

Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit

Baseline Audit Report
September 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1 This is a baseline audit of the safeguarding arrangements of the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit. The Latin name for the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit is *Congregatio Missionalis Servarum Spiritus Sancti*. The abbreviation SSpS is derived from the shorter Latin title *Servarum Spiritus Sancti* (Servants of the Holy Spirit) and will be used hereafter in this report. This audit has been undertaken as part of the CSSA's Baseline Audit phase of Religious Life Groups (RLGs) and reviews the progress made against the eight National Safeguarding Standards¹.

1.2 The SSpS was founded by Arnold Janssen, an ordained priest, in 1889 in Steyl, the Netherlands. In 1875 he had previously founded St. Michael the Archangel Mission House to train priests for the missions from which the male missionary Society of the Divine Word was developed. The founding of the SSpS provided a female mission that complemented the work of the male mission which included education, health, pastoral care, spiritual guidance, adult education, communication, catechetics, chaplaincy work, social work, administration and interfaith dialogue. The SSpS in England is a member of the European Province, created following a recent restructure of the regions across Europe and a merging of those in Austria, Germany, Romania, South Tyrol, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, England and Ireland. The inauguration of the European Province took place in January 2026. The province is led by a Provincial Lead who is based in Austria and who is supported by a General Council, members of which come from each of the countries that together form the province. The communities in England and Ireland are represented by a Provincial Counsellor, Sr Ewa Pliszcak. This audit examines and reports solely on the safeguarding arrangements for the SSpS in England.

1.3 The SSpS in England is in two communities, one with six Sisters in Bristol and another with three Sisters in Birmingham. The communities include Sisters who

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](#).

work full time and those who are semi-retired and confine their work to volunteering in local parishes. The working Sisters are employed by external organisations, predominantly working for charities supporting those living in poverty and with the homeless. One Sister works full time in a local nursing care home, and all of the Sisters are additionally involved with the parish churches where they live. In all cases the Sisters who work and volunteer follow the safeguarding arrangements of the dioceses and external organisations that they support. In addition, they are governed by their own Congregational and local safeguarding policies. The SSpS in England does not at present run any missions, although this may change in the future following the recent merger with other European regions.

1.4 This audit seeks to assess the effectiveness of current safeguarding arrangements, by considering practice over the last twelve months. The Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) has categorised 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 with vulnerable populations and/or providing some diocesan activities, such as a Parish Priest), to Level 3 (a large community and/or one with significant outreach with vulnerable populations and/or a disproportionately high number of open safeguarding cases). The SSpS has been audited as a Level 1 Apostolic RLG.

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 initially notified the SSpS of its intention to carry out a Level 2 audit on 16 February 2026. A meeting was held between the analyst and the SSpS Safeguarding Lead on 16 March 2026 to discuss recent changes in its circumstances in terms of ministry and the reduced numbers of sisters in England. Following this meeting an

adjustment was made to a more appropriate Level 1 Apostolic audit. Audit dates were agreed for 26 and 27 of June 2026 to allow the analyst to visit and speak directly with both communities in England.

2.2 In advance of the formal audit week, the SSpS was requested to complete a Level 1 Apostolic audit self-assessment tool providing information on its adherence to the eight National Safeguarding Standards and progress in the overall implementation of said standards. The completion date for the self-assessment and supporting evidence was scheduled for 22 May 2026 and this was duly received. A confirmation email was sent to both communities on 22 June 2026, and the audit took place as scheduled.

2.3 The analyst visited the communities in Bristol and Birmingham on the 26 and 27 June 2026 respectively, and interviews were conducted with the following:

- The Provincial Counsellor for England
- The SSpS Safeguarding Lead
- The community leader in Bristol
- The Trustees
- The community members in both Bristol and Birmingham

2.4 Information provided within the self-assessment was analysed by the CSSA, alongside additional documentary evidence provided by the SSpS, together with information sourced from the Order's website². Further confirmation of engagement was sought from the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS)³.

² [Home New – Worldssps](#)

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](#)

3. Audit grading

3.1 Safeguarding practice was assessed against the eight National Safeguarding Standards adopted by the Catholic Church in England and Wales and graded in accordance with the CSSA Maturity Matrix for Level 1 Apostolic RLGs⁴.

3.2 Potential audit ratings against each standard, and the final overall ratings, are: Not met, Met with recommendations and Met.

