

Missionaries of St Francis De Sales

Baseline Audit Report
September 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1 This report is a baseline audit of the safeguarding arrangements for the Missionaries of Saint Francis De Sales¹, also known as the Fransalian Fathers. The Congregation is commonly abbreviated to MSFS and will be referred to in this manner for the remainder of this report. This audit is undertaken as part of the CSSA programme of baseline audits for Religious Life Groups (RLGs) in England and Wales.

1.2 The MSFS was founded in Savoy in 1838 and has a worldwide membership of 1,480 Priests and Brothers. The Generalate for the group is located in Rome and the Congregation is structured into Missions, Regions, Vice-Provinces and Provinces. At present, England is constituted as a Province with a Provincial appointed by the Superior General. The stated object of the English Province is the furtherance of the Roman Catholic faith through pastoral care of churches and mission and by caring for members of the Congregation throughout their life. The MSFS is a Congregation of Pontifical Right and has 18 members in total in England who live in presbyteries alone or in pairs. There are no members in Wales. All 16 active members of the MSFS are engaged exclusively in pastoral ministry in parishes, two of whom are deans, and some hold additional roles such as chaplain for a hospital and school governors. The active members consist of five in Clifton diocese, five in Northampton diocese, two in Leeds diocese, three in Nottingham diocese and one in Plymouth diocese. Of the remaining two members, one resides in a private care home, and another is out of ministry. The MSFS has no employees or volunteers engaged with it directly.

1.3 The scope of this audit includes safeguarding arrangements for the 12-month period preceding the audit week which took place in May 2026. All active members of the MSFS minister as Parish Priests or, in one case, an Assistant Priest for different diocese. The audit will not include comment on the safeguarding arrangements in place for the dioceses in which the Parish ministry is undertaken nor for host

¹ The Missionaries of St Francis De Sales is a registered charity with the charity number 234926.

organisations such as the NHS and schools where Chaplaincy ministry and educational governance is undertaken.

1.4 The CSSA has devised a categorisation scheme for Religious Life Groups taking part in safeguarding audits. This categorises groups on a scale of *Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3*. Level 1 is classed as a small community with minimal outreach and no known safeguarding concerns. Level 1 is itself divided into two categories: *Enclosed* (for Enclosed Orders) and *Apostolic* (for non-Enclosed Orders). Level 2 is for Orders of medium sized communities with some outreach with vulnerable populations and/or providing some diocesan ministries such as Parish Priests. 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 MSFS has been assigned to a Level 2 audit.

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

2. Methodology

2.1 Telephone contact was made by the CSSA Analyst with the former Provincial on 21 January 2026 who advised that a new Provincial had been appointed but was out of the country at the time. Upon the new Provincial's return telephone contact was made on 13 February 2026 and arrangements for the in-person visit agreed. An email was then sent to the Provincial on the same day to confirm the details of the audit and to share the relevant Level 2 audit guidance documents.

2.2 The Level 2 Self-Assessment (an assessment tool which provides background information on the MSFS's adherence to the eight National Safeguarding

Standards²) was completed by the group and then emailed to the CSSA with accompanying evidence on 23 March 2026. Following the review of the Self-Assessment and the supporting evidence provided, the CSSA Analyst completed the in-person visit to St Aldhelm's Presbytery, Malmesbury on 18 May 2026. During the in-person visit interviews were conducted with the Provincial who is also the group's Chair of Trustees and the newly appointed Safeguarding Lead who is also a Trustee. On 20 May interviews via telephone were held with a member from Wiltshire who is also a Trustee and a member who is based in Northampton. A virtual interview was held with a member who resides in Leeds on 21 May.

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 The MSFS has one safeguarding concern that has been open within the last 12 months. It has been managed by the RLSS³ and the audit of this case only covers the role of the MSFS. The case files were shared with the CSSA Analyst ahead of the in-person visit and a subsequent case audit was undertaken with findings referenced within this report.

