

Cistercians of Mount St Bernard Abbey

Baseline Audit Report
May 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 This is a baseline audit of the safeguarding arrangements of the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard Abbey. The audit has been undertaken as part of the CSSA's Baseline Audit phase of Religious Life Groups (RLGs). The audit seeks to assess the effectiveness of current safeguarding arrangements, by considering practice over the last twelve months.

1.2 The Cistercians of Mount St Bernard are comprised of 18 members. At this time, 14 members of the community are resident at Mount St Bernard in Leicester, 3 are located outside of England and Wales and 1 member lives within the Diocese of Brentwood as a Chaplain. The primary ministry of those resident at St Bernard's Abbey is one of prayer and contemplation, they do not undertake any external ministry.

1.3 The Cistercians of Mount St Bernard the Church is open to the public and Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation are available daily. There is a small shrine to Blessed Cyprian Tansi and prayer intentions are left daily by lay persons. The Mount St Bernard Abbey has accommodation for relatives and friends of the monks, retreatants, and those interested in the life of the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard. The Abbey provides 9 rooms, one of which is a double, and there are also six rooms available in a guest lodge located on the premises. The Guest Mistress resides in a separate apartment within the lodge, which is apart from the guests. Stays can range from two nights to five days, and all bookings are handled through the Guest master, who can be reached by email or phone.

1.4 Mount St Bernard Abbey has an onsite shop which attracts a number of visitors daily and is run by the shop manager (who is also a member) and an assistant shop manager. The community produces various items for sale, including literary work, pottery, cards, rosaries and vegetables. Individuals visiting the shop may also make prayer requests, mass intentions or require pastoral support. The shop is one of the main outlets for the beer produced within the Mount St Bernard Brewery.

1.5 Mount St Bernard Abbey Brewery has been a principal source of income since 2018 and is open to the public for planned guided tours. The Brewery is run by a Head Brewer and the Operational Manager, who is responsible for five of the thirteen lay employees.

1.6 The CSSA has devised a categorisation scheme for Religious Life Groups taking part in safeguarding audits. This categorises Groups on a scale from Level 1 Apostolic or Level 1 Enclosed (small communities with minimal outreach and no known safeguarding concerns), Level 2 (a medium sized community with some outreach with vulnerable populations and/or providing some Diocesan Activities such as a Parish Priest) or Level 3 (a large community and/or one with significant outreach with vulnerable populations and/or a disproportionately high number of open safeguarding cases). The Cistercians of Mount St Bernard Abbey have been categorised as a Level 1 Enclosed audit.

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

2. Scope & Methodology

2.1 Initial contact was established with the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard Abbey on the 11 November 2024, a further follow up teams meeting was organised for the 2 December 2024 where further clarity about the ministry of the Fathers was established, and the audit process was discussed in detail.

2.2 This Baseline Audit Report was undertaken following the submission of the Level 1 Enclosed Self-Assessment by the Safeguarding Lead on 29 January 2025. Supporting evidence was supplied throughout the month of January 2025.

2.3 Additional evidence was reviewed by the auditor during a site visit on 27 February 2025 and the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard Abbey website has also been reviewed.

2.4 Interviews took place with the following individuals from the community on the 27 February 2025 at Mount St Bernard Abbey

- A focus group including seven members of the Abbot's Council, including five trustees, one of which is the Abbot.

- A focus group to include three Fathers and two Brothers who currently reside within the Monastery.
- The Infirmarian, who also holds the role of the Prior.
- The Safeguarding Lead.
- The Operations Manager for Mount St Bernard Abbey.
- The Guest Mistress for the guest house at Mount St Bernard Abbey.

2.5 Liaison has also taken place between analysts and the RLSS regarding the Community's engagement with them over the last 12 months.

3. Audit Grading

3.1 Safeguarding practice is assessed against the eight safeguarding standards adopted by the Catholic Church in England and Wales¹.

3.2 Safeguarding practice is graded in accordance with the CSSA Maturity Matrix for Level 1 Religious Life Groups. Each standard is graded on an ascending three point scale of *Not Met*, *Met with Recommendations* and *Met*. Grades for individual standards are combined in order to produce an overall grading for the Religious Life Group as an outcome of the audit. The audit draws on evidence generated from self-assessment, interviews and the supporting documentation provided by the Religious Life Group.