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

⁴ [APPENDIX-5-LEVEL-1-APOSTOLIC-MATURITY-MATRIX-February-2025.docx](#)

Standard 8 – Quality assurance and continuous improvement

Met

4. Audit findings against each standard

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

4.1.1 The SSpS has a newly drafted Congregational safeguarding policy that is due to be ratified by the General Council and will be shared with all the provinces on completion of translations. This requires each province to create a local policy that reflects the legislation of each country and also the requirements of the individual Bishops' Conferences, in this instance for England and Wales⁵ whilst maintaining the standards set out in the Congregational policy. There has been a period of significant change in the SSpS culminating in the merger of several countries to form a European Province, the inauguration of which took place on 16 January 2026. At the time of audit, the SSpS in England was awaiting the outcome of discussions and agreement on a safeguarding policy for the European Province. This new policy will meet the standards expected of safeguarding policies by the CSSA in terms of safeguarding processes, but in its final adaptation for England will need to provide sufficient specificity on safeguarding arrangements in England in terms of meeting legislative and Charity Commission requirements. During this period the SSpS in England is following its existing safeguarding policy and processes from its previous incarnation as a combined region with Ireland. These were seen by the analyst to be comprehensive and robust.

4.1.2 The SSpS in England has a Safeguarding Lead who has held the role for more than 20 years, is very experienced in safeguarding, and who is also a Trustee. The

⁵ The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales is the permanent assembly of Catholic Bishops and Personal Ordinaries in the two member countries. [Catholic Church in England and Wales – Catholic Bishops' Conference](#)

new Congregational policy sets out the expectation for each province to have a safeguarding commission with a safeguarding delegate and sets out the terms of reference for this. Each provincial safeguarding commission must include persons with specific expertise including in health, education, law enforcement, canon and civil law, and social work. Each commission must also include two members of the congregation with safeguarding expertise. This safeguarding commission will be led by a safeguarding delegate who is appointed by the Provincial Lead and who must have expertise and experience in safeguarding. There are clear roles and responsibilities set out in the new policy for the safeguarding commission and the safeguarding delegate. This structure will be developed in the European Province and will provide a robust governance structure once in place, as will be required with such a large province with in excess of 300 members. This work will commence at the introduction of the new European policy.

4.1.3 Current safeguarding governance and oversight is provided through the Trustees of the SSpS charities in England and Ireland. The SSpS safeguarding lead for England provides a safeguarding report to the Trustees, and this is discussed at their six-monthly face-to-face meetings, evidenced by the minutes seen at audit. The safeguarding lead updates the Trustees on the training status of the Sisters, and on safeguarding developments in the wider context of religious life through her attendance at safeguarding conferences and networking events with other religious safeguarding leads, including her contemporary in Ireland. The SSpS has not had any direct safeguarding concerns to deal with in England or Ireland, and therefore the safeguarding lead shares her learning with the Trustees from others' experience of this gained from the external events she attends. This enables them to assess their own practice to ensure that their systems are robust enough to manage issues should they arise. There are six Trustees in place, all of whom are Sisters. Four Sisters are from the English communities and two are from the Irish SSpS communities. This is a reciprocal arrangement with the charity for the SSpS community in Ireland as the Order feels it brings a level of external scrutiny to the Trustee decision-making process. All Trustees have completed Trustee training and

were able to articulate their reporting responsibilities to external organisations including the Charity Commission⁶ and CSSA.

4.1.4 The SSpS is contracted to the RLSS and avails itself of RLSS services including training and assistance and support should there be a safeguarding concern. The SSpS Safeguarding lead has established a good working relationship with RLSS and circulates all their communications and training opportunities to the Sisters. The Order is also contracted to the CSSA and is a member of the Conference of Religious⁷.

4.1.5 The Congregational leadership of the SSpS has shown its commitment to improving standards across safeguarding through the engagement of a safeguarding consultant with whom they worked to create the new Congregational Safeguarding Policy. Within this policy is a safeguarding statement of commitment from the Congregational Leader that sets out the vision and mission for safeguarding everyone. This statement will be included in all Provincial safeguarding policies and can be found on the Order's website. The Provincial Counsellor and SSpS safeguarding lead in England work closely together to promote and share the Congregational leadership's messaging at joint community meetings held monthly and when they are visiting the communities in person to review local safeguarding arrangements.

