

Order of the Friar Servants of Mary

Baseline Audit Report
April 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 This is a baseline audit of the safeguarding arrangements of the Order of the Friar Servants of Mary, hereafter referred to as the Servite Friars. This audit has been undertaken as part of the CSSA's Baseline Audit phase of Religious Life Groups (RLGs).

1.2 The Servite Friars were initially approved as a religious order by the Bishop of Florence between 1240 and 1247. In 1304, they received definitive approval as a religious order by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life (at the Vatican). The Servite Friars have offered pastoral care and support in London since 1864, this was the first foundation, of what later became known as the English Province of the Friar Servants of Mary, established in London in 1914. In 1983, the General Chapter of the Order undertook a significant revision of the Order's jurisdictional structure. As part of this process, they planned to unite the Pories in Ireland, England, Scotland, France, Belgium, Germany, and Austria into a European Province. However, the Servite Friars in Ireland, England, and Scotland chose to form a separate entity, resulting in the creation of the Province of Isles, which was officially decreed by the General Council in June 2000.

1.3 The Province of the Isles consists of seventeen Friars, with two primary communities in England and Wales. The Servite Order in the UK describes their aim as "to use their resources for religious, educational and other charitable purposes in connection with the Roman Catholic Church". Five Servite Friars reside in the Servite Priory (London), with one being retired, and they are responsible for the pastoral care of a church and its surrounding Catholic community. These ministries include a multi-ethnic and socially diverse Parish, reflecting the diversity of the city with over 40 language groups among its parishioners. One of the Servite Friars, currently residing in the London Priory, serves as the Vocations Recruitment Officer, assistant Parish priest, while also being an active member of the Parish Youth Ministry Team. Additionally, he fulfils the role of chaplain at the local hospital and is involved in ministry for the elderly and sick. In Salford, a single Friar resides at Kersal Priory, undertaking similar duties for the parish church and its community. Both Parishes within London and Kersal are owned by the Servite Friars. Additionally, a single Friar living in Bath, has similar duties for a parish church and its local

congregation. However, this Parish is under the ownership of Clifton Diocese. Each Friar in these locations is dedicated to serving their respective congregations through spiritual guidance, sacraments, and community engagement.

1.4 There are Servite Primary Schools in both the London and Salford parishes where the Servite Friars are Trustees and responsible for these Voluntary Aided Schools. The Servite Primary School in London has 210 pupils while St Philips Primary School in Salford has 320 pupils. The Servite Friars are Foundation Governors to both.

1.5 There are two employees of the Servite Friars, a cook and a part time secretary. Volunteers associated with the Servite Friars have their Safeguarding training and vetting undertaken by the relevant Dioceses. The Servite Friars are members of the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS).¹

1.6 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)² 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 Servite Friars were categorised as a level 2 community because their role is to provide Parish Priests in three Dioceses, and they completed a corresponding self-assessment.

1.7 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.

¹ [Religious Life Safeguarding Service \(religioussafeguarding.org\)](https://religioussafeguarding.org/)

² [Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency](https://catholic-safeguarding.org/)

2. Scope & Methodology

2.1 The CSSA analyst initially contacted the Prior (who also takes the role of safeguarding lead and will be referred to as such throughout this audit) on Monday 5 August 2024 to confirm a baseline audit for the week commencing the 4 November 2024.

2.2 In advance of the formal audit week, the Servite Friars were requested to complete a Level 2 audit self-assessment tool providing information on their adherence to the Eight National Safeguarding Standards and progress in the overall implementation of said standards. The Servite Friars were provided with the self-assessment tool and guidance on the 5 August 2024. However, due to staff changes within the CSSA, this audit was rescheduled to the 13 January 2025. The completion date for the self-assessment and supporting evidence was rescheduled to the 10 December 2024.

2.3 This baseline audit was undertaken following the submission of the self-assessment and supporting evidence by the safeguarding lead on 10 December 2024. The safeguarding lead also submitted an amended Self-assessment to the CSSA analyst on the 28 December 2024. Supporting evidence was provided on 10 and 17 of December 2024.

2.4 Additional evidence was reviewed by the auditor during a site visit on 13 January 2025 and the Servite Friars website³ has also been reviewed.

2.5 The CSSA analyst and safeguarding lead spoke on the 9 December 2025 to discuss audit arrangements and further brief email communications were held between the analyst and safeguarding lead to finalise arrangements for visiting the Servite Friars on site at the London Priory.

2.6 Information from the self-assessment and supporting evidence provided by the safeguarding lead was reviewed by the CSSA analyst and this evidence was

³ www.servitefriars.com

assessed against the Level 2 Maturity Matrix to arrive at ratings for each standard and a combined overall grade.

2.7 The following methods were employed:

2.7.1 Interviews

- Interviews took place with the following key individuals from the Servite Friars on 13 January 2025 in the London Priory:
- Prior (also safeguarding lead)
- 4 Friars have participated in a focus group all Friars were trustees of the Servite Friars
- Vocations Recruitment Officer (also an assistant parish priest and local hospital chaplain)
- The CSSA Analyst contacted a Servite Friar from Salford Diocese
- An interview with a survivor of historic abuse, perpetrated by a former Servite Friar who was laicised in September 2024, has been conducted online.

2.7.2 Document Review

- Review of the following key documents additionally took place
- Self-assessment form
- Website for the Servite Friars
- Supplementary evidence (Listed at Appendix A)

2.7.3 Casework Review

Within the last 12 months a single complaint has been raised against the Servite Friars. One member was the subject of a Safety management plan, however following an investigation by the Religious Life Safeguarding Service this plan is no longer in place. The case work files relating to the respondent have been reviewed and a separate case work audit tool has been completed.

2.8 During the course of the audit, the CSSA had contact with a survivor who provided documentation relating to her contact with the Servite Friars.

2.9 Liaison has also taken place between auditors, RLSS and the Safeguarding Teams in Westminster, Salford and Clifton regarding the Servite Friars engagement with their Safeguarding expectations.

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 ratings, are: Below Basic, Basic, Early Progress, Firm Progress, Results Being Achieved, Comprehensive Assurance and Exemplary.

3.3 The Servite Friars have received an overall rating of Early Progress

Overall Grading	Early Progress
Standard 1 – Safeguarding is embedded in the Church body’s leadership, governance, ministry and culture	Early Progress
Standard 2 – Communicating the Church’s Safeguarding Message	Early Progress
Standard 3 – Engaging with and Caring for those who report having been harmed	Basic
Standard 4 – Effective Management of Allegations and Concerns	Firm Progress

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)

Standard 5 – Management and Support of Subjects of Allegations and Concerns (respondents)	Early Progress
Standard 6 – Robust Human Resource Management	Early Progress
Standard 7 – Training and Support for Safeguarding	Basic
Standard 8 – Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement	Early 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 Prior is the safeguarding lead for the Servite Friars in the UK and has accessed training with Westminster Diocese and the RLSS to support him in discharging his duties.

4.1.2 The Servite Friars have signed a formal contract with the RLSS and CSSA, and the safeguarding lead proactively engages with the RLSS regarding safeguarding queries. This includes support for the audit process and in response to a safeguarding complaint made against a member, which is further considered under Standards 3, 4 and 5 below.

4.1.3 The Safeguarding Lead has sought the advice and guidance from the RLSS regarding the implementation of a safeguarding policy. This policy has been discussed within the Provincial Council meetings.

4.1.4 Provincial Council meetings take place every 6 weeks and are attended by trustees. On occasion these meetings are facilitated online to allow the attendance of the Provincial who lives in Ireland and Servite friars residing in other Dioceses. The last three provincial council meetings discussed safeguarding matters. The provincial chapter meet annually, and Safeguarding is included on the agenda for these meetings. Meetings allow the Servite Friars to hold safeguarding discussions formally however informal discussions take place during mealtimes at the priory.

4.1.5 The Servite Friars are aware of the Integrity in Ministry⁵ guidance, and this was distributed to the Friars on the week commencing the 2 December 2024. The Servite Friars have a code of behaviour for all members, outlining the expectations of members. The code of behaviour, 2021, discussed the appropriate behaviours for Servite Friars including “treating all children and adults at risk with respect, dignity and courtesy” and to “develop a culture of openness, honesty and safety”. The document also discussed behaviour that Servite Friars should not exhibit including reference to sexual abuse of children or adults at risk. The information provided in the code of behaviour also discussed appropriate behaviour during reactive situations as well as safe behaviour for planned and structured work. The document is clear and concise.

4.1.6 A safeguarding policy statement provided by the Servite Friars is displayed in the office of the premises and refers to Caring Safely for Others Pastoral Standards and Conduct in Ministry (2020).⁶ The policy statement provides the contact details for the local authority and Parish representatives.

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. The values inherent in this document apply also to lay people who have been engaged to carry out formal ministries alongside Religious in the Catholic Church – Integrity in Ministry can be found using the following link [Religious Life Safeguarding Service](#)

⁶ The Caring Safely for Others Pastoral Standards document ensures that, in the exercise of their care for others and responsibility to safeguard children, all clergy who exercise ministry in England and Wales should be familiar with the best safe pastoral standards and practices, and that these are conducted within appropriate boundaries, often referred to as ‘professional boundaries’. This document can be found here: [Caring-Safely-For-Others.pdf](#)

4.1.7 Within the interviews with the trustees, and the vocational recruitment officer, the Servite Friars demonstrated an understanding of the need to address low level concerns and share information with the safeguarding lead and the RLSS. The Friars also recognised that on occasion statutory agency referrals may be made and the Friars felt comfortable in their ability to do this.

Areas for Development

4.1.8 The safeguarding lead highlighted that the Servite Friars currently conduct their trustee meetings under the title of the Provincial Council meetings. While this arrangement is in place, it is essential to ensure that it meets the specific expectations set out by the Charity Commission. This includes making certain that the roles and responsibilities within the meetings are clearly defined and in line with the legal requirements for trustee governance. It is especially important to ensure that non-trustee members are not assigned to positions or tasks that are legally reserved for trustees. By doing so, the Servite Friars can ensure compliance with regulatory standards and maintain good governance practices.

4.1.9 The Servite Friars are a relatively small RLG, albeit audited at Level 2 due to their provision of Priests in Dioceses. This means that the Prior also acts as the Safeguarding Lead in addition to his day-to-day duties as a Priest. This dual role limits the time he can dedicate to safeguarding responsibilities. While the challenges of balancing time for safeguarding compliance have been discussed during provincial chapter meetings, no formal outcome or decisions regarding support to the safeguarding lead, have been documented. The Servite Friars should consider how to support the safeguarding lead in fulfilling their duties. This may include arranging for additional support, either by delegating certain responsibilities to another member of the community or by employing a safeguarding professional. The Servite Friars should also liaise with the RLSS to ensure that a role description is in place to formalise any decisions.

4.1.10 The Safeguarding lead should also consider undertaking additional training specific to his role in leadership, this should enhance his ability to manage safeguarding requirements.

4.1.11 The Servite Friars' safeguarding policy is still in draft form and remains incomplete. The responsibilities section is blank, and the document is neither signed

nor dated. This policy is not based on an RLSS template. Although the Servite Friars state the policy was discussed in the provincial chapter, there is no formal evidence of its ratification. The Safeguarding Lead described it as a guiding document still under review by trustees, with updates planned. Additionally, there is confusion within the community; one Friar stated the last policy he received was dated 2015 and overdue for renewal since 2019, though the renewal was delayed by COVID-19. In addition to this, the policy is not available on the Servite Friars' website, making it inaccessible to service users. To address this, the Servite Friars should ensure the draft policy is reviewed, ratified, signed, and dated by all relevant members to clarify accountability and formal commitment to safeguarding standards. The policy should be updated with input from key stakeholders to align with current legal requirements and best practices. Regular reviews will help maintain its relevance and effectiveness.

4.1.12 Several other policies referenced within the safeguarding policy not in place, which creates further confusion. The whistleblowing and complaints policy are currently in the draft stages of development and the provincial council have viewed this document and agreed the content and the Servite Friars look to ratify these policies in June at the next Provincial Chapter. The Servite Friars should consider a revision of the linked policies and finalise the complaints and whistleblowing policies currently in draft, to ensure the protection of its members and provide clarity for these processes.

4.1.13 The Servite Friars have yet to create a safeguarding implementation plan to drive safeguarding improvements. They have informed the CSSA analyst that it is their intention to use the recommendations of this audit process to create one.

4.1.14 The safeguarding lead advised that Integrity in Ministry was last distributed to the Friars by email on the week commencing 2 December 2024. However, the Servite Friars interviewed could not recollect the last time this was discussed and therefore the Servite Friars should consider reflecting how the safeguarding messages are relayed to the Friars to ensure they have received and read all documentation provided to them.

4.1.15 The Servite Friars should ensure that safeguarding is included as a standing item on the agenda for every meeting. It is crucial that discussions related to

safeguarding are clearly documented and regularly reviewed. Additionally, it should be noted that there is no evidence to suggest that safeguarding was discussed at Provincial Council meetings prior to September 2024. To meet legal requirements and align with best governance practices, the Servite Friars must ensure safeguarding is consistently prioritised in trustee meetings, with clear accountability for addressing any related issues.

4.1.16 The Servite's code of behaviour displayed on the premise is from 2010, however this is not the same document that was updated in 2021 and therefore displays should be updated as a matter of urgency. The code of behaviour should be revisited to ensure the information presented is in line with current standards.

Graded: Early Progress

4.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

Strengths

4.2.1 The CSSA analyst was shown safeguarding posters from the Diocese of Westminster placed within the entrance to the office and the entrance to the Church of Our Lady of Dolours.

4.2.2 In the Priory Office, the CSSA analyst was shown a specific Servite Friar Safeguarding Information Poster which includes details of where to report concerns, including to the Safeguarding Lead and posters identifying the Prior as the safeguarding lead, with contact details for the RLSS.

4.2.3 Safeguarding messages are communicated to members at provincial council meetings and by email. The vocational recruitment Servite Friar shared that the close community of the Friars and the dedication from the safeguarding lead to promote safeguarding is considered a strength by the community.

4.2.4 The safeguarding lead shares the local parish newsletter to the Friars which includes information regarding safeguarding.

4.2.5 The safeguarding lead receives information from SAFEcic⁷, regarding safeguarding resources, these monthly newsletters are sent to all the Friars for information.

Areas for Development

4.2.6 The Servite Friars do not have a communication plan. Therefore, information regarding how the Friars will share their safeguarding messages internally and externally are not considered. The Servite Friars should develop a plan that describes how they will communicate their safeguarding messages, to whom and in what way. This may be part of an existing safeguarding policy or their safeguarding implementation plan. Additionally, this plan should be reviewed regularly to ensure effectiveness.

4.2.7 The Servite Friars engage with a diverse community where English is not always their first language. Although contact information for the RLSS and Westminster Diocese are displayed throughout the premises, as the Servite Friars work with a diverse congregation they should consider working with key stakeholders including those who speak other languages to ensure safeguarding messages are available all, this includes posters.

4.2.8 Within the Servite Friars' office there is a poster with information regarding spiritual and Pastoral Support for those affected by HIV and a poster provided by the local council that includes contact numbers including contact for the homeless, family support, social services and mental health. It would be beneficial for the Servite Friars to place copies of these documents in the public space outside of the offices to ensure member of the public can access this information

4.2.9 The Servite Friars should provide information regarding external support services and organisations for survivors or those at risk of abuse. The Servite Friars are aware of Safe Spaces⁸ however information regarding this service is not

⁷ <https://www.safecic.co.uk/>

⁸ Safe Spaces 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 Catholic Church of England and Wales, the Church of England, or the Church in Wales. <https://safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk>

provided on the website nor around the premises. Doing so will allow individuals to speak to other organisations if they do not wish to contact the Servite Fathers, Diocesan safeguarding team or Parish representatives directly. It will also support those who wish to remain anonymous or have an advocate speak on their behalf.

4.2.10 In its current form, the website for the Servite Friars is the official site of the province of the Isles. The main website does not contain any information regarding the Servite Friars' commitment to adults at risk of abuse however it does include a commitment to children at risk of abuse, information regarding the Safeguarding Children: Policy and Standards for the Catholic Church in Ireland 2016 and links to the RLSS. There are links to a specific page on this website regarding information on the London Priory and Kersal Priory, which includes contact details for both. However, the Servite Friars should include specific safeguarding information regarding policies and procedures for the Servite Friars living in England and Wales. Consideration should also be given to including support information for survivors, such as Safe Spaces. The main safeguarding page states that "anyone who may have safeguarding concerns regarding the Servite Friars is invited to contact our Designated Liaison Person (DLPs) whose contact details are provided elsewhere on this site." The Servite Friars should consider revisiting this information so that those with concern can access the information readily without searching for the correct information.

4.2.11 Although the Servite Friars display information and contact details on their premises, some of the documents are outdated. While posters have been updated with new contact information, older details remain visible underneath. To demonstrate a strong commitment to safeguarding, the Servite Friars should replace these outdated documents with new, accurate copies. This will ensure that the information is current, clear and shows a proactive commitment to creating a safe environment.

Graded: Early Progress

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

Strengths

4.3.1 The current document displayed on the premises named Initial Reception of a complaint of abuse (2010) describes what to do when presented with a complaint. The document discusses the importance of listening, the rights of the complainant and the respondent and confidentiality considerations.

4.3.2 The Safeguarding trustees have oversight of any disclosures that are received. At present the Servite Friars do not have any open cases. However, they have received a single complaint in October 2024.

4.3.3 The safeguarding lead spoke with the safeguarding analyst about the complaint made against a member of the Servite Friars October 2024. Although the complaint was deemed unsubstantiated the safeguarding lead, in his position as Prior, has agreed to meet with the individual who made the complaint in the near future to discuss how the Friars can learn from the experience.

4.3.4. The Servite Friars informed the CSSA analyst that they would work closely with the RLSS for support whenever they become aware of any safeguarding concerns. This collaboration is documented in the casework audit related to the investigation of the October 2024 complaint. The Friars are committed to handling allegations of abuse in accordance with national policies, ensuring that all allegations are addressed with respect. The Safeguarding Lead confirmed that they would consult with the RLSS when engaging with survivors of abuse to provide a compassionate response. Regarding the October 2024 complaint, the Safeguarding Lead discussed the approach for speaking with the complainant and the safeguarding measures to be implemented. Furthermore, when issuing an apology to the complainant, both the Safeguarding Lead and the involved individual liaised with the RLSS to ensure that the response was both compassionate and appropriate.

4.3.5 The safeguarding lead confirmed that when necessary the Servite Friars are able to provide funding for the counselling services for Survivors.

Areas for Development

4.3.6 Although the initial reception of a complaint of abuse document is displayed in the Priory it is out of date. This document states it was created in 2010 and therefore this should be updated to include any recent safeguarding guidance, policies or legislation. The document also contains incorrect contact details which are still legible under the additional names that have been added to the original document.

4.3.7 The Safeguarding policy draft does not stipulate a “Reporting Procedure” or a “Reporting Flowchart” nor information on how a “complainant” or “respondent” will be cared for. The Servite Friars should consider amending their policy draft to include this to ensure consistency and allow any Servite friar to confidently respond to any disclosure of harm that they receive.

4.3.8 The Servite Friars have not, at present, engaged with survivors to provide feedback and therefore should consider the use any future feedback to inform policy and practice.

4.3.9 The Servite Friars are aware of the Safe Spaces service however updating their website and posting display information on the premise would enable survivors to engage directly with the service.

4.3.10 The Servite Friars recognise the importance of providing appropriate support to survivors and should make a dedicated effort to expand their understanding of available support services and relevant organisations. By increasing their knowledge, the Friars would be better placed to quickly and effectively direct individuals to the most suitable resources when needed. It is vital that all members remain vigilant, as they may encounter disclosures at any given time, and their responses should be sensitive, appropriate, and supportive. Furthermore, the Servite Friars should consider expanding their knowledge not only of support services for survivors of sexual abuse, but also of those organisations that assist individuals affected by other forms of abuse, ensuring they are fully equipped to respond to a wide range of situations. This broader understanding will help to ensure that every survivor receives the help they need, regardless of the nature of the abuse they have experienced.

