

Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions

Baseline Audit Report
November 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 This is a baseline audit of the safeguarding arrangements at the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions. This audit has been undertaken as part of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency's (CSSA) Baseline Audit phase of Religious Life Groups (RLGs).

1.2 The Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions in their UK and Ireland province consists of nine communities spread over Scotland and England. In England the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions number 37 Sisters. Sixteen of the Sisters are resident in their Care Home, St Anne's Convent in Kent. The Care Home is not regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) so its safeguarding practice does come within the scope of this audit. Twelve Sisters, not in the Care Home, are of retirement age, of whom five carry out no ministry at all. The ministry of the active Sisters varies but includes pastoral work in Parishes, whose safeguarding arrangements are the responsibility of the applicable Diocese, various other charitable works, such as volunteering at Catching Lives¹, a homeless charity in Canterbury, and welcoming visitors to their Heritage Site in Kent. Another key ministry is providing financial support to the neediest areas of the Congregation's work abroad, in a variety of nations, including Bangladesh, Peru and Vietnam. In 2023 the total donated exceeded £40,000. The Provincial House is in Wealdstone in London.

1.3 Aside from the Care Home, the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions employ three staff in London as a cook, a cleaner and a finance officer. St Anne's has 31 staff, of whom 22 are carers. Four volunteers support the Care Home.

1.4 This audit seeks to assess the effectiveness of current safeguarding arrangements, by considering practice over the last twelve months. The 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

¹ [Home | Catching Lives](#)

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 Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions was categorised as a Level 2 community because of the number of Sisters and the provision of care outside of CQC oversight.

2. Methodology

2.1 Initial contact with the Provincial Leader was made on 26 February 2025. An in-person date for audit interviews was agreed for 2 July 2025. The self-assessment and supporting evidence were requested, and provided, by 3 June 2025. Additional supporting evidence was provided by the Safeguarding Lead for the Care Home on the day of interviews.

2.2 Audit interviews were completed on 2 July 2025 in-person with the Provincial Leader, an employed Safeguarding Lead for the Care Home, a volunteer Safeguarding Lead for the Province, a Trustee of the charity and a Sister who is originally from overseas. A virtual interview was completed with the Care Home Manager on 7 July 2025.

2.3 Liaison with the Religious Life Safeguarding Service² (RLSS) about the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions' engagement with them took place on 21 August 2025.

2.4 The Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions had an open safeguarding concern with RLSS between November 2024 and June 2025. This related to a non-recent allegation against a deceased Sister. It was reported initially to RLSS by a diocesan safeguarding team, who had received the information from Safe Spaces. By the time the Provincial Leader was notified of the allegation by the diocese all other relevant parties were aware of the matter and a police referral had been

² RLSS are an independent team of safeguarding professionals offering safeguarding services to the Religious of the Catholic church in England and Wales

submitted. The limited actions expected of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions in these circumstances are therefore insufficient to enable a case audit to be completed. However, their response to the Survivor will particularly inform the assessment of Standard 3.

2.5 Documentary evidence provided by the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions is listed in Appendix 1. Their website³ and Charity Commission report for the year ending 2023 were also read.

3. Audit grading

3.1 Practice was assessed against the eight National Safeguarding Standards adopted by the Catholic Church in England and Wales⁴ and graded in accordance with the CSSA Maturity Matrix for Level 2 RLGs.

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 Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions have received an overall rating of Firm Progress, achieving that in five of the eight standards. The other three standards reached the higher rating of Results Being Achieved.

³ <https://www.rndm-ukireland.org/>

⁴ Full details of the eight standards and underpinning sub standards are available here: [The Eight National Safeguarding Standards \(catholicsafeguarding.org.uk\)](https://catholicsafeguarding.org.uk/)

Overall grading	Firm Progress
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)	Firm Progress
Standard 6 – Robust human resource management	Firm Progress
Standard 7 – Training and support for safeguarding	Firm Progress
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 The Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions have two safeguarding policies. One, from January 2023, is a general Safeguarding Policy for the Congregation. The other from May 2024, is a Safeguarding Adults Policy specifically for the Care Home and not directly applicable to the whole Congregation. Both policies are available via the RLG's website. Trustees of the Charity are all Religious members. They have a copy of the general Safeguarding Policy and are required to sign to say they have received it. All Sisters have been asked to sign the Safeguarding Policy and have done so. The written Safeguarding Policy at St Anne's has been distributed to all staff.