4.1.6 The SSpS Sisters in England are all active and continue to provide ministry in various settings. The Sisters in Bristol live in a purpose-built convent that includes a chapel and has en-suite rooms for some of them, as well as communal areas for food preparation, eating, meeting and relaxing. There is also a guest room for visitors. The building is protected by security cameras, and the Sisters have a door camera that allows them to see who is calling before they open the door. The Sisters are all fully mobile, but there is a lift in the building should this be required. Any Sister

⁶ The Charity Commission for England and Wales registers and regulates charities in England and Wales to ensure that the public can support them with confidence. [The Charity Commission - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/the-charity-commission).

⁷ 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](https://www.conferenceofreligious.org/).

who may require additional support with care in the future would be supported to stay in the convent for as long as possible with care provision being accessed via the National Health Service or private care providers. The situation is the same in the community in Birmingham, although their home is not a purpose-built convent, but an adapted house, and there is no lift. In addition to remaining in their homes, any Sisters who wish to do so can be accommodated in the Congregation's Mother House in the Netherlands that has purpose-built nursing care facilities should this be required or requested. Only those who are known to the Order are allowed into the homes and children are not permitted unless they are accompanied by a parent or guardian who must always remain present. Sisters meeting with vulnerable adults do so in public spaces only, away from the home.

4.1.7 The SSpS in England has demonstrated at audit that its current governance arrangements for safeguarding are established and are fit for purpose. It is however, in a state of flux at the moment and has delayed reviewing and updating its current policies whilst waiting for the final European Provincial Safeguarding Policy to be ratified. Once this is done, it will set in motion a new period of change for the SSpS in England as it joins its peers in Europe in a safeguarding commission and appoints a new Provincial safeguarding delegate. Care will need to be taken that the new policy and processes are widely shared and understood by the Sisters in England and that a review and evaluation process is put in place to ensure that they have been embedded in practice.

4.1.8 There is currently no safeguarding implementation plan in place. The implementation of the new Provincial Safeguarding Policy will require the development of a safeguarding implementation plan to manage the changes, especially as these will likely involve a change of personnel in terms of the safeguarding delegate. Care must be taken to ensure a proper handover takes place and that knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding arrangements and position in England are fully understood by the incoming safeguarding delegate. Structures and processes must also ensure that the Sisters in England have access to safeguarding support from the Province should this be required.

4.1.9 The SSps has its own code of conduct that sets out the behavioural expectations for safe ministry, and this is embedded in the new Congregational Safeguarding Policy but is not in the existing regional policy, currently in use. There was only limited awareness of Integrity in Ministry⁸ although these guidelines have now been shared with all the Sisters. This action should be followed up by the SSps safeguarding lead to ensure that all Sisters have read and understood the expectations and have adopted them into their ministry whilst they wait for the introduction of their updated code of conduct.

4.1.10 There are some Sisters who provide occasional ministry on behalf of their local parish in people's homes. This was not managed using a lone worker policy⁹. The SSps should consider how it independently monitors Sisters' safety when they are lone working in the absence of a parish policy or procedure.

Graded: Met with recommendations

4.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church's safeguarding message

4.2.1 Although there is no separate communication policy or plan, the current SSps safeguarding policy requires that information is shared on safeguarding both within the community and with those with whom it comes into contact. This commitment and requirement are continued in the new draft Congregational Safeguarding Policy. Safeguarding information is provided on the website and also in the individual buildings where the Sisters live. There was evidence seen at audit of posters by the entrances of both settings that included the contact details of the SSps safeguarding lead and the RLSS. The notice boards in both settings also had

⁸ Integrity in Ministry is a code of conduct for Religious engaged in ministry in the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

⁹ A lone worker policy is a formal set of guidelines and procedures implemented by an organisation to ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of those who work (or in this case minister) without close or direct supervision.

further information on local services and statutory authority contact details as well as information on the local diocesan safeguarding teams should they need to be contacted.

4.2.2 Safeguarding messages are routinely communicated within the SSps communities in England. The SSps safeguarding lead sends all communications and updates individually to Sisters via email and there is an expectation that these will be read prior to being discussed at the monthly joint community meetings. Messaging comes from the RLSS, CSSA and centrally from the Congregational leadership. In addition, information is shared from conferences, training and from the RLG forum facilitated by RLSS attended by the SSps safeguarding lead. Safeguarding is spoken about at the Chapter meetings which are held every three years, and the Order holds an annual online safeguarding workshop for all members.