3.3 This report summarises the findings of the audit undertaken with the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard Abbey and their progress towards meeting the eight safeguarding standards. The overall grading for the Group is assessed as Met with Recommendations.

¹ A description and full details of the Standards can be found on the CSSA website [here](#)

Overall Grading	Met with Recommendations
Standard 1 – Safeguarding is embedded in the Church body's leadership, governance, ministry and culture	Met with Recommendations
Standard 2 – Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message	Met with Recommendations
Standard 3 – Engaging with and Caring for those who report having been harmed	Met
Standard 4 – Effective Management of Allegations and Concerns	Met with Recommendations
Standard 5 – Management and Support of Subjects of Allegations and Concerns (respondents)	Met with Recommendations
Standard 6 – Robust Human Resource Management	Met with Recommendations
Standard 7 – Training and Support for Safeguarding	Met
Standard 8 – Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement	Met with Recommendations

4. Audit findings against each standard

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

4.1.1 The Cistercians of Mount St Bernard Abbey website² contains a dedicated area titled Safeguarding which contains a Safeguarding commitment statement. The statement outlines that "The Catholic Church, and all those with a role within it, have a duty of care to ensure that all children and adults are safe from harm. This duty spans from ensuring people are safe within our premises and care to protecting those who may be at risk of harm or abuse within their home, community or other settings. Mount St Bernard Abbey recognises its responsibilities and is committed to proactively embedding a culture of safeguarding across the Community".

4.1.2 There is a standalone Safeguarding Policy, created and ratified in November 2024, which is based on an RLSS (Religious Life Safeguarding Service) template. This policy is not available on the website and the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard should make this available to those who have contact with them to be able to fully understand the safeguarding expectations of the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard.

4.1.3 The Safeguarding Lead was appointed to a part time position in November 2024. Although relatively new to the post, significant progress has been made since their appointment to ensure that formal safeguarding processes are in place. With over 14 years of experience in a senior leadership role as head of safeguarding within a charity organisation, the Safeguarding Lead brings extensive expertise. For the past four years, they have held a volunteer role within Safe and Sound,³ supporting individuals affected by child sexual exploitation. This experience has

³ <https://safeandsoundgroup.org.uk/> - Safe & Sound is a UK-based charity focused on supporting children and young people affected by exploitation, particularly child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation. They offer various services including one-to-one support, awareness training, and activities to build resilience and confidence. Their mission is to help young people move towards a safe and healthy future

further enhanced their ability to understand the complex issues surrounding safeguarding, particularly in vulnerable populations. This experience is invaluable in identifying risks and providing appropriate support and intervention. The Safeguarding Lead also brings a wealth of expertise from the education, mental health and compliance sectors and is also a registered mental health trainer. In addition, their Prevent⁴ Trainer certification strengthens their ability to address issues related to radicalisation and extremism, and they have completed Level 5 Safeguarding Training through the NSPCC. The safeguarding lead has also undertaken the Safeguarding Training for Trustees and the advanced Safeguarding Training, both through the RLSS. The Safeguarding Lead is committed to ongoing professional development, with plans to pursue NSPCC Train the Trainer certification and RLSS Safer Recruitment training in the near future.

4.1.4 There are four Trustees' meetings per year, attended by five Trustees who are all Religious. Safeguarding is not a standing agenda item for each of the meetings, although there may be significant discussion about Safeguarding on each occasion. This frequency exceeds the Charity Commission's minimum recommendation of at least two Trustees' meetings per year. The trustees should ensure that safeguarding is a standing agenda item for all meetings. In addition to the quarterly trustee meetings, the Abbot's Council meet every four weeks. This meeting is attended by all trustees and two other members of the community. Safeguarding communications may be included in these meetings however this is not a standing agenda item for this meeting.

4.1.5 The Cistercians of Mount St Bernard Abbey facilitated this CSSA audit of their Safeguarding practice. RLSS confirmed their membership of the organisation and that they had liaised with their membership, safeguarding and training teams in the last 12 months. The safeguarding lead reported that the RLSS have provided

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance> - Prevent is one part of the government's overall counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST. The aim of Prevent is to: tackle the ideological causes of terrorism. intervene early to support people susceptible to radicalisation. enable people who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate.

excellent support to them during their first initial months in their new role and that they are comfortable to approach them for any necessary advice and guidance.

4.1.6 All the Trustees are aware of the Integrity in Ministry⁵ document and the safeguarding lead confirmed that it was last discussed during a training session facilitated by the Abbot in January 2025. A hard copy of the document was visible during the visit, on the 27 February 2025, within the Monastery Library. The Safeguarding Lead has also created a draft code of conduct that has been approved by the Abbot and is awaiting ratification by the trustees in the coming months. This code of conduct aims to make clear the expectations of those within the Monastery and is for all members and lay employees.

4.1.7 The safeguarding lead drafted a safeguarding implementation plan in February 2025 and this has had oversight from the Abbot. The safeguarding trustees have not yet viewed this plan, and the safeguarding lead has confirmed that this will be discussed at the next trustee meeting.

4.1.8 Focus group participants confirmed that the Abbot and safeguarding lead model a positive safeguarding culture and described the Abbot as “attentive to Safeguarding”. The participants discussed instances where they had raised concerns with leadership, highlighting that these issues were addressed effectively and promptly. The group emphasised their confidence and willingness to challenge, which is encouraged by the leadership’s commitment to creating a space for openness and transparency. The participants also felt that the Abbot and Safeguarding lead promote and share information regarding safeguarding regularly and this was shown in communications and meetings. The participants engaged in a discussion about the aging population within the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard and the associated safeguarding concerns that arise due to the increasing age of the community members. The discussion focused on the unique challenges faced by the members, particularly those in the infirmary. To address these challenges, various adaptations were discussed, including the installation of alarms in the infirmary to provide additional safety measures for vulnerable

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

members. The safeguarding lead, in collaboration with the Abbot considered the health and safety of the members. They discussed the importance of ensuring that appropriate safeguarding measures are in place to protect all individuals, particularly those with a higher care need. Ongoing risk assessments are in place within the Mount St Bernard Abbey and allow continuous review of potential risk.

4.1.9 Over the past twelve months the shop manager and assistant shop manager have expressed concerns about the risks associated with lone working in the shop, particularly the potential for verbal and physical harm from the public. In response, the safeguarding lead developed a risk assessment that includes consultations with the alarm systems provider to explore potential improvements and emphasises the need to renew staff training and reduce the likelihood of lone working. Additionally, the Guest mistress raised concerns regarding her personal safety during the evening, particularly in relation to the potential risk she faces in her role. She expressed those concerns had been taken seriously by the community leadership, and steps are now being taken to ensure her safety. These steps include offering her a personal alarm for added protection during the evening duties. The Guest mistress confirmed that she is appreciative of the proactive measures being implemented to support her well-being.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

4.2 Standard 2 Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message

4.2.1 The Cistercians of Mount St Bernard do not currently have a formal safeguarding communication plan. However, the safeguarding lead acknowledges the importance of having one, and the draft implementation plan outlines that a key goal for 2025 is to develop and implement this communication plan. Once established, the plan will be made visible to all members.

4.2.2 Given their professional experience, the appointment of the safeguarding lead will enable the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard to engage with local organisations and the wider community more effectively. The implementation plan also

addresses this as an anticipated outcome for 2025. However, the plan should consider what local organisations and churches are in the community and how they can engage with them.

4.2.3 The Safeguarding Lead has confirmed that a feedback questionnaire will be distributed quarterly to everyone within the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard to gather input on safeguarding matters within the Monastery. Focus group participants highlighted their awareness of the significance of safeguarding. Additionally, many noted that the openness and transparency of the leadership, as well as their ability to address concerns directly, were key strengths within their community.

4.2.4 The safeguarding lead shares information such as policies, guidance and training opportunities with the Abbot who disseminates this information across the RLG (religious life group) through email. If there is a need to share information with the lay employees, then this information is disseminated by the operations manager. The safeguarding lead is also copied into these emails to ensure that the information has been sent. However, some participants of the focus group noted that it would be beneficial to have the documents in larger fonts or have adaptations to allow them to read this information independently.

4.2.5 The safeguarding statement and contact information for the safeguarding lead is on the website and information is also located throughout the Monastery. However, the Safeguarding Policy, created and ratified in November 2024, is not available on the website and the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard should make this available to those who have contact with them to be able to fully understand the Safeguarding expectations of the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard.

4.2.6 RLSS display posters and the safeguarding statement, and contact information for the SGL are displayed throughout the premises and on the website. The Cistercians of Mount St Bernard Abbey should also include links and information regarding support agencies such as Safe Spaces⁶ to ensure that any

⁶ 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 of England, the Catholic Church in England and Wales or the Church in Wales.

Survivors that may use the website or visit the premises can directly access support tailored to their needs. The website should also include links to the CSSA, RLSS and the local diocese to ensure that individuals can access the appropriate Safeguarding guidance for them.

4.2.7 Although there is no formal communication plan or strategy it is evident that regular safeguarding communication takes place during in-person discussions, through email and at the Abbot's council meetings.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

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

4.3.1 There have been no safeguarding concerns or complaints raised against the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard community or their staff in the last 12 months. However, focus group participants could recall historical instances when they received disclosures of harm through their ministry and noted that they referred these disclosures to the appropriate leaders and statutory agencies at the time. All participants, whether from focus groups or individual interviews, could discuss hypothetical situations involving a disclosure, including those who have not had direct experience with received disclosures. They confirm that, in such an event, they would listen attentively, affirm the importance of the persons experience, offer support, document the information in writing, and share all concerns with the Abbot and safeguarding lead.

4.3.2 The safeguarding lead is suitably trained to receive and respond to disclosures of harm and has established connections with the RLSS. Additionally, the safeguarding lead is familiar with organisations outside of the RLSS and statutory agencies that may be contacted for support. Alongside the knowledge gained through professional experience, the safeguarding lead also carries a

lanyard with a LinkIndex⁷ Keyring, which features QR codes that, when scanned, provide instant access to a database of a variety of agencies supporting children, adults, and families. The safeguarding lead confirmed plans to ensure that all individuals in front-facing or leadership roles will have a lanyard.

4.3.3 In their self-assessment, the safeguarding policy and through in person interviews with the SGL, the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard Abbey confirmed that they would, on receipt of any disclosure, liaise with RLSS to ensure that the individual received care tailored to their specific needs. The safeguarding policy states that the RLSS will “update the relevant people at Mount Saint Bernard Abbey and offer any support needed”. However, clarity is needed on the further support that Mount St Bernard may offer to survivors as the safeguarding lead indicated that they may be willing to offer funding for counselling or additional support if necessary.

4.3.4 As the safeguarding lead is new to their role within the Monastery and there have been no recent concerns raised, the leaders of the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard may benefit from engaging with other RLGs that have direct experience with handling disclosures within the RLG context, potentially through the RLSS. This collaboration could offer valuable insights into best practices and help identify areas where the current safeguarding procedures may be strengthened. Additionally, the leaders have discussed but may wish to consider how they can create accessible and sensitive channels for receiving feedback from victims and survivors, should they encounter such situations in the future. Developing a clear, empathetic approach to gathering feedback would be vital in ensuring that survivors feel supported and heard. This could involve establishing confidential support systems, providing a safe space for survivors to share their experiences, and ensuring that feedback is acted upon to improve safeguarding practices. In doing so, the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard would demonstrate a commitment to not only responding appropriately to disclosures but also creating a culture of openness, trust, and continuous improvement in safeguarding.

Graded: Met

⁷ <https://maappuk.co.uk/>

4.4 Standard 4 Effective Management of Allegations and Concerns

4.4.1 The safeguarding policy states that "Action must be taken if a concern is raised that a child or adult is suffering or is likely to be suffering from significant harm." The policy also includes a procedures section that specifies the safeguarding lead must inform the RLSS and outlines the actions the RLSS will take. Additionally, the draft safeguarding code of conduct, which is yet to be ratified by trustees, requires everyone at Mount St Bernard to report any incidents or concerns that lead them to believe that a child, young person, or adult at risk is, or is likely to be, at risk of harm. This includes a requirement under the Prevent Duty to report any suspected risks of radicalisation or extremism.

4.4.2 The safeguarding policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of the RLSS and Safeguarding Lead when a disclosure or concern is raised. However, the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard should also consider developing a formal, written guidance specifically for those responding directly to allegations of abuse as this is not currently in place. This information should include clear and consistent instructions on how to handle allegations, outlining the process for recognising, responding, reporting and recording concerns. Reference should also be made to the importance of maintaining confidentiality and ensuring appropriate support is available to those affected. This ensures that any disclosure is handled with care, sensitivity, and in line with safeguarding best practices. Additionally, the policy should offer clear guidance on the roles and responsibilities of all individuals involved in responding to allegations, reinforcing a culture of accountability, transparency, and safeguarding within the community.

