

Safeguarding in church life – the role of the safeguarding trustee

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Introduction

If you are the Safeguarding Trustee for your church, or if you are considering taking on the role, we want to start with a big thank you for your willingness to serve your church in this way. We hope that this short guide will give you a good understanding of the role and give you extra confidence.

The safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk is an important part of church life in Baptist churches across England and Wales. The role of the Safeguarding Trustee in each church is an important one, and this short guide sets out the requirements of the role, the tasks and activities involved and how the Safeguarding Trustee can work effectively alongside the church leadership team.

All Baptist churches are individual charities in their own right. This applies whether or not the church has registered as a charity with the Charity Commission. As charities, churches are subject to the requirements of charity law. The implications of charity law for a church are explained in Baptists Together Guidance Leaflet C01: Charity Legislation and Churches

https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/368651/Guideline_Leaflet_C01.aspx

Churches have a responsibility to ensure they minimise the risk of harm to anyone who has contact with them. Because churches support and work with children, young people and adults at risk they have extra responsibilities.

All of the Trustees and Deacons in the Church have these responsibilities, even though some tasks or activities are delegated to the Safeguarding Trustee or other members of the church Safeguarding Team.

The Charity Commission can hold trustees to account if things go wrong and can check that trustees followed this guidance and the law.

1.The role of the Safeguarding Trustee

The Safeguarding Trustee is a member of the leadership team with specific responsibilities for Safeguarding. If you take on this role it is **not** essential that you have a professional background in safeguarding – it could be that you have an interest in supporting safeguarding in your church and a willingness to learn more.

As the Safeguarding Trustee you will:

- Support and encourage the Designated Person for Safeguarding (DPS)
- Act as the key contact between the DPS and the Trustees and Deacons
- Take a lead on discussing safeguarding issues with the Trustees and Deacons
- Provide oversight for key safeguarding priorities in the church
- Work alongside the DPS to raise the profile of safeguarding within the church

As the church's Safeguarding Trustee, you will have oversight of safeguarding making sure that the church:

- has appropriate policies and procedures in place. This should include details on how concerns are handled and where necessary reported to relevant agencies
- checks that people are suitable to act in their roles
- sets out identified risks and how they will be managed and reviewed
- follows safeguarding statutory guidance, good practice guidance and legislation relevant to their charity
- makes sure protecting people from harm is central to its culture
- has enough resources, including trained staff/volunteers/trustees for safeguarding and protecting people
- conducts periodic reviews of safeguarding policies, procedures and practice
- make referrals to the Barring Service when certain criteria are met

Bond's 'Good governance for safeguarding' for support on developing good practice on governance states that UK **Non-Governmental Organisations (i.e. non-profit, voluntary groups that operates independently of government to address social, humanitarian, environmental, or advocacy issues)** ''have a duty of care to those involved in or affected by its activities and are required to take reasonable steps to manage the risk of causing harm. The *Trustees* play a crucial leadership role in setting the culture, behaviour and priorities of the organisation.'
In Bond's document summarises this graphically:



That doesn't mean that the safeguarding trustee does all of these things themselves. Many of the operational safeguarding tasks will be done by the Designated Person for Safeguarding. However, the safeguarding trustee has an oversight and governance role in making sure that these things are in place and that the Designated Person for Safeguarding is supported in their role.

This guide considers the Safeguarding Trustee role and provides signposting for additional support.

2. Safeguarding responsibilities

2.1 Identify and manage risks

A key part of effective governance is a robust process to identify and manage possible and probable risks that the church may face. All Trustees and Deacons share the responsibility for identifying and managing risks in all areas of church life. This includes ministries, services and all activities and groups of the church. As the church's Safeguarding Trustee, you have a particular responsibility to make sure that safeguarding risks are properly identified and assessed, especially where they relate to potential harm to children, young people or adults at risk. (See the table of Types of Risks and Harm in Appendix 1).

You will not normally take the lead in the response to a safeguarding concern - this is the role of the Designated Person for Safeguarding (DPS). It is important that you are aware of safeguarding concerns as you act as the link between the DPS and the leadership team. You are also likely to be the person taking the lead in responding to potential complaints about how the church has dealt with safeguarding matters.