4.1.2 In February 2024 a Safeguarding Action Plan was created to drive improvements in safeguarding against the eight safeguarding standards. This details the action required, how it will be done, who is responsible and the evidence to demonstrate completion. It is RAG rated for progress and currently contains no actions that are rated Red.

4.1.3 There are separate safeguarding leads, one for the Province and one employed specifically for the Care Home. Their roles and responsibilities are outlined in the relevant Safeguarding Policies. The general policy stipulates that they must have Safeguarding Training at Level 3 for Safeguarding Leads. Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at Province Leadership Team meetings of which there were six in 2024. These are separate from Trustees meetings, of which all four in 2024 discussed safeguarding. One of these was an extraordinary meeting due to the concern referenced in 2.4.

4.1.4 In the handling of the single concern they have dealt with over the last 12 months there is evidence of leaders having oversight during their meetings and acting on their responsibilities, particularly in regard to the Survivor.

4.1.5 Integrity in Ministry⁵ was distributed to the Sisters as an attachment to an email. A copy of the eight safeguarding standards is held in a reference log available to all members. RLSS confirmed that the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions have engaged with their membership and training teams, in addition to constructively working together on managing the safeguarding concern.

4.1.6 A Safer Environment is promoted in the Care Home in a variety of ways. A Safeguarding Lead with experience as a practice supervisor in Child Protection and in working with RLGs was employed a year ago. She has worked on the specific Safeguarding Policy and managed the two low level concerns that have been reported. Her poster and contact details are accessible to residents and staff. The manager of the Care Home is a Registered Nurse. She has maintained working relationships with local GPs and updates their Care Coordinators team on a weekly basis to inform them of incidents such as falls or hospital admissions. They use a medicines management system from their pharmacy and are regularly audited by the pharmacy as to their pharmaceutical practice. Sisters or, when necessary, their representatives are involved in drawing up their Care Plans.

Areas for development

4.1.7 In their self-assessment the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions wrote that their province Safeguarding Policy was updated in July 2024. This update has not been translated to the policy on the website, which states it is from 2023, and should be the current version to ensure that users know exactly what their expectations should be. A separate page on the website states that it is a safeguarding policy from 2025 but appears to be more of a safeguarding statement supplemented by contact details for the Safeguarding Leads, RLSS, Safe Spaces and the CSSA. The Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions should ensure that the website's safeguarding resources are clear and unambiguous.

4.1.8 The Safeguarding excerpts from minutes of the Leadership and Trustee meetings provided as evidence for this audit do not demonstrate regular

⁵ Integrity in Ministry is a code of conduct for Religious engaged in ministry in the Catholic Church in England and Wales

leadership oversight of the Safeguarding Action Plan. The Provincial Leader said that it does get discussed but this was not recorded in minutes and stated the fact that most of the actions are RAG rated green as evidence of oversight. However, Leaders should specifically record their oversight of the plan and holding individuals to account for the delivery of it.

4.1.9 Integrity in Ministry has been shared with all Sisters. However, they did not all demonstrate a good knowledge of the document. Leaders should arrange for regular discussion of Integrity in Ministry to promote understanding and to keep the expectations in the forefront of the Sisters' work.

Graded: Results Being Achieved

4.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church's safeguarding message

Strengths

4.2.1 The Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions do not have a formal safeguarding communication plan. They do however, communicate via their website and safeguarding posters in their locations across England. The poster details that safeguarding is "integral in all that [they] do is every aspect of [their] apostolic ministry". It has contact details for the Safeguarding Provincial Lead, the lead at St Anne's Care Home, RLSS, Safe Space and the Provincial Leader. There is a specific poster at the Care Home, with a picture of the Safeguarding Lead, and her contact details so that Sisters in the care setting can recognise her and know how to contact her with any concerns they have. Sisters have also been given an RLSS leaflet to help them report concerns about their care or potential abuse.