4.2.3 The SSps has well established processes for communicating safeguarding messages and for ensuring that these messages are heard and understood by the Sisters. It also has established links with external organisations and a safeguarding consultant which ensures that they are maintaining currency. This will need to be maintained on the implementation of the new European Provincial Safeguarding Policy, and it is recommended that an evaluation is undertaken following this to ensure that the current high standards have been maintained following the transition.

Graded: Met

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

4.3.1 The current regional safeguarding policy being followed by the SSps in England does not include any specifics on reaching out to those who may have been harmed and focuses instead on the support and care provided to those who have reported harm. Processes of providing support and on how to respond to those

reporting harm are covered and include the practicalities of recording their individual experience and ensuring that they understand the processes that will be followed after their disclosure in terms of sharing information and making referrals. The SSpS does not have any direct experience itself of working with those who report harm and has therefore used learning from other RLGs' experiences to inform their procedures and practice.

4.3.2 The new draft Congregational Safeguarding Policy includes significantly more detail than the current policy on reaching out and engaging with those who report harm and has, as one of its standards, 'Responding and Care for Victims' which sets out its commitment to proactively engaging with and supporting those who have been harmed. This includes a commitment to participate in any relevant external investigative process whether that be a criminal or civil investigation. The new policy also recognises the need to be sensitive as to how those who report having been harmed wish to be referred to and whether this should be as a victim, a survivor or by neither term. The new standard also sets out guidance and terms of reference for those appointed to support people who report being harmed.

4.3.3 The policy and procedures currently in use were demonstrated to be clearly understood by the Sisters spoken to as part of this audit. There was an awareness that those who report harm could come from both within and without the SSpS community and that all would need to be treated with kindness, compassion and empathy. The Sisters were aware of their recording and reporting responsibilities and were aware of the role RLSS would play in supporting those who report harm.

4.3.4 The new European Provincial Safeguarding Policy will set out the expectations for the Sisters to follow going forward. This will need to include how the SSpS in England will work with RLSS to delegate aspects of the support and management for those reporting harm, which is not a process that is necessarily available or followed in the other European countries in the province. A feedback mechanism will also need to be developed so that the SSpS can learn from the experiences of those who have reported harm.

4.3.5 More work needs to be done on engaging with those who report harm and although people are encouraged to report their experiences through the website,

no alternative options such as Safe Spaces¹⁰ were promoted by the SSpS in England on their notice boards and posters. Sharing this information and that of other support organisations for those harmed by the church will widen the access for both religious and lay survivors of abuse.

Graded: Met with recommendations

4.4 Standard 4 Effective management of allegations and concerns

4.4.1 The current policy used by the SSpS in England has a robust process in place for the management of allegations and concerns. The policy in current use sets out the actions to be taken if a Sister witnesses or receives a disclosure of abuse. Sisters spoken to at audit were all aware of their reporting responsibilities and the need to follow the guidance in the policy. The policy sets out the actions a Sister must take in terms of recording and reporting concerns or allegations and includes guidance on confidentiality and the need to ensure that any action they take does not compromise a statutory investigation. All Sisters spoken to would refer the issue immediately to the SSpS safeguarding lead and share their records with her. If there was an immediate risk of harm, the Sisters reported that they would call the police. The Sisters who work or volunteer in external organisations reported that if the situation occurred in those settings, they would follow the policies of the organisation and would also, if it directly involved a Sister from the SSpS, inform the SSpS safeguarding lead. On receipt of an allegation or concern the SSpS safeguarding lead would immediately inform RLSS and would engage them to help with any investigative process and the ongoing management of the issue.

¹⁰ Safe Spaces England and Wales is 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](#)

4.4.2 The policy in current use also details how an allegation or concern raised against a Sister should be managed including reporting processes and guidance on maintaining the privacy and dignity of the respondent. It includes the actions that must be taken in reporting significant incidents involving the SSps in England to the Charity Commission and CSSA. The Provincial Counsellor, Trustees and SSps safeguarding lead were all able to articulate their responsibilities and subsequent actions they would take during their audit interviews. All records created as part of the management of an allegation or concern would be kept in a locked filing cabinet if in hard copy and in password protected folders on computers if digital.

4.4.3 As before, the SSps in England has never had to report or manage a safeguarding allegation or concern within the Order. Sisters who work and volunteer for external organisations have reported concerns through those organisations and therefore have some experience of the processes followed by the statutory authorities and their organisations' safeguarding teams. They have shared their experiences with others in their SSps community being careful to maintain confidentiality in line with the Data Protection Act (2018)¹¹ and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)¹².