3. Audit grading

3.1 Safeguarding practice is graded in accordance with the CSSA Maturity Matrix for Level 2 Religious Life Groups. Each standard is graded on an ascending six-point scale of *Basic*, *Early Progress*, *Firm Progress*, *Results Being Achieved*, *Comprehensive Assurance* and *Exemplary*. Grades for individual standards are combined in order to produce an overall grading for the Religious Life Group as an

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

³ RLSS is an independent team of Safeguarding professionals offering Safeguarding services to the Religious of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

outcome of the audit.⁴ 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 MSFS and its progress towards meeting the eight National Safeguarding Standards; the grading for each, and the 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	Results being achieved
Standard 2 – Communicating the Church’s safeguarding message	Firm progress
Standard 3 – Engaging with and caring for those who report having been harmed	Results being achieved
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	Comprehensive assurance
Standard 7 – Training and support for safeguarding	Results being achieved

⁴ 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

Firm progress

4. Audit findings against each standard

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

Strengths

4.1.1 As all active members of the MSFS are Parish Priests who follow the safeguarding policy and procedures for the diocese in which they minister. However, the MSFS also has its own Provincial Safeguarding Policy. This policy is comprehensive and includes a policy statement, definition of safeguarding, responsibilities and mandatory reporting expectations, how to report concerns, contact details, whistleblowing, recording and storage expectations, safer recruitment and outlines a zero tolerance of abuse. The policy was reviewed in March 2026 and has a further review date set for April 2029. Following the review of the Safeguarding Policy and all other related policies, new versions are circulated via email to the group members and requests made of the Local Superiors to discuss them in their community meetings. This was confirmed by the members interviewed; one of whom reported printing hard copies as a preference for ease of reference.

4.1.2 There are four Trustees of the MSFS all of whom are members of the group. The MSFS holds Provincial Council meetings four to five times per year which are attended by all Trustees and are, in effect, Trustee meetings. Minutes from these meetings show that safeguarding is a standing agenda item for all meetings. The MSFS has an Annual General Meeting (AGM) and retreat which is attended by all active group members. Minutes from the last AGM held in September 2025 were provided and evidence that safeguarding is an agenda item and was discussed at the last meeting. Members within the Province are split into three local

communities. Each community has an allocated Local Superior and meets a minimum of five times per year. Any safeguarding messages from the Safeguarding Lead are disseminated to all members through this forum.

4.1.3 During interviews the Trustees demonstrated an awareness of the need to be informed of safeguarding concerns and allegations and of the need to report to the Charity Commission. Policy outlines that the severity of an allegation would be assessed prior to any referral to the Charity Commission which would be completed by the Safeguarding Lead but the Provincial advised they would seek the guidance of the RLSS if they were unsure if a concern met the threshold.

4.1.4 Within the past two months the MSFS has appointed a new Safeguarding Lead who is a Trustee of the group and has completed diocesan safeguarding training. Prior to this, the newly appointed Provincial had been the group's Safeguarding Lead for the previous six years. At present the Provincial is working with the Safeguarding Lead to handover responsibility for safeguarding gradually. The Provincial additionally remains responsible for safeguarding for the worldwide Congregation and states he has managed over 60 safeguarding cases to date. The MSFS has a Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities Guidance document which covers the roles of Trustees, Safeguarding Committee and Designated Safeguarding Lead. There is also a Safeguarding Lead Role and Responsibilities document which describes the role and responsibilities, values, person specification and personal qualities required in greater detail.

4.1.5 *Integrity in Ministry*⁵ has been sent out to all members in the past via email. In the past year this was recirculated by the Safeguarding Lead at the time and discussed at local community meetings. Awareness of the document, familiarity with the content and confirmation of recent circulation were confirmed by the members interviewed.

⁵ *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](#)

4.1.6 The RLSS has confirmed that the MSFS has engaged with its safeguarding, membership and training teams. During interviews the Safeguarding Lead and the Provincial referenced several occasions on which they have liaised with the RLSS and described a close working relationship where they felt confident in seeking the service's expertise when needed.

