Safeguarding Policy 2024

NOTE: If you have come to this policy because you wish to report abuse of a child or adult at risk of harm, please go to Section 3 for guidance on reporting abuse.

Section 1 – The Baptist Union of Scotland

1.1 Details of the organisation

Baptist Union of Scotland
48 Speirs Wharf
Glasgow
G4 9TH
Phone: 0141 423 6169
Email: admin@scottishbaptist.org.uk
The Baptist Union of Scotland is a charitable company limited by guarantee.
Scottish Charity Number: SC094097
Company Number: SC620266
Insurer: The Baptist Insurance Company

1.2 Safeguarding Contacts

Safeguarding Lead (General Director): Martin Hodson
Phone : 0773 036 7606
Email : martin@scottishbaptist.org.uk

Deputy Safeguarding Lead (Younger Lead): Ali Laing
Phone: 07938 312014
Email@ ali@scottishbaptist.org.uk

1.3 Activities

The Baptist Union of Scotland (BUS) is a network of about 155 churches across Scotland. Its main activities focus on strengthening churches, supporting leaders and deepening fellowship among the Baptist community.

Each member church is a charity in its own right and will therefore have its own Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. Local churches are autonomous so BUS does not have authority over them in any matters, including safeguarding. This policy governs the actions of the staff and volunteers of BUS and any activities undertaken by the charitable company BUS.

However, as a networking organisation, BUS seeks to support local churches in safeguarding and encourage best practice. BUS encourages all churches to be members of Thirtyone:Eight and refer to Thirtyone:Eight for safeguarding advice and guidance. BUS is able to provide pastoral support and advice on communications to church leaders addressing safeguarding concerns. As safeguarding issues in one church may have wider implications for Baptist churches (eg an offender may be known to have connections in other Baptist churches), BUS asks local churches to inform its Safeguarding Lead of any safeguarding incidents that occur locally.

BUS is the accrediting body for Baptist ministers and it is a requirement of accreditation that ministers undertake safeguarding training provided by BUS at least every three years.

BUS National Team members may from time to time have contact with children and adults with care and support needs in the context of local churches, who will have their own safeguarding policies and procedures.

BUS itself from time to time runs events and activities which involve children and adults who have care and support needs. These would include our annual national gathering, Canopy, at which there is a dedicated youth and children's programme, and a youth camp within the context of the annual Magnitude youth event. This policy covers all such events and activities unless other arrangements have been made in accordance with Section 2.5.

1.4 Our commitment

a. BUS recognises the need to provide a safe and caring environment for children, young people and adults. We acknowledge that children, young people and adults can be the victims of physical, sexual, emotional and spiritual abuse, and neglect.

b. BUS acknowledges its role as outlined in "National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 (revised 2023)":

> Religious leaders, practitioners and volunteers within faith organisations have a unifying priority in relation to the protection of children. They may provide regulated care as well as a wide range of voluntary support services. Faith organisations including churches provide carefully planned activities for children, supporting families under stress and caring for those hurt by abuse

in the past, as well as ministering to and managing those who have caused harm.

Within these varied roles, all reasonable steps must be taken to provide a safe environment that promotes and supports the wellbeing of children and young people. This includes careful selection and appointment of those who work with children. It also means ensuring practitioners and volunteers are confident about how to respond promptly, in line with agreed protocols, when concerns arise about risk of harm to a child from abuse or neglect. Child protection coordinators and safeguarding advisers should be available for consultation within faith organisations. They will work with social workers and police officers as and when required. Practitioners and volunteers with church and faith organisations must report concerns about harm to a child to their line manager or safeguarding/child protection coordinator. The safety of the child or adult at risk is the priority.

c. BUS recognises its responsibility to protect adults who are at risk of harm. The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 defines adults (16 and over) as being at risk of harm if they are:
    - unable to safeguard their own wellbeing, property, rights or other interests,
    - at risk of harm (from themselves or others)
    - more vulnerable to being harmed because of a disability, mental health condition, illness or physical or mental infirmity

d. BUS undertakes to:

    - endorse and follow all national and local safeguarding legislation and procedures
    - provide ongoing safeguarding training for its workers who have contact with children or adults at risk of harm
    - regularly review its policy operational guidelines
    - ensure that its premises meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and all other relevant legislation, and that it is welcoming and inclusive
    - support the BUS Safeguarding Leads in their work and in any action, they may need to take in order to protect children and adults at risk of harm

1.5 Safeguarding Advisory Group

BUS has a Safeguarding Advisory Group, comprised of people with professional experience of safeguarding (eg in social work, police, etc) and direct experience of BUS churches. Their purpose is to provide ongoing support, insight and knowledge to the Safeguarding

Lead/Deputy. The presence of this group does not replace the requirement to contact Thirtyone:Eight for expert advice where specified in this policy.