4.2.2 Since June 2024 the UK and Ireland Province newsletter for the Sisters contained safeguarding information on five separate occasions. Messages included why safeguarding is important, training availability and information about RLSS and the CSSA audit. It demonstrates the efforts that the Congregation of Our

Lady of the Missions are making to ensure safeguarding remains at the forefront of their work.

Areas for development

4.2.3 The Safeguarding Action Plan states as an action that they should “Develop a communication/action plan” and it is RAG rated green. An action plan has been created but no evidence has been seen of a communication plan which would state how the RLG will communicate its safeguarding messages, to whom and in what manner. This may simply be to formalise the communication they are already doing, via the website and on physical posters, and plan to review it for effectiveness in 12 months with feedback from service users, sisters and care home staff.

Graded: Firm Progress

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

Strengths

4.3.1 RLSS confirmed that the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions have established links with them to support them in all aspects of their safeguarding work, including caring for Survivors of abuse. The employed Safeguarding Lead provided training to members in September and November 2024. This included a specific section on how to receive a disclosure of abuse. This detailed the action to take whilst receiving a disclosure, including telling the person making the disclosure that they have done the right thing and are not to blame, informing the individual that they cannot keep the disclosure secret and details for the individual receiving the disclosure on how to share the information and with whom. They have designed a cause for concern form to be shared with the Safeguarding Lead after a disclosure and provided contact details for RLSS in her absence.

4.3.2 It was evident from interviews that being made aware of a non-recent allegation against a deceased member of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions was a significant shock to the leadership. However, their response was described by RLSS as extremely sensitive to the needs of the Survivor. An offer to meet with Congregation leaders was made but not taken up. Counselling was funded, an apology was made and specific requests from the Survivor were facilitated.

Areas for development

4.3.3 Leaders from the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions talked about having learned a great deal from the allegation that they dealt with. They should now consider review of their safeguarding policies and procedures and internal training provision in the light of this learning to establish whether any changes or improvements are needed. Relevant learning should also be shared with the Sisters in the interests of transparency and to reassure them that they would be supported if there were an allegation against them.

Graded: Results Being Achieved

4.4 Standard 4 Effective management of allegations and concerns

Strengths

4.4.1 In addition to the training referenced in 4.3.1, both Safeguarding Policies contain practice guidance for members on how to respond if a safeguarding concern is received. St Anne's Safeguarding Policy contains additional information for if an individual witnesses an act of abuse, which includes calling police if a crime has been committed. The Sister from overseas had a knowledge of both Safeguarding Policies. She also stated that in her house she knew how to access phone numbers and email addresses to report concerns and would be confident to do this, including calling police in an emergency situation.

4.4.2 In practice, during the management of the concern last year the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions worked with RLSS and were made aware that a referral to statutory services was completed. They also acted upon advice that the threshold for reporting a Serious Incident to the Charity Commission⁶ had not been met. Leadership meeting extracts demonstrate that leaders maintained oversight of the management of the concern throughout. The Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions can, if necessary, access the advice of Canon Law experts through the Archdioceses of Westminster and Southwark.

4.4.3 Hard copies of records related to the allegation are stored in a confidential locked file and electronic records are kept in a password protected computer.

Areas for development

4.4.4 The Leadership of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions should quality assure their response to the allegation that they received, to ensure they were compliant with their own policy expectations. As in standard 3, the relevant policies should also be reviewed after the management of the concern to ensure that they are relevant and workable.

Graded: Results Being Achieved

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

Strengths

4.5.1 In managing the recent concern that Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions did not have to support a Respondent to the concern as they are deceased. However, leaders acknowledged that, were they to receive an allegation against a current Sister, that Sister should be supported. They have within the Order Counsellors and a Social Worker whose expertise could be utilised. They would be

⁶ [How to report a serious incident in your charity - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity)

able to facilitate a temporary removal from ministry, and financial support to the Respondent during this period.

