hospitals, prisons, schools and people in their own homes. These include ensuring that all friars, staff and volunteers are aware of the

¹⁰ Integrity in Ministry is a code of conduct for Religious engaged in ministry in the Catholic Church in England and Wales [Integrity in Ministry – Religious Life Safeguarding Service](#)

safeguarding policies and procedures and understand their responsibilities to meet them. To assist them with this, documents have been created that set out the expectations of each role in terms of responding to and reporting safeguarding concerns. A flow chart has been developed that takes people through the processes step by step and this is available in all settings and is on display on the safeguarding notice boards. All friars, staff and volunteers have undergone safeguarding training relevant to their roles and responsibilities, and all have the contact details of the safeguarding lead and designated liaison person to whom they can turn for support. These details were reported through self-assessment to be on display in all settings on the safeguarding notice boards. The Greyfriars have a safer recruitment policy in place that requires all friars, staff and volunteers to have Disclosure and Barring Checks (DBS)¹¹.

4.1.8 Environmental safety is managed using a variety of approaches. Self-assessment audits demonstrated that each of the friaries and church buildings has a safeguarding notice board at all available entrances and exits with useful safeguarding information and advice. Glass-panel doors or open-door arrangements where this is not achievable have been put in place for meeting spaces, which ensure that appropriate visibility and supervision in ministry settings is maintained. A notable practice was the keeping of records of all minors in the friaries and sacristies and using confidential visitor sign-in books to ensure an audit trail is in place and that there is evidence that all are following the policies on maintaining safety. The registers seen documented the presence of minors and included the details of the responsible lay adult supervising them. In addition, a register of home visits is kept in all parishes which supports the safety of those who are lone-working, together with visitor sign-in books for the churches, church buildings and presbyteries.

4.1.9 The friars' wellbeing and safety is a priority for the Custos who meets with all the friars to discuss their individual needs and wishes. The Greyfriars' friaries do not have infirmaries or care facilities in them so should a friar have additional care

¹¹ The Disclosure and Barring Service processes and issues criminal record checks on individuals applying for employment or a voluntary role for employers.

needs these would be sought either from private nursing agencies or through the local National Health Service (NHS) to the friary. In addition, the Greyfriars have engaged with the Little Sisters of the Poor¹² who run care homes and any friars needing 24-hour care can be supported to move into a care home close to their community where possible.

4.1.10 The Greyfriars' systems and processes for the governance and assurance of safeguarding are a good example of how a culture of safeguarding can be developed and embedded in a religious order. The Order should be commended on their determination not to accept 'good enough' but to actively look to improve and develop, bringing in standardised agendas and minutes across the whole governance framework and by expanding their engagement with lay experts, bringing in their knowledge and skills to further enhance their own practice. The Greyfriars have a good level of insight into how safeguarding can be enhanced in all aspects of their culture, ministry and governance and through their safeguarding implementation plan demonstrated at audit a continuous improvement cycle.

Areas for development

4.1.11 No additional areas for development were noted at audit in addition to those that have been self-identified by the Greyfriars and are already contained within the safeguarding implementation plan.

Graded: Exemplary

¹² [Caring for the elderly inspired by faith - Little Sisters of the Poor Care Home](#)

4.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church's safeguarding message

Strengths

4.2.1 The Greyfriars have created and implemented a safeguarding communication plan which sets out the key safeguarding messages, the intended audiences, the communication methods to be used, and the persons responsible for the delivery and the review of the impact of these communications. In practice, the Greyfriars use this plan to ensure consistent safeguarding messages are communicated to friars, staff, volunteers, parishioners, visitors and the wider public. This is achieved using the website, posters, parish communications, chapter meetings and local safeguarding briefings. Information is shared on safeguarding boards which are at all entrances and exits of church buildings. These safeguarding boards are standardised and include the safeguarding statement and a poster with a QR code that is a direct link to the safeguarding pages of the Greyfriars' website. The safeguarding boards also have the contact details of the safeguarding lead, the designated liaison person as well as the local PSR should anyone wish to report a concern. The safeguarding flowchart is also on the board which takes people through what to do and what to expect if they raise a concern. In addition to posters aimed at adults, there are also posters in the church buildings aimed at children that use simple language and themes to raise awareness and to encourage them to speak up if they are worried about anything that include information on who they can speak with.