The Safeguarding Trustee could take the lead in supporting all group leaders to complete activity risk assessments when they are undertaking any church activity with children or adults at risk, There is a template on the BUGB website to assist in this task:

Risk_Assessment_Template_2020.doc (live.com)

2.1.1 Safeguarding online

The Safeguarding Trustee must be confident that volunteers, staff and trustees understand how to keep themselves safe online and this must be reflected in policies and practices. The church should have a policy in place in relation to data protection, including the use of privacy settings and password access to meetings to support in this.

2.2 Safeguarding risk assessments

A Risk Assessment and Safeguarding Contract may be needed if there are people in your church with convictions, charges, allegations or concerns about:

- Sexual or physical abuse
- Emotional abuse or neglect that causes significant harm
- Domestic abuse
- Any other type of abuse (e.g. spiritual, financial)
- Accessing or distributing indecent images of children (on any device)

This list is not exhaustive.

As Safeguarding Trustee, you may need to support the DPS to discuss and assess risks and ensure appropriate actions are taken to reduce the risks. This might mean that you will get involved in the risk assessment process and in putting in place a suitable safeguarding contract for individuals attending or wanting to attend your church.

2.3 Policies and Procedures

As safeguarding trustee, you will take the lead in ensuring that the safeguarding policy and procedure adopted by the church is fit for purpose and put into practice. All churches must have a Safeguarding Policy and Procedure in place to comply with Charity Commission regulation. There is a template for churches to use on the BUGB website. The policy can be adapted to reflect the activities and ministry of your church. Whilst your Designated Person for Safeguarding will do most of the work on your church safeguarding policy and procedures, it is important that you understand the policy and can help other trustees understand the impact of the policy and procedures on church life.

The Baptist Union of Great Britain: Model Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

In your role as Safeguarding Trustee, you will want to check the following:

- For ease of access, the church's Safeguarding Policy and Procedure document should be available to everyone in the church through the church website.
- Making sure that the published policy and procedures contain details for local contacts and people in the church safeguarding team, as well as contact details of local statutory agencies are available (for example police, social care teams or the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub)
- Ensuring that all church members know where to find a copy of the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and Safeguarding Incident Forms. They should also ensure the Safeguarding Policy Statement is displayed in the church building. Your Safeguarding Policy Statement sets out what your church will do to keep people who come into contact with your church safe from harm.
- You must be assured that all safeguarding policies, procedures and practices are reviewed annually to ensure they remain relevant to your church context and ministries. They may also need to be reviewed dynamically following an incident if a debrief raises changes that are needed. The Safeguarding Audit Tool is designed for churches to use as a way of reviewing and checking compliance with safeguarding legislation, guidance and best practice. This review would usually be done by the Safeguarding Trustee and the DPS, reporting back to the Leadership Team and the annual church meeting.

2.4 Procedure for safer recruitment

As the Safeguarding Trustee, one of your responsibilities is to make sure that a framework is in place to make sure that Trustees, Deacons, staff and volunteers are suitable, and legally able, to act in their positions and have the skills and experience to undertake the tasks involved.

For all roles you may need to get:

- DBS check
- References and checks on gaps in work history
- Confirmation that staff can work in the UK
- Health checks

It is noted that some of these checks are not specifically part of safeguarding, but they may still need to be considered as part of recruitment processes.

For any role working with children, young people and adults at risk, both the role description and the person specification should highlight the safeguarding responsibilities of the role and if there is a requirement for a DBS check to be carried out before they start in role. The DBS check should be used

alongside references and interviews to give a broad and informed view to manage the risk of abuse or harm. It is not sufficient to just do a DBS check.

Whilst the Safeguarding Trustee role does not have responsibility for carrying out DBS checks, the Safeguarding Trustee needs to check that safer recruitment and appropriate checks are undertaken on a consistent and regular basis.

Different types of DBS checks are required depending on the nature of the work being carried out. Our Guide to DBS Checks contains a useful table of church roles, indicating the level and type of check needed. The Baptist Union of Great Britain: BUGB Guide to DBS Checks

2.5 Protect volunteers and staff

As the Safeguarding Trustee, you should work alongside the DPS to consider how to improve the safeguarding culture within the church and establish good safeguarding practice that all Trustees, Deacons, staff and volunteers follow. That should always include training for all staff and volunteers in safeguarding best practice.

