



STRATEGIC SAFEGUARDING PLAN 2022-2025

DECEMBER 2021

STRATEGIC SAFEGUARDING REVIEW REPORT

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STRATEGIC SAFEGUARDING REVIEW REPORT

1. Introduction

1.1 AIMING FOR EXCELLENCE

This is the third strategic safeguarding plan since 2015 and represents a big step forward in our aspiration towards excellence in safeguarding.

When our second strategic safeguarding plan was put in place at the end of 2018, it focused on continuing to develop and extend our safeguarding support for churches. The priorities identified in that plan reflected some of the urgent areas of work coming out of the increased levels of awareness and activity in relation to safeguarding good practice. As many churches worked to improve their local safeguarding arrangements.

In practice, the impact of Covid and subsequent lockdown have meant that we have needed to turn some of our attention to immediate concerns in terms of adapting safeguarding policy, procedures and practices to fit the needs of churches during lockdown, as well as the need to provide video based safeguarding training that could be accessed by individuals and groups, supported by online sessions with experienced safeguarding trainers. However, good progress has been made against priority areas and this is demonstrated in Section 2.

1.2 FEEDBACK FROM BAPTIST CHURCHES

Looking at the feedback provided by our churches we can see some trends over the three-year period of the last safeguarding plan:

- We know that Baptist churches are dealing with an increasing number of safeguarding cases, reflecting both current issues in their congregations and groups, but also the growing number of people who are finally feeling able to come forward to talk about historical abuse. Whether that abuse took place in a church setting or whether church attendees are bringing details of abuse in other settings, hoping and believing that the church will support and care for them as they disclose, churches are expected to be able to respond quickly and appropriately to safeguarding concerns. People in our local communities expect churches to be at least as aware and active in terms of safeguarding as their local scout group, school or care home.
- Our statistics from annual returns show that approximately 93,000 children and young people come to a Baptist church led activity or event during the year, of whom only 1 in 4 attend church on a regular basis. It is not possible to estimate accurately the number of adults at risk attending our churches, but in our case work we note that we deal with cases involving abuse of children and young people and cases involving the abuse of adults at risk in a fairly equal split of case numbers. We also note that during lockdown, large numbers of people have joined in with church activities online, perhaps with very little previous church involvement.

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- Feedback from the Regional Safeguarding Leads tells us that churches are increasingly asking for advice and seeking help with how best to respond to safeguarding concerns. It is a good sign that churches are recognising that professional help and support is available, and that they are taking advantage of it. New support packages for churches joining BUGB and for new DPSs have been piloted successfully during the second half of 2021 and are about to be launched nationally.
- At church, association and national level we are working far more closely with police and other statutory authorities to protect those at risk in our churches and to ensure that perpetrators of abuse can be brought to justice. Recent work to provide more guidance on risk assessment and the use of safeguarding contracts is helping churches to welcome and manage offenders and those who present particular safeguarding risks.
- We have seen a new commitment to making sure that all church leaders, staff and volunteers have had appropriate training for the roles they carry out. Based on our statistics for those in formal membership of Baptist churches, at least 1 in 6 of all church members have been through our new safeguarding training in the last 3 years. This equates to more than 26,000 church leaders, staff and volunteers in Baptist churches across England and Wales, including approximately 5,000 people who have used the Safeguarding Update film during lockdown. Our safeguarding trainers report that they are seeing delegates returning for repeat training and asking questions that demonstrate a better overall knowledge of the fundamentals of safeguarding in a church setting. This is encouraging, and we will continue to focus on supporting churches, their DPSs and safeguarding trustees to grow in confidence in their safeguarding policies, procedures and practices.

1.3 NEXT STEPS

Our first 3 year strategic plan aimed to help us **understand and move towards best practice**.

The second 3-year plan aimed to **sustain and enhance our approach to safeguarding**.

This third plan focuses on **building confidence and supporting good management and governance of safeguarding at church, regional and national level across Baptists Together**.

2. Review of the 2018-2021 plan outcomes

Despite lockdown, we have been able to make significant progress in all the priority areas set out in the 2018-2021 safeguarding plan.

The seven priority areas were:

1. Embedding the progress made in the 2015-2018 plan
2. More support for safeguarders in churches
3. Exploring safeguarding in diverse cultures, including groups with specific needs
4. College safeguarding support
5. Understanding data protection and confidentiality issues
6. Gender identity and safeguarding
7. New safeguarding website and online tools
8. Supporting Association safeguarding policy and structures

As well as working in these priority areas, two other significant areas of work have had significant impact on our safeguarding work in this last review period:

1. The IICSA inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Religious Organisations – we have reported separately to trustees about our involvement as a core participant, the information provided to the inquiry and the IICSA inquiry report findings. Our next reporting point to IICSA is in early February 2022.
2. The Covid pandemic and the need for to adapt our guidance, training and support for churches to reflect online contact and enhanced safeguarding risks.

Actions and outcomes from the 2018 -2021 safeguarding plan

Priority area	Action plan points	Progress
<u>Embedding progress</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring consistency in our safeguarding training programmes so that all churches receive high quality training through their association training teams Continuing to develop the number and diversity of our safeguarding trainer group Implementing a three-year review cycle for all core safeguarding policies and procedures Carrying out regular updates to our safeguarding training to ensure that all material is relevant and interesting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing a formal policy and procedure review process, using internal and external safeguarding specialists to ensure that we continue to move towards excellence in safeguarding. Actively working to find, train and support a wide range of safeguarding trainers, operating through their association training groups. Developing a monitoring and review programme for all safeguarding trainers to assess, support and assist them to deliver our training programmes consistently and accurately. Gathering statistics on numbers trained at each level in each association area. Completing an update of Level 2 and 3 training programmes, including introducing a fresh set of case studies and examples Producing the next Level 1 film and accompanying materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed Completed Completed Completed Completed Planned for 2022
<u>More support for safeguarders in churches</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide more church-based resources for ministers, designated persons for safeguarding and safeguarding trustees in churches To communicate regularly to update DPSs and DBS verifiers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop a welcome pack for new Designated Persons for Safeguarding and Safeguarding Trustees in churches To deliver an electronic newsletter for DPSs distributed twice a year To deliver an electronic newsletter for DBS verifiers twice a year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed and pilots underway First newsletter written

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To offer webinar-based learning sessions for DPSs in churches, including the opportunity for question-and-answer sessions To design and launch a one-day conference for DPSs in Baptist churches, running once every two years 	<p>Completed</p> <p>Delayed because of lockdown – moved into this plan</p>
<p><u>Supporting association safeguarding</u></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that each Association has adequate advisory capacity to help churches in its area with safeguarding issues To ensure that all Regional Ministers are confident in how to deal with a safeguarding issue, including an emergency enquiry, from one of their churches That each association has a suitable safeguarding policy and set of operating procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue to roll out the association and partnership safeguarding training day programme To ensure that any new Regional Minister is invited to attend a safeguarding induction course with the National Safeguarding Team To work with each Association team to ensure that they have developed and implemented a suitable safeguarding policy and set of procedures for that Association, reflecting their specific approach to resourcing safeguarding support for churches. To offer twice yearly webinar meetings for Association safeguarding trustees to talk with each other the National Safeguarding Team to share good practice and to discuss matters of common concern. 	<p>Completed on request</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed on request</p> <p>Not completed – included in this plan</p>
<p><u>Supporting college safeguarding</u></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support all Baptist training colleges in operating to best practice standards for safeguarding To provide a forum for college safeguarding staff to meet and discuss their work, with the support of the National Safeguarding Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To set up a College Safeguarding Forum with representatives from each Baptist training college To create effective liaison between the College Safeguarding Leads and the National Safeguarding Contacts Group 	<p>Alternative model proposed and accepted</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure effective liaison between colleges and the ministerial settlement process in terms of safeguarding concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that the safeguarding processes in colleges enable effective information sharing when candidate enter the ministerial settlement process, by aligning the way in which safeguarding information is gathered and used in these processes. 	Completed
<p><u>Safeguarding support for diverse cultures and those with specific needs</u></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that our safeguarding training is accessible and available to all major language groups in our churches through a programme of careful translation and trainer support To work to make our training accessible to people with specific requirements in terms of delivery e.g., available in British Sign Language) To offer training for those with low levels of literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify and commission translation work and trainers support where a clear need is identified To produce a British Sign Language version of Level 2 To develop more visual aids and film clips to support our Level 2 programme for use for those with low literacy skills or where English is not their first language. 	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed – Safeguarding Update film (with BSL version also available)</p>
<p><u>Gender Identity and Safeguarding</u></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify and understand how issues of gender identity inter-react with our safeguarding policies and procedures and to provide appropriate guidance and support to churches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with the Faith and Society team, to consider BUGB’s perspectives on issues of gender identity and to identify issues that need further consideration within BUGB’s consultation groups and processes To produce guidance information for churches on how to respond to questions about the practicalities of gender identity issues in church life 	<p>Underway</p> <p>Completed using 31:8 resources for the time being</p>

