



# Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency



## Diocese of Salford

Inspection Report  
May 2026

### Possible Grades

- Exemplary
- Substantial assurance
- Exceeding expectations
- Meeting expectations
- Requires attention
- Significant improvement needed
- Serious concerns

### Overall Grading



Exceeding expectations

#### Standard 1

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



Exceeding expectations

#### Standard 2

Communicating the Church's safeguarding message



Exceeding expectations

#### Standard 3

Engaging with and caring for those who report having been harmed



Exceeding expectations

#### Standard 4

Effective management of allegations and concerns



Exceeding expectations

#### Standard 5

Management and support of subjects of allegations and concerns (respondents)



Substantial assurance

#### Standard 6

Robust human resource management



Exceeding expectations

#### Standard 7

Training and support for safeguarding



Meeting expectations

#### Standard 8

Quality assurance and continuous improvement



Requires attention



# Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency

## Possible Grades

### Exemplary

Safeguarding practice is exceptional, innovative, and influential. The organisation demonstrates a deeply embedded safeguarding culture with consistently excellent outcomes. Learning is shared, and the body serves as a model of best practice for others in the Church.

### Substantial Assurance

Safeguarding arrangements provide a high level of confidence in both practice and governance. Evidence shows sustained excellence, continuous improvement, and well-coordinated oversight. Policies and culture reinforce safe practice, delivering assurance at a strategic level. There is evidence of continuous improvements and quality assurance activity.

### Exceeding Expectations

Safeguarding practice is consistently strong and often goes beyond minimum requirements. There is evidence of positive outcomes, proactive risk management, and well-embedded systems. Leadership demonstrates a strong commitment to safeguarding, and practice is robust and forward-looking.

### Meeting Expectations

Safeguarding arrangements are sound, consistent, and compliant with expected standards. Key processes, policies, and oversight mechanisms are in place and functioning effectively. Practice is reliable, and safeguarding responsibilities are understood and fulfilled across the organisation.

### Requires Attention

Safeguarding practice is partially effective but contains notable gaps or inconsistencies. Some processes work well, but others need targeted improvement to ensure reliability and compliance. Risks are being managed, but not always proactively or systematically.

### Significant Improvement Needed

Core safeguarding structures exist but are not functioning reliably or consistently. Weaknesses in policy, implementation, or oversight significantly undermine safe practice. Improvements are achievable but require substantial effort and focused leadership to reach an acceptable standard.

### Serious Concerns

Safeguarding arrangements show serious and immediate failings. Children or adults at risk may be exposed to harm due to significant gaps in practice, governance, or culture. Urgent corrective action is recommended to ensure safety and compliance. Leadership oversight is insufficient or ineffective.

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## 1. Summary of Findings

**1.1** This is an inspection report of the safeguarding arrangements for the Diocese of Salford, carried out by the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) as part of its national inspection programme for dioceses in England and Wales. The Diocese of Salford has been graded overall as Exceeding Expectations, reflecting strong safeguarding leadership, an embedded safeguarding culture and effective safeguarding practice across most areas of diocesan life. The inspection identified clear evidence of proactive safeguarding arrangements and positive engagement across the diocese, alongside some areas where further development is required to strengthen quality assurance and governance oversight.

**1.2** Safeguarding is visibly prioritised across the diocese and promoted as a shared responsibility by senior leaders, clergy, employees and volunteers. Governance arrangements are well established and supported by an experienced safeguarding team that is highly regarded across the diocese. The inspection identified strong working relationships between the safeguarding team, clergy and parish safeguarding representatives, with evidence of timely safeguarding responses, effective multi-agency working and person-centred practice. The diocese has also demonstrated a developing commitment to survivor engagement through initiatives such as the planned Survivor Reference Panel and partnership working with specialist survivor support organisations. Parish visits demonstrated that safeguarding is well understood and embedded in practice at local level.

**1.3** The inspection also identified areas where further development is required to strengthen consistency and assurance. Further consideration should be given to increasing independent challenge within the Safeguarding Sub-Committee and strengthening the routine review and oversight of safeguarding risks, operational plans and quality assurance activity. The diocese has identified the need to review and update aspects of its safeguarding policy framework and to strengthen mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding communications and the experiences of those who engage with safeguarding services. Addressing these areas will support the Diocese of Salford in sustaining continued safeguarding improvement across the diocese.

## 2. Introduction

**1.1** This is an inspection of the safeguarding arrangements for the Diocese of Salford, undertaken as part of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency's (CSSA) programme of inspections of all 21 Dioceses of England and Wales. The inspection was undertaken in accordance with the contractual agreement between the Diocese of Salford and the CSSA. Public accountability and transparency are provided by the publication of this full inspection report on the CSSA website.

**2.2** The diocesan inspection programme will run from 2025 until 2028 and represents a second phase of CSSA quality assurance of diocesan safeguarding arrangements, following the baseline audit programme that ran from 2022 to 2024. Having primarily focussed on compliance with safeguarding expectations in the baseline audit phase, inspections will concentrate on the quality of safeguarding arrangements and practice, together with the means by which dioceses quality assure and continuously improve their own practice. Inspections are graded according to a new maturity matrix that provides more stringent expectations than during the baseline audit programme and utilises new grade descriptors. There is therefore no equivalence to baseline audit grades.

**2.3** The Diocese of Salford covers a large part of Northwest England between the River Mersey and the River Ribble, some parishes north of the Ribble, and Todmorden in West Yorkshire. It includes the cities of Salford and Manchester, and parts of Lancashire. Bishop John Arnold is the eleventh Roman Catholic Bishop of Salford to be appointed on 30 September 2014; he was installed at Salford Cathedral on 8 December 2014. Within the Diocese, there are 9 deaneries which contain 106 parishes. There are 266 members of diocesan clergy.

**2.4** Safeguarding governance is provided by the Board of Trustees who delegate some areas of strategic responsibility to their Safeguarding Sub-Committee. A separate Safeguarding Advisory Panel (SAP) is in place to provide independent and operational advice and challenge to the Diocese on its overall approach to safeguarding and on decision-making in significant cases. The safeguarding team

consists of a full-time Head of Safeguarding, a Senior Safeguarding Social Worker, Safeguarding Social Worker, Welfare Officer and two Safeguarding Administrators. The safeguarding team is based in the curial offices at Ford Street, Salford.

**2.5** Formal notification of the CSSA's intention to inspect was sent to the Diocese on 29 September 2025 along with the self-assessment document with an agreed completion date of 22 December 2025. A guide for evidence to be provided to support the self-assessment was also shared as well as a data sharing agreement, which was returned along with the self-assessment and some supporting evidence on 6 January 2026. Owing to issues with uploading documents, a workaround was sought, where further evidence was provided on 9 January. Further evidence was requested following the inspection and provided on 12 February.

**2.6** The inspection was completed between 19 January and 6 February 2026 via a combination of remote inspection, primarily on case audits and focus groups, and in-person interviews and parish visits. Three CSSA Quality Assurance Analysts completed the inspection (the third assisting in the completion of case audits).

### 3. Methodology

**3.1** This inspection assesses the progress of the Diocese of Salford against all eight national safeguarding standards of the Catholic Church in England and Wales<sup>1</sup>. The Diocese provided their self-assessment alongside documentary evidence of their adherence to the eight standards. These have been reviewed by the analysts alongside additional evidence provided following the inspection. The diocesan website<sup>2</sup> was also reviewed as a key source of safeguarding information.

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<sup>1</sup> The Catholic Church in England and Wales has adopted a standards based approach to safeguarding in which all dioceses and religious life groups work to and are assessed against agreed standards: [The Eight National Safeguarding Standards](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Roman Catholic Diocese of Salford](#)

**3.2** The Head of Safeguarding provided the CSSA with a list of all safeguarding cases recorded on their case management system, MyConcern<sup>3</sup>. Twenty-two of these cases were chosen to be audited in detail using the CSSA case audit tool. The cases chosen were a representation of the range of casework activity by the safeguarding team and remote access was provided to facilitate this.

**3.3** Online surveys were sent to 304 clergy and 127 Parish Safeguarding Representatives<sup>4</sup> (PSRs) across the diocese to capture as wide a variety of views as possible. A public call for information was also issued regarding the Diocese of Salford's safeguarding arrangements, with a focus on the last 12 months. All survey responses were received anonymously and any self-identifying information included within free text answers was removed before the clergy and PSR surveys were shared with the Diocese.

**3.4** Surveys for clergy and PSRs were available between 1 December 2025 and 16 January 2026. Responses were received from 28 clergy, which is a response rate of 9%, and 23 PSRs, which is a response rate of 18%. These response rates are significantly lower than would typically be expected and, as such, only limited conclusions can be drawn. Twenty-three responses were received from the public call out for information about the diocese issued by the CSSA. Two focus groups were also run online during the inspection period. One was made up of a small group of clergy, selected by the CSSA, and one was a group of PSRs, selected by the diocese.