4.5.2 As they demonstrated when managing an open concern, the primary source of support in this scenario would be RLSS whose guidance they would follow. To prepare for the prospect of managing an individual subject to a Safeguarding Plan, the Provincial Lead completed RLSS Care and Safety Management Plan training in April 2023. They would be able to signpost a Respondent to sources of Canon Law advice.

Areas for development

4.5.3 To prepare for the possibility that there may be an allegation or concern raised against a Sister in the future, leaders in the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions should familiarise themselves with potential sources of support they could utilise. They should also consider if there are individuals within the Congregation who can be prepared as prospective sources of pastoral support for the Respondent from outside the leadership team.

Graded: Firm Progress

4.6 Standard 6 Robust human resource management

Strengths

4.6.1 Both of the applicable Safeguarding policies contain Safer Recruitment practice guidance. For the Care Home, appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service⁷ (DBS) checks are sought and an individual cannot start in role until they, along with previous employment references, are received. Employees are provided with copies of applicable policies and procedures, including the Safeguarding Policy, and must sign to confirm they understand them. The general Safeguarding Policy has the same expectations for other employed staff. Records are kept of DBS

⁷ [Disclosure and Barring Service – GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

checks which, in line with CSSA expectations, are renewed every three years. All were in date at the point of audit.

4.6.2 The Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions have not had anyone from the UK exploring a vocation to religious life in over 20 years. However, they do receive Sisters from overseas who, in common with all Sisters, are expected to complete safeguarding training. Safeguarding training is part of the training expectation for new members in the global congregation. The Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions' most recent overseas recruit will undergo an induction course in October 2025 and May 2026 which includes a safeguarding training element to ensure that they understand the expectations in the UK.

4.6.3 The Employee Handbook, last revised in January 2025, and both Safeguarding Policies address whistleblowing. The Employee Handbook states what a qualifying disclosure is and which statute, the Employment Rights Act 1996, provides protection for them if they do whistleblow. The procedure for reporting a concern and the expectation that the person who raises the concern will suffer no detriment is outlined. This provision of information means that any employee who wished to raise a concern can easily understand the mechanism to do so. Sisters are eligible to raise concerns under this policy. No whistleblowing concerns have been received in the last 12 months.

Areas for development

4.6.4 As part of their evidence for audit, the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions provided the Safeguarding section of Trustee Meeting Minutes for the last year. On one occasion, April 2025, the extract states that "Training and DBS for staff is up to date". This is evidence of trustees having some oversight of Safer Recruitment expectations. However, it is not routinely recorded that trustees receive safer recruitment information at every meeting, and it should be to demonstrate that information is regularly received and that expectations are consistently being met.

4.6.5 Whilst they have whistleblowing guidance, the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions do not have a complaints policy. They have a complaints form which individuals can complete, however this is not readily available via the website.

Therefore, if individuals such as the Survivor that was indirectly engaged with them, wished to raise a complaint about how the Congregation managed the concern there is not a transparent mechanism to do so.

Graded: Firm Progress

4.7 Standard 7 Training and support for safeguarding

Strengths

4.7.1 The Safeguarding Lead at the Care Home has created a “Safeguarding Training Analysis” which is applicable to staff and visiting Sisters who minister in the home. It details the current training completion per role and the expected training completion. For example, the Care Home Manager is expected to complete RLSS Advanced Safeguarding, In-house Safeguarding Training from the Safeguarding Lead and be trained in the Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards. The Safeguarding Lead and Care Home Manager keep records of training completion for the Care Home. Training is mandatory for Care Home staff and, at point of audit, there was full compliance with the expectations.

4.7.2 The general Safeguarding Policy sets out the training expectation for members of the Congregation from the Provincial Leader to members who do not work with the public. Refresher training is expected annually. Records of the Sisters’ training completion were provided to the CSSA. This demonstrated that many of the Sisters, including the Congregation Safeguarding Lead and Provincial, exceed their own minimum expectation of safeguarding training. The primary source of the various training courses completed was RLSS.