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<p><u>Data Protection and Safeguarding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that the impact of GDPR on gathering, processing and storing safeguarding information in churches, associations and at national level is clearly understood by all those with safeguarding responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publication of a BUGB Guide to record keeping and storage of safeguarding information Updating of all policy and procedure documentation to reflect new GDPR guidelines Updates for churches on the developing legal position in relation to handling and storage of safeguarding information, including blemished disclosures and other criminal record information 	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>
<p><u>New safeguarding website and online tools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make it simple for all churches, their members and attendees to obtain high quality information and advice on safeguarding issues for churches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop a new static website to include all of our safeguarding resources and tools for churches (linked directly to the main BUGB site) To produce and promote tailored 'pathways' through the safeguarding website so that it is easy for churches to find what they need To introduce an online feedback tool so that churches, church leaders and members can let us know what they think of our safeguarding materials and tools 	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>

Completion of such a large proportion of the 2018-2021, especially in the challenging circumstances of the last two years, represents a significant achievement and has been driven and enabled by the members of the National Safeguarding Contacts Group. Of the 18 members of this group, 7 are newly appointed since the 2018-2021 plan was written, and we have benefited greatly from the combination of longstanding experience and understanding and the fresh perspective of new members. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the association trustees and team leaders who have recruited carefully and seriously for their safeguarding roles, and who have actively supported their Regional Safeguarding Leads to engage with the work of the National Safeguarding Contacts Group.

3. Key priority areas in the 2022-2025 plan

3.1 OVERVIEW

We have identified four key priorities for safeguarding across Baptists Together in the next three years.



These 4 key priorities translate into a series of projects and work areas that form the backbone of the action plan for 2022 -2025. These priority work areas have been developed by the national safeguarding team in conjunction with the National Safeguarding Contacts Group

Each of these areas is explained in more detail in the following pages.

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4. Building the confidence of our church leaders, staff and volunteers

4.1 INDUCTION AND SUPPORT FOR NEW SAFEGUARDING APPOINTMENTS

It is vital that those who take up safeguarding responsibilities are clear and confident about what their role involves and how to get support when needed. In addition to our current materials and resources we want to develop the following:

Aimed at	Requirements	Key actions and projects	Timing
New Designated Person for Safeguarding in a church	Induction materials to explain the role and provide key information Link to regional support	Development of a new DPS induction and support package	Developed in 2021, and ready for roll out to churches in Q1 2022
New Safeguarding Trustee in a church	Induction materials to explain the role and provide key information Link to regional support	Production of a welcome video and information pack	Q1 2022
Church leadership team	Tool to allow church leaders to review how safeguarding cases are handled in their church	Development of church annual review tool for safeguarding cases and concerns	Q2 2022- available as a download with accompanying video

4.2 TRAINING FOR ALL THOSE WITH SPECIFIC SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES IN CHURCH LIFE

Our Excellence in Safeguarding suite of training courses at Levels 1, 2 and 3 continue to work well. We have a three-year schedule to update and/or replace existing programmes with new materials so that delegates receive key safeguarding messages in a fresh presentation.