4.4.4 The draft Congregational Provincial Safeguarding Policy has built on the existing safeguarding policy with more detail on the processes of listening, responding, recording and referral, an adaptation of the 4 Rs of safeguarding set out in the NSPCC's Learning Framework¹³. The new policy also sets out the requirements of Vos Estis Lux Mundi¹⁴ in regard to the importance of reporting. In addition, the new policy recognises the need for mandatory reporting is dependent

¹¹ The Data Protection Act (2018) regulates the processing of information relating to individuals, sets out the Information Commissioner's functions and sets out a direct marketing code of practice [Data Protection Act 2018](#)

¹² 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](#)

¹³ The NSPCC is a UK children's charity that has worked to stop child abuse and neglect for over 140 years [4Rs of safeguarding and child protection | NSPCC Learning](#)

¹⁴ Vos Estis Lux Mundi (2019/2023) A *motu proprio* (apostolic letter) establishing universal procedures for reporting abuse, preventing cover-ups, and holding clergy accountable [Apostolic Letter in the form of "Motu Proprio" of the Supreme Pontiff Francis "Vos estis lux mundi" \(7 May 2019\)](#)

on the country where the SSpS is resident in terms of civil legislation and Bishops' Conference requirements. An addendum or adaptation to the European Provincial policy will be needed to clarify the mandatory reporting requirements in England and must also include the role of RLSS in the provision of advice, support and management of allegations and concerns.

Graded: Met

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

4.5.1 The current policy in use by the SSpS in England articulates the processes that would need to be followed to manage and support a respondent following an allegation or concern being raised against them. The new draft Congregational Policy has more detail on the expectations of support that a respondent might receive including the implementation of a safety plan, provision of financial support and the future management and support they would receive if the allegations were found to be unsubstantiated. Both policies recognise the need for a respondent to be provided with physical, emotional and spiritual support and there is detail on how a community would provide a suitably qualified and experienced support person for the respondent. The SSpS has the ability to source alternative accommodation for a respondent should this be required and also has access to both Canonical and civil law advice, the details of which would be shared with the respondent.

4.5.2 The SSpS in England has never had an allegation or concern raised about a Sister and therefore has no practical experience to inform it of the efficacy of its policy and procedures. It has used the learning from other RLGs to inform its policies and procedures, and review and adapt them as required when new learning is identified. The SSpS has the RLSS as providers of advice and practical support whom they could engage should an allegation or concern be raised. The SSpS safeguarding lead has completed the RLSS safeguarding lead training and was

able to articulate the process that would be followed if a concern was raised. All safeguarding allegations and concerns would be shared with the Trustees at the extraordinary meeting that would be convened in these circumstances. As with the management of an allegation process described in 4.4.2, the Trustees and Provincial Counsellor were aware of their reporting responsibilities to the Charity Commission and CSSA.

Graded: Met

4.6 Standard 6 Robust human resource management

4.6.1 The current safeguarding policy includes the procedures that have to be followed when someone is either employed or volunteers for the SSpS. These procedures have not been used as the SSpS neither employs staff nor engages volunteers as part of its mission in England. All of the Sisters in England have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificates in place for their roles which have either been secured by their employing or volunteering organisations or by the dioceses which they support in a formal voluntary role. The SSpS is working with RLSS to obtain DBS checks directly, so that Sisters can provide ministry on behalf of the SSpS, and this work was ongoing at the time of the audit. The SSpS safeguarding lead recognises the need to secure DBS checks only for those in regulated activity.

4.6.2 The SSpS in England welcomes visiting Sisters from the Congregation who come to this country to learn English. These Sisters require visas and stay for a limited period of time only, do not get directly involved in any ministry and are supervised by the Sisters here. The SSpS in England currently has no new members entering but is prepared to accept new candidates should they come forward. Initial formation (Pre-novitiate) would take place in England, while the common novitiate for the new Province is in Ireland. The Congregation has a process in place for those who wish to enter the Order that includes gaining references, criminal records checks and psychological testing.

4.6.3 The SSpS has both a Complaints policy and a Whistleblowing policy that set out the procedures to be followed and by whom in the event of someone raising a concern. Complaints and Whistleblowing incidents would be overseen by the Trustees and reported to the European Provincial Lead. In the past 12 months there have been no complaints raised or whistleblowing incidents recorded.

4.6.4 The SSpS Sisters currently hold their own DBS certificates for their role with the organisations where they either work or volunteer and there is limited oversight of these by the SSpS safeguarding lead, with renewal reminders being managed outwith the Order by the employing organisations or the dioceses. A system will need to be put in place for the oversight and management of the DBS checks secured by the Order through RLSS going forward and compliance will need to be reported to the Trustees more formally. The safer recruitment standards in the new European Provincial Safeguarding Policy will also need to be embedded going forward and will need to be evaluated after a period of time to ensure that they are being met. This could be achieved by introducing safer recruitment Key Performance Indicators¹⁵ that can be reviewed by the Trustees.

Graded: Met

4.7 Standard 7 Training and support for safeguarding

4.7.1 The SSpS in England is a member of RLSS and all of the Sisters have completed their basic safeguarding training with them. In addition, those Sisters in Trustee roles have completed Trustee training. The Sisters have also completed the mandatory safeguarding training as determined by the organisations they work and volunteer for, including dioceses. This was evidenced through the provision of training certificates for scrutiny at audit. Training records are maintained by the SSpS safeguarding lead and compliance is reported to the Trustees. The SSpS holds an

¹⁵ Key Performance Indicators are quantifiable measures used to evaluate the success of an organisation, employee etc in meeting objectives for performance. (The Oxford English Dictionary).

annual safeguarding workshop online to ensure that all community members have access to up-to-date information and can refresh their knowledge and skills.

4.7.2 The SSpS does not have a formal training plan but the safeguarding policy sets out the minimum requirements for training for those who hold specific roles and responsibilities including community leads, safeguarding leads and those in ministry. The newly drafted Congregational Safeguarding Policy specifically sets out the training expectations for all SSpS Sisters and has included specific topics that should be considered alongside a basic introduction to safeguarding, dependent on an individual's roles and responsibilities. These topics include creating safety plans, mandatory reporting, creating a culture of protection and prevention, understanding and managing risk, responding to allegations and concerns, responding to victim survivors, care and support for victims, management and support of the accused, coercive control, case scenarios and discussion, and secondary trauma. Training will need to be sourced in each country of the Province, and those doing so will need to consider these recommendations when identifying training providers.

4.7.3 The Sisters reported at audit that the current training was of good quality and useful. They are asked to evaluate all the training they receive both by the training providers and the safeguarding lead who also encourages them to discuss any additional areas they would like to receive training in. The SSpS safeguarding lead shares all training opportunities with the communities, and all are encouraged to reflect on their own needs and apply for training through her. Additional training completed by the Sisters in the past twelve months included conflict management and emotional intelligence, as well as joint training sessions facilitated by the Conference of Religious and RLSS on Dementia awareness. The SSpS safeguarding lead is encouraged to attend conferences and networking events with other RLG safeguarding leads and shares her learning from these with the Sisters through the Chapter meetings, Trustee meetings and community meetings.

4.7.4 There were no specific areas for development identified in this standard. The SSpS in England may, however, need to broaden its engagement with additional

training providers once the Congregational Safeguarding Policy has been fully implemented to secure training in the more specialised subjects.

Graded: Met

4.8 Standard 8 Quality assurance and continuous improvement

4.8.1 The SSpS has a code of conduct which sets out the expectations placed on the Sisters in terms of ensuring that everyone is safeguarded from abuse. There is an awareness that safeguarding arrangements need to be scrutinised and reviewed regularly and this is achieved through the regular visits to the communities in England undertaken by the Provincial Counsellor and the SSpS safeguarding lead. The SSpS has a good working relationship with RLSS, local dioceses and the Conference of Religious which ensures that members remain up to date on any changes and issues that arise in terms of broader safeguarding activity and proactively seek learning from others in areas where they have no personal experience, including the management of allegations and supporting survivors. Learning from their peers in the religious communities through attendance at conferences, RLSS events and networking opportunities was seen at audit to have been used to inform their knowledge and allowed them to ensure that their policies and procedures were robust enough in terms of meeting the needs of survivors and those reporting harm. Safeguarding reports are shared with Trustees twice a year and there are processes in place to share any non-compliance or issues with the RLSS.