4.7.3 In April 2025 the Safeguarding Lead for the Care Home facilitated a Safeguarding Reflective Audit with Sisters who visit and support St Anne’s. The session focused on recognising signs of abuse or neglect, reporting any concerns, and the roles and responsibilities of staff, as well as the training they have accessed. Feedback indicated that completion of safeguarding training had made

the Sisters feel that safeguarding processes were more straightforward to undertake than they had initially thought.

Areas for development

4.7.4 Training attendance is expected and recorded. However, training compliance is not routinely recorded as being discussed in leadership forums. If it were routinely reported to trustees and leaders, they could promptly address any failures to complete the expected levels of training and refresher training.

4.7.5 Feedback should routinely be sought from attendees following all training sessions to ensure that it is meeting their needs or to identify where improvements can be made. Ongoing effective evaluation of the training provision and the training needs of the staff in the Care Home is important given that the training needs may vary over time due to staff turnover.

Graded: Firm Progress

4.8 Standard 8 Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Strengths

4.8.1 The Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions provided a Safeguarding Action Plan from February 2024 as evidence for this audit. It demonstrates that there has been some consideration of how they will improve their practice against the eight safeguarding standards of the Catholic church in England and Wales. Actions and how they will be achieved are listed alongside who is responsible for the work and what the evidence will be that it is completed.

Areas for development

4.8.2 The Safeguarding Action Plan has not been updated in over 12 months and is not regularly recorded as being discussed in leadership forums. Following this baseline audit, leaders should revisit the plan with consideration of the below recommendations and how progress will be regularly checked and recorded.

Graded: Firm Progress

5. Summary of overall findings

5.1. The Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions are a Religious Life Group with 37 Sisters. A large proportion of the Sisters are resident in their Care Home which is not subject to CQC oversight. Their ministry includes running their Heritage Centre and supporting the charitable missions of other groups, both through volunteering and financially.

5.2 To support effective safeguarding practice the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions have two Safeguarding Leads, one of whom supports the Care Home and the other the general Congregation. Separate Safeguarding Policies are in operation and leaders of the Congregation routinely discuss safeguarding at their regular meetings. Their response to a Survivor of non-recent abuse, with the assistance of RLSS, demonstrated compassion and care.

5.3 Leaders must ensure that the safeguarding policies are regularly reviewed for effectiveness, in the light of any learning that is gained from casework with RLSS, and that the current versions are readily available on the website. Leaders must also be sure that they receive regular information on safer recruitment, training and vetting in their leadership forums so that any failures can be promptly addressed.

5.4 Overall the evidence provided for this audit demonstrates that the Congregation of Our Lady of the Missions have achieved a rating of Firm Progress against the eight safeguarding standards of the Catholic church in England and Wales.

6. Recommendations

To support improvement, the following recommendations are made:

Within 3 months

- Arrange regular discussion of Integrity in Ministry to ensure it is understood by all Sisters
- Ensure that the Safeguarding Policies on the website are current versions
- Leaders to receive and record updates on Safer Recruitment and Training expectation compliance for each of their meetings

Within 6 months

- Formalise a Communications Plan which states how safeguarding messages will be shared, where and how often
- Ratify and publish a Complaints policy
- Identify potential sources of support for any Respondents to concerns
- Update the existing Safeguarding Action Plan and ensure that it is reviewed for progress in leadership meetings

Within 12 months

- Quality assure the internal response to the concern from the last 12 months and update relevant policies with any learning
- Seek feedback from training attendees to inform future training sessions

7. Arrangements for follow-up

7.1 In line with an overall rating of Firm Progress, the earliest potential date of re-audit by the CSSA is July 2027. 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

- Care Home Staff Induction Checklist
- Care Home Safeguarding Policy
- Care Home Safeguarding Posters
- Complaint Form
- Congregation Safeguarding Policy
- Employee Handbook 2025
- Province Leadership Minutes for the last 12 months (Safeguarding excerpts)
- Safeguarding Action Plan February 2024
- Safeguarding Cause for Concern Form
- Safeguarding Reflective Audit Minutes – Care Home, April 2025
- Safeguarding Training Analysis
- Training Slide on dealing with a disclosure
- Trustee Meeting Minutes for the last 12 months (Safeguarding excerpts)
- UK and Ireland Province Newsletters for the last 12 months