4.3.11 During the course of the audit, the analyst reviewed an email sent by the Provincial of the Servite Friars, currently residing in Ireland, to a survivor known to the religious life group. It was determined that the content and tone of the email did not align with the standards of communication expected when engaging with survivors of abuse. The Servite Friars should ensure that all correspondence with survivors adheres to national guidance, particularly in relation to respectful tone, acknowledgement of harm, and offering appropriate support. All members in positions of leadership should consider training on survivor engagement and trauma-informed communication. Additionally, the Friars should prioritise the development of a formal safeguarding framework within their policies to guide interactions and ensure accountability, this will be further discussed below.

4.3.12 The Servite Friars should consider developing a safeguarding policy that clearly outlines the expectations and commitments made to survivors of abuse. This policy should detail the support and services available to survivors, including formal arrangements for counselling, ensuring that appropriate, professional care is provided to meet their emotional and psychological needs. The policy should set out how survivors will be supported throughout, from initial disclosure to ongoing support, with a focus on creating a safe and compassionate environment. It should also establish clear procedures for accessing support services, ensuring that the Friars can respond promptly and effectively to the needs of survivors, and that these services align with recognised national standards.

Graded: Basic

4.4 Standard 4 Effective Management of Allegations and Concerns

Strengths

4.4.1 As mentioned above the initial response to a complaint of abuse document outlines how to respond to an allegation of abuse and if necessary, to report to statutory agencies. In practice, the Servite Friars would deal with an allegation of abuse against one of their members, in conjunction with RLSS, and the relevant Dioceses would manage allegations related to Parishioners or other concerns.

4.4.2 The Servite Friars are aware of their responsibility to provide support to those who make disclosures and listen to their voice. The Friars also understood the importance of recording information and referring concerns to either the safeguarding lead or the RLSS. The Servite Friars are aware that there may be circumstances in which they need to report concerns directly to statutory agencies including the police or social care if there is an immediate risk of harm.

4.4.3 The Servite friars keep records of concerns on encrypted electronic filing system with limited access. If the safeguarding lead is unable to access these documents for any reason, there are two other Servite Friars who have access. The Servite Friars also keep records in a locked fireproof cabinet in Benburb, Northern Ireland.

4.4.4 The casework audit undertaken in respect of the complaint evidences that referrals are made, on time, to the Charity Commission by the Safeguarding Lead. Regardless of the outcome of unsubstantiated, there is also evidence that the respondent in this case has agreed to undertake additional boundaries training to address some issues identified in the investigation. The safeguarding lead in his position as Friar has agreed to meet with the complainant (with another individual present) and will look to discuss any feedback that they wish to provide. The Servite Friar has also offered an apology to the complainant. There is a clear concise record of the case including any correspondence with the RLSS and the respondent.

4.4.5 The trustees confirmed that they are all made aware of any safeguarding concerns and updated during the process of an investigation. Clarity is needed to determine how this information is discussed at provincial council meetings.

Areas for Development

4.4.6 As stated above the Initial Response to a complaint of abuse document should be updated. The Servite Friars should adopt or adapt national policies and practice guidance for taking and recording disclosures of abuse. This approach ensures consistency with established legal standards and best practices, fostering a safer environment for individuals to come forward with their experiences. By aligning with national frameworks, the Servite Friars can provide clear, professional, and legally sound responses, while also demonstrating accountability and commitment to protecting vulnerable individuals. Additionally, adapting national

policies allows them to remain up to date with evolving legal requirements and safeguards, ensuring that all disclosures are handled with the necessary care, sensitivity, and transparency.

4.4.7 The Servite Friars currently share information regarding disclosures with the safeguarding lead via email, telephone, or in person. However, to ensure accuracy and that all information is appropriate, the Servite Friars should implement a formal system for recording concerns. This will help ensure that details are documented securely and consistently, and that information is passed on in a professional and organised manner. Additionally, the formal documentation process will ensure that the information shared does not conflict with or jeopardise the actions of statutory agencies involved, maintaining clear and transparent communication while respecting the roles and responsibilities of statutory agencies.

Graded: Firm Progress

4.5 Standard 5 Management and Support of Subjects of Allegations and Concerns (Respondents)

Strengths

4.5.1 The Servite Friars have strong links with the RLSS for support and they have access to Canon Law advice through links within their order.

4.5.2 The Servite Friars also understand the importance of maintaining appropriate levels of confidentiality in respect of allegations. However, they also recognise the difficulties that may be present when receiving disclosures from those who wish to remain anonymous

4.5.3 No safeguarding plans are current in place however during the past 12 months the Servite Friars have had two safeguarding plans. One plan was monitored until this was concluded in August 2024 and an interim plan was implemented in November 2024, this plan ended in December 2024 with the respondent able to return to ministry. In respect of this complaint, the safeguarding Lead holds a comprehensive chronology of actions and correspondence throughout the case. The respondent was provided with a welfare support person and the RLSS were

informed of actions taken. The respondent's views were also sought throughout the process. During the investigation, the safeguarding lead liaised with the RLSS to ensure that any attendance to additional services or events were noted and agreed prior to attendance.

4.5.4 There is an awareness across leadership that there may be occasions when respondents need to be stepped down from ministry and there would be ongoing support for the respondent in this circumstance, through the Safeguarding lead, a welfare support person and the other Friars living within the Priory.

Areas for Development

4.5.5 The safety plan that was concluded in August 2024 involves a former Servite Friar, laicised in September 2024. The safeguarding lead speaks regularly to the individual to provide pastoral support, and the current Parish Priest requires confirmation for any attendance at the Parish. However, clarity is needed on formal processes to ensure if any additional safeguarding measures are needed should he wish to attend regular worship at his local Parish.

4.5.6 The Safeguarding Lead acknowledges that, in previous cases, the approach to managing situations involving them has not been fully understood across all the Dioceses where they minister. He noted that the memorandum of understanding being developed for RLG priests in diocesan parishes should resolve some of the ambiguity that is currently present. The Servite Friars stated in the past the care of an individual subject to allegations had been neglected and an understanding of the Vow of Poverty the Friars have taken, and their vulnerability in the sense of accommodation, was not understood and therefore it will be essential for the Servite Friars to liaise with the Safeguarding Coordinators in each Diocese where they work to ensure a shared and agreed understanding of roles and responsibilities.

4.5.7 Although the Servite Friars have access to canon law advice, it is acknowledged by some of the Friars that they are unaware of the support they are entitled to as respondents. During one interview, it was noted that it would be helpful for the Friars to have clear information about the process and what to expect, if such a situation were to arise. This information would help ensure that all involved

understand their rights, responsibilities, and the steps that will be taken, providing clarity and reassurance in what can be a difficult and uncertain process.

4.5.8 The safeguarding lead has not yet undertaken any training regarding the management of individuals who may be subject to a safety management plan. The Servite Friars should consider undertaking additional training for the safeguarding lead in this area to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to effectively manage these situations. By ensuring that the safeguarding lead is properly training, the Servite Friars can better protect both the individuals involved and the wider community, ensuring that any safety concerns are managed appropriately and consistently. Additionally, this training would help the safeguarding lead respond with sensitivity and professionalism, balancing the need for safeguarding with the rights of all individuals concerned.

Graded: Early Progress

4.6 Standard 6 Robust Human Resource Management

4.6.1 Members of the Servite Friars in England have an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service certificate (DBS), which is appropriate given the ministry that they undertake with vulnerable groups. Responsibility for the completion of the DBS check for those with active ministry lies with the Diocese in which the Friars are ministering. However, it is the responsibility of the Servite Friars to undertake any additional DBS checks for others.

4.6.2 The Servite Friars have no volunteers as those that work in the Parishes are recruited by the Diocese. Therefore, they have not had to utilise a Safer Recruitment process in the last 12 months. Despite this, the provincial council have discussed safer recruitment processes within their meetings, and the draft safeguarding policy shared with the CSSA analyst discusses appropriate recruitment processes. The safeguarding lead confirmed that any new volunteers or those looking to join the Servite Friars would undergo appropriate recruitment checks, including application forms, appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks,

references and safeguarding training. However, the process would also follow the guidance of the provincial directory 2021.⁹

4.6.3 The Safeguarding Lead recognises the need for a complaints policy and a whistleblowing policy, these documents are currently in draft and the Servite Friars viewed these documents in October 2024. These are not yet ratified by leaders or available to the public.

4.6.4 The Servite Friars are expected to keep their own records of DBS and training. The safeguarding lead has a small file which includes the recent DBS certificates and training completed by the Servite Friars.

4.6.5 The safeguarding lead has reported that obtaining Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificates for overseas members can be particularly challenging due to the fact that other countries often have different systems and requirements for background checks, which may not align with the UK's DBS process. The safeguarding lead is aware of the need for additional steps, such as liaising with relevant authorities in those countries, to verify the background of these individuals.

Areas for Development

4.6.6 Enquiries with the Dioceses of Salford and Clifton have confirmed that the Servite Friars, who have responsibilities within parishes in these dioceses, are up to date with their DBS checks. However, when speaking with the Diocese of Westminster, it was confirmed that two of the Servite Friars residing at the London Priory do not hold DBS checks with the Diocese. Their checks indicate that they do not have formal "parish roles." The safeguarding lead confirmed that these Friars are registered with the update service for an enhanced DBS check, which was completed by Servite Primary School for their role as volunteers. However, since

⁹ The Order of the Friar Servants of Mary, Province of the Isles, The Provincial Directory 2021, outlines the community and governance structure, as well as financial policies for the province. It covers guidelines for community life, including prayer, spiritual practices, and community activities. It details the structure of provincial chapters, elections, and the roles of various provincial officials, including the Prior Provincial, Councillors, and finance officers. Additionally, the document provides directives for managing the province's finances, ensuring transparency, and establishing accountability within the communities. This directory serves as a guide to the province's operations, spiritual life, and administrative procedures.

both Friars are trustees for the Servants of Mary, and one holds a role within the parish, it is crucial for the safeguarding lead to ensure that appropriate DBS checks are completed for all Friars. While the Servite Friars are not a specialised cancer organisation, their ministry often involves significant work with cancer patients and their families, offering spiritual care, emotional support, and community outreach. Given that their work often involves supporting vulnerable adults, particularly those dealing with cancer, their DBS checks should include the adult barred list.

4.6.7 The CSSA Policy “Making a complaint to the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) about a diocese, eparchy or religious life group in England and Wales” states that “The CSSA will investigate complaints about the Catholic dioceses, eparchies, and religious life groups” and “The CSSA is the final stage for unresolved complaints”. Therefore, the Servite Friars will need to incorporate this into any future complaints policy to reflect that the CSSA will investigate unresolved complaints by the Servite Friars.

4.6.8 The draft complaints and whistleblowing policies should be ratified by leaders and published so that they are readily accessible to their target audiences

4.6.9 Copies of DBS certificates are held by the safeguarding lead. The Servite Fathers should implement a written policy outlining the correct handling and safekeeping of DBS certificate information and training records. The policy should be regularly reviewed to ensure ongoing compliance with safeguarding best practices and relevant legal requirements. The safeguarding lead ensures that the DBS documents are stored securely in a locked location with restricted access. However, the safeguarding lead must ensure that these documents are disposed of in accordance with UK government guidance and are not retained longer than necessary. Friars with responsibility for these documents should also consider additional training on data protection, confidentiality, and the correct procedures for storage and disposal. To ensure better management and clarity, the Servite Friars should consider using a tracking system, such as a spreadsheet, to monitor DBS certificate details, including issue dates and renewal deadlines, to ensure nothing is overlooked.

4.6.10 The Servite Friars' draft safeguarding policy, has a section for recruitment to all roles, both paid and voluntary but since the policy itself has not been formally

ratified, the section is not yet set or fully enforceable. Without ratification, the recruitment procedures outlined in the policy lack formal status, which undermines their effectiveness and consistency. For the recruitment section to be fully effective, it must be ratified alongside the safeguarding policy. Once ratified, the recruitment guidelines will become an official part of the organisation's safeguarding practices, ensuring that all new staff and volunteers undergo a thorough vetting process. This will help prevent potential applicants from being placed in roles where they might pose a risk to vulnerable individuals. In addition, ratification will provide clarity and accountability. Therefore, the immediate priority should be to formally ratify the policy, ensuring that the recruitment practices outlined within it are set and can be fully enforced to protect vulnerable individuals in the community.

Graded: Early Progress

4.7 Standard 7 Training and Support for Safeguarding

4.7.1 All members of the Servite Friars are expected to attend regular Safeguarding Awareness (Level 1) Training. This includes training from the Diocese and the RLSS. Liaison with the Diocese of Salford and Clifton confirmed that the Servite Friars are up to date with their safeguarding training requirements. Information from the Diocese of Westminster indicated that all active Friars are up to date with their requirements. However, it is unclear whether the retired Servite Friar currently residing within the London Priory has completed the necessary training required for trustees.

4.7.2 Records of safeguarding training certificates are kept by the safeguarding lead. If members are not compliant the safeguarding lead stated that they would be encouraged to do so by fraternal influence.

4.7.3 The Servite Friars receive communication regarding upcoming training by email. This is communicated to the Friars by the safeguarding lead through telephone, email or council meetings. However, this is usually in person.

4.7.4 The current Friars who are governors at the school have also undertaken the safeguarding training provided by the school.

Areas for Development

4.7.5 Although the safeguarding lead holds copies of certificates for training, clarity was needed from the Diocese and RLSS to determine when the Friars last completed their training and at what level. The Safeguarding lead confirmed that the Servite Friars undertake safeguarding training every 3 years. However, it is the Friars' own responsibility to ensure that this is up to date. To improve management, the Servite Friars should implement a tracking system, like the document outlined in Standard 6, to keep track of certificate details, including the level of the training course, completion dates and renewal deadlines. This will help ensure the Friars stay current with their training requirements and that the information is easy to read and accessible to Trustees.

4.7.6 The Servite Friars should also consider ensuring that all the Trustees have completed Trustee training and that the draft safeguarding policy's training expectations for safeguarding are aligned with the expectations of the Catholic Church in England and Wales and the local Diocese.

4.7.7 The Servite Friars should consider bespoke training for each of the members in line with their ministry, for example the current safeguarding lead may wish to consider enrolling on the Leadership in Safeguarding course available online. A current Servite Friar who is heavily involved with the youth ministry within the Parish and is also a Hospital Chaplain should consider more specialised training in these areas.

4.7.8 When accurate safeguarding training records are created and maintained, it will be important for Trustees to have regular oversight of the level of compliance. If members are failing to engage with safeguarding training, then Trustees will be able to promptly identify this and initiate actions. Full training records will also allow the safeguarding lead to evaluate the effectiveness of the training currently received, through Diocese and RLSS, and make plans to address any gaps or strengthen areas of Safeguarding practice linked to their ministry.

4.7.9 The RLSS has confirmed that the Servite Friars did not access any training during 2024 and therefore the RLSS will be making contact in 2025 to rectify this.

4.7.10 Training expectation by roles for members (including those with limited or no ministry), trustees, employees and volunteers should be documented and agreed by the trustees.

Graded: Basic

4.8 Standard 8 Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Strengths

4.8.1 The Servite Friars fully engaged with the CSSA Baseline Audit process. It is their intention to develop a Safeguarding Implementation Plan (SIP) based upon the recommendations of this audit with a view to improving their Safeguarding practice and ensuring their adherence to the eight Safeguarding standards of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. This plan may take the form of an annual workplan, which will include both routine tasks and improvement actions derived from the audit.

Areas for development

4.8.2 The safeguarding lead and Trustees should continue to work with the RLSS to ensure that their policies and procedures align with the Catholic Safeguarding Standards and the expectations of Integrity in Ministry. This engagement should be ongoing to guarantee their policies remain compliant, relevant and up to date in accordance with best practice and current safeguarding legislation within the context of religious life. Regular reviews and consultations will help reinforce a culture of safety within the Servite friars.

4.8.3 Trustees should ensure safeguarding is a standing agenda item and discuss the progress of the intended SIP that will be created post audit. The Servite Friars should make sure that any actions set are allocated to individuals or groups who are given appropriate resources and time to complete them. Progress should be reported to Trustees in their Provincial Council meetings so any issues can be identified and addressed.

4.8.4 Trustees should complete, and refresh, RLSS Safeguarding Trustee training to ensure that they understand their responsibilities in full in relation to safeguarding.

Graded: Early Progress

5. Summary of Overall Findings

5.1 The members of the Servite Friars serve communities as Priests across three Dioceses in England and Wales. The basic Safeguarding expectation placed upon them is to comply with the individual Diocesan Safeguarding arrangements and the evidence seen demonstrates that they fulfil this. As a separate charity from the Diocese, they also have Safeguarding expectations placed upon them across the eight Safeguarding standards of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. They have been rated as Early Progress against five of the standards, Basic against a further two standards and Firm Progress against the remaining standard. This gives an overall rating of Early Progress

5.2 There are some areas where improvements can be made, the most significant of which is the ratification of a Safeguarding policy and to ensure that all Servite Friars have appropriate DBS checks and have completed Safeguarding Training with the RLSS.

5.3 Trustees should always discuss Safeguarding at their meetings and update with key information such as vetting and Safeguarding training compliance which may require their action. A SIP, which they plan to implement post-audit, should also be tracked at these meetings. Although the Integrity in Ministry pastoral standards document has been re-distributed recently, this should be discussed at the Provincial council with all the Servite Friars to demonstrate a shared understanding.

5.4 The Servite Friars have demonstrated that their current practice exceeds minimum Safeguarding practice expectations such that an overall rating of Early Progress is warranted.

6. Recommendations

To support improvement, the following recommendations are made:

Within 3 months

6.1.1 Ratify the draft Safeguarding Policy ensuring that any policies mentioned within this document are ratified and in place

6.1.2 To consider the following amendments to the safeguarding policy.

- the implementation of a formal disclosure process
- the expectations and commitment to survivors with feedback from Survivors where possible
- the expected support for those who are subject to an allegation
- the inclusion of a communication plan, in association with stakeholders such as Survivors, to ensure messaging is reaching target audiences as intended

6.1.3 Consider the implementation of a formal recording system for DBS checks and training requirements to be held by the safeguarding lead

6.1.4 Ensure that all Servite friars have undertaken the correct DBS checks.

6.1.5 To update the following information on displays (to include areas visible to the public)

- Safe Spaces Information to be present in both the offices and throughout the premises
- Re-write and display new, accurate copies of all details regarding safeguarding and contact details for safeguarding representatives in both the offices and throughout the premises including those areas available to the public, ensuring that the information is current and clear.
- The initial reception of a complaint of abuse located in the Priory

Within 6 months

6.1.6 Reconstruct the Servite website to include the Safeguarding Policy for public accessibility

6.1.7 Add links to Safe Spaces to the website

6.1.8 Liaise with the Safeguarding Coordinators in the Diocese where the Servite Friars minister to agree an understanding of case management and information sharing expectations

6.1.9 Complete the implementation of the draft complaints and whistleblowing policies

Within 12 months

6.1.10 Consider additional training for those in positions of leadership or those with significant roles within the community.

6.1.11 Create a document of both local and national support services for survivors of all types of abuse. Ensuring that this is accessible to all Friars and available in both the premises and website.

6.1.12 To attend RLSS training within the next 12 months and ensure that Servite friars have undertaken the minimum requirements for safeguarding training

6.1.13 To provide safeguarding display information in other languages that are relevant to the local community.

7. Arrangements for Follow-up

7.1 In line with an overall rating of Early Progress, the earliest date of the next audit of the Servite Friars by the CSSA is within one year in January 2026. 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 A



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