Church volunteers and staff need to complete the relevant level of BUGB Excellence in Safeguarding Training which will equip them to Recognise, Respond, Record and Report safeguarding concerns. In your role you should check regularly that appropriate records are kept of volunteers and staff, that training is completed and refreshed in accordance with the person's level of responsibility and role in the church.

All people within the church need to know how to raise safeguarding concerns and where to access the Safeguarding Incident Form (See Appendix 2).



Alongside the safeguarding policy and procedures, the church must also have clear policies and procedures for areas that may overlap with safeguarding, which may include a policy on preventing bullying and harassment, and a whistleblowing policy. Please see the BUGB website for the Bullying and Harassment Guide and resources.

2.6 Ensuring all concerns are dealt with appropriately.

Everyone in the church should always follow the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures when responding to concerns or disclosures. It is your responsibility as the Safeguarding Trustee to check that information is recorded, stored and retained securely, and that action is taken quickly to ensure the potential for further harm or abuse is minimized. You should also check that the DPS shares information with other relevant agencies appropriately. The church should always consider whether an incident or concern involves criminal behaviour and whether it needs to be reported to the police. You may need the support of the Association Safeguarding Lead to make this decision.

Remember that the DPS will, in the majority of situations, be the main lead in responding to any concerns or disclosures.

The Safeguarding Trustee will support the DPS as needed and appropriate when concerns are raised. This will differ depending on the nature of the concern or disclosure and who the concerns relate to.

Safeguarding case information should only be shared on a 'need to know' basis. There may be occasions when you will be the main link with other Trustees and/or Deacons to make them aware of some of the basic information in relation to a case. You may need to support the DPS (perhaps with additional support from the Association Safeguarding Lead) to consider the likelihood of media interest or reputational risks and whether a reactive press statement is needed. As Safeguarding Trustee, you may be asked to act as the point of contact for the church in such situations. You are likely to be the person to share information with the fellowship in situations where this is deemed proportionate and necessary. Again, support is available from the Association Safeguarding Lead in these situations.

As the church's Safeguarding Trustee, when allegations or concerns are being addressed, you will check with the minister and DPS that pastoral support is offered to everyone impacted, and if it is given, that it is sustainable over a potentially long period.

2.7 Reporting to Charity Commission

Each church has a responsibility for reporting serious incidents to the Charity Commission. The Commission states that when incidents have resulted in risk of significant harm to those who come into contact with its ministries and other work, these must be reported.

"A serious incident is an adverse event, whether actual or alleged, which results in or risks **significant** harm. That could be:

Harm to your charity's beneficiaries, staff, volunteers or others who come into contact with your charity through its work	Harm to your charity's work or reputation
Damage to your charity's property	Loss of your charity's money or assets

For the purposes of this guidance, 'significant' means significant in the context of your church, taking account of its staff, operations, finances and/or reputation'.

In a Baptist Church context this could include, but is not confined to:

- An incident of harm or mistreatment (alleged or actual) of a church member or attendee (adults or children)
- Where someone connected to the church was responsible for the harm or mistreatment of people who comes into contact with the church through its outreach work.

- Where a member of the church reports that they have been harmed by another member or church worker.

- Theft or loss of monies or confidential documents

If you are in doubt as to whether an incident is 'serious' please contact your Association Safeguarding Lead for guidance.



The Charity Commission requires charities to report serious incidents. If a serious incident takes place within your church, it is important that there is prompt, full and frank disclosure to the Charity Commission. You need to report what happened and, most importantly, let the Commission know how you are dealing with it, even if you have also reported it to statutory agencies, a solicitor or your Association Safeguarding Lead. You need to do this as soon as possible. The Charity Commission guidance on this is available here: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity

There is additional guidance on the Baptist Together website: The Baptist Union of Great Britain : Serious incident reporting

If your church has been or is suspected to be the victim of a fraud, the Safeguarding Trustee must report this as a serious incident to the Charity Commission. They must also report the matter to Action Fraud http://www.actionfraud.police.uk/ ensuring that a crime reference number is obtained and making it clear that you're representing a church charity.

Any actual or suspected criminal activity within or involving your church is a serious incident. If your church or an associated charity is being investigated by the police or another regulator, for any reason, this must be reported as a serious incident. Allegations or incidents of theft should be reported to the police (call 101, make an online report, or make a report in person at a local police station) and obtain a crime reference number.

Safeguarding allegations or incidents of abuse or mistreatment of people who come into contact with your church through its work should be reported to statutory agencies. Usually, the DPS will make such reports, but may ask for the support of the Safeguarding Trustee

If a serious incident is not reported, the Commission may consider this to be mismanagement and take regulatory action against the church Trustees.

The Charity Commission expects a report to be made as soon as it is clear that the event should be reported. The Safeguarding Trustee should not wait for the outcome of an investigation, whether internal or by an external agency, before reporting. The link to the guidance on reporting a serious incident is below.

https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/report-a-serious-incident

2.8 Reporting to the DBS

If someone providing a regulated activity (paid or voluntary) is dismissed or removed because of safeguarding concerns, or they remove themselves pending completion of an investigation there may be a legal requirement to make a referral to the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service).

Referrals allow the DBS to decide if an individual should be barred based on the risk of future harm to vulnerable groups. Failure to refer can put others at risk and may have legal consequences. The church should refer even if the individual has been reported to another body, or the police.

If a church thinks they may have a legal duty to refer someone they should complete an online referral form by searching ‘ Barring Referral Service’ on GOV.UK website.

3. Further help

The Charity Commission has helpful guidance for Safeguarding Trustees at Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees - GOV.UK

Read NCVO's safeguarding resource Safeguarding for trustees for advice on how to get started with safeguarding.

Read the Charity Governance Code for best practice advice including on safeguarding.

Read Bond's 'Good governance for safeguarding' for support on developing good practice on governance.

Please speak to your Association Safeguarding Lead if you require help and support.

You are not on your own! You are part of a team, alongside the DPS, the church Trustees, Deacons and your minister. You all have responsibilities for safeguarding and protecting those that have contact in any way with your church and charity.

Finally, we end with a verse from Scripture that reminds us of our safeguarding responsibilities:

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

Proverbs 31:8

Appendix 1

Types of Risks and Harm



Appendix 2

Safeguarding Incident Form

PERSON REPORTING THE INCIDENT OR CONCERN:
Name:
Address:
Phone number:
Email:
Role in Church:

DETAILS OF CHILD / ADULT AT RISK YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT:
Name:
Date of Birth / Approximate Age:
Address:
Phone number:
Email:
Do they know that you are sharing concerns about them?
IF UNDER 18 PLEASE INCLUDE DETAILS OF THE PARENT OR CARER:
Name:
Address:
Phone number:
Email:
Relationship to the child/ young person:
Do they know that you have concerns that you are sharing?

DETAILS OF INCIDENT OR CONCERN:

- Remember to include the 4 W's – Who, What, Where, When.
- Be clear whether this is something you have been told about or something that you have observed directly.
- Include names of anyone else who witnessed the incident or is aware of the concern.
- Refer to the church safeguarding policy if you are unsure what to include.

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary

DETAILS OF ALLEGED PERPETRATOR (IF RELEVANT)

Name:

Address:

Phone Number:

Email:

Are they an adult or a child (under 18):

Relationship to the child/adult at risk:

Does the child / adult at risk live with the alleged perpetrator?

HAVE YOU CONTACTED ANYONE ELSE (SOCIAL SERVICES, POLICE, LADO, REGIONAL SAFEGUARDING CONTACT, MINISTER)?

Please give details of who and when below:

Organisation:

Name of contact:

Date of contact:

This Incident Form should be passed to the Designated Person for Safeguarding (DPS) within 24 hours of any incident or concern arising. Do not delay reporting your concerns to the DPS because you do not have all the information requested in this form. Where there is an immediate risk of harm, please call the DPS at the first opportunity and use this form to follow up on that call.

Remember: Treat this information confidentially. Do not discuss the contents of this form with anyone other than the DPS, not even for prayer purposes.

Signed …….

Date ……..

This guide has been produced for use in Baptist churches in England and Wales.

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