4.2.2 The Greyfriars have an annual 'Safeguarding Sunday' event where information on safeguarding is shared with parishioners by the PSR who speaks with them about their role and what to do if they have a concern. The focus on the day is that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that all concerns should be raised, no matter how insignificant they feel or seem. The event is used to raise awareness in the children as well as to what they should do if they ever feel unsafe. The event is also used to reflect on the impact of abuse and to pray for those who have survived abuse. Safeguarding Sunday is one of the actions seen on the safeguarding communication plan that is used to share information and safeguarding

expectations with parishioners and the wider public. Internally additional strategies are used to ensure that friars, staff and volunteers are all up to date with safeguarding messages including awareness sessions, training and presentations at chapter meetings, and monthly updates via a newsletter. Local diocesan safeguarding messaging is shared through liaison with diocesan safeguarding coordinators¹³ and attendance at diocesan events and training subject to invitation.

4.2.3 Safeguarding communication is reviewed annually as part of the self-assessment carried out by each friary. This includes a walkthrough of all sites and spaces where the friars work and live and is completed by the parish priest and the friary guardians. As part of this process feedback is sought on the content and effectiveness of the safeguarding messages being shared from the friars and from the PSRs and parishioners. This feedback informs the future development of safeguarding communications. To achieve improvement in this area the Greyfriars also use the expertise of the RLSS, diocesan safeguarding teams, and through discussions with their safeguarding consultant. These approaches combine to inform the annual updating and review of the safeguarding communication plan.

Areas for development

4.2.4 The Greyfriars have ensured that information on safeguarding is easily accessible through the website and they have provided links to this for parishioners on their safeguarding notice boards. The Greyfriars should consider how they might improve accessibility for those who may not be able to use technology easily and provide information in alternative formats than just a QR code such as an information factsheet, a handbook or this could include additional posters which should be made available at all church buildings on or near the safeguarding boards.

Graded: Comprehensive assurance

¹³ A Diocesan Safeguarding Coordinator is a professional appointed by the bishop to lead the safeguarding team, ensuring compliance with national standards, managing allegations, and supporting victims/survivors.

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

Strengths

4.3.1 In addition to the safeguarding policy, the Greyfriars have created a Survivor Support Policy that gives more in-depth guidance on the process to be followed with those who report having been harmed and how they should be engaged with and supported throughout. There is the expectation that any person making a disclosure of harm receives an appropriately open and person-centred response. The Greyfriars have trained all their friars in how to respond to those who report harm including ensuring that they listen carefully, make appropriate records, seek advice on where to signpost survivors to for additional help and support, including facilitating access to counselling and offering pastoral accompaniment if requested. The Greyfriars would seek advice and support from RLSS and Grief to Grace¹⁴ on any requirement for counselling or therapeutic services and would consider funding these if it were judged to be appropriate. The safeguarding lead and designated liaison person were aware of Safe Spaces¹⁵ and their role in survivor support and have their contact details on the website. Although the Greyfriars have not had any reason to use any of these services over the 12-month pre-audit period, the routes to them are widely shared and known, and can be activated if required in a timely manner.

4.3.2 The Greyfriars have in the past had experience engaging with and supporting survivors through historic allegations in Australia and a more recent (2022) incident in Ireland. They have used the learning from these experiences to develop their Survivor Support policy and to create a process by which survivors can share their

¹⁴ Grief to Grace is a specialised 5-day programme of spiritual and psychological healing for anyone who has suffered sexual, physical, emotional or spiritual abuse in childhood, adolescence or adulthood, including those who are the victims of rape, incest or abuse by a member of the clergy. [Home | Grief to Grace](#)

¹⁵ 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. [Home – Safe Spaces England and Wales](#)

experiences to the Greyfriars through the completion of a feedback template. The next stage in the process is the completion by the safeguarding lead and designated liaison person of a reflections template, and a lessons learned template from the feedback they have received. The outcomes of these are recorded on the lessons learned log and are shared with the board of trustees and used to inform developments in future safeguarding practice. Any identified actions would then be added to the safeguarding implementation plan and shared with the Order more widely through discussions and training. Minutes from board meetings demonstrated this process in action for lessons learned from such a review.

Areas for development

4.3.3 The Greyfriars have access to a number of resources and individuals from whom they could seek support and who are trained in providing direct survivor support. They may want to consider whether they would benefit internally from having key individuals such as the Custos, the safeguarding lead and the designated liaison person trained more formally in trauma-informed responses so that they have the skills and knowledge to engage with and personally meet survivors if this is requested by them. Awareness of trauma-informed approaches would also support them to work more closely and directly with survivors to inform their ongoing safeguarding practice.

Graded: Comprehensive assurance

4.4 Standard 4 Effective management of allegations and concerns

Strengths

4.4.1 The Greyfriars safeguarding policy and flow charts have clear guidelines on how all allegations and concerns should be responded to. There are clear lines of reporting for people to follow and timeframes for doing so within the management of allegations policy. All friars, staff and volunteers have undergone training in the management of allegations, and this is updated annually. The friars, staff and

volunteers were aware when spoken to of their obligations in terms of reporting issues to internal staff and statutory authorities and were able to articulate the need to be open and transparent when speaking with people who were reporting harm in regard to issues of confidentiality and the need to escalate issues when needed.

4.4.2 All safeguarding concerns and allegations are channelled through the designated liaison person, who then contacts RLSS at the earliest opportunity. Allegations and concerns are also immediately shared with the safeguarding lead and escalated to the board of trustees if required through a documented escalation procedure. Governance reporting templates have been created and are used to inform the board of trustees of the situation and progress of any cases, providing a management audit trail. In addition, the Greyfriars have a General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)¹⁶ and safeguarding records protocol which is followed to ensure that records are written, kept and managed in line with legislation. Case management records are stored in the Custos' office in locked cabinets or managed through password protected data management systems online. Case records consist of a chronology template as well as a standardised records template that ensure that all required information is gathered and managed correctly and consistently.

4.4.3 The Greyfriars have established good working relationships with RLSS and those spoken to at audit were aware of their role in terms of being a source of advice and other services for the management of safeguarding concerns. In practice, the Greyfriars' safeguarding lead and designated liaison person would manage any interaction with RLSS and would provide feedback on the outcomes for the friar, member of staff or volunteer who referred the matter to them. In addition to the safeguarding services and support that the Greyfriars receive from RLSS, they have access to their safeguarding consultant who can provide additional expertise when required.

¹⁶ The General Data Protection Regulations are the UK's data privacy laws that have been in effect since May 2018 [Data protection: The UK's data protection legislation – GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/data-protection-the-uk-s-data-protection-legislation)

Areas for development

4.4.4 The Greyfriars have comprehensive systems and processes in place for the management of allegations that provide clear guidelines to ensure a consistent approach. Consideration should be given to how they can measure the impact of receiving safeguarding concerns on those who do so in terms of whether the current processes support them as reporters and responders and whether there is any additional supervision or de-briefing process that could be added.

Graded: Comprehensive assurance

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

Strengths

4.5.1 The Greyfriars have developed a 'Supporting those accused' policy that includes a respondent management protocol and pathway. This policy guides their actions when they are made aware of an allegation against a member of the Order. The protocol would involve engaging the services of RLSS to carry out a risk assessment and to support the Greyfriars with the development and management of a safeguarding plan should this be required. As part of the respondent management protocol there is guidance on the instigation and management of any Canon Law proceedings and what support would be available for a respondent during these processes as well as support for any civil law proceedings. Information for respondents is provided through the list of relevant professional or canonical contacts within the 'Supporting those accused' policy. The Greyfriars have access to Canon lawyers and civil lawyers and insurers who would all be informed and advice sought as required.

4.5.2 The supporting respondent's pathway was developed to address the needs of the respondent following an allegation. This pathway includes measures that can be taken to ensure that the respondent has access to appropriate emotional,

spiritual and practical support, including therapeutic or counselling services where appropriate and signposting to support organisations if required. Actions taken as part of this pathway would be done so with the supervision and advice of safeguarding experts from RLSS or the safeguarding consultant to ensure that they did not contravene any restrictions put on the individual. The Greyfriars would be able to accommodate a friar being withdrawn from ministry in another of their own communities should this be required, and although they would be willing to support other Religious Life Groups in this respect have never been asked to do so. The policy includes guidance for the management of those returning to ministry following an allegation, recognising the need for any return to ministry to be informed by appropriate advice, risk assessment and safeguarding review.

4.5.3 The 'Supporting those accused' policy is widely available to all friars and was, with the supporting respondent's protocols and pathway, developed following learning from a case in another jurisdiction. Friars spoken to at audit all reported feeling knowledgeable about the processes that would be followed in the event of an allegation being made against them and reported feeling confident that they would be treated fairly and the situation would be managed in line with the policy. All recognised the need to provide care and support to any individual in this situation during the process and on their return to ministry should this be the outcome.

Areas for development

4.5.4 The Greyfriars have established good links with the RLSS and diocesan safeguarding coordinators and, with the added resource of their safeguarding consultant, have access to expertise that they can call on to support them to manage and support a respondent. Consideration should be given as to how they might provide training, support and supervision internally to those friars and lay people who might step into the role of supporter for a respondent to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills they need to effectively support an individual whilst maintaining their own wellbeing.

Graded: Comprehensive assurance

4.6 Standard 6 Robust human resource management

Strengths

4.6.1 The Greyfriars have an established safer recruitment policy in place that requires that all friars, staff and volunteers have the required DBS checks prior to starting in their respective roles. Senior leadership take safer recruitment seriously and have attended RLSS safer recruitment training to ensure that they have a clear understanding of their responsibility and accountability for safer recruitment. The Greyfriars also employ the services of a private company to assist them with their Human Resource (HR) management when required. Those arriving from overseas must undergo a police check in their country of origin and a DBS check in England and Wales on arrival, prior to completing an induction programme that includes an enculturation course as well as safeguarding training before they are permitted to start any ministry. There have been no new friars from overseas during the past 12 months. The Greyfriars are aware of the challenges of enculturation, and all friars must complete this course regardless of their country of origin.

4.6.2 DBS checks and status are managed by the designated liaison person who holds a central database that includes the current requirements for all friars, staff and volunteers, and their status. The Greyfriars use the update service where possible to manage their DBS checks and have the support of RLSS with the processing of new DBS checks and the review of any that are blemished in any way. This information would be shared with RLSS, who would be approached to carry out a formal risk assessment if required, and their advice would be followed. Once a DBS check has been completed, each new starter will go through an induction checklist which includes completion of the required level of safeguarding training which is role specific. Once this induction process has concluded, a local sign-off process completes the safer recruitment procedure. The responsibility for the safer recruitment of staff sits ultimately with the board of trustees and any compliance issues in terms of recruitment are shared with them through the safeguarding lead.

4.6.3 The Greyfriars have a complaints policy that is accessible through their website that meets the standards expected in terms of content and identified processes that must be followed on the receipt of a complaint. Those spoken to at

audit were aware of the policy and said that they felt confident that any complaints they had would be listened to and acted on objectively. The Greyfriars also have a whistleblowing policy which again was well known and was also available on the website. All friars spoken to were aware of the whistleblowing policy and were confident to use it should it be required. The Greyfriars constitution requires that they work as a democracy with everyone's voice carrying equal weight so matters are usually resolved in friary chapter meetings if they arise. The Greyfriars reported no internal or external complaints or episodes of whistleblowing during the 12-month period prior to audit.

Areas for development

4.6.4 The Greyfriars' safer recruitment processes are robust and include a system of oversight from the board of trustees for issues of non-compliance. Consideration should be given now to introducing some data on safer recruitment that can be used to inform the trustees more about the process itself so that it can be evaluated for effectiveness and efficiency. Developing some recruitment Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)¹⁷ could be considered which would enhance the current system of reporting by exception, to provide added quality assurance.

4.6.5 The Greyfriars should consider how they might gather feedback on the recruitment processes in place that would identify any issues from the perspective of the person being recruited that could be used to improve practice.

Graded: Comprehensive assurance

¹⁷ Key Performance Indicators are a quantifiable measure used to evaluate the success of an organisation, employee etc in meeting objectives for performance. (The Oxford English Dictionary).

4.7 Standard 7 Training and support for safeguarding

Strengths

4.7.1 The Greyfriars have completed a training needs analysis and developed a central training matrix that details the role-specific training requirements for all of the friars, the staff and the volunteers. Training records are maintained and updated by the designated liaison person on the central training matrix which is available for scrutiny by the trustees. The friars, staff and volunteers have all undergone the correct training for their role requirements as evidenced by the training records seen at audit. RLSS training information is shared regularly with the friars, and they are encouraged to attend any training that they feel would be beneficial to their individual ministries and personal development. All friars undertake mandatory annual safeguarding updates alongside their mandated three-yearly safeguarding training. Friars in leadership positions are also required to undertake leadership training and the trustees spoken to at audit had all completed the RLSS safeguarding for trustees training as well as additional trustee training on governance provided by L&P. All training undertaken by friars, staff and volunteers is evaluated for content, effectiveness and appropriateness and these findings are used to inform future training provision.

4.7.2 Those wishing to explore a vocation with the Greyfriars are signposted to the vocations team who are based in the United States of America (USA) for more information on the application process and on the initial stages of discernment and postulancy which take place there. All persons exploring a vocation are subject to rigorous checks including criminal records checks as well as psychological assessments and observation before they are welcomed into postulancy. Currently there is one friar in simple profession in the USA and another entering the Novitiate there.

4.7.3 Training in safeguarding is a priority for the Greyfriars' leadership, and the board of trustees regularly review compliance and discuss ongoing requirements for the friars, staff and volunteers. The trustees review the RLSS training package annually and discern which topics are to be mandated and which can be chosen by the individual friars. Friars therefore have access to additional role-specific

training and were seen to have completed additional training in spiritual direction, safer recruitment and safe use of media. Friars in the majority of dioceses have also attended diocesan safeguarding events and training at the invitation of the safeguarding coordinators. In the Archdiocese of Liverpool where the invitation has not been extended, the Custos has ensured that these friars have access to additional updates via the RLSS. Friars who minister in hospitals have all completed the required training in these settings and share these records with the designated liaison person. The Greyfriars have no issues with compliance with training.

Areas for development

4.7.4 No areas for development were identified other than that self-identified on the safeguarding implementation plan, which was for the safeguarding lead to complete GDPR training during 2026.

Graded: Exemplary

4.8 Standard 8 Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Strengths

4.8.1 The Greyfriars have worked hard to implement the eight national safeguarding standards and have welcomed audit and evaluation of their safeguarding practice from external parties. Following a review of their safeguarding practice completed by the safeguarding team from the Archdiocese of Southwark, they implemented a plan to improve and act on the recommendations it made. The most recent iteration of their safeguarding implementation plan, agreed by the trustees in 2025, and reviewed in 2026 has identified areas for development in each of the eight national standards and includes an action plan and dates for review of progress against pre-determined targets. The Greyfriars have measurable outcomes for each action which allows them to get the assurance they need that actions have been completed. The Greyfriars demonstrated at audit that they evaluate the outcomes of actions and have learned from these when making new commitments to change.

4.8.2 The Greyfriars have established an internal audit process that takes place annually. As part of this, all friars with their respective guardians are required to complete a self-assessment of their friary and church buildings that reviews their safeguarding practice and how it aligns with the requirements of the safeguarding policy and the eight national safeguarding standards. These self-assessments are sent externally to the safeguarding consultant for analysis and a report on each friary is returned to the safeguarding lead with recommendations as required. The format of these self-assessments is an example of how the Greyfriars have adapted their practice following feedback as the originals, created by the Greyfriars and used in both England and Wales and Ireland, have been adjusted so that they more closely reflect the eight national standards and therefore provide the right data for the trustees to inform their oversight of compliance. Actions identified by these self-assessments are added to the safeguarding implementation plan and shared with the respective friaries. Follow-up on actions are monitored by the safeguarding lead and the designated liaison person who provide advice and support to the individual friaries as required.

4.8.3 In terms of learning from the experience of survivors of church abuse, the Greyfriars themselves had not had any recent experience in England and Wales to draw on that has required the use of their survivor feedback processes. They have however endeavoured to learn from the wider experiences of the Church and have engaged with RLSS and Grief to Grace to broaden their knowledge on this issue and to inform the changes they have made to ensure a safer environment in terms of safeguarding. Examples would be the introduction of clear policies and processes for engaging with and supporting survivors and improving how minors are managed in a church setting to ensure their safety.

4.8.4 The Greyfriars reporting structure includes an annual safeguarding report that is shared with trustees. This report summarises all the previous 12-months' governance, training and safer recruitment activities, any safeguarding concerns or incidents that might have occurred, audit activity and returns on complaints and whistleblowing data. The report draws conclusions and identifies key learning and priorities for the following year. The aim of this annual safeguarding review is cited by the Greyfriars as to "support transparency, accountability and ongoing

improvement for members, trustees and other stakeholders”. At audit it was evident that the findings from these annual safeguarding reviews had been used to inform the safeguarding implementation plan and that this process was embedded in practice.

Areas for development

4.8.5 No areas for development were identified at audit.

Graded: Exemplary

5. Summary of overall findings

5.1. At audit the Greyfriars demonstrated a strong and well-embedded commitment to safeguarding, underpinned by comprehensive policies, clear governance structures, and a proactive organisational culture. Leadership plays a key role in this, with trustees and senior figures showing a strong understanding of their responsibilities and actively overseeing safeguarding practices. The introduction of structured safeguarding strategies, implementation plans, and regular audits reflects a mature and systematic approach to continuous improvement. Their engagement with external experts, such as safeguarding consultants and organisations like RLSS and the CSSA, further strengthens the quality of their safeguarding framework.

5.2 Safeguarding was seen to be consistently applied across all areas of ministry. Robust systems are in place for safer recruitment, training, case management, and communication, ensuring that friars, staff, and volunteers understand their roles and responsibilities. The Greyfriars have also created a culture of openness and accountability, where safeguarding is regularly discussed, reviewed, and improved. Their approach to communication is particularly strong, with clear messaging accessible to a wide audience, including children. Overall, their practices are well-aligned with the eight national safeguarding standards and reflect a commitment to excellence and ongoing development.

5.3 While the overall safeguarding framework is highly effective, a small number of areas for development have been identified, primarily focused on enhancing existing good practice rather than addressing significant weaknesses. These include improving accessibility of safeguarding information for individuals who may not easily engage with digital formats and further developing internal expertise in areas such as trauma-informed responses when supporting survivors. There is also the scope to strengthen reflective practice that includes considering how the impact of safeguarding processes is experienced by those reporting concerns, and whether additional supervision or debriefing processes could be beneficial. Additionally, opportunities exist to enhance internal training and support for those involved in managing respondents (those accused), and to introduce more data-driven approaches, such as KPIs, to evaluate training and recruitment processes. These developments would help the Greyfriars build on their already strong foundations and further enhance effectiveness and accountability.

6. Recommendations

To support improvement, the following recommendations are made:

Within 3 months

- Provide safeguarding information in a wider range of accessible formats (e.g. printed handbooks, factsheets, non-digital resources).
- Introduce Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor and evaluate safer recruitment processes and training data.

Within 6 months

- Consider the development and introduction of support, supervision, or debriefing processes for those handling safeguarding concerns. This should include a methodology by which new processes can be evaluated for effectiveness and impact.

- Consider how to strengthen training and support for individuals managing respondents (those accused) to provide an internal resource that can be drawn upon should it be required.
- Establish a methodology by which feedback from new friars, staff and volunteers can be gathered to improve recruitment and onboarding experiences.

Within 12 months

- Develop training in trauma-informed approaches, particularly for trustees, the safeguarding lead and designated liaison person.

7. Arrangements for follow-up

7.1 In line with an overall rating of Comprehensive assurance, the earliest potential date of re-audit by the CSSA is in three years. If the CSSA becomes aware of a significant safeguarding concern or allegation in the intervening period, then an earlier audit will be required.

8. Appendix

The following evidence was submitted and reviewed during the audit

- Safeguarding policy
- Safeguarding Statement of Commitment
- Policy Index and review schedule for all policies
- Safeguarding committee meeting minutes
- Trustee meeting minutes
- Leadership meeting minutes
- Parish Council meeting minutes
- Friary Chapter meeting minutes
- Record of distribution of minutes and information to friars
- Safeguarding committee terms of reference
- Annual meeting schedule
- Safeguarding reports for Trustee meetings
- Role Descriptors for all safeguarding roles
- Three-year safeguarding implementation plan and review schedule
- Self-assessment toolkit for internal safeguarding audits
- Completed internal self-assessments
- Evaluation reports for self-assessments with recommendations
- Action log for self-assessment recommendations showing follow-up
- Briefing notes on safeguarding to local leaders and friars
- Photographic evidence of open-door arrangements and glass doors in public areas
- Records of minors in the friary showing supervision
- Records of minors in the sacristy showing supervision
- Confidential visitor sign-in books
- Local site safeguarding checklists
- Safeguarding communication plan
- RLSS membership documentation and CSSA contract documentation
- Safeguarding posters and flow charts for churches, church buildings and public areas

- Parish newsletters
- Agendas for Chapter and briefing meetings
- Safeguarding Sunday materials
- Local site safeguarding communication checklist
- Diocesan safeguarding contacts
- Disclosure response guidance
- Survivor Support Policy
- Support pathway document
- Pastoral response pathway
- Template for recording support offered to those making a disclosure
- Counselling/ therapeutic support approval route
- Contact list of approved external services
- Feedback/reflection/lessons learned process template
- Support review template
- Action log for lessons learned
- Management of allegations procedure
- Statutory reporting guidance
- Supporting those accused policy including pastoral support arrangements
- Escalation procedure
- Trustee reporting protocol
- Sample governance reporting template
- Concerns/ allegation log
- Case recording template
- Chronology Template
- GDPR/Safeguarding records management protocol
- Risk assessment template
- Professional referral route for complex safeguarding risk assessments
- Safeguarding plan template
- Review template for safeguarding plan
- Role descriptor for those monitoring safeguarding plans locally
- Training/ briefing note for the supervision of offenders or those on safeguarding plans
- Legal/ canonical signposting protocol

- List of professional legal and canonical contacts
- Return to ministry/ leave protocol
- Safer recruitment policy
- Human Resource support arrangements
- Recruitment checklist
- DBS screening process
- Local sign-off process prior to commencement of ministry
- Training expectations for those from overseas / new arrivals document
- DBS renewal log
- Adverse disclosure / risk assessment template for DBS screening
- Safer recruitment decision-making template
- Complaints Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- External agency support records for safer recruitment
- Training needs analysis
- Role-based training map with mandated training by role
- Trustee Induction programme
- Training records for Trustees and safeguarding leaders
- Annual training plan
- Refresher training records
- Chapter safeguarding training resources
- Annual safeguarding questionnaire