



Safeguarding in church life – the role of the Designated Person for Safeguarding

Your questions answered

Introduction

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 Designated person for Safeguarding 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 DPS can work effectively alongside the church leadership team.

What is the Designated Person for Safeguarding (DPS)?

The DPS is appointed by the church to be a key contact point for safeguarding.

- The DPS receives all reports regarding concerns about children and adults at risk;
- The DPS listens, observes and acts on those concerns appropriately, having taken advice from the relevant people
- The DPS acts as a link between the church and other agencies and bodies on safeguarding matters

What does the DPS do?

The DPS has a number of roles:

- Reporting and monitoring of safeguarding concerns raised by others in the church
- Helping with the preparation and supervision of Contracts of Agreement
- Maintaining a record of volunteers and staff who have completed safeguarding training
- Promoting good safeguarding practice across the church, including ensuring the safeguarding policy and procedures are reviewed regularly
- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers working directly with children, young people and adults at risk have completed a DBS check at the appropriate level
- Keeping a record of safeguarding concerns as they arise and the actions taken
- Liaising with statutory services and other safeguarding contacts, such as the Regional Association team on behalf of the church when concerns arise.

Many of these roles can be shared with other members of the Safeguarding Team. It is important that the DPS is supported by the Safeguarding Team and that the trustees of the church understand the roles and responsibilities held by them.

Who should be a DPS?

The DPS should be someone who is committed to excellence in safeguarding, who is able to remain calm under pressure and work well with others. They will need to maintain confidentiality when dealing with issues within the church but also to recognise when information needs to be shared appropriately for the protection of others.

The DPS role is best suited to someone who has experience of safeguarding with children or adults as part of their working life, or someone who has voluntary experience of a similar nature. This does not mean that they need to be a social worker but maybe a teacher or nurse, youth worker or police officer, nursery nurse or doctor.



Can the Minister/Pastor be the DPS?

We believe that a minister or pastor acting as DPS can be problematic because of their pastoral responsibilities to support everyone within the congregation. Part of the DPS role is to work with statutory services and report concerns. It is hard to combine this with providing pastoral care, and can place the minister in a very difficult position with both the individual(s) who may have been abused and the alleged perpetrator. We would suggest the minister keeps their focus on providing and arranging pastoral support as needed.

This does not mean that the minister isn't involved in safeguarding. We encourage ministers to be part of the team working with the DPS and Safeguarding Trustee to promote safeguarding within the church and ensure ministerial oversight of the work being undertaken by the team.

Does the DPS have sole responsibility for safeguarding in the church?

The quick answer to this question is no! Safeguarding is everybody's business, which is why the Baptist Union of Great Britain has produced training material for the whole church. However, there are some people who have more responsibility for safeguarding than others; the DPS is one of those people.

Even then we do not see this role in isolation, and we recommend that churches have a safeguarding team. This might include a deputy DPS, a Safeguarding Trustee and the minister/pastor of the church.

What training will the DPS need to complete?

The DPS will need to complete both Levels 2 and 3 of the Excellence in Safeguarding training. The dates for this training can be found by contacting your Regional Association or looking on the Regional Association website.

Although there is no requirement to do additional training you might find the NSPCC and Action on Elder Abuse websites a useful read. In addition the Virtual College has [free courses](#) relating to specific issues in safeguarding.

Websites:

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.virtual-college.co.uk

www.elderabuse.org.uk

What support does the DPS receive beyond the church?

Whilst the DPS is the lead for the church in safeguarding they are not expected to be experts in the field. As the DPS, if you are unsure whether something is a safeguarding concern then please check it out. The first point of call should be your Regional Association Safeguarding Contact. Their details can be found on the Baptist Union website at <https://www.baptist.org.uk/associationcontacts>.



If the Association Safeguarding Contact is not immediately available then you can always phone your local children or adult social care team for advice about whether they feel a referral would be appropriate.

Where should the DPS store records relating to safeguarding concerns and how long for?

It is vital that there is a written record of all safeguarding concerns raised within the church and what action has been taken. In addition, the DPS needs to keep copies of Safeguarding Contracts. These records should be stored in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 in a locked drawer or cabinet within the Church building. If the church does not have a building, then a the DPS should be provided with a lockable cupboard in which to store safeguarding material. Only the DPS and deputy DPS should have access to this storage area.

If the DPS moves on or leaves the role, then the information needs to be accessible to the person replacing them and therefore the key/code/cupboard need to be passed to them.

Records should be kept for a minimum of 75 years. Whilst this seems like a long time (a lifetime) this lengthy retention period is for good reason. Even if someone chooses not to proceed with a complaint at the time it occurs, they could do so in the future and the records that you have held from the time will offer significant evidence to help the police or other agencies with their enquiries.

What information will the DPS need and where can these be found?

The DPS will need access to wide range of forms and information, much of which can be found on the Baptist Union website safeguarding pages: <https://www.baptist.org.uk/safeguarding>. On the website, there are template forms that are designed to be adapted to the churches needs and a sample church Safeguarding policy, also to be adapted.

It is also useful for the DPS to keep to hand the contact details for children and adult social care, including the out of hours numbers. The best way of finding these numbers is by doing an internet search for your local authority and finding contact numbers on the website.

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Checklist: Ten actions for the new DPS

As you start your role as a Designated Person for Safeguarding here are the key actions to get you started:

(✓)

	Read your Church's current safeguarding policies and procedures
	Check that there is a review process in place for the safeguarding policies and procedures within your church
	Check with the DBS verifiers that all checks are up to date and agree a plan of action with them to complete any checks needed
	Check when safeguarding training last took place for the leaders and volunteers in your church. If more training is needed, speak to your Regional Association Safeguarding Contact to arrange it
	Think about who will work with you on the Safeguarding Team – try to include a minister and identify a deputy DPS
	Ensure that everyone who is in the Safeguarding Team has completed both Level 2 and 3 of the Excellence in Safeguarding training
	Look up and keep a record of the contact details for local statutory agencies for both children and adults
	Think about how you can ensure that everyone within the church, including children and young people, knows who you are and what your role is within the church
	Meet with the previous DPS to talk through any current issues that you may need to be aware of, including the details of anyone who is on a Contract of Agreement

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

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