Section 2 - Prevention

2.1 Understanding abuse and neglect

A person may abuse by inflicting harm or failing to prevent harm. Children and adults in need of protection may be abused within a family, an institution or a community setting. Very often the abuser is known or in a trusted relationship with the child or adult.

BUS accepts (in respect of both children and adults at risk of harm) the obligations set out in Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to

> take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse…Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment…

2.2 Safer recruitment

BUS will ensure all staff or volunteers who work with children or adults at risk of harm will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with government guidance on safe recruitment. This includes ensuring that:

- There is a written job description / person specification for the post
- Those applying have completed an application form and a self-declaration form
- Those short listed have been interviewed
- Safeguarding has been discussed at interview
- Written references have been obtained, and followed up where appropriate
- A Protecting Vulnerable Groups Disclosure has been obtained where necessary
- Qualifications where relevant have been verified
- A suitable training programme is provided for the successful applicant

- The applicant has been given a copy of the organisation's Safeguarding Policy and knows how to report concerns.

2.3 Safeguarding Training

BUS is committed to on-going safeguarding training for all workers with children or adults at risk of harm, developing a culture of awareness of safeguarding issues to help protect everyone. All these workers will receive induction training and undertake recognised safeguarding training on a regular basis.

2.4 Code of Conduct and Good Practice Guidelines

All workers with children and adults at risk of harm will be issued with a Code of Conduct and Good Practice Guidelines with regard to children, young people and adults with care and support needs. These are found in the Appendices to this policy.

2.5 Working in Partnership

Where BUS enters a partnership with another organisation for any activity involving children or adults at risk of harm, BUS will discuss our safeguarding expectations and ensure an appropriate safeguarding policy is in place for any joint activities.

Section 3 - Responding to allegations of abuse

Under no circumstances should a worker or volunteer carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse.

3.1 Reporting

The person in receipt of allegations or suspicions of abuse should report concerns as soon as possible to the Safeguarding Lead:
Martin Hodson
Tel: 0773 036 7606
Email: martin@scottishbatist.org.uk

In the absence of the Safeguarding Lead or, if the suspicions in any way involve the Safeguarding Lead, then the report should be made to the Deputy Safeguarding Lead:
Ali Laing
Tel: 07938 312014

Email: ali@scottishbaptist.org.uk

If the suspicions implicate both the Safeguarding Lead and the Deputy, then the report should be made in the first instance to:
Thirtyone:Eight
PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ
Tel: 0303 003 1111.
Alternatively contact Social Services or the police.

3.2 Contacting Relevant Authorities

a. The Safeguarding Lead should contact the appropriate agency, or they may first contact Thirtyone:Eight for advice. They should then contact the relevant Social Work Department in the area the child or adult lives, or Police Scotland.

b. The role of the Safeguarding Lead/ Deputy is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass this information on to statutory agencies who have a legal duty to investigate.

c. A written record of the concerns should be made in accordance with these procedures and kept in a secure place.

d. The Safeguarding Lead may need to inform others depending on the circumstances and/or nature of the concern, such as the BUS Convener or other designated trustee.

e. Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone other than those named above.

f. Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the Safeguarding Lead, the absence of the Safeguarding Lead or Deputy should not delay referral to Social Work, the Police or taking advice from Thirtyone:Eight.

g. BUS will support the Safeguarding Lead/Deputy in their role and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need to know basis.

h. It is the right of any individual to make a direct referral to the safeguarding agencies or seek advice from Thirtyone:Eight. If, for example, the individual with the concern feels that the Safeguarding Lead/Deputy has not responded appropriately, or, where they have a disagreement with the Safeguarding Lead/Deputy as to the appropriateness of a referral, they are free to contact an outside agency direct.

3.3 Detailed procedures where there is a concern about a child

3.3.1 Allegations of physical injury, neglect or emotional abuse

If a child has a physical injury, a symptom of neglect or where there are concerns about emotional abuse, the Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will:

a. Contact Children's Social Work Department (or Thirtyone:Eight) for advice in cases of deliberate injury, if concerned about a child's safety or if a child is afraid to return home.
b. Not tell the parents or carers unless advised to do so, having contacted Children's Social Work Department.
c. Seek medical help if needed urgently, informing the doctor of any suspicions.

d. For lesser concerns, (e.g. poor parenting), encourage parent/carer to seek help, but not if this places the child at risk of significant harm.
e. Where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, offer to arrange for someone to accompany them. In cases of greater concern, if they still fail to act, contact Children's Social Work Department direct for advice.
f. Seek and follow advice given by Thirtyone:Eight (who will confirm their advice in writing) if unsure whether or not to refer a case to Children's Social Work Department.