4.1.7 The Provincial described one of the group's strengths as being upbeat and enthusiastic about safeguarding. A positive culture of safeguarding was also echoed by the members spoken to who described safeguarding as a well-regarded and well-covered area within the group. It was acknowledged that approximately 80% of members have come from India to minister in England and with some having ministered in Africa beforehand. It was apparent that they have embraced the cultural change and adapted well to the expectations of safeguarding in this country with the support of leadership. All those interviewed knew of reporting processes and voiced confidence in the group's safeguarding structures. Raising safeguarding as a topic at all MSFS meetings helps to show that a positive safeguarding culture prevails within the group. The Provincial and Safeguarding Lead advised that when they receive messages or material from the RLSS, the CSSA, the Charity Commission or the Holy See these are disseminated as appropriate to members. The MSFS also has a WhatsApp group in which shorter messages can be shared and for anything larger, emails are sent.

Areas for development

4.1.8 The Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities Guidance document outlines that the MSFS will have a Safeguarding Trustee who is accountable for reporting to the Trustee Board and a Safeguarding Committee which is accountable to the Safeguarding Trustee and ensures the Trustees are discharging their safeguarding duties correctly. The MSFS should form a Safeguarding Committee in line with the commitment in the policy statement or remove this commitment from the statement.

4.1.9 In line with best practice the Provincial has completed Trustee training with the RLSS but there is no evidence to suggest the remaining Trustees have undertaken this training. All Trustees should receive Safeguarding for Trustees

training and so it is recommended that the remaining three Trustees avail themselves of this training.

4.1.10 The MSFS does not have a Safeguarding Implementation/Action Plan. It should develop and agree an Implementation or Action Plan that tracks progress against identified actions and ensure that governance arrangements facilitate its delivery and review.

Graded: Results being achieved

4.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church's safeguarding message

Strengths

4.2.1 The Provincial advised and provided evidence to show that at Provincial meetings and Congresses, safeguarding updates are offered and full use of the RLSS resources is made. Although local community meetings are not recorded, members attending these meetings have confirmed that safeguarding messages from the CSSA, RLSS, the Holy See and other organisations are passed to the Local Superior via the Provincial or Safeguarding Lead to be shared with members.

4.2.2 The MSFS website has a designated safeguarding tab which is clearly displayed on the home screen. The safeguarding section contains the group's Safeguarding Statement, the most recent Safeguarding Policy, the contact details of the Safeguarding Lead, the Safeguarding Lead Roles and Responsibilities document, instructions for reporting a concern, Privacy Notices, Management of Active Concerns document, Visitor's Policy, Complaints Policy, Whistleblowing Policy and Low-Level Concerns Policy.

4.2.3 The Safeguarding Statement which features on the website and the Purpose and Policy statement in the Safeguarding Policy communicate a positive message of safeguarding to members of the public. They are clear public statements of the group's commitment to safeguarding and supporting survivors.

Areas for development

4.2.4 The MSFS does not currently have a Communications Plan. A Communications Plan, whether a standalone document or integral to a Safeguarding Action Plan, that is reviewed regularly would assist in determining what audiences to reach, what safeguarding messages need to be communicated and in what form these should take.

4.2.5 There has been no active engagement with survivors, vulnerable groups or those the MSFS serves in deciding how to communicate their safeguarding messages most effectively. Views from the intended audiences should be sought to ensure messages are targeted appropriately.

Graded: Firm progress

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

Strengths

4.3.1 The Provincial, Safeguarding Lead, Trustees and members interviewed all demonstrated empathy and the need for respect and dignity in communications with survivors and those reporting harm. As mentioned in Standard 2, the safeguarding page of the MSFS's website contains a Safeguarding Statement. The statement expresses a commitment to ensuring all those encountered during the MSFS's ministry are treated with dignity, respect and care. The Policy Statement included in the Safeguarding Policy also voices a drive for a compassionate approach to working with those the group serves.

4.3.2 The case audit undertaken as part of this safeguarding audit evidences that support and restrictions recommended by the RLSS have been adopted by the

MSFS. Although the original response to the complainant is outside of the scope for this audit, it does demonstrate that the group has experience in receiving concerns and responding to them in a prompt and effective manner, tailoring the support offered to the needs of those reporting harm.

4.3.3 MSFS members mostly live individually which reduces the likelihood that they would need to report current or non-recent allegations or concerns about other confreres. That said, those spoken with during the audit said that should they have any concerns about their confreres they would relay these to a MSFS Trustee or the Provincial. If the concern was about a group leader, they would be comfortable in passing these on to the RLSS or the Generalate and the Superior General who is reported to be easily contactable via telephone and email and approachable. The active members interviewed displayed a sound knowledge of reporting procedures and of the need to demonstrate compassion and sensitivity towards anyone disclosing abuse. They confirmed that any incidents of concern or allegations received in the Parish would be passed directly to the Parish Safeguarding Representative and/or the Diocese Safeguarding team or the police and other statutory services if appropriate.

4.3.4 All group members advised that they regularly liaise with their Parish Safeguarding Representatives, have posters on display in their public places for Safe Spaces⁶ and safeguarding awareness for Parishioners and that they discuss safeguarding in Parish Councils. These were cited as ways of providing a safe environment, promoting a positive culture of safeguarding and encouraging those who have been abused to feel safe in reporting.

Areas for development

4.3.5 The MSFS has had recent experience of responding to a disclosure of harm. It should now reflect on the information they received and their responses and formalise any learning to inform future practice.

⁶ Safe Spaces is a free and confidential support service funded by the Catholic Church for victims and survivors of abuse. Their website can be accessed [here](#)

4.3.6 Outside of their involvement with the Parishes in which members minister, there is no evidence to show that Safe Spaces has been independently actively promoted by the MSFS. This could be readily achieved by the group including a link to Safe Spaces on the safeguarding page of its website.

Graded: Results being achieved

4.4 Standard 4 Effective management of allegations and concerns

Strengths

4.4.1 The MSFS has a Guidance for MSFS Leadership Managing an Active Safeguarding Case document which contains all the information necessary for these purposes. It outlines the responsibilities of the RLSS, appropriate terminology and ways of working with complainants and respondents, reporting and investigations and litigation.

4.4.2 In the case audit the concern was referred to the RLSS at the earliest opportunity, demonstrating that the MSFS understands the thresholds for case management and the need to take appropriate action. The Provincial Council meeting minutes show that progress for the member subject to the Safety Plan is discussed and that the Trustees have oversight.

4.4.3 The Low-Level Concerns Policy was last reviewed in March 2026 and has a next review date set for March 2029. The Policy Purpose outlines the group's commitment to creating an open and transparent safeguarding culture in which all members and those they serve are empowered to highlight and report safeguarding and low-level concerns. Definitions of low-level concerns for children and adults at risk are offered and the procedure for reporting explained along with potential outcomes and actions that may be taken. Data Protection and the need to record information in a sensitive manner are also covered.

4.4.4 Under normal circumstances, due to the nature of the MSFS's ministry, any safeguarding concerns would initially be managed by the diocese. However, if the MSFS is directly notified of a safeguarding concern or allegation it is able to approach the RLSS for advice and guidance and the service would manage the case on its behalf. The MSFS keeps a secure password-protected cloud drive for recording any information relating to allegations and concerns which is accessible by the Safeguarding Lead and another member of the group. Any hard copies of documents are stored in a filing box that is locked in a room which only the Provincial, Safeguarding Lead and Trustees can access.

Areas for development

4.4.5 Although the details of the progress of the member subject to a Safety Plan have been appropriately reported back to the Trustees for oversight, there has been no routine analysis of the management of the case with regard to drawing learning from the experience. Responses to concerns and the subsequent management should be formally quality assured by leadership to ensure compliance with policies and best practice, although it is acknowledged that the plan has been largely unchanged in recent years.

Graded: Results being achieved

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

Strengths

4.5.1 The case audit evidences that the MSFS seeks appropriate advice from professional services in managing and supporting respondent members and that it understands the importance of allocating designated support and wellbeing people to respondents. The actions taken in the delivery of the safeguarding plan, which are evident throughout the case audit, demonstrate that the theoretical processes outlined in MSFS's policies are being implemented effectively.

4.5.2 The Provincial is a canon lawyer and so is well placed to offer advice and guidance to any respondent members. However, the group also has links to other canon lawyers to manage any situation in which the Provincial is absent or there is a conflict of interest. The Provincial also advised that they would assist any accused member in sourcing civil legal advice if they required it.

4.5.3 Those interviewed for the safeguarding audit said they felt confident they would be supported and their needs cared for should they be the subject of an allegation. Basic care, spiritual direction, counselling and financial support were listed as some of the means by which members felt they would be supported by the group. The Provincial advised that the MSFS would assess any funding requirements for the purpose of providing therapy and a retreat if needed and that the ability to move respondents between communities was available. However, the Provincial also acknowledged that any such move would need to be carefully managed.

4.5.4 The Guidance for MSFS Leadership Managing an Active Safeguarding Case document contains a section on guidance for those accused of causing harm. The guidance outlines what a respondent can expect when they are accused of harm, what decisions might be taken and why, and what forms an investigation might take. It is therefore a useful formal document for respondents to refer to if needed.

Areas for development

4.5.5 Minutes from the Provincial Council meeting show that the member subject to a Safety Plan has been sent a letter regarding accommodation and wellbeing. However, there is no record of the letter that was sent and no evidence of a reply or of any follow-up action as a result. Formal communications with the member and an evidence trail of actions taken should be recorded.

4.5.6 No evidence has been seen to show that the MSFS has sought the views of the respondent. Their comments should be invited in order to learn from their experiences. Any feedback received should be formalised and a structure created for learning and making any appropriate changes to practice as a result.

Graded: Results being achieved

4.6 Standard 6 Robust human resource management

Strengths

4.6.1 As all active members of the MSFS are Parish Priests, they undergo their DBS checks through the diocese in which they minister. The Provincial has a record of letters received from the different dioceses in which the members minister advising him of the successful DBS clearance for each member, the certificate number, their anticipated renewal date and assuring him that there are no safeguarding concerns or negative findings in the DBS return. The Provincial Council meeting minutes demonstrate that Trustees have oversight of DBS checks and renewals as well as other key safeguarding performance indicators.

4.6.2 At present the MSFS has no employees or volunteers. Nevertheless, there is a safer recruitment section in the Safeguarding Policy which details that any lay employees and volunteers would need to provide satisfactory references and an appropriate DBS check prior to appointment. It also states that although the MSFS Priests work in the Parishes and the diocese arranges the DBS, the Safeguarding Lead will ensure it is completed and up to date.

4.6.3 In the event of any blemished DBS returns the Provincial and Safeguarding Lead advised they would be informed by the diocese completing the check. Whilst both state the diocese is responsible for the decision on whether to appoint the DBS applicant as the Parish Priest, the Safeguarding Lead and Provincial understand that they would be involved in assessing any information from the DBS and that careful consideration would be given to mitigating any risks posed prior to making the decision. If a diocese decided not to appoint a member as Parish Priest on the basis of adverse information received, the applicant would return to their sending Province. The Provincial advised that, should this be necessary, members would be supported through counselling, therapy, professional supervision, training and any other suitable interventions.

4.6.4 The MSFS has no novitiate or formation houses and any priests it receives from overseas have already completed their formation. Twelve of the active members of the MSFS are from other Provinces and in England on “loan” or for studies but all

are fulfilling pastoral ministry at the same time. A Recruitment and Integration Programme for new members coming from abroad to minister in England offers a comprehensive induction programme. The document is thorough and covers a broad spectrum including areas such as culture, LGBTQ+ issues, communications, boundaries, colloquialisms, liturgical style, safeguarding, driving, and finances.

4.6.5 The group's newest member arrived from overseas in April 2026 and completed online safeguarding training ahead of their arrival as directed by the diocese. As per the process outlined in the Agreement Between Provinces document the Superior from the sending Province was required to sign a Letter of Suitability which included assurances of good standing, absence of any current or outstanding canonical discipline and criminal charges, that there were no safeguarding concerns or prevailing personal issues and fluency in the English language. An overseas criminal record check was completed ahead of their arrival, and he then had an induction week with the Provincial which included a safeguarding element as contained within the Integration Programme. The induction is supported by the requirement for the member to complete a Curriculum Vitae document which is an extensive information gathering tool for vital details and personal information.

4.6.6 Included in the suite of policies as evidence were the MSFS's Complaints Policy and Whistleblowing Policy. Both policies are detailed and fit for purpose and are easily accessible to those who may need them on the group's website.

4.6.7 During interview the Provincial advised that the MSFS does not have, and does not expect to have, any visitors outside of those who come for Parish purposes. Nonetheless, the group has a Visitor's Policy which describes the expectations for any lay and clergy visitors. The policy also affirms the group's zero tolerance to abuse.

4.6.8 The MSFS has two Privacy Notices, one for the English Province and one for Survivors. Both documents outline data protection guidance. Data Protection is also covered in the majority of the group's policies and the expectations around handling of data are well recorded.

Areas for development

4.6.9 To improve grading in this area further the MSFS should seek to quality assure its HR policies and procedures. Some policies, such as the Whistleblowing Policy, have yet to be utilised and so should be tested for robustness ahead of the need for them.

Graded: Comprehensive assurance

4.7 Standard 7 Training and support for safeguarding

Strengths

4.7.1 The RLSS has confirmed that the previous Safeguarding Lead attended the Safeguarding Lead training delivered by its service. During interview the current Safeguarding Lead expressed their intention to undertake the training imminently and to this end is liaising with the RLSS to book a space as soon as there is availability.

4.7.2 As all active members of the MSFS are Parish Priests, they undergo their safeguarding training through the diocese in which they minister and with host organisations such as the NHS. The Provincial has kept a record of letters received from dioceses confirming that members' safeguarding training has been completed and is up to date. If shortfalls were identified in safeguarding training requirements then the Provincial, who was also the Safeguarding Lead until very recently, would prompt the member to complete it as soon as possible. The new Safeguarding Lead will track attendance from this point onwards and prompt any member to complete training if the diocese informs him that it has not been completed. They will then advise the Provincial who will take remedial action should a member not complete appropriate training when reminded. Several group members confirmed they share their safeguarding training certificates with the Provincial and that, in addition to mandatory training through the diocese, Local Authority and NHS, they have chosen to undertake optional RLSS safeguarding

training. The RLSS has confirmed attendance at a number of training events. This supports the assertions that safeguarding is a valued topic within the group.

4.7.3 As covered above, the members who come from overseas are expected by the dioceses in which they are to minister in to complete safeguarding training ahead of their arrival. This is supported by the MSFS which has included the obligation to complete safeguarding training in its Agreement Between Provinces document. The Recruitment and Integration Programme also has a specific safeguarding section which is to be completed when new members arrive from overseas.

Areas for development

4.7.4 To date the MSFS has primarily relied on members completing safeguarding training within their diocesan and other professional roles, however this will only equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary for these roles. A training needs analysis should therefore be created to establish any additional training that is necessary for MSFS roles (for example, that of trustee) and thereafter used to plan for its provision. A review of the overall range, quality and impact of safeguarding training completed by members should also take place.