**3.5** The Diocese of Salford arranged parish visits to two of their parishes and the Cathedral where the resident clergy and PSRs were spoken to and the premises inspected to assess how a safe environment is created.

**3.6** Interviews took place with the following key diocesan individuals:

- Bishop John Arnold

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<sup>3</sup> MyConcern is a secure safeguarding software for recording and managing all types of safeguarding concerns.

<sup>4</sup> A Parish Safeguarding Representative is a volunteer who supports their Parish in Safeguarding matters such as Safer Recruitment of volunteers and liaison with Diocesan safeguarding teams.

- Caritas
- Chancellor
- Chancery
- Chief Operating Officer (COO)
- Director of Education
- Episcopal Vicar for Formation
- Head of Communication
- Head of Human Resources
- Head of Safeguarding
- Lay Trustees
- Pilgrimage Leads
- Safeguarding Administrator
- Safeguarding Sub-Committee Chair
- Safeguarding Advisory Panel Chair
- Safeguarding Social Worker
- Senior Safeguarding Social Worker
- Vicars General
- We Are Survivors<sup>5</sup>
- Welfare Officer
- Youth Ministry Leads

## 4. Inspection grading

**4.1** Safeguarding practice was assessed against the eight National Safeguarding Standards adopted by the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Evidence gathered during the inspection was evaluated using the CSSA Diocesan Maturity Matrix.

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<sup>5</sup> We Are Survivors is a survivor focused voluntary sector organisation that aims to create and facilitate safe spaces for male survivors of sexual abuse, rape and sexual exploitation across Greater Manchester.

**4.2** Each standard is graded on a seven-point scale ranging from Serious Concerns to Exemplary. Individual assessments against the sub-standards are aggregated to determine the overall grade for each standard. These standard grades are then considered collectively to determine the overall inspection grading for the diocese.

**4.3** The full set of grading descriptors used by the CSSA inspection framework is set out on the opening pages of this report.

## 5. Inspection findings against each standard

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

#### Strengths

**5.1.1** The inspection identified a clear culture of shared leadership in safeguarding, consistently described as a collective responsibility, with visible contributions from a range of individuals, including the Bishop, the Vicars General, and the Head of Safeguarding. Individuals spoken to across the diocese, irrespective of their role(s), whether lay employee, member of clergy or volunteer, demonstrated a clear understanding of their responsibility in contributing to and promoting a culture of safeguarding. This shared commitment was reflected in survey findings, with 100% of clergy and 96% of PSRs reporting that those responsible for church leadership were either very involved or somewhat involved in promoting safeguarding practice. The consistency of these responses across roles indicates that safeguarding is firmly embedded as a collective responsibility throughout the diocese.

**5.1.2** From the range of cases selected for audit, there is evidence that the Church body's zero tolerance approach to all forms of abuse is widely known and clearly understood. All cases reviewed that were referred to the safeguarding team by

clergy or parish volunteers were referred appropriately and within the required timescales.

**5.1.3** Each year, the diocese holds a ‘Survivors’ Mass’ in Collyhurst, Manchester. This is a day on which the Catholic Church in England and Wales holds in prayer all who have been abused, in whatever way, by another, whether within the Church or any other setting. The diocese publicly state on the diocesan website that this day is *‘a day not only to recommit ourselves as Church to learn from past mistakes and make the Church a safe setting for all but also a day to reflect on the Church’s ministry of healing and welcome to Survivors/Victims.’* The diocese recognises the importance of engaging with those who report harm and acknowledges that their voices and experiences can be used to inform future safeguarding practice. At the time of the inspection, processes were underway to establish a Survivor Reference Panel. A Terms of Reference had been drafted and sets out its purpose, *‘to provide informed survivor-led insight into the safeguarding work of the diocese. Panel members will contribute to shaping safeguarding policies, practices, and support services to ensure they are compassionate, effective and person-centred.’* This has the potential to enable the diocese to draw on and utilise the lived experience of survivors, helping to inform, share and strengthen safeguarding services and practice.

**5.1.4** The safeguarding section of the diocesan website includes a Mission Statement, which clearly outlines the diocese’s commitment to safeguarding and that *‘creating a safer environment is paramount to ensuring that the Diocese of Salford fosters a culture of safeguarding.’* Furthermore, it states that *‘we will ensure that everyone in the Diocese understands their responsibility to safeguarding and promote the well-being of those who worship in our churches or join us for any activity facilitated by church members. We will continue to strive towards the highest standards of practice to keep people safe.’* This is followed by an introduction to members of the safeguarding department and clear guidance on how to contact them. The section also provides reassurance that any safeguarding concerns will be addressed in a timely and appropriate manner. This page is complemented by additional safeguarding related pages, including guidance on how to report a concern, support for survivors, creating a safe environment, safer

recruitment, resources and links, governance, and feedback. These areas will be reflected upon further within other standards of this report.

**5.1.5** Evidence was seen in one of the Bishop's weekly emails to all clergy, dated 23 May 2025 of safeguarding messages being communicated. In it, he not only reflected on the Survivors' Mass held three evenings prior but also drew attention to an organisation of concern and advised that any approaches from that organisation should be referred to the Head of Safeguarding. During parish visits, analysts heard consistently that clergy and PSRs receive communications from a range of sources from within the Church body's leadership.

**5.1.6** The diocesan Board of Trustees comprises five clergy and six lay members, six of whom (the Bishop, the Vicars General, the Chancellor and two lay members) were spoken to as part of the inspection. The Board of Trustees meet between three to five times a year, with meetings deliberately scheduled to follow those of the Safeguarding Advisory Panel (SAP) and Safeguarding Sub-Committee. The 'Safeguarding Committee' is a standing item at every Board meeting. The Head of Safeguarding provides a quarterly report in advance of each meeting, outlining key safeguarding information. This includes data on DBS checks, training completion rates, safeguarding plans, and the number of cases managed by the safeguarding team, alongside supporting narrative, good news headlines and other relevant information.

**5.1.7** Trustees support the discharge of their safeguarding responsibilities through the Safeguarding Advisory Panel, whose role is to provide an independent voice, advice and challenge to the diocese on its overall approach to safeguarding and on decision making in significant cases. The Panel plays a role in ensuring the perspectives of survivors are heard and reflected in its work and in promoting accountability, including where appropriate, the ability to engage with the media and make public statements. The Chair of the Panel is independent of the diocese and is a current university professor in safeguarding and violence prevention, with extensive experience in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, and of working across systems and organisations. The Chair is supported by panel members who are either currently working in relevant professional fields or bring appropriate

professional expertise, including backgrounds in health, policing, probation, education, and social care. The panel is supported by diocesan advisers, including communication, youth ministry, clergy, and religious advisers, as well as members of the safeguarding team.

**5.1.8** A Safeguarding Operational Development Plan (2024–2025) is in place and sets out short, medium, and long-term operational goals aligned to each of the eight national safeguarding standards. For each standard, the plan clearly outlines what the safeguarding team aims to achieve, how it will be achieved, why the action is necessary and its intended impact, a target completion date, and record of progress. The Head of Safeguarding reports that the plan is formally reviewed on an annual basis, with updates being provided to members of the Safeguarding Sub-Committee. Minutes evidence that updates are shared, however, they are not presented as a standing agenda item. Including the plan as a formal agenda item could further strengthen governance arrangements and support more systematic monitoring and oversight, particularly as there are some areas within the plan where target dates and progress updates are not consistently recorded. Given that the current plan covers the 2024–2025 period, consideration should now be given to reviewing progress and agreeing a revised plan for the next operational period. A timely review will help ensure that progress is evaluated and that any outstanding actions are appropriately carried forward. Any new or emerging priorities, including recommendations from this inspection should be incorporated to ensure that it remains current.

**5.1.9** The safeguarding team consists of a Head of Safeguarding, a Senior Safeguarding Social Worker, a Safeguarding Social Worker, a Welfare Officer and two Safeguarding Administrators. All members of the team are full-time, with the exception of one of the newly appointed Safeguarding Administrators, who works the remaining half time in the Vicars General office. Line management is provided by the Head of Safeguarding, and external supervision is offered to the Safeguarding Social Workers. During the inspection period, the team was impacted by sickness absence and by a disruption to team meetings over a five-month period. In response to sickness amongst two members of the team, arrangements were made for the transfer of safeguarding cases, as seen in case audits.

**5.1.10** Guidance on how to create safe environments can be found on the safeguarding section of the diocesan website. This section is introduced by the statement, *'The Diocese of Salford and its individual members will undertake appropriate steps to maintain a safer environment for all and to keep them safe from harm. This is demonstrated by the provision of carefully planned activities for all children, young people and adults, caring for those hurt by abuse and robustly managing and ministering to those who have caused harm.'* Following this statement, the section provides guidance on what it means to create a safer environment. This includes information on risk assessments, adult child ratios, and codes of conduct. On review of this page, it was observed that the hyperlinks provided to CSSA pages are no longer valid, therefore, the diocese should review those, to ensure that any practice guidance and forms that are expected to be used, remain available and accessible. During parish visits and focus groups, clergy and PSRs were able to describe the practical arrangements they have in place to create safe environments. While not exhaustive, examples included safer recruitment processes, providing regular reminders to parents and carers that they must accompany their children unless specific arrangements are in place, and promoting adherence to the photo policy. This provides evidence that safeguarding is embedded within this sample of parishes. The CSSA values parish visits as an important means of understanding of how safeguarding arrangements operate at a parish level and how effective they are in practice. They inform and strengthen our judgement-making processes and the time and commitment involved in facilitating this engagement is recognised, as are the contributions from all involved.