4.8.2 The SSpS currently uses its existing regional safeguarding policy which, due to the recent changes, has not yet been superseded by an up-to-date European Provincial Safeguarding Policy. Once in place review dates will need to be confirmed and added to a safeguarding implementation plan, together with other actions identified through this audit's recommendations. This plan's progress should be reported to, and reviewed by, the Trustees at their biannual meetings.

4.8.3 The SSpS proactively engages with RLSS and CSSA and accesses the resources, training and services that both organisations offer. It is also a member of the Conference of Religious and members have attended events through them on safeguarding using the networking opportunities to gain further knowledge and expertise. These practices need to be maintained as they develop as a European Province.

Graded: Met

5. Summary of overall findings

5.1 The SSpS has demonstrated at audit a commitment to safeguarding that comes directly from the Congregational leadership through a Safeguarding statement that is supported by a detailed policy document with robust procedures, guidance and expectations. The SSpS in England is now part of a European Province that was inaugurated in January 2026 and is therefore still in the early stages of development of policies and procedures for safeguarding. The draft Congregational Safeguarding Policy reflects the current Congregational policy in use in England and once implemented will provide strong governance and oversight of safeguarding in all SSpS communities. There are challenges in ensuring that the current arrangements with CSSA and RLSS are maintained and reflected in the policy.

5.2 The current local safeguarding arrangements are robust and meet the requirements of the eight National Safeguarding Standards. This audit nevertheless identifies some areas for development which, if addressed, would enable the SSpS to improve the quality of its safeguarding. A safeguarding implementation plan would support the SSpS to monitor the progress of any changes that are put in place and would be a useful tool to have whilst it navigates the introduction of a new safeguarding commission and the appointment of a new safeguarding delegate to ensure the current high standards are maintained.

5.3 The SSpS Sisters in England all demonstrated a personal commitment to good safeguarding practice, engaging with the SSpS safeguarding lead and Provincial Counsellor in discussions on safeguarding and attending training and other safeguarding events to further their knowledge and expertise. Through discussions, they all showed a good awareness of the expectations placed on them, and a determination to safeguard everyone they come into contact with from abuse.

6. Recommendations

To support improvement, the following recommendations are made:

Within 3 months

- Integrity in Ministry should be actively promoted to all Sisters to support them to provide ministry safely.
- The new Congregational Safeguarding Policy should be reviewed before implementation to ensure that:
 - It meets legislative and Charity Commission requirements and aligns with the Church's mandatory expectations in England and Wales.
 - It reflects the roles of and expected engagement with the RLSS and the CSSA.
- The SSpS should review the arrangements for those who provide ministry in people's homes to ensure that risk assessments have been completed, and systems are in place that protect them from harm.
- A system should be developed to manage the DBS checks secured by the SSpS to ensure that they are obtained whenever required and that renewal dates are recorded and met.

Within 6 months

- The SSpS should develop an implementation plan for the transition to its new safeguarding arrangements and the introduction and embedding of

a new safeguarding policy. This needs to include how the new arrangements are shared with the Sisters, training and discussion on how procedures are to be implemented and embedded. This implementation plan should include review dates to monitor progress and should be reported to and overseen by the Trustees.

- The implementation plan should include a robust process detailing how the current safeguarding arrangements are shared with and handed over to the new Provincial Safeguarding Delegate who may be based in another country. This process must include a safeguarding meeting schedule that also details reporting responsibilities as well as systems that ensure the continuity of access to safeguarding advice and support.

Within 12 months

- The SSpS should, once its new policy and procedures are implemented, consider how it might increase its engagement with survivors and build on the work already started in this. Additional survivor-led training could be considered to widen their understanding.
- Following the implementation of the new policy the SSpS in England should review the additional training suggested against their own needs and source accredited training providers to arrange this for those who require it.

7. Arrangements for follow-up

7.1 In line with an overall rating of Met, the earliest potential date of re-audit by the CSSA is in two 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 reviewed as part of this audit:

- Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit (MSSHS) Regional Safeguarding Policy
- Congregational Safeguarding Policy
- Updated Congregational Safeguarding Policy (draft version)
- Complaints Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Congregational Safeguarding Statement
- Explanatory document of status of MSSHS in England following recent inauguration of the European Province.
- Minutes from Trustee meetings showing safeguarding discussions
- Training records and certificates
- DBS records and certificates
- Safeguarding report presented at the Chapter meeting
- Examples of liaison between MSSHS and RLSS
- Safeguarding posters as described in 4.2.1
- Evidence of safeguarding communications to the communities.