Aimed at	Requirements	Key actions and projects	Timing
All church members and attendees	An update to our current Level 1 safeguarding awareness film	Develop and produce new script, video and accompanying materials for use in all age services and church meetings	Production in Q2 2022 and launch in Q3 2022
Church staff and volunteers who work with children and/or adults at risk	Scheduled design and development of a new version of our main Level 2 Excellence in Safeguarding course	Create a working group for new design work and do initial training design and pilot courses.	Working group set up in Q3 2022

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		<p>Training for safeguarding trainers.</p> <p>Launch of new Level 2 course.</p> <p>Commission external accreditation of new programme</p>	<p>Q4 2022</p> <p>Q1 2023</p> <p>Q4 2022</p>
Church staff and volunteers who work with children and/or adults at risk	Explore the possibility of offering online safeguarding training as an option for churches	<p>Assess existing pilots of online training and consider suitability and practicality</p> <p>Develop and test BUGB online training modules</p> <p>Roll out of online material</p> <p>Assessment of online training quality and impact.</p>	<p>Q1 2023</p> <p>Q2 2023</p> <p>Q3 2023</p> <p>Q3 2024</p>
Accredited and non-accredited ministers	Annual safeguarding update sessions delivered as blended learning	<p>Develop key themes for these updates for each of next three years</p> <p>Design and delivery of:</p> <p>2022 ministers update</p> <p>2023 ministers update</p> <p>2024 ministers update</p>	<p>Q1 2022</p> <p>Q1 2022</p> <p>Q1 2023</p> <p>Q1 2024</p>
All church based safeguarders	Access to 'safeguarding clinics' at Baptist Assembly offering access to national and regional leads	Introduce clinics as part of 2022 Assembly and develop further for 2023 and 2024	<p>Q2 2022</p> <p>Q2 2023</p> <p>Q2 2024</p>
All church based safeguarders	Access to topic based learning and resources	Offer video content and summary factsheets alongside all of our existing and new policies and guidance notes.	Starting from Q1 2022 – see section 6 for more detail.

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4.3 SAFEGUARDING SUPPORT FOR PIONEERS

We recognise that pioneering situations present some different safeguarding challenges, and we have already started conversations with pioneers to understand the 'on the ground' situations where safeguarding structure and support is needed.

Aimed at	Requirements	Actions and projects	Timing
Pioneer ministers, leaders and groups	A simple safeguarding approach that recognises the fluidity of pioneering work	Set up a small working group to build understanding and establish a safeguarding framework.	Q2 2022
Pioneer ministers	Identify any specific risks that attach to pioneering situations (for example, holding church in your own home)	Need to consider pastoral care boundaries and safeguarding risks.	Q3 2022
Pioneer leaders	Resources, training and tools that can be used without a church building	Develop, test and assess initial materials and support arrangements.	Q4 2022

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5. Promoting sound management and governance of safeguarding at all levels

5.1 NATIONAL LEVEL GOVERNANCE

BUGB introduced a new set of safeguarding policy and procedures in 2020 that relate to the work of BUGB as a charity, rather than our guidance and support to churches. All BUGB staff have now attended training to understand their responsibilities under this policy.

Our policy includes guidance on how the work of the National Safeguarding Team is reviewed, reporting requirements to the board, Charity Commission obligations as they apply to all trustees and the way in which safeguarding incidents involving Specialist Team staff, ministers and BUGB trustees will be handled.

One of the learning points for BUGB from the IICSA inquiry report was a strong encouragement for us to gather data from our churches on the number and type of safeguarding allegations and concerns that they receive each year. We are encouraged to do this to inform our decisions about resourcing and to make sure that our information and support offerings continue to meet the actual needs of our churches.