Graded: Results being achieved

4.8 Standard 8 Quality assurance and continuous improvement

Strengths

4.8.1 The Self-Assessment notes that the group has not formally commissioned an independent review of their safeguarding practice but that it does seek to continually learn from the safeguarding practice of the dioceses in which members serve. Ministering across five dioceses provides the MSFS with opportunities to learn about best practice from a variety of sources.

Areas for development

4.8.2 The MSFS has a whole group action plan which contains elements of safeguarding practice. However, there is no standalone Safeguarding Action Plan. A Safeguarding Action Plan/Implementation Plan should be agreed and used as a tracking and assurance tool for leaders and Trustees.

4.8.3 The MSFS does not currently produce a formal annual safeguarding report. An annual safeguarding report should be compiled and presented to Trustees and stakeholders. It should also be made publicly available, subject to any necessary redactions.

Graded: Firm progress

5. Summary of overall findings

5.1 The MSFS has established a robust safeguarding framework in which safeguarding is well embedded within leadership and governance, strengthened by a comprehensive Safeguarding Policy and broad suite of supporting policies. There are regular discussions on the topic at Trustee meetings and community meetings and a positive and transparent safeguarding culture across the Congregation. Leaders and members demonstrated a clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities, maintained strong links with the RLSS and showed confidence in reporting procedures.

5.2 The case audit found that allegations and concerns are referred promptly to the RLSS and that safeguarding cases are managed effectively with appropriate oversight from Trustees. Members demonstrated compassion towards those reporting harm, a good knowledge of reporting pathways and an active commitment to promoting safeguarding within their Parish ministries which is in line with the group's publicised Safeguarding Statement.

5.3 The audit found that the Safeguarding Committee, which is already envisaged within governance documents, should be established, or the documents amended

accordingly, and all Trustees should complete Trustee-specific training. Developing a Communications Plan and seeking feedback from survivors and those the group serves will assist in shaping safeguarding messaging more effectively.

6. Recommendations

To support improvement, the following recommendations are made:

Within 3 months

- A Safeguarding Action Plan is developed, agreed and reviewed at least annually.
- The Safe Spaces resource should be promoted on the safeguarding page of the MSFS website.
- Formal communications with any members engaging with a Safety Plan are recorded.

Within 6 months

- Trustees should determine whether the safeguarding committee referenced within documentation is to be established and either put this in place or amend the references accordingly.
- A Communications Plan, whether a standalone document or integral to a Safeguarding Action Plan, which includes the views of intended audiences is agreed.
- Respondents' views should be invited in order to learn from their experiences and any feedback received should inform future practice.

Within 12 months

- All Trustees should receive Safeguarding for Trustees training.

- A formal system for reflecting upon the group's own safeguarding experiences and the experiences of others is developed and any learning is used to inform future practice.
- Quality assurance and testing of HR policies and procedures should take place.
- A training needs analysis is created which sets out which members require which training and is actively used to plan future safeguarding provision.
- A review of the range, quality and impact of safeguarding training provided should take place.
- An annual safeguarding report should be compiled and presented to Trustees and stakeholders and made publicly available.

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 MSFS 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:

- The MSFS website⁷
- Safeguarding Policy
- Email liaison with the RLSS

⁷ <https://msfsenglishprovince.com/>

- The Charity Commission website for the MSFS⁸
- Case Audit documents for a closed safeguarding case
- Agreement Between Provinces document
- Guidance for MSFS Leadership Managing an Active Safeguarding Case
- Letter of Suitability
- Curriculum Vitae
- DBS records
- Safeguarding training records
- Complaints Policy
- Low-Level Concerns Policy
- Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities Guidance
- Safeguarding Lead Job Role and Responsibilities
- Safeguarding Statement
- Visitor's Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Privacy Notice for the English Province of the MSFS
- Privacy Notice for Survivors of Abuse
- Recruitment and Integration Programme
- General Body Meeting minutes
- Provincial Council Meeting minutes
- Safeguarding elements of the Action Plan

⁸ The Charity Commission website page can be accessed [here](#)