3.3.2 Allegations of sexual abuse

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will:

a. Contact the Children's Social Work Department Duty Social Worker for children and families or Police Child Protection Team direct. They will NOT speak to the parent/carer or anyone else.
b. Seek and follow the advice given by Thirtyone:Eight if for any reason they are unsure whether or not to contact the Children's Social Work Department or Police. Thirtyone:Eight will confirm its advice in writing.

3.4 Detailed procedures where there is a concern that an adult is in need of protection

3.4.1 Suspicions or allegations of abuse or harm including; physical, sexual, organisational, financial, discriminatory, neglect, self-neglect, forced marriage, modern slavery, domestic abuse.

If there is concern about any of the above, the Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will:

a. Contact the Adult Social Care Team who have legal responsibility to investigate allegations of abuse. Alternatively, Thirtyone:Eight can be contacted for advice.
b. If the adult is in immediate danger or has sustained a serious injury contact the Emergency Services, informing them of any suspicions.

3.4.2 Suspicions of spiritual abuse

If there is a concern regarding spiritual abuse, the Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will:

a. Identify support services for the victim i.e. counselling or other pastoral support
b. Contact Thirtyone:Eight and in discussion with them will consider appropriate action with regards to the scale of the concern.

3.5 Allegations of abuse against a person who works with children/young people

If an accusation is made against a worker (whether a volunteer or paid member of staff) whilst following the procedure outlined above, the Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will:

a. Refer the matter to Children's Social Work Department who will investigate the concerns and pass on information to Disclosure Scotland in relation to the worker
b. Make a referral to Disclosure Scotland for consideration of the person being placed on the barred list for working with children or adults with additional care and support needs. A referral must be made within 3 months of the organisation's disciplinary actions or the organisation will be criminally liable.

3.6 Allegations of abuse against a person who works with adults with care and support needs

The safeguarding Lead/Deputy will:

a. Liaise with Adult Social Services to discuss concerns and, if advised, with Disclosure Scotland with regard to the suspension of the worker

b. Make a referral to the Disclosure Scotland. A referral must be made within 3 months of any disciplinary measures.

c. Note that The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 and the Code of Practice April 2014 places the duty upon Adult Services to investigate situations of harm to adults with care and support needs. This may result in a range of options including action against the person or organisation causing the harm, increasing the support for the carers or no further action if the 'victim' chooses no further action and they have the capacity to communicate their decision. However, this is a decision for Adult Social Work to decide, not BUS.

3.7 Allegations of Non-Recent (or 'Historic') Abuse

Non-recent (sometimes called 'historic') refers to abuse which someone who is now an adult experienced as a child or young person (under 18). It may also refer to the experience of an older adult who was abused when they were a younger adult.

a. Allegations of non-recent abuse should be reported to the Safeguarding Lead/Deputy in the same way as other allegations or suspicions, as set out in section 3.1 above.
b. The Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will contact the relevant authorities, in accordance with section 3.2 above, subject to the 'survivor' of the abuse giving consent to this (if they are able to do so).
c. If an allegation of non-recent abuse refers to events that occurred in the context of a local church (and not in a BUS activity) but is reported to BUS, the BUS Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will advise the Safeguarding Officer in the local church of the allegation and advise them to deal with this according to the local church's Safeguarding Policy.
d. The BUS Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will remain in contact with the local church Safeguarding Officer, to offer support and to ensure the local church acts on the allegation.
e. If it emerges that the allegations have implications for other BUS churches, the BUS Safeguarding Lead/Deputy will ensure that the relevant local church Safeguarding Officers are informed.

Section 4 - Pastoral Care

4.1 Supporting those affected by abuse

BUS is committed to facilitating pastoral care and support, working with the statutory authorities and local churches as appropriate, to all those affected by abuse who are involved in our activities.

4.2 Working with offenders and those who may pose a risk

Given the nature of BUS and the work it undertakes, there are very few circumstances in which someone known to have abused children, or known to be a danger to adults at risk of harm, will be able to take part in its work. In such cases, BUS will undertake to work with the person's church and any other appropriate agencies to supervise the individual concerned and offer pastoral care, but in its safeguarding commitment to the protection of children and adults at risk of harm, to set boundaries for that person which they will be expected to keep.

Adoption of the policy

This policy was agreed by the BUS Trustee Board and will be reviewed annually in October 2025.

Signed by: Position:

Date: