



BAPTIST ASSEMBLY SAFEGUARDING POLICY – ADULTS AT RISK

October 2026

Introduction

This policy and procedures guide has been written for all those working at and attending Baptist Assembly and focuses on protecting and serving any adults at risk in attendance.

We want Baptist Assembly to be a safe, welcoming environment for everyone to enjoy and so it is vital that safeguarding best practice is in place.

An important part of our policy is to always have two Designated Persons for Safeguarding on site at Baptist Assembly to provide any support and advice needed. They can be contacted anytime during the day via the Information Desk and are happy to help.

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding is the protection of adults and children from harm, abuse or neglect. We all have the same rights and expectations to independence, respect, choice, fulfilment of our ambitions, to be heard, included, and to have privacy and confidentiality. These expectations are central to the way in which we interact with each other in our life together.

Safeguarding involves a range of activities aimed at promoting the individual's fundamental right to be safe. These include making and maintaining safer environments for all, having processes to follow should something go wrong, and support for everyone involved.

Who are adults at risk?

There is no standard single definition for an adult at risk, so for our policy we are using the following simple definition taken from thirtyone:eight -

Any adult aged 18 or over who due to disability, mental function, age, illness or traumatic circumstances may not be able to take care or protect themselves against the risk of significant harm, abuse, bullying, harassment, mistreatment or exploitation.

Some adults might be more at risk than others, and there are some periods in life where risks may increase. Some of these circumstances may include:

- Learning, sensory or physical disability
- Old age and frailty (especially if it creates a dependency on or needing help from others)
- Mental health problems
- Dementia or confusion
- Illness
- Addiction or dependence on alcohol, drugs or medication
- Bereavement
- Past abuse or trauma
- English is not their first language

At Baptist Assembly, there will inevitably be adults at risk in attendance and we need to be mindful of their needs, following best practice at all times.

What is abuse?

Abuse is the violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons. It comes from the misuse of power and control that someone has over another. Harm is the result of this mistreatment or abuse.

Abuse may consist of one single act or many repeated acts, and it can occur in any relationship at any time of life. It can take many forms, not just physical or violent acts, but it may also be verbal, sexual, psychological, spiritual or financial. It may be an act of neglect or an omission to act. Any or all types of abuse may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance. Abuse can be perpetrated by anyone and can take place in all kinds of different settings.

For further information about the different types of abuse, please see the Baptist Union of Great Britain Safeguarding Policy.

Responding to abuse

This section will help you know what to do if you know or suspect an adult is being abused or may be at risk of abuse, or you have concerns about their wellbeing. It is often not easy to recognise abuse or harm. Therefore, it is important to act if you suspect abuse – don't wait until you are absolutely sure. This doesn't mean that you are jumping to conclusions or making judgements about the situation, it simply means that there is a safeguarding concern.

Within the context of Baptist Assembly, you may suspect abuse because:

- You have a general concern about someone's wellbeing. This could have started prior to Baptist Assembly.
- You see or hear something at Baptist Assembly which could be abusive.
- Someone tells you that something has happened or is happening to them, or to an adult at risk, which could be abusive.

In these circumstances, do not delay. Pass on your concerns to one of the Baptist Assembly Designated Persons for Safeguarding as soon as possible. There are always two Designated Persons on site, so someone should always be available. If, in exceptional circumstances, they were not available and an adult is at imminent risk of harm, contact the police or emergency services on 999 without delay.

If an adult discloses abuse directly to you at Baptist Assembly, please remember to:

Listen	Take what is said seriously;
Reassure	Tell them that they have done the right thing by telling you, and that you believe them;
Remain Calm	No matter how difficult it is to listen to what is being disclosed. You have been chosen because the person feels able to talk to you;
Be honest	Do not promise full confidentiality or offer false reassurance;
Be open	Do not ask leading or closed questions, such as "Did she hit you?" It is not your role to investigate. As soon as you have enough information to concern you, stop probing.

Ask	Request their consent to share information and seek help, but pass on any concerns to one of the Baptist Assembly Designated Persons for Safeguarding for advice regardless;
Explain	Tell them that you are going to tell the Baptist Assembly Designated Person, as they are best placed to know how to help;
Write	Document everything the adult at risk has told you, in their own words. The Baptist Assembly Designated Persons will have an incident form that you can use. You will need to record the questions you asked as well as the answers or information given. This should be done as soon as possible after the disclosure has been made;
Report	Contact one of the Baptist Assembly Designated Persons (or appropriate alternative if necessary – see above) and report the disclosure;
Keep quiet	The concerns you have should be kept confidential between you, the adult concerned, the Baptist Assembly Designated Persons and your church safeguarding team (if applicable). The Baptist Assembly Designated Persons may need to inform the relevant local Baptist Association Safeguarding Contact and the statutory authorities. Never go and talk to the alleged abuser or try to investigate the allegations yourself.

Communication difficulties

Be aware that the person's ability to recount their concern or allegation will depend on age, culture, language, communication skills and disability. You may need to ask the person to repeat themselves or to check that you have understood what they said.

If you have concerns, witness the abuse of someone or have seen changes, such as in behaviour, that make you suspect that someone is being abused, it is important that you don't ignore what you have seen or suspect. Everyone has the right to live free from abuse of any kind, and there is help and support available to put a stop to it. But remember that it is not your job to investigate; as soon as you have enough information you should report it to one of the Baptist Assembly Designated Persons for Safeguarding.

Mental capacity

Within safeguarding, mental capacity is whether or not someone has the capacity or ability to make decisions about themselves and their safety and wellbeing. There is a fine balance between the individual's rights to autonomy and their need for protection.

If there are any concerns about the mental capacity of an adult at risk, speak to one of the Baptist Assembly Designated Persons for Safeguarding for advice.

What if the adult doesn't want help?

The mental capacity of the adult at risk is vital in deciding what should be done. All actions should be based on the assumption that the individual has the capacity and the right to make their own choices in relation to their personal safety and wellbeing. This includes upholding their right to follow a course of action which others may deem unwise or eccentric, including staying in a situation of abuse.

If the adult at risk doesn't want help it may still be necessary for the police or Adult Social Care Services to be informed, who can put a safeguarding plan in place so that, as far as possible, the adult continues to be protected. This is particularly important:

- When the person lacks the mental capacity to make such a choice
- When there is a risk of harm to others
- In order to prevent a crime

In the context of Baptist Assembly, regardless of whether or not the statutory authorities need to be involved, the concern should still be passed on to one of the Baptist Assembly Designated Persons for Safeguarding as a first step, even if the adult at risk has not given consent for it to be shared. It can then be discussed and decided if the concern needs to be reported to the police or Adult Social Care.

Pastoral support

We have a responsibility to support anyone who has been affected by abuse, no matter what form of abuse they have suffered; whether they suffered abuse as children or as adults; whether it was prolonged abuse or a one-off attack; or even whether the abuse seems trivial to the onlooker.

The impact of abuse on a person will be specific to them. It will depend upon their personal circumstances, now and at the time of the abuse, as well as the nature of the abuse suffered and the identity of the abuser. The abuse may have a lasting effect for the rest of their life and they may show a range of symptoms, which are detailed in *the BUGB Model Safeguarding Policy*, or conversely, show none at all.

If a safeguarding concern arises at Baptist Assembly, it is important that all those affected are offered pastoral support. Depending on the circumstances, it may be that this can be arranged by your church, or it may be needed outside of your church or in a different area of the country. The Baptist Assembly Designated Persons for Safeguarding will be able to give advice on the most appropriate approach for the situation at hand. It may also be necessary for those affected to seek professional counselling as they work through their experiences. Again, the Baptist Assembly Designated Persons can advise.

Best practice guidelines

It is important that we work together to enable everyone to get the most out of Baptist Assembly in the safest and most enjoyable way.

It is not possible to guard against every eventuality or protect those adults at risk from every potential harm or abuse by cruel and abusive people. However, we can strive to do our best to provide a safer place for everyone at Baptist Assembly, including adults at risk, by making sure that best practice guidelines are in place and are followed.

a) Venue

We are committed to making Baptist Assembly as accessible as possible to all people and will try our utmost to address any restrictions to access, visibility, audibility, toilet facilities, lighting or heating - putting aids and adaptations in place where necessary. We will carry out the relevant health and safety checks, ensuring that we always meet legislative requirements.

b) Inclusivity

The language people use can often reflect their attitudes and opinions of others. At Baptist Assembly, we will make every effort to use appropriate language and suitable vocabulary, enabling the greatest level of inclusivity and accessibility.

We will consider the wide range of requirements of those attending Baptist Assembly. For example:

- Having some copies of large print type available for all printed materials
- Ensuring that speakers are always facing the delegates and don't cover their mouths when talking, enabling those who rely on lip-reading
- Describing what is being presented on a screen for those who cannot see it clearly
- Using inclusive language
- Using a variety of styles and resources to cater for different levels of education and understanding
- Using a microphone during times of open prayer so that all can hear

c) Videos and photography

Only designated event photographers should take photographs / videos at Baptist Assembly. A notice outlining this policy will be clearly displayed at the venue, making this clear to all those attending the event. Verbal permission will be sought at the time from any adults featured in individual or small group photographs. Due to the nature of public events, we cannot guarantee that attendees will not take personal photographs, particularly in the main auditorium. However, our practice is to discourage this where possible by providing signage to explain why.

Some sessions at Baptist Assembly will be live streamed or recorded for people to access at a later date. In this situation it will be made clear to those attending prior to the event and announced at the start of each session. There will also be an area, clearly marked out where people can sit who do not want to be on camera. Please refer to the BUGB guide, *Livestreaming and Recording Services and Events: Safeguarding Guidance* for further information.

d) Safer recruitment

We apply safer recruitment best practice principles to all those working at Baptist Assembly. We acknowledge that anyone from our team could have incidental contact with adults at risk and therefore ensure that all staff are aware of this policy and procedures in advance of Baptist Assembly. All staff are also aware of and agree to follow our Baptist Assembly Code of Conduct, which outlines appropriate behaviour for everyone working at the event. The relevant staff also receive safeguarding training and undertake Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks where applicable.

e) Participation in the Children and Youth Programme

In order to safeguard the children and young people attending, no adults can take part in any element of the Baptist Assembly Children and Youth Programme, other than those appointed to work in such programmes and designated Baptist Assembly staff.

f) Personal care needs

If anyone attending Baptist Assembly has personal care needs, such as requiring assistance going to the toilet, they should bring someone along with them to provide the necessary assistance. If there are any concerns regarding personal care needs at the event, please contact one of the Baptist Assembly Designated Persons for Safeguarding for advice.

Key contacts at Baptist Assembly 2027

Key contacts

Event manager: Shirley Buckle	
Designated person/s for Safeguarding:	
1. Anna Macfarlane	01235 517719
2. Nicky Gibbard	01235 611453

Association Safeguarding Leads:

If you would like to speak to the Regional Safeguarding Lead for your local Baptist Association then you will find their details at www.baptist.org.uk/safeguardingcontacts

You can also contact the Baptist Union National Safeguarding Team on: 01235 517700 or safeguarding@baptist.org.uk