**5.1.11** The safeguarding team are well known across the diocese and valued for their work. This was consistently evident in interviews, where diocesan departments reported consulting the team for their expertise in the planning and organising of activities, including pilgrimages, youth activities, communications, as well as seeking of advice from when safeguarding concerns arise within the marriage tribunal process. The team's reputation was also reflected in parish visits, focus groups and in survey responses where clergy comments highlighted the team's strengths in approachability, professionalism, and the quality of support provided

when concerns or issues arise within a parish. Similarly, PSR survey feedback reflected appreciation for the team's timely responses to queries and the consistent communication that ensures parishes are kept informed and updated, particularly in relation to safer recruitment processes. This feedback is attributed to the team's continued efforts to build supportive relationships. Analysts heard that, historically, contact with the safeguarding team was often perceived by clergy as punitive, occurring only when something had happened or when individuals felt they were in trouble. The current approach is experienced as being more collaborative and supportive.

**5.1.12** The Diocese of Salford has demonstrated their commitment to a developing culture of transparency by publishing details of their pilot audit conducted in February 2023, including a summary of key findings against each standard, recommendations and the overall rating of Firm Progress. This was not a CSSA expectation of those dioceses participating in the pilot audit programme.

**5.1.13** The Head of Safeguarding has consistently and proactively liaised with the CSSA for the provision of advice and guidance and to share information requiring safeguarding alerts and action at a national level. Her direct and regular access to the Bishop ensures communication, effective information sharing, oversight, and timely reporting. Prior to recent structural changes she was an active member of the Strategic Council for Catholic Safeguarding<sup>6</sup>, where her engagement has created opportunities to contribute to and influence safeguarding at a national level.

### Areas for development

**5.1.14** The Safeguarding Sub-Committee has five members, comprising of three senior clergy, one diocesan employee and one lay trustee, who serves as the independent Chair. The Chair is a former Chief Constable and provides valuable expertise in governance, safeguarding and public protection. The Sub-Committee is supported by five advisers, all of whom are diocesan employees. This

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<sup>6</sup> The Strategic Council for Catholic Safeguarding (SCCS) is the strategic leadership body that oversees safeguarding across the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

membership was agreed by trustees on the basis of the recommendations of the Elliot Review<sup>7</sup> and following the receipt of legal advice. It is, however, not consistent with practice in the majority of other dioceses in which safeguarding sub-committees typically include a proportion of members who are independent of the diocese to strengthen accountability and provide challenge. While it is acknowledged that this is a decision for trustees, it is recommended that consideration is given to how greater independent perspective and challenge can be brought to the Safeguarding Sub-Committee, be that through additions to the membership or by other means.

**5.1.15** A Safeguarding Risk Register has been created and combines strategic, operational, reputational and financial risks and how they will be mitigated. A review of this document is required, as some of the identified risks have already been addressed or mitigated against. For example, safeguarding oversight is currently embedded within the planning and coordination of pilgrimages. In addition, safeguarding plans are subject to routine review, as evidenced in case audits. These measures demonstrate that there are controls in place and are functioning effectively. The risk register records its last review date as early 2024, which indicates that no recent review has taken place. A formal review would provide a more current assessment of risks and would confirm which risks remain relevant and any additional mitigations required accordingly. This will support the diocese to maintain effective oversight and provide assurances that safeguarding risks are being appropriately managed.

**5.1.16** While *Caring Safely For Others*<sup>8</sup> is accessible via the 'Creating a Safer Environment' page of the safeguarding section on the diocesan website, the Vicars General advised that it is promoted during training and referenced when addressing clear cultural differences amongst overseas priests. However, some members of clergy spoken to during the inspection were not aware of the

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<sup>7</sup> The Elliott Review, published in October 2020, was commissioned to review and make proposals for future safeguarding structures and arrangements in the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Its final report is available here: [Independent Review Safeguarding Report 2020 Re-Format 4](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Caring-Safely-For-Others.pdf](#) Pastoral Standards and Safe Conduct in Ministry

document. This highlights that further promotion of this document is required to ensure that the pastoral standards are not only available but are clearly understood and consistently embedded in practice.

**5.1.17** Trustees have previously adopted all CSSA template policies and have been anticipating the release of an updated suite of safeguarding policies due to be made available for the Catholic Church in England and Wales. These policies had been expected to be available at an earlier date but remain in development. In the interim, senior leaders have held discussions regarding the need to create a bespoke suite of safeguarding policies tailored to the diocese's specific context and requirements. However, this has not been progressed, and the diocese recognises that there are current gaps which now need to be addressed.

**Graded: Exceeding Expectations**

## 5.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church's safeguarding message

### Strengths

**5.2.1** A Communications Strategy for 2025–2027 has been developed to build upon those previously produced in 2018 and 2022. The Strategy recognises the work of the Synod, environmental stewardship, cathedral restoration and safeguarding as a dedicated communications strand. The document provides a summary of its overarching aims and the strategies in place to achieve them. It outlines key messaging, core communication strands, identified risks and opportunities, governance and review mechanisms and measures of progress. It also sets out the next steps for implementation, alongside a defined audience and the channels through which communication will take place. The safeguarding section aims to embed safeguarding into all aspects of diocesan work, ensuring it is visible and integrated rather than as an add-on. This includes providing regular updates on policies, training and support resources, sharing positive stories of safeguarding in

action, listening to the voice of survivors, and ensuring safeguarding is integrated into social media and all appropriate public facing materials. The key message of the safeguarding strand is focussed on '*creating a safer environment to ensure that the Diocese of Salford fosters a culture of safeguarding*'.

**5.2.2** Alongside the Communications Strategy, a separate Crisis Communication Plan is in place that incorporates a Crisis and Reactive Communication Strategy. This document was originally produced in June 2024, and in line with the stated review period, was reviewed in June 2025. No amendments were required at that time. The development of the plan was in recognition of the potential reputational risks associated with diocesan work, with safeguarding identified as one of the risks to be addressed. The document sets out the roles and responsibilities of diocesan personnel and identifies who should be involved in drafting any statements, in conjunction with the Communications Team. Notably, this includes how the Head of Safeguarding must be involved in signing off any statement relating to a safeguarding allegation. Evidence from one case audit demonstrated consideration given by a member of clergy as to whether the communications team should be informed of a safeguarding incident within the parish. Although their involvement was not required, this example shows an awareness of the team's role and the situations in which they may need to become involved in safeguarding matters.

**5.2.3** Included in the safeguarding section of the diocesan website, is a dedicated 'Resources and Links'<sup>9</sup> page. This provides access to key statutory guidance relating to children and adults at risk (though it currently references a previous version of Working Together to Safeguard Children). In addition, the page includes links to national safeguarding policies and procedures, as well as a range of relevant external organisations. These include the Church Child Protection Advisory Service

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<sup>9</sup> [Resources and Links - Roman Catholic Diocese of Salford](#)

(now known as Thirtyone:eight)<sup>10</sup>, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)<sup>11</sup>, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)<sup>12</sup>, Shelter<sup>13</sup>, Mind<sup>14</sup>, Samaritans<sup>15</sup>, Hourglass<sup>16</sup>, and Stop it Now<sup>17</sup>.

**5.2.4** In addition to the messages delivered by the Bishop, as described in 4.1.5 analysts were provided, (following one parish visit), with evidence from clergy and volunteers of communications received from both the safeguarding team and the communications team. Copies of the (monthly) Safeguarding Newsletter circulated to PSRs were reviewed and found to provide useful updates on training, safer recruitment documentation, safeguarding Sunday, and parish audits. Communications issued to clergy (weekly) by the communications team focus on developments relating to the Survivor Reference Panel, together with reminders on responding to safeguarding enquiries, media interest and social media engagement. Analysts observed consistent displays in the parishes visited, primarily through the use of the CSSA poster<sup>18</sup>, which included details of the PSRs and the safeguarding team. In one parish, a bespoke poster had been created featuring an introduction from the PSRs and information regarding their professional backgrounds. Additionally, parish newsletters (both electronic and

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<sup>10</sup> Thirtyone:eight is an independent Christian safeguarding organisation that provides a number of safeguarding services to individuals, organisations, charities, faith and community groups.

<sup>11</sup> The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) processes and issues criminal record checks on individuals applying for employment or volunteering.

<sup>12</sup> IICSA was a statutory inquiry for England and Wales, established in 2015, designed to examine how institutions failed to protect children from sexual abuse.

<sup>13</sup> Shelter is a housing and homeless charity.

<sup>14</sup> Mind is a mental health charity in England and Wales, providing advice, information and support services.

<sup>15</sup> The Samaritans is a UK based charity that provides emotional support to anyone in distress, struggling or at risk of suicide.

<sup>16</sup> Hourglass (formerly known as Action on Elder Abuse) is a charity focussing on ending the abuse and exploitation of older adults across the UK.

<sup>17</sup> Stop it Now is a campaign to support anyone with a concern about child sexual abuse and its prevention.

<sup>18</sup> [CSSA Poster \(template\)](#)

hard copies) included details of the PSR(s), as did one of the two parishes, that have a website.

### Areas for development

**5.2.5** At the time of the inspection, the Communications Strategy had not been formally approved by the Trustees, although oversight of the document had been held by a communications committee. Once the Trustees have reviewed and formally approved the document, consideration should be given to publishing it on the diocesan website. Doing so would help ensure transparency and provide clarity to the intended audience regarding the diocese's approach to safeguarding communications (it is recognised that this document has a broader scope than safeguarding and any decision to publish will need to account for this). The diocese should also consider a review of its Crisis Communication Plan, in light of the experience gained from working with parishes affected by safeguarding allegations.

**5.2.6** The Head of Communications reported that current practice involves spot checking parishes to establish whether notices have been included in parish newsletters. There are also plans to bring together members of clergy to seek their views on diocesan communications more broadly, which could incorporate safeguarding communications. As noted in 4.2.4, there is considerable variation in the level of safeguarding information published on parish websites and in its accessibility. For example, one website had a clearly identifiable safeguarding section, however, the content was limited to safer recruitment processes and did not provide any further guidance, or the inclusion of the details for the PSR's in that parish. On another website, safeguarding information was located within the 'Groups' page, which limits its visibility and accessibility. Further consideration should be given to establishing clear expectations for each parish to ensure that safeguarding information is presented consistently, readily available and easy to access.

**5.2.7** Further work is required in evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding communications. Once the Survivor Reference Panel has been established, seeking feedback from its members will provide valuable insight into the appropriateness,

tone and content of safeguarding messages. However, it is important that feedback is not limited to this group and that views are sought from a wide range of people across the diocese. These could include parishioners, volunteers, parents/carers and children and young people who participate in youth ministry and pilgrimages. Their perspectives will help ensure that safeguarding communications are accessible, and effective for all audiences.

### Graded: Exceeding Expectations

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

### Strengths

**5.3.1** The diocese has made a public commitment through their 'Support for Survivors' page where they encourage anyone who has experienced harm to contact the safeguarding team. By doing so, this demonstrates an open and responsive approach, explicitly stating that, *'we want to continue to learn and develop our safeguarding work, by working closely with survivors of abuse and listening to their experiences.'* The diocese further outline their approach to supporting survivors by acknowledging that each survivor's journey is unique. Its stated key principles include *safety first, confidentiality, empowerment and choice, respect and compassion, and accountability and transparency*, which align with best practice. Towards the end of the page, there is clear signposting to both local and national services, such as Healing Through Community<sup>19</sup> and Safe Spaces<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Healing through Community is a partnership programme between the Diocese of Salford, We Are Survivors and Greater Manchester Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Support Centre. The aim of the project is to provide therapeutic support to survivors of sexual abuse.

<sup>20</sup> 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 Church in Wales.

**5.3.2** Evidence from case audits demonstrate that the diocese's key principles are being embedded in practice. In 78% (18) of audited cases, person-centred practice was assessed as either good or outstanding. This shows that in the majority of cases reviewed, individual's needs and voices were carefully considered. This picture is further reflected in survey responses, where 92% of both clergy and PSRs reported that they were either very confident or confident in the Church's ability to provide appropriate care to individuals who disclose harm. An example of effective practice was seen in one case, where the case worker and member of clergy worked collaboratively to ensure that timely and appropriate pastoral and emotional support was provided to those affected by a significant safeguarding incident. This response demonstrated empathy, care and compassion, as well as a clear commitment to safeguarding individuals' emotional well-being. In another case, clear and accessible information about available specialist services was provided. The information was carefully outlined in a way that was easy to understand, enabling the individual to make informed decisions about their next steps. Analysts also saw evidence (outside of case audits) of individuals being offered a choice of meeting venues. This recognises the importance of individuals feeling safe and comfortable for them to be able to engage meaningfully.

**5.3.3** The Bishop has experience of engaging with individuals who have reported harm and from this, has developed an understanding that each person's experience is unique and requires a tailored response. He recognises the potential for lifelong impact and acknowledges that, while he cannot heal the harm experienced, he aims to ensure that those who he engages with feel heard and supported. He shared that individuals he has met with have reported their contact with him to be positive. This was evidenced in communications relating to the Healing Through Community project, where a meeting was facilitated between the Bishop, Head of Safeguarding, and a survivor. Feedback indicated that the survivor found the meeting beneficial, describing how much they had gained from it and highlighting the care and compassion demonstrated throughout.

**5.3.4** As referenced in 4.1.3, establishing a Survivor Reference Panel is an important step to help to ensure that the voices and lived experiences of those who have been harmed directly inform and shape future safeguarding practice.

## Areas for development

**5.3.5** Within the safeguarding section of the diocesan website, a 'Feedback' page states that feedback is both welcomed and appreciated and helps to shape the service delivered, as well as informing learning. This links to a safeguarding feedback form. At the time of the inspection, it was reported that no responses to this survey had been received since the form was introduced in Spring 2025. Consideration should be given to proactively seeking the views and experiences of those who have been provided with a safeguarding service at appropriate stages of their involvement, for example, at the point of case closure, where suitable. The process for gathering feedback via the survey or by other accessible means should be routine, with clear mechanisms established to ensure that any identified learning is reviewed, acted upon, and used to inform and strengthen future safeguarding practice.

**5.3.6** The diocese should seek to further develop how its leadership reflects collectively on both their individual and organisational response to those who report having been harmed. Quality assurance processes should be introduced to provide for the systematic review, monitoring and evaluating of safeguarding practice, to ensure that responses are consistent, trauma-informed, survivor focused and aligned with best practice. This could include through regular case audits and independent scrutiny (for example, by SAP members). Once the Survivor Reference Panel is established, consideration should be given to how members could contribute to quality assurance processes. This could be by providing oversight to leaders by contributing to anonymised case reviews, offering challenge and insight from their own experiences. This would strengthen how leaders reflect on the quality and impact of responses, thereby promoting transparency and accountability.

**5.3.7** It is positive that the Bishop is willing to meet with survivors and has some experience in these meetings, with support from the Head of Safeguarding. To further ensure a trauma-informed response, trauma-informed training should be undertaken by the Bishop and any other senior leaders across the diocese who are

likely to engage with those who report harm. This training could be extended to other roles within the diocese, and those who are new to role.

### Graded: Exceeding Expectations

## 5.4 Standard 4 Effective management of allegations and concerns

### Strengths

**5.4.1** The 'Reporting a Concern' page within the safeguarding section of the website clearly states that anyone who holds a role within the Catholic Church must refer allegations directly to the safeguarding office or directly to the police. Members of the public are advised to refer allegations directly to the police and/or to the diocese's safeguarding office, via an online reporting form<sup>21</sup>. Within the 'Immediate Concerns' section, a clear and prominent message advises that where there are concerns about the immediate welfare of a child or adult at risk, the police should be contacted without delay. These procedures are well known and understood by clergy and PSRs, with 91% of PSRs and 86% of clergy reporting feeling either confident or very confident in knowing what should be reported, to whom, and when. Within the focus groups, PSRs demonstrated strong awareness of what to do when they receive an allegation or safeguarding concern. This was particularly in terms of knowing who to contact, the importance of timeliness and of relying on the safeguarding team for guidance on how to manage situations appropriately. Similarly, in the clergy focus group, most members had direct experience of receiving safeguarding concerns and/or managing the Church attendance of individuals known to pose a risk. They demonstrated good procedural understanding of how to respond to serious safeguarding incidents, including prompt reporting of allegations and the appropriate escalation of information relating to individuals assessed as high risk. This was described as being

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<sup>21</sup> [Safeguarding - Report a Concern \(to the Diocese of Salford\)](#)

undertaken in collaboration with the safeguarding team, police and prison services. At the same time, clergy highlighted the emotional impact involved in this work particularly in distressing cases, cases involving fellow clergy, or those requiring ongoing supervision of high-risk individuals. Senior leaders should consider whether additional pastoral and well-being support is required for clergy involved in complex or high-risk safeguarding cases.