4.4.3 As discussed in 4.1.8 and 4.1.9, there is an awareness and willingness of members specifically those with additional care needs to report concerns about their own safety. The safeguarding policy states that "the Mount Saint Bernard Abbey Community will encourage and enable anyone with a safeguarding concern, to refer the concern without fear of victimisation, or disadvantage. If that concern is regarding malpractice, illegal acts, or omissions at Mount Saint Bernard Abbey or other religious institution in relation to safeguarding, then the RLSS should be made aware". While the employee handbook's whistleblowing policy provides guidance on the procedure for managing these concerns, it does not specifically

address how this policy applies to its members, as opposed to employees or how concerns regarding members are handled within the context of the community. Therefore, the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard should consider amending the current safeguarding policy to outline the processes for reporting concerns specifically related to members.

4.4.4 The focus group for trustees confirmed that safeguarding concerns are only discussed within their meetings if the safeguarding lead or Abbot determine that there may be a reputational risk or legal implications, this includes instances when safeguarding concerns may be reported to the charity commission through a serious incident report. However, trustees should be informed of any serious safeguarding concerns, trends, or patterns that could impact the safety and well-being of individuals within the community, as part of their duty to ensure effective governance and oversight of safeguarding practices. Trustees should receive appropriate summaries or reports from the safeguarding lead, ensuring transparency while respecting confidentiality. This will allow trustees to ensure that appropriate actions can be taken to address any concerns, and that support and resources are provided to safeguard individuals effectively.

4.4.5 Documentation related to historical allegations or concerns are stored securely in the Abbot's office. If the Abbot is unable to access this information, another identified trustee can do so. Since the appointment of the safeguarding lead (SGL) in November 2024, any new low-level concerns, disclosures, or allegations are recorded on a secure laptop, which is only accessible by the SGL. During an in-person interview, the SGL confirmed the need for a secure system within the Abbey to log concerns, ensuring they are recorded securely and can be accessed appropriately. However, ongoing issues with the broadband connection have made this a challenging task. Conversations with the local MP and service provider are underway to resolve these issues and implement the secure system as soon as possible.

4.4.6 Although they do not have Canon Law expertise within the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard, the Abbot and SGL were confident that they could access advice in Canon Law should this become necessary.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

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

4.5.1 The safeguarding lead confirmed that guidance from RLSS would always be sought to provide expert advice on supporting Respondents. In addition, the RLSS would be expected to lead on managing, monitoring and risk assessing any Respondents with the full cooperation of the leadership of the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard Abbey.

4.5.2 Although leadership acknowledges that respondents may require legal, emotional, spiritual, physical and mental support, the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard should implement formal guidance or amend the current safeguarding policy to clearly outlines the support available to members in the event of an allegation being made against them. During the in-person interviews and focus groups, all members expressed a lack of awareness regarding the support they could receive and confirmed that understanding their rights as a respondent and the process involved would be beneficial. Leaders should also try to familiarise themselves with local organisations they can refer respondents to, ensuring that, if an allegation were made, appropriate signposting could take place immediately.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

4.6 Standard 6 Robust Human Resource Management

4.6.1 The Cistercians of Mount St Bernard currently employ thirteen individuals, as listed in Appendix B. The Safeguarding Policy includes Safer Recruitment guidelines, which require a DBS check for relevant positions. An appointment to any role will not be finalised until a satisfactory DBS Disclosure check is completed and previous employment references are deemed acceptable. The safeguarding lead confirmed that the recruitment process for new staff is overseen by the Abbot, Guest Master, and Operational Manager. The Operational Manager is directly responsible for the line management of two brewery staff members and three estate team members, while the Abbot manages all other staff.

4.6.2 The safeguarding policy also states that on appointment, all new employees should receive and sign a document confirming they understand all relevant policies and procedures, including their responsibilities within them. The Cistercians of Mount St. Bernard Abbey provide an employee handbook, which contains various policies, to all employees as part of the induction process for new recruits. This handbook is also given to members. However, many of these policies are specifically written for employees. The Abbey should consider adapting these policies to apply to members and employees, or creating additional policies tailored specifically for those not employed. This will ensure that all members of the community, regardless of employment status, are properly informed and covered by the appropriate guidelines and standards.

4.6.3 There is no imminent likelihood of any members joining from overseas, and the last member to arrive did so approximately five years ago. However, the safeguarding lead and Abbot confirmed that were an individual to arrive from overseas they would be expected to undergo appropriate checks, provide references and complete the appropriate safeguarding training in line with the current safeguarding policy. The policy states "Mount Saint Bernard Abbey will ensure that congregation members, lay staff and volunteers are subject to the appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks (including enhanced DBS) in line with both statutory and Catholic Church requirements." The safeguarding lead and Abbot confirmed that those wishing to enter formation will be required to undertake the same checks. While the policy covers key safeguarding procedures, clarity is needed to ensure consistency, particularly for those members from overseas. The Cistercians of Mount St Bernard should consider explicitly addressing the recruitment and formation process, within the policy, ensuring all recruits undertake the same safeguarding checks and training regardless of origin. This will ensure the policy is transparent and consistent.

4.6.4 The safeguarding lead maintains records of DBS checks for all community members residing within the Abbey, ensuring proper vetting. Trustees, the Infirmarian, the safeguarding lead, and operational manager all hold enhanced DBS checks appropriate to their roles. For those ministering outside the Abbey, the Diocese is responsible for overseeing DBS checks and training, though the Cistercians of Mount St. Bernard Abbey, as trustees, remain accountable for ensuring compliance with safeguarding standards. The Abbey should maintain

up-to-date records of DBS checks, training, and safeguarding compliance for all members to monitor compliance, manage risk, and uphold safeguarding standards

4.6.5 The whistleblowing policy for the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard is included within the safeguarding policy and further information is included within the employee handbook which has been made available to all lay employees and members. The employee handbook also includes a grievance policy for lay employees. However, there is currently no formal complaints policy in place for individuals outside of the community, who come into contact with the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard. Leaders should work with the RLSS to obtain a template for this policy, which should then be customised for the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard and made available on their website. Additionally, any policy created should include the contact information for the CSSA as the final escalation point for unresolved complaints related to how the church body has handled a safeguarding complaint.

4.6.6 The Monastery has an infirmary for individuals who require additional care, and this care is provided by an outside care agency. The infirmarian confirmed that the only visitors that can access the infirmary are healthcare professionals. The infirmarian ensures that visitors and carers are up to date with appropriate DBS checks and all visitors are required to sign in on arrival.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

4.7 Standard 7 Training and Support for Safeguarding

4.7.1 Certificates of training completion for members and lay staff within the Monastery are held by the Safeguarding Lead. Safeguarding awareness and training is a priority for the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard, and all members identified as having capacity and lay employees completed basic safeguarding training on January 14 2025. Some of the trustees for the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard have completed trustee training, the SGL confirmed that it is a priority to ensure all trustees have this training. The safeguarding lead keeps a spreadsheet to record the training attended by all of the members.

4.7.2 The safeguarding Lead has recently been in contact with the RLSS to arrange additional training on safer recruitment to be provided to those with recruitment responsibilities within the Monastery. At this time this training is not available, and the safeguarding lead has requested that, when available, the RLSS contact the Monastery to arrange this.

4.7.3 During the focus group meetings several participants were able to raise questions regarding safeguarding practices. It was noted that training regarding online safety, responding to disclosures and mental capacity may be beneficial to them. The members expressed a strong interest in deepening their understanding of safeguarding issues, and the safeguarding lead has confirmed that feedback on training needs will be gathered through the quarterly feedback forms.

Graded: Met

4.8 Standard 8 Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

4.8.1 The Cistercians of Mount St Bernard have embraced the expectations of Integrity in Ministry and have reviewed this document together during meetings which the Abbot leads. This document was last discussed in January 2025.

4.8.2 Trustees should ensure that, at least annually, they formally review their compliance with the eight Safeguarding standards and the effectiveness of their own specific Safeguarding arrangements given their current ministry and circumstances. Trustees should formally review the safeguarding implementation plan developed by the SGL and monitor the effectiveness of this plan. If deficiencies in Safeguarding practice are identified at any point it will be important to ensure that actions are set and tracked for completion. Trustees may wish to amend the current implementation plan to track completion of the recommendations of this audit as a way to demonstrate continuous improvement in safeguarding practice. They may wish to ensure that all relevant members, staff and volunteers are informed of any relevant learning from this audit as it impacts on their role.

4.8.3 Leaders can discuss the importance of supporting and learning from survivors whenever possible. However, the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard

acknowledge that they have not yet fully evaluated their quality of their safeguarding practices. However, they have demonstrated that they are committed to making arrangements with the RLSS for training and other support needs. Additionally, the appointment of an experienced safeguarding lead in November 2024 further reflects their commitment to enhancing safeguarding practice. This appointment shows a clear dedication to ensuring the safety and well-being of all members of the community and those with whom they come into contact. The safeguarding lead will play a central role in moving forward with upcoming changes, ensuring safeguarding practices are regularly reviewed, implemented and adapted to emerging patterns, challenges or requirements.

Graded: Met with Recommendations

5. Summary of Overall Findings

5.1. The Cistercians of Mount St Bernard consists of eighteen members. Currently, thirteen of these members live within a monastery in Leicester, four are currently located outside of England and Wales and one member lives within the Diocese of Brentwood as a Chaplain. The Cistercians of Mount St Bernard have prioritised safeguarding through the recent appointment of an employed safeguarding lead, and they have developed a draft action plan, implemented new policies, created draft policies, and ensured that safeguarding training, along with the appropriate DBS checks, are completed for all individuals within the monastery. Engagement with RLSS for training and general Safeguarding support is regular and will be effective in improving practice. All members know how to report Safeguarding concerns to the Abbot or safeguarding lead.

5.2 The Cistercians of Mount St Bernard should strengthen their safeguarding practices by adding the full Safeguarding Policy to the website, implementing a formal complaints policy, and ensuring safeguarding is a key agenda item in leadership meetings. Engaging with local organisations and learning from other Religious Life Groups will help refine practices and ensure continuous improvement. Feedback collection will allow the community to adapt and respond to emerging

needs, ensuring ongoing compliance and enhancing overall safeguarding standards.

5.3 The evidence demonstrates that the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard meet the basic Safeguarding expectations of the Catholic Church in England and Wales with recommendations which, if implemented, will improve practice further.

6. Recommendations

To support improvement, the following recommendations are made:

Within 3 months

- To add the full Safeguarding Policy document to the safeguarding section of the website.
- Ensure that safeguarding is a standing agenda item for all leadership meetings.
- To ensure that the implementation plan is finalised, discussed with the trustees and agreed.
- To ensure that the implementation plan is reviewed regularly, and updates are provided to trustees at every meeting.
- Ensure that information regarding support agencies such as Safe Spaces is available, to ensure that any Survivors that may use the website or visit the premises can directly access support tailored to their needs.
- To consider developing a formal, written policy or set of guidelines specifically for those responding directly to allegations of abuse. This should provide clear and consistent instructions on how to handle allegations, outlining the process for recognising, responding, reporting and recording concerns.

Within 6 months

- Consider implementing formal guidance or a policy, which may comprise part of an overarching safeguarding policy document, that clearly outlines the support available to members in the event of an allegation being made against them.
- To create a formal written communication policy, which may comprise part of an overarching safeguarding policy.
- To agree and implement a formal complaints policy for individuals who receive a safeguarding service from the Cistercians of Mount St Bernard and publish this policy on the website.

Within 12 months

- Liaise with other Religious Life Groups which have experience of managing allegations and concerns, supporting Survivors and supporting Respondents to see if there are any transferable lessons that can be learned.
- Audit internal Safeguarding practice on an annual basis to ensure ongoing compliance with the Safeguarding standards and the expectations of Integrity in Ministry.
- Ensure feedback is received from members regarding training needs from quarterly feedback forms and implement any training appropriate to this feedback.
- Consider local organisations and churches in the community and how the SGL can engage with them to improve safeguarding practice.

7. Arrangements for Follow-up

7.1 In line with a baseline audit grade of Met with Recommendations, there will be a minimum period of two years before reauditing by the CSSA unless emerging Safeguarding concerns necessitate an earlier return.

Appendix A

List of Employees

- Operations Manager,
- Accounts Administrator,
- Assistant Shop Manager,
- Maintenance Worker,
- Head Brewer,
- Gardener,
- Guest mistress,
- Cleaner,
- Estate Forestry Management,
- Warehouse/Deliveries Worker,
- Three cooks.