

The Baptist Union of Great Britain

Safeguarding Policy Statement

1. Our commitment to safeguarding

The care and protection of children and those who are vulnerable mattered to Jesus, and therefore it matters to us. Striving to keep everyone safe from harm and acknowledging and responding appropriately to concerns when they arise must be at the heart of our life as Christian communities.

The Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) is a charity in itself, but also provides support to nearly 2,000 Baptist churches across England and Wales who provide services and activities to their members, attendees and the wider local communities in which they are based. We recognise that our churches need support and guidance to achieve consistent and high-quality safeguarding policies and practices, and so we provide resource, expertise and support to help them to do just that. Our policies and resources for churches are all available free of charge on our website and are accompanied by training events and materials delivered across our Union.

This policy is written specifically for the body that is BUGB and addresses our responsibilities for those decisions and activities that are made and organised by BUGB, including policies for our staff, volunteers and the Baptist ministers who are accredited through BUGB.

This policy statement will be reviewed on an annual basis at the May Trustee Board meeting.

2. Our structures for safeguarding

The BUGB Trustee Board

The BUGB Trustee Board has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that BUGB meets its responsibilities and obligations in terms of the governance of safeguarding. It does this in three ways:

- **The Trustee Board** has oversight of the rolling three-year excellence in safeguarding plans and accompanying budget commitments. It also receives summary reports on case numbers and trends at each of its meetings.
- **Safeguarding Trustee** – the Trustee Board appoints one trustee to act as Safeguarding Trustee. This role focuses on acting as a point of liaison with the National Safeguarding Team. A formal job description and communication requirements are in place for this role.
- **Safeguarding Committee** – a committee of three trustees, made up of the Moderator, the Safeguarding Trustee and General Secretary, has oversight of the work of the National Safeguarding Team and is kept informed of the type and nature of all cases where national support is provided. Formal terms of reference are in place for this Committee.

The National Safeguarding Team

This team, led by our HR and Safeguarding Team Leader and operating as part of the Specialist Teams, provides leadership and expertise to the safeguarding groups and officers working across our Union. The team also develops and takes the lead on the development and implementation of our Excellence in Safeguarding three-year plans and the Excellence in Safeguarding training materials.

The team brief the trustee board on those more serious cases handled across at national level. It coordinates with the Ministries and Faith & Society teams and the Association Safeguarding Leads to provide expert back up on complex church safeguarding issues. The team reports to the General Secretary. Formal job descriptions and responsibilities are in place for each role in the National Safeguarding Team. Three advisers in the team are also qualified to deliver the BUGB Excellence in Safeguarding training programmes.

The National Safeguarding Contacts Group

The National Safeguarding Contacts Group is made up of the members of the National Safeguarding Team and the Association Safeguarding Lead from each of the 13 regional associations. The group meets three times a year, including a residential training meeting, to discuss and work on matters of policy and practice, and to ensure that a consistent approach to safeguarding is promoted across our Union churches. The NSCG is chaired by the HR and Safeguarding Team Leader. Formal terms of reference are in place for the NSCG.

3. Our policies and procedures

Recruitment

Our recruitment processes include suitability checks to make sure that trustees, staff and volunteers are suitable and legally able to act in their positions. This includes people from or working overseas.

These checks, operating as part of a safer recruitment process, include:

- DBS checks where the position is eligible
- references and checks on gaps in work history
- confirmation that staff can work in the UK
- health checks where appropriate

Health and safety

We have detailed policies in place to ensure the health and safety of staff, ministers, trustees and other volunteers working in our offices and working remotely. From a safeguarding perspective, this includes guidance on lone working, home working, fire regulations and manual handling as well as guidance on safe handling of digital information and equipment. Online training is available for all staff on core areas of health and safety and are included as part of our induction programme.

BUGB staff

The majority of staff roles at BUGB do not involve any direct contact with children or adults at risk as part of their day to day work. For this reason, we do not require DBS checks for all BUGB staff.

Where staff are required to have regular direct contact with children or adults at risk as part of their day to day work, a DBS check will be carried out at the appropriate level before the individual is appointed to post. Such staff will also be required to attend our Level 2 and 3 training programmes at least once every 5 years.

Basic training in safeguarding will be a requirement for all BUGB staff and is carried out by the National Safeguarding Team.

Where accredited ministers hold posts as part of the Specialist Teams, they are subject to DBS checks at least once every 5 years to maintain their accreditation, and to the training requirements set out for accredited ministers. Any blemished disclosures are dealt with through our normal process i.e. are reviewed by the National Safeguarding Team and subject to risk assessment if needed.

BUGB Trustees

All BUGB trustees are required to have a basic level DBS check as part of their appointment process. We will also require each trustee to attend the BUGB 'Excellence in Safeguarding' Level 2 and 3 safeguarding training within their first year of appointment (or watch the Safeguarding Update film during the lockdown period)

Accreditation of ministers and other church workers

All ministerial students participate in Level 2 and Level 3 at the start of their ministerial training and again before they start their NAMs period.

It is a requirement of ongoing accreditation that Baptist ministers and accredited workers complete our Level 2 and 3 training at least once every 5 years, and that they also complete an online training module on safeguarding annually.

Designated Person for Safeguarding for BUGB staff and ministers

We use the term 'Designated Person for Safeguarding' to describe the person who takes on the safeguarding contact and liaison role in BUGB churches. We use the same title for the staff member at BUGB who acts as the contact point and liaison for any safeguarding questions or concerns in relation to BUGB staff or ministers. This person also acts as BUGB's contact with its local authority safeguarding boards.

The Designated Person for Safeguarding for BUGB is Rachel Stone, the HR and Safeguarding Team Leader.

4. Reporting concerns

- Any safeguarding concerns about BUGB staff or ministers should be brought to the attention of the Designated Person for Safeguarding in the first instance. The DPS will handle and record information and will make any necessary report to statutory authorities as required.
- Where the nature of the safeguarding concerns suggests a risk to the individual, the complainant or the organisation, the DPS will liaise with the General Secretary to make a decision about the need for suspension whilst an investigation takes place.
- In conducting any such investigation, the Union's complaints processes for staff, ministers and trustees will be followed. However, where there is a need to report safeguarding concerns to the statutory authorities, the instructions of the police or social services teams will be followed throughout. This may include delaying any further internal steps until police investigation is concluded.
- Once an investigation into safeguarding concerns is completed, the General Secretary will invoke the Union's disciplinary procedures for ministers, staff or trustees accordingly. A serious breach of safeguarding policies and procedures, or evidence that an individual has

carried out serious safeguarding offences whilst in the employment of the Union will be treated as gross misconduct.

- Appeals against any actions taken because of a safeguarding investigation will be dealt with under the appeals processes laid down in our disciplinary procedures.
- Due attention will be paid to privacy and data protection requirements through any such investigation or subsequent disciplinary process.
- In the event of a serious safeguarding incident, the DPS will manage the process of making a serious incident report to the Charity Commission.
- In the event of a safeguarding concern about the HR & Safeguarding Team Leader or the General Secretary, the reporting procedure will be the responsibility of the Safeguarding Trustee/Moderator of the BUGB Trustee Board.

5. Bullying and sexual harassment

BUGB does not condone any mistreatment or misuse of power or authority by any member of our teams, whether staff, minister, trustee or volunteer.

We have a clear policy in place on how we will handle allegations of bullying and sexual harassment. This sets out our processes and support arrangements for those who believe that they are being subjected to inappropriate behaviour by others in their workplace environment.

6. Whistleblowing

The Union's complaints policies are open to all to use to report matters that concern them in relation to the behaviour or conduct of staff, ministers, trustees and other volunteers. In addition, there is a separate whistleblowing policy available for staff to use to report concerns.

7. DBS checking service

BUGB manages the selection of an appropriate DBS checking service provider for all BUGB churches and covers the cost of this service. This contract is reviewed on a three-year rolling basis and is managed through a formal contract arrangement with a set of key performance indicators with quarterly reporting.

The National Safeguarding Team provides a review service for all blemished disclosures, including guidance to churches and to the Ministries Team on the suitability of individuals to work with children and/or adults at risk.

8. Working with or making grants to other organisations

BUGB operates as a grant making body in several circumstances and will ensure that proper due diligence takes place when we work with, or make grants to, other bodies to achieve their aims.

As part of our review processes before any grant is made we will ask for evidence that the grant recipient or partner body has appropriate safeguarding procedures in place. We will also ensure

that clear lines of responsibility and reporting are in place in writing between BUGB and the recipient or partner body.

This written agreement or contract sets out:

- the relationship between BUGB and the recipient or partner body
- the role of each organisation.
- monitoring and reporting arrangements

9. Baptist Assembly and national events

Separate safeguarding policies and procedures are in place for the operation of Baptist Assembly. These can be found on the Baptist Assembly webpages and include requirements for all third-party organisations providing children and youth activities at Assembly.

10. Support for Associations and Colleges

It is the responsibility of each association and college to have their own safeguarding policies and appropriate governance structures for safeguarding in place.

The National Safeguarding Team provides support to associations and colleges on request in terms of:

- Supporting Association and College Safeguarding Leads with expertise and guidance on complex cases
- Providing a template Association Safeguarding Policy to all associations
- Providing specialised training for association teams on managing their safeguarding responsibilities
- Providing a Qualified BUGB trainer to deliver safeguarding training for colleges

11. Policies, procedures and support for BUGB member churches

It is the responsibility of each church to have their own safeguarding policies and appropriate governance structures for safeguarding in place.

A full suite of safeguarding policies and procedures is in place to support Baptist churches to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities. This includes:

- Template safeguarding policy and procedures including guidance for churches on best practice in relation to both children and adults at risk
- A suite of training programmes at Levels 1, 2 and 3 for church volunteers, helpers, paid workers, ministers, church leaders and trustees delivered by teams of trainers in each of our association areas
- A wide range of online guides and notes providing advice on specific safeguarding topics e.g. self-harm, cyber safety and domestic abuse

12. Insurance and liability

BUGB will hold appropriate levels of insurance cover for itself as an organisation, for its staff, ministers working in the specialist teams and volunteers, including trustees, in relation to any liabilities for past or future safeguarding claims.

13. Risk Register

Safeguarding risks are assessed and recorded as part of the overall BUGB Risk Register which is reviewed by the BUGB Trustee Board on an annual basis. This will include any safeguarding risks in relation to Baptist Assembly.

14. Review and monitoring of this policy

This policy will be reviewed as part of the BUGB governance process, which means that it will be formally reviewed on an annual basis and updated as required.

This policy was last reviewed in February 2023.

February 2023

Version 1.3