**5.4.2** Case audits evidence timely and proportionate safeguarding practice across the Church body. They demonstrate effective multi-agency collaboration, proactive information gathering and clear internal communications, with prompt engagement and appropriate escalation, where necessary, to the relevant diocesan departments (including senior clergy, HR, communications) as well as with statutory authorities, (Police, Probation, Local Authority Designated Officer<sup>22</sup> (LADO)) and other relevant partners where required. Evidence was seen of referrals being made to statutory authorities, however, in one case, a referral to Adult Social Care was not made as promptly as would be expected, with no explanation for the delay provided in the case record. Evidence was also seen of appropriate professional challenge to the LADO regarding their processes, specifically in relation to the failure to interview a respondent. While areas for development have been identified and are outlined below, the overall gradings reflect sound practice. Of the cases audited, 19 were assessed as Good, meaning that 86% met the expected standards. The remaining three cases (14%) were graded Requires Improvement, with no cases assessed as Insufficient overall. This indicates that safeguarding practice is generally effective, with scope to strengthen consistency in specific areas.

**5.4.3** The safeguarding team is led by the Head of Safeguarding and comprises a Senior Safeguarding Social Worker and a Safeguarding Social Worker. All are qualified social workers with relevant experience in either statutory children's services or with independent organisations. The team is experienced in assessing and managing risk, as was reflected in case audits where risk assessments were

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<sup>22</sup> A LADO is responsible for overseeing the management and oversight of allegations against people that work with children.

completed in a timely manner and informed by information from a range of relevant sources and then used to develop and implement proportionate safeguarding plans. Case records also demonstrate an understanding of the restrictions on internal action during statutory investigations. This ensures that internal responses do not interfere with or jeopardise statutory processes.

**5.4.4** Minutes from Safeguarding Advisory Panel (SAP) meetings provide evidence of discussions being held in respect of individual significant and higher risk safeguarding cases concerning lay and clergy members, as well as organisations operating within the diocese where substantive concerns have been identified. The minutes record the actions arising from these discussions, which are either determined and set by the safeguarding team or formally agreed by panel members. In some instances, panel members are advised of actions to be undertaken by the safeguarding team, whereas, in other cases, the panel collectively determines and agrees the appropriate course of action. The Panel's Terms of Reference do not specify which cases must be presented, they outline its advisory and oversight functions. These include reviewing significant cases for compliance with policy and standards, advising the Bishop and Trustees, and offering guidance on pastoral and long-term arrangements where there are convictions or significant concerns. Analysts were informed that all new cases involving the implementation or closure of any safeguarding plans (for both lay and clergy) are presented, along with cases that are likely to attract public or media attention.

**5.4.5** The safeguarding team work collaboratively with the Vicars General and they offer advice and guidance in clergy welfare and safeguarding cases to ensure compliance with canon law. One case audit provided evidence of a member of the safeguarding team liaising with the National Tribunal Service (NTS)<sup>23</sup> with a subsequent referral being shared with the Bishop for his oversight prior to submission. The case audit further demonstrates that updates were provided to

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<sup>23</sup> The purpose of the National Tribunal Service is to enhance impartiality, transparency and consistency in the application of canon law across its jurisdiction in penal cases. [National Tribunal Service \(NTS\) – Catholic Bishops' Conference](#)

the NTS, resulting in the matter being referred to the Holy See for their consideration of laicisation.<sup>24</sup>

**5.4.6** Trustees advised that decisions regarding the submission of serious incident reports to the Charity Commission are informed by information received from the safeguarding team. Where a potential serious incident is identified, the Head of Safeguarding and the Diocesan Solicitor (who is a lay Trustee) discuss the matter. The final decision on whether to submit a report is made by the Diocesan Solicitor in their capacity as a Trustee. Trustees have had prior experience of submitting serious incident reports, in relation to safeguarding and financial matters, therefore, are familiar with the reporting requirements. During the inspection, it was reported that the last incident report related to a deceased priest, however, this was subsequently assessed as not meeting the Charity Commission's threshold for reporting.

### Areas for development

**5.4.7** While case audits evidence timely and proportionate activity, they identified inconsistencies in the quality and timeliness of case recording practice. The 'Practice Standards, Expectations and Guidance', produced by the Head of Safeguarding in June 2023, includes a clear requirement within the 'Case Recording' section that stipulates that 'all case recordings should be added to the diocesan systems within 5 working days'. However, delays were identified in several cases, with some case activity not recorded until up to two months after the action had been taken. This is not in line with the stated guidance, which emphasises that *'the recording of case notes, uploading of documents, accuracy of details for a child, 'adult at risk' and any involved professionals is key to effective partnership working and timely decision making and that the importance of recording information is central to our practice.'* While the underlying safeguarding actions were generally appropriate, delayed recording can create avoidable risks if the case is transferred to another case worker, potentially leading to delay, duplication, or gaps in safeguarding activity. The diocese should review the current timescale

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<sup>24</sup> Laicisation is the process by which a member of clergy's clerical status is removed.

as five working days does not reflect best practice in timely safeguarding recording.

**5.4.8** While the overall gradings of cases is acknowledged, management oversight within the audited cases was inconsistent. Of the 22 cases audited, 14 were assessed below the expected standard (three Insufficient and 11 Requiring Improvement). Five cases evidenced Good oversight, while in three cases oversight was not required. In cases that had progressed to SAP, records of discussions and ensuing actions were not consistently or sufficiently documented in case files. It was reported that all cases referred to the safeguarding team receive some level of management oversight; however, this was not consistently apparent with the cases audited.

**5.4.9** To strengthen practice in this standard, the diocese should embed routine learning from safeguarding allegations and concerns as part of ongoing quality assurance processes. This could be at the point of case closure where cases are subject to a documented “lessons learned” review, using a standard template to identify good practice, areas for improvement, required actions and how learning will be shared as appropriate and proportionate. It is important that examples of good practice are shared more widely (eg amongst clergy and PSRs), as this provides assurance regarding the effectiveness of the approach taken to manage allegations and concerns, while also ensuring that areas requiring development are clearly identified and actioned by the appropriate individual(s). Senior leaders should receive regular oversight of this activity and any associated progress to ensure accountability, consistency and demonstrable improvement in safeguarding practice.

**Graded: Exceeding Expectations**

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

### Strengths

**5.5.1** Case audits demonstrate that clergy respondents are contacted promptly following allegations being made against them, with timely engagement to explain next steps and confirm understanding of the process. Senior leaders are notified without delay. Where required, interpreters are arranged and safeguarding plans are translated, supporting clear and accessible communications. Risk assessments and safeguarding plans are completed collaboratively with respondents, with careful consideration given to individual communication needs. Safeguarding plans now routinely include a confidentiality agreement, which addresses a recommendation from the baseline audit. While most safeguarding plans had been signed and uploaded to MyConcern, a small number of case audits identified that this had not consistently occurred. Ensuring that all signed plans are routinely uploaded will not only strengthen recording practice, but it will also provide clear evidence of the respondent's agreement to the plan. Respondents are generally kept informed of progress and updates, and where their needs cannot be met by the diocese, they are provided with timely information about appropriate external support services.

**5.5.2** If a situation arises in which a respondent refuses to engage with or sign an individual safeguarding plan and continues to attend church services or receive the Eucharist at home, a Parish Safeguarding Plan is implemented. This represents good safeguarding practice, as it ensures that identified risks are managed by establishing a safe environment in which all relevant personnel (primarily clergy) are fully informed of the required standards and measures to mitigate the risks. Evidence was provided of a current Parish Safeguarding Plan which clearly sets out the purpose and scope of the plan, details of the identified concerns and associated risks, specific actions required to mitigate those risks, clear allocation of responsibility, and timescales for review. The plan also includes a contingency section, outlining the steps to be taken should the conditions of the plan not be

adhered to. This approach ensures that safeguarding responsibilities are maintained, even where the respondent does not formally engage.

**5.5.3** Safeguarding plans are overseen by the Head of Safeguarding, whose comments are included within the plan. In addition to this, any new cases involving both lay and clergy respondents are presented to the SAP for their oversight, as per the Terms of Reference. Case audits demonstrate routine oversight is provided by SAP at the point of a safeguarding plan ending and the case closing. Notable practice is seen in the frequency of reviews of safeguarding plans, once implemented, which exceeds national policy expectations. Additional oversight is held by Trustees and the Safeguarding Sub-Committee, who receive quarterly figures from the Head of Safeguarding on the number of safeguarding plans implemented. The figures are accompanied by narrative to provide context, including information on the support provided by diocesan personnel and updates on parish safeguarding plans in place.

**5.5.4** Case audits evidence that support is provided by the Diocesan Welfare Officer, with balanced and proportionate judgement applied to individual circumstances. The introduction of the Welfare Officer role was consistently described by interviewees as a positive development in strengthening support to both lay and clergy respondents. The Welfare Officer provides regular support to individuals subject to Safeguarding Plans and is responsible for ensuring that plans are maintained appropriately and regularly reviewed under the direction of the Safeguarding Social Workers. The role provides appropriate separation from Safeguarding Social Workers, particularly where they may be working with the person reporting harm, thereby promoting clarity of role and reducing any potential conflicts of interest.

**5.5.5** The Vicars General advised that in the cases of allegations being made against a member of clergy, support is provided alongside a clear commitment to safeguarding and to supporting victims. Once a statutory process is initiated, the diocese protects the integrity of any investigation while maintaining appropriate contact with the clergy respondent as part of any ongoing safeguarding plan. Practical support will be arranged, this includes the provision of alternative

accommodation, a financial package, access to legal advice and ongoing pastoral support, with the level of contact being dependent on individual needs and their existing support networks. While this was not evidenced in the case audits selected, where any assessments are required, these will be commissioned by St. Luke's Centre<sup>25</sup> or another suitable provider, as appropriate.

### Areas for development

**5.5.6** To strengthen practice further, safeguarding plans should consistently include clear agreed actions and associated timescales. Timescales were not always specified within plans reviewed, and case records did not consistently evidence that plans had been formally shared with respondents. While respondent's views were seen within risk assessments, they should be routinely sought and explicitly recorded within safeguarding plans themselves. Greater consistency is also required in evidencing the provision of emotional support when respondents indicate they are finding the process challenging. One case audit identified a significant delay in facilitating a lay respondent's attendance at church due to absence within the safeguarding team, followed by a transfer of the case and subsequent clergy unavailability. This highlights the need to ensure resilient arrangements and continuity planning when key personnel are unavailable, so that safeguarding processes and proportionate access arrangements are not delayed.

**5.5.7** Within parish visits and the focus group, clergy described an awareness of what would happen if they were to become the subject of an allegation, including how support would likely be provided by the Diocesan Welfare Officer and of how access would be given to appropriate legal advice (both civil and canon law expertise). However, they also described feeling vulnerable and fearful and reported that those whom they were aware of had been subject to allegations had felt unsupported. Some expressed concern about the impact of having to move home on both their safety and their reputation. Building on the progress made to date, it is recommended that the diocesan safeguarding team, with the support of

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<sup>25</sup> St. Luke's Centre provide practical support services to meet the needs of clergy and improve their well-being and mental health.

senior clergy and other diocesan personnel likely to be involved (including finance, legal), develop clear written guidance on how clergy will be supported if an allegation is made, specifying who will provide support. This guidance should explicitly clarify roles and responsibilities in relation to welfare, pastoral care and legal advice and outline arrangements relating to housing, financial and practical considerations, as well as a step-by-step explanation of the process. This will support work to enable respondents to understand the procedures involved and the structures in place to support them, and will help to reduce fear, confusion, and feelings of isolation.

**Graded: Substantial Assurance**

## 5.6 Standard 6 Robust human resource management

### Strengths

**5.6.1** The Diocese of Salford has adopted all of CSSA's policies, this includes the Safer Recruitment Policy, which stipulates that as part of the recruitment process, an application or personal details form must be completed by all those seeking to work with children and adults at risk or who may be otherwise vulnerable, and two references must be sought and provided. For paid positions, the diocese conducts formal interviews organised by the Human Resources Department. The policy also sets out the process for unpaid (voluntary) roles, which includes participating in a voluntary discussion. The diocese has produced a '*Safeguarding, Safer Recruitment and DBS Guide*' which provides detailed information around these processes. The guide includes the following attachments, a 'Volunteer Registration Form', 'Reference Contact Details Form', 'Reference request form (letter to referees)', 'Identity Verifier Form', a 'Written Agreement for Volunteers' and a 'Code of Conduct for Leaders and Helpers'.

**5.6.2** The safeguarding section of the diocesan website includes a 'Safer recruitment' section which states that 'as part of its commitment to ensuring that children, young people and adults are kept safe from harm, the Catholic Church in

England and Wales will apply robust selection and appointment processes to anybody who is applying to work or minister within the Church or in a role which gives them direct access to children or adults.’ This statement follows two additional sections titled ‘Volunteering in the Diocese’ and ‘DBS for Volunteers’ which make it clear that all volunteers, whether they are applying for DBS eligible roles or not, are expected to follow the diocese’s safer recruitment process before taking up any role within the parish. To strengthen this section of the website, the diocese should consider outlining what these processes involve in practice (eg application, references, training and DBS processes). This would be particularly helpful for any prospective volunteer seeking clarity before approaching their PSR or clergy about a role.

**5.6.3** During the focus groups and parish visits, participants acknowledged the challenges associated with safer recruitment processes, particularly around the volume of paperwork involved. It was noted, that in some cases, this had discouraged prospective volunteers from pursuing roles. However, there was a clear and shared understanding of the importance of these processes in ensuring safety and accountability.

**5.6.4** The processes for any visiting clergy, whether short term or long term, is managed by the Chancellor and Vicars General, in conjunction with the safeguarding team, who are notified of any clergy coming into the diocese. In practice, prior to the arrival of any priest or religious member, particularly those coming from overseas, a CV is requested, along with a photograph, a copy of their passport, a Testimonial of Suitability<sup>26</sup> and an overseas criminal record check. Once these documents are received and the checks are returned satisfactorily, the priests are referred to the safeguarding team to receive an induction outlining what is expected of them (further details of this are covered in the next standard). There has been one occasion where the diocese refused to receive a priest due to

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<sup>26</sup> A Testimonial of Suitability is required when a person is seeking to exercise priestly ministry in a diocese or when a religious congregation wishes to establish itself in the jurisdiction of the Bishop’s Conference in England and Wales. The testimonial confirms that the individual is in good standing and has no concerns, allegations, or criminal convictions.

behaviour observed on a social media platform. On other occasions, the diocese has facilitated the return of priests to their home dioceses or religious life groups when they were deemed unsuitable for safeguarding reasons. The diocese was one of the first to introduce photo ID celebrant cards incorporating a QR code, which enables a priest's current good standing to be verified instantly.

**5.6.5** A case selected for audit demonstrated a clear understanding of the importance of adhering to safe procedures in relation to visiting clergy. When a concern arose, a member of clergy acted appropriately by making enquiries with the Chancery and Tribunal Service. This resulted in a referral to the safeguarding team and subsequent liaison with another diocese and the priest's home diocese, to ensure that safe practice was maintained throughout the planned visit.

**5.6.6** DBS clinics are provided by the safeguarding team and are identified as being highly valued by parishes. This is evidenced through feedback gathered from PSRs, during focus groups, parish visits and in documentary feedback (including email correspondence). Throughout the course of 2025, eight DBS clinics were held, resulting in 127 DBS applications being processed. The team offers flexible appointments, including evenings and weekends, and provides clear guidance in advance on ID requirements and the appropriate level of DBS check based on the role being applied for. DBS clinics are arranged in response to parish requests, with administrative support to coordinate suitable times for the parishes to promote the sessions locally. The presence of the safeguarding team is reported to increase confidence, add authority to the process, while reducing the administrative burden, for example, removing the need to scan documents, which supports GDPR compliance.

**5.6.7** Two cases selected for audit evidenced the process for responding to blemished DBS disclosures. In each case, the applicant was contacted directly and an assessment was made, confirming that the disclosed information for the individual did not include any cautions or convictions that would prevent them from undertaking the applied for role safely. The decision to appoint to the role was made accordingly. In the event of significant information being identified a formal risk assessment would be completed. The SAP Terms of Reference currently states

that members have oversight of blemished DBS disclosures for employees, this should be extended to include clergy and voluntary roles.

**5.6.8** DBS data is provided in the quarterly reports presented to Trustees, the Safeguarding Sub-Committee and SAP. Minutes from Safeguarding Sub-Committee meetings evidence discussions being held regarding DBS figures and the challenges seen by the safeguarding team in the transition from one system to another.

**5.6.9** A Whistleblowing Policy is available via the 'Policies' section of the website. It encourages employees, contractors, suppliers and volunteers to report wrongdoing, illegal acts or unethical behaviour that is in the public interest. The policy sets out clear internal routes for raising concerns, including specific contacts for safeguarding and bribery issues. The policy protects whistleblowers from harassment and victimisation under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, ensures concerns are handled confidentially and investigated fairly and offers support throughout the process. It distinguishes the difference between whistleblowing, personal grievances and complaints, and explains how matters can be escalated externally if necessary. It is noted that the policy does not state whether it applies to clergy. Whistleblowing provision for clergy should be reviewed, although it is acknowledged that their status as office holders places them outside statutory protections. The policy should also be actively promoted across the diocese, as analysts heard inconsistent responses regarding where clergy and PSRs would direct complaints and whistleblowing concerns.

### Areas for development

**5.6.10** Although safer recruitment processes are understood and valued across parishes, survey findings suggest small gaps in assurance. For example, three members of clergy reported that they were not confident that all volunteers and employees had been recruited using full safer recruitment processes. Similarly, two PSRs expressed the same. Given that safer recruitment processes are typically undertaken by PSRs, this lack of confidence may highlight the need for improved oversight and communication on the lines of accountability. However, during one parish visit, strong practice was observed in relation to safer recruitment. Even prior

to formally commencing these processes, the parish have adopted a considered approach, requesting that anyone wishing to volunteer should ideally be regularly attending for a period of six months before having any initial contact with the parish priest, whose responsibility it is to approve new volunteers. This was viewed as an opportunity for any adverse information to come to light. Comprehensive records were maintained and are reviewed bi-monthly, alongside other matters relating to safeguarding, to ensure that any required follow up action can be identified and swiftly acted upon.

**5.6.11** DBS data is routinely provided within quarterly reports to Trustees, the Safeguarding Sub-Committee and SAP. Minutes from Safeguarding Sub-Committee meetings evidence discussions taking place regarding DBS figures, including the challenges experienced by the safeguarding team during a national transition between systems. However, it is noted that the most recent quarterly report figures (provided as evidence prior to the inspection), for outstanding clergy DBS checks do not align with those provided during the inspection. While the diocese has made significant progress in addressing what had previously been a significant backlog of DBS re-checks in their pilot audit, information provided in the course of this inspection indicated a small residual backlog, although the diocese was of the view that this included a number of people who were no longer in active roles. The work to address any outstanding checks should now be prioritised to ensure a timely resolution. Further assurance is required regarding the accuracy, completeness and currency of the remaining DBS records to ensure full compliance given the previously noted disparity between information provided. Confirmation should also be sought that any risks identified will be appropriately assessed and that proportionate measures are taken to mitigate them as necessary.

**5.6.12** At the time of the inspection, the Head of Safeguarding advised that three complaints had been received within the last 12 months, one of which remains open. While the diocesan Complaints Policy is publicly available via the diocesan website, it does not set out the procedure for raising complaints specifically about the safeguarding service, as recommended in the pilot audit. During the inspection, the analyst was advised that, in practice, complaints relating to the safeguarding

service would be directed to the Head of Safeguarding, and that such complaints are typically resolved at an early stage. The policy should therefore be reviewed to include the process for safeguarding complaints, including that the final recourse is to contact the CSSA.

### Graded: Exceeding Expectations

## 5.7 Standard 7 Training and support for safeguarding

### Strengths

**5.7.1** The diocese has agreed to deliver refresher safeguarding training to clergy and employees on a two-yearly cycle, with the intention of repeating courses several times throughout the year, to ensure they remain accessible. At the time of the inspection, planning was underway for joint training to be delivered to both PSRs and clergy, with the aim to promote collaboration and a shared understanding of practice and responsibility. Analysts saw quarterly reports from the last 12 months including information pertaining to the numbers of induction sessions delivered to newly appointed PSRs and training provided to new starters (lay employees) and incoming clergy. Evidence was also seen of training delivered on related safeguarding themes, including modern day slavery, diversity and inclusion and themes identified through referrals coming in to the safeguarding team. In response to an increase in the numbers of referrals relating to spiritual abuse, the Head of Safeguarding developed a new programme, 'An Introduction to Spiritual Abuse', alongside a 'Working with People' course. Additionally, following an increase in referrals concerning requests to facilitate church attendance for known offenders, specialist training was commissioned from the Lucy Faithful Foundation, for the safeguarding team and invitations were extended to other dioceses. The Head of Safeguarding reported that senior clergy were also in attendance, which was positively noted by other dioceses. Online courses through the Learning

Management System<sup>27</sup> (LMS) continue to be actively promoted by the diocese, particularly to volunteers. The LMS modules are described (in quarterly reports) as a 'back-up' option for those unable to attend in-person sessions and continue to be available to volunteers and remain accessible.

**5.7.2** For overseas clergy who are new to the diocese, there is an expectation that they attend Inculturation training. This training is delivered by the Senior Safeguarding Social Worker and the Safeguarding Social Worker and is provided either on a one-to-one basis or in small groups, depending on the number of clergy joining the diocese. Inculturation training includes a basic understanding of safeguarding, an overview of the fundamental laws of England, clarification of their role in safer recruitment, guidance on maintaining appropriate boundaries and advice on keeping themselves safe in ministry. The purpose of this training is to support overseas clergy in understanding the cultural, legal, and safeguarding context in which they will be ministering, ensuring both their well-being and the safety of those they serve.

**5.7.3** Evidence was provided demonstrating that the safeguarding team delivers bespoke training presentations tailored to the specific responsibilities of different roles within the diocese. These include sessions for clergy, trustees, employees, and volunteers, ensuring that safeguarding guidance is relevant and proportionate to their respective duties. In addition, safeguarding training is delivered to other diocesan groups, such as pilgrimage leaders, with content appropriately adapted to reflect the specific contexts and responsibilities involved in those activities.

**5.7.4** Arrangements for the training and support of those involved in youth ministry and pilgrimage activities are robust. Prior to pilgrimages, all volunteers complete general online safeguarding training and British Lourdes Medical Association training where the role necessitates it. Every pilgrimage volunteer also undertakes two formation training days, comprising both online and in-person sessions. Any failures to comply with required training or vetting checks results in the individual

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<sup>27</sup> This system was formerly developed and owned by CSSA as the Catholic Church's online training portal, providing free online safeguarding training.

being unable to participate in the programme. There are strong links between these groups and the safeguarding department, as it is routine practice for a member of the team to sit on the coordination team and contribute to planning. Additionally, the team also provides guidance on any live or emerging issues that arise and plays an active role in shaping the development of new youth ministry groups. Training is reported to be reviewed and refreshed annually, drawing both on diocesan protocols, wider organisational and school governance standards. Leads ensure that volunteers are clear about reporting pathways and disclosure processes. Practical safeguarding arrangements include the use of different coloured lanyards that are used to clearly identify volunteers' ages and the safeguarding training they have completed, which helps young people and participants with know who the most appropriate person to approach is.

**5.7.5** Oversight of training is held by Trustees, members of the Safeguarding Sub-Committee and SAP members, all of whom receive quarterly reports that provide information on which groups of individuals (clergy, PSRs, employees, volunteers) have attended training, the topic and the numbers of attendees. While there is leadership oversight, lay Trustees report that responsibility for clergy compliance sits primarily with the Vicars General, and any failures to comply are addressed through direct engagement and potential consideration of removal from ministry, although this has not been required to date. Of note, while survey response rates were low, findings indicate that a small number of clergy and PSRs reported not having completed safeguarding training within the last three years. Further work is required to understand the reasons for this non-compliance. The Lead Analyst was advised that, although all retired clergy are welcome and encouraged to attend training, only those intending to remain active and maintain a current celebret are expected to keep their training up to date.

**5.7.6** The Safeguarding Social Workers maintain their professional registration and are able to access ongoing continued professional development opportunities via Social Work England<sup>28</sup>. It is reported that training and development opportunities

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<sup>28</sup> [CPD – Social Work England](#)

are open to all members of the safeguarding team and are routinely accessed. Training and development needs are reported to be discussed and recorded during supervision sessions.

### Areas for development

**5.7.7** Training records indicate that all diocesan trustees, with the exception of one, attended trustee safeguarding training delivered in 2024. However, clergy training records demonstrate lower than expected levels of compliance, with figures being at 57%<sup>29</sup> (no training was provided in 2025 due to a change in policy about the frequency of such training). This data appears inconsistent with reports that issues of non-compliance have not needed to be addressed. Records of completion of LMS were made available up until April 2025, indicating that between 2022 to April 2025, a total of 63 individuals completed online training modules (including Safeguarding for Volunteers, Leadership in Safeguarding, Dementia Awareness, Civil Law in Safeguarding). This figure appears lower than would reasonably be expected. The recorded clergy training compliance rates from 2024, together with acknowledged gaps in the accuracy of training records mean that the Diocese is unable to definitively demonstrate its levels of training compliance. This highlights a need for improved data accuracy, and stronger assurance mechanisms to ensure that non-compliance is identified promptly and addressed appropriately.

**5.7.8** In response to a recommendation arising from the pilot audit, a first Training Needs Analysis was developed by the Head of Safeguarding in April 2025. The document clearly outlines safeguarding training requirements, according to role, including clergy (and retired clergy), PSRs, curia staff, volunteers, members of the safeguarding team, trustees, and pilgrimage volunteers. It sets out what training is required and for whom and provides a structured framework for delivery. However, it does not reference additional or emerging safeguarding training themes, such as spiritual abuse. There is no evidence to indicate that the document is a live, evidence informed document subject to regular review, monitoring or learning arising from safeguarding cases. Dates referenced within the document have

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<sup>29</sup> This figure was taken from the Annual Report for the period of January 2024 – December 2024.

passed, with no progress notes or updates, which suggests that it has not been actively maintained. In addition, the document states that training should be completed every three years and therefore does not reflect the recently agreed two-year training cycle.

**5.7.9** The need to obtain feedback from training in order to evaluate the effectiveness and quality is acknowledged, and procedures have been developed to ensure feedback is sought. Written evaluation forms have been designed to allow individuals to complete feedback promptly following training, however, they are not structured in a way that enables the safeguarding team to easily analyse the responses. As a result, although feedback is being collected, it has not been systematically analysed, therefore, has not informed the ongoing evaluation or development of safeguarding training. The diocese should introduce a more structured and easier to analyse feedback mechanism to ensure that all training feedback is routinely reviewed and evaluated. This feedback should then be used to inform the training needs analysis and future programme. This will contribute to continuous improvement in ensuring that training remains responsive, effective and aligned with identified needs.

**Graded: Meeting Expectations**

## **5.8 Standard 8 Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement**

### **Strengths**

**5.8.1** The Diocese of Salford has demonstrated a clear commitment to safeguarding by addressing many recommendations identified in the previous audit. At the time of the pilot audit in early 2023, the safeguarding department was undergoing a period of unprecedented transition, including the new appointment to the two key roles of Head of Safeguarding and Senior Safeguarding Social Worker, the former of which was initially made on an interim basis that has subsequently been made permanent. Since that time, significant and positive developments have been observed. There is a sense of direction within the

safeguarding department, alongside a notable culture of collaborative working across diocesan teams. Safeguarding is not seen as the responsibility of one single department, but as a shared priority throughout the diocese. This shift is evidenced in the way that safeguarding consideration is given by other departments, which reflects an organisation wide commitment. It is important though that this collaborative and wide-reaching approach is carefully managed as there is a real risk of the team being stretched too thinly, which is why the focus must be on the quality and impact of safeguarding practice.

**5.8.2** As previously referenced, the diocese has strengthened its engagement with other Church bodies. For example, the Head of Safeguarding has played a key role in fostering links with neighbouring dioceses and relevant national bodies (including the CSSA and SCCS). Following the identification of a conflict of interest, these relationships facilitated the handover of a case to a neighbouring diocese to undertake an independent investigation. By proactively seeking an external review and scrutiny, this demonstrates an openness to challenge and a commitment to transparency and continuous improvement.

**5.8.3** An Annual Report covering the period 1 January – 31 December 2024 has been produced, detailing the team’s achievements, impact, key data (including training, DBS, and safeguarding cases) and future plans. This inspection has noted that implementation of these plans has already commenced. Consideration should be given to publishing future annual report following appropriate redaction of any confidential information. By doing so, this would demonstrate the diocese’s commitment to transparency and accountability, while increasing confidence amongst those who require assurance that safeguarding responsibilities are being carried out effectively and with appropriate oversight.

**5.8.4** Analysts acknowledge the diocese’s proactive engagement with this inspection, and the progress made since the last audit in addressing a number of the recommendations, including the implementation of a fit for purpose case management system, the reduction of the DBS backlog, the introduction of processes for receiving clergy into the diocese, and the completion of a historical case review. Although some areas still require further attention, there is clear

evidence that a culture of safeguarding is continuing to be embedded across the diocese. The diocese has also provided support to religious life groups ministering within the diocese that have not met the expected standards in their own audits, recognising that their practice impacts upon the wider diocesan safeguarding arrangements.

### Areas for development

**5.8.5** As previously outlined in Standard 1, a Safeguarding Operational Plan is in place and updates on progress are periodically provided to members of the Safeguarding Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee should ensure a prompt agreement of updated content for the next operational period (also including recommendations from this report) and thereafter include a standing agenda item for its review. Regular reviews of progress will help ensure it remains active and effective, enabling the Sub-Committee to have appropriate oversight, scrutiny and constructive challenge, and to ensure that resources are aligned with identified safeguarding priorities.

**5.8.6** The safeguarding team has introduced yearly parish audits which provide a means to assess compliance against the National Safeguarding Standards and to identify where safeguarding resources should be prioritised (eg DBS clinics, training provision, and general safeguarding support). However, information from completed audits is not routinely analysed. As a result of this, findings are not systematically reviewed, and resources are not being directed on the basis of identified and prioritised need. This limits the effectiveness of the audit process and reduces its impact as a tool to support with quality assurance and continuous improvement. The diocese should now establish a process for the routine analysis and review of parish audit outcomes, ensuring that findings and areas of risk are systematically identified and presented to diocesan leaders. This analysis should inform prioritisation and decision making with risks feeding into the risk register and actions incorporated within the operational plan where not already included. Any agreed actions should have clearly defined timescales and be subject to regular oversight and ongoing monitoring to ensure effective implementation and accountability.

**5.8.7** Within the self-assessment, the diocese acknowledged the need to introduce mechanisms to support the routine learning from safeguarding allegations, concerns and the experiences of those who report harm. This was a recommendation arising from the pilot audit. While it is recognised that work is underway to establish a Survivor Reference Panel, which will contribute to this, the approach should extend beyond this. To strengthen arrangements the diocese should introduce a structured process for capturing and reviewing safeguarding learning, this could be following the closure of complex or high-profile safeguarding cases or through thematic case reviews, (with involvement from SAP members where appropriate). Any learning identified should be formally recorded and reported to the Safeguarding Sub-Committee and Trustees to provide assurances that it is embedded into new policies, training and practice.

**Graded: Requires Attention**

## 6. Recommendations

To support improvement, the following recommendations are made:

### **Within 3 months**

- To undertake a formal review of the risk register to ensure that identified risks remain current, and to establish a schedule for routine review and oversight.
- To review the how independent perspective and challenge is brought to the Safeguarding Sub-Committee.
- To reinforce standards regarding timely recording and ensure management is clearly evidenced within case files.
- To establish an accurate record of outstanding DBS re-checks and to ensure that they are undertaken promptly and to address the remaining DBS backlog ensuring that appropriate risk mitigations are in place where required in the meantime.

- Review the Complaints Policy to clearly outline the procedure for raising complaints about a safeguarding service, including escalation routes and reference to the CSSA as the final stage of recourse.
- Clarify within the Whistleblowing Policy whether it applies to clergy and promote the policy consistently across the diocese.

### **Within 6 months**

- To progress the development of an updated suite of safeguarding policies to address any identified gaps and ensure that diocesan arrangements remain current and comprehensive.
- To strengthen promotion of Caring Safely for Others.
- To seek formal Trustee approval of the Communication Strategy.
- To review and update the Crisis Communication Plan, in light of experience of working with parishes affected by safeguarding allegations.
- To establish clear expectations for parishes regarding the visibility, accessibility, and consistency of safeguarding information published on parish websites.
- To introduce a proactive and routine approach to seeking feedback from those who have engaged with the safeguarding service, ensuring that learning is formally reviewed and used to inform service development.
- To ensure that senior leaders who may engage with those reporting harm undertake training in trauma-informed practice to strengthen survivor focused practice.
- To embed consistent and clearly recorded management oversight within case files, including documentation of Safeguarding Advisory Panel discussions and decisions.
- To introduce a 'lessons learned' process at the point of case closure, to support continuous improvement.
- To strengthen oversight of safeguarding training to ensure accurate data recording, improved compliance monitoring and timely follow up of non-attendance.

- To update the Training Needs Analysis to reflect the two-year cycle and emerging safeguarding themes and maintain it as a live document.
- To introduce a structured and easy to analyse training feedback mechanism to ensure evaluation of training effectiveness informs future programme development and safeguarding support needs.

### **Within 12 months**

- To develop a process for evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding communications across the diocese.
- To develop clear written guidance outlining the support available to clergy in the event of an allegation being made against them, including welfare, legal, pastoral, housing and financial arrangements.
- To introduce a quality assurance process to assess the quality, consistency and impact of safeguarding responses. This could include regular case audits, thematic case reviews. Findings should be formally recorded, reported on and used to inform policy, training and practice.

## **7. Arrangements for follow-up**

**7.1** In line with an overall rating of Exceeding Expectations, the earliest potential date of re-inspection of the Diocese of Salford is within two to three years. In the intervening period there will be check in meetings every six months and the diocese will be asked to complete an annual self-assessment. If the CSSA becomes aware of a significant safeguarding concern or allegation before the anticipated next inspection, then an earlier inspection will be required.

## 8. Appendix

### 8.1 Evidence provided by the Diocese of Salford:

Safeguarding Sub-Committee Terms of Reference

Sample of Bishop John's weekly emails

Sample of weekly bulletins distributed by the Communications Team

Welfare Officer and Safeguarding Social Workers Job Descriptions

List of Clergy

List of Parish Safeguarding Representatives (PSR's)

Training Certificates and Records of Attendance for Clergy, Employees, Lourdes, PSR's, Trustees, Volunteers

Safeguarding Training Presentation Slides

Compilation of Training Feedback Forms

Minutes from Safeguarding Team Meetings 2025

Minutes from Safeguarding Team Meetings with Vicars General 2025

Minutes from Trustees Meetings 2025

Minutes from Safeguarding Advisory Panel (SAP) Meetings 2025

Parish Audit Analysis 2019

Training Needs Analysis Plan

List of DBS Clinics held in 2025

Minutes from Safeguarding Sub-Committee Meetings 2025

Safeguarding Pre-Audit Report 2025

Communications Strategy 2025-2027

Crisis Communications Policy

Survivor Reference Panel Role Descriptor, Applications and Narrative

Quarterly Annual Reports 2025  
Safeguarding Annual Report 2024  
Safeguarding Operational Plan  
Safeguarding Risk Register  
Safeguarding Sub-Committee Terms of Reference  
Parish Safeguarding Plans Template  
Completed Parish Safeguarding Plans  
Email correspondence with external agencies  
Self-Assessment  
List of Safeguarding Casework 2025-2026