We propose the following in terms of national governance of safeguarding:

Aimed at	Requirement	Tasks and Projects	Timing
Church leaders	Provide information on the IICSA guidance and how BUGB plans to implement this. Gather feedback from churches on how this might best be accomplished.	Establish working group for this project including church and association representatives.	Q1 2022
BUGB Specialist Teams and NSCG	Identify the best technical solution for gathering this sensitive data.	Look at options in terms of information gathering and pilot the preferred option with one association.	Q2 2022
Church DPSs	Simple and straightforward question and answer format for providing anonymous information on safeguarding concerns and allegations.	Launch new model either as part of or alongside Annual Return process for 2022.	Q4 2022
BUGB Trustees	Assess initial data and process used.	Review and improve process if needed and produce first report on church data.	Q2 2023
BUGB Trustees	Add professional safeguarding trustee to the BUGB trustee board.	Search for a trustee with specific safeguarding experience and background.	Continuing

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BUGB Trustees	External review of BUGB safeguarding as part of the work of the Safeguarding Committee.	Identify and appoint an external safeguarding practitioner to provide external perspective and carry out review work as needed.	Q2 2022
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5.2 REGIONAL SAFEGUARDING GOVERNANCE

Each association is responsible for its own safeguarding governance work. However, there are plenty of opportunities to work collaboratively to share good practice, both between national and regional teams, and between regional teams directly.

To enable this, we propose to move ahead with an action outstanding from the last safeguarding plan, and to establish a group for association safeguarding trustees at which issues of application of policy and procedures, management of regional safeguarding leads, and updates on changes in legislation or best practice can be discussed. We will ask for feedback from each association as to whether they would wish to participate in this, but there was a warm response when it was originally discussed in 2019. If there is support for this, it could be launched in Q2 of 2022 with a follow up meeting in Q4 of 2022, after which a regular pattern to meet the needs of the trustees can be established.

5.3 CHURCH SAFEGUARDING GOVERNANCE

We already publish some information for church safeguarding trustees, but plan to provide an information pack and an accompanying video introduction (see section 4.1).

It would also be helpful for us to publish guidance for individuals who have concerns about safeguarding in their church but are not confident that they will be taken seriously by their church trustees. This has become a more common question over the last year and giving clear direction on how to raise an issue with church trustees should be helpful. Guidance for regional ministers on this issue can also be added.

6. Sustaining and extending our framework of information and support

6.1 NEW AREAS WHERE GUIDANCE FOR CHURCHES IS URGENTLY NEEDED

The NSCG have identified a number of areas of safeguarding practice where more information is needed to help churches understand and respond to particular types of abuse and its impact on those involved with their church.

At the top of this list are four areas where more information and guidance is urgently needed:

- **Peer-on-peer abuse i.e., the abuse of children and young people by other children and young people.** The NSPCC's research shows that as much as a third of all abuse perpetrated on children and young people is carried out by their peers. The 'Everybody's Invited' website launched earlier this year has so far received more than 50,000 accounts from children of secondary school age about abusive experiences in the school setting. Children who are being abused by their peers at school and who attend church, will sometimes see church as a safe place to talk about what's happening to them, and we need to be sure that parents and CYF workers are ready to deal with disclosures as they arise.
- **Safeguarding in online and hybrid church settings**
We have provided advice during lockdown, but churches are asking more questions about the safeguarding impact of continuing with hybrid services and activities. We will produce a short guide to address the particular risks connected with hybrid events and online meetings, with a particular focus on the impact on children and young people. We will welcome input from the CYF Roundtable as we develop this resource.
- **Bullying and harassment in a church setting**
The number of allegations that relate to bullying or harassment in a church setting have grown over the last few years at both national and regional level. Bullying allegations often also contain allegations of associated spiritual abuse and it is clear that relationships between church leaders and members can be permanently damaged when such bullying occurs. We are currently in the process of producing guidance notes for ministers, church leaders and DPSs about how to prevent bullying and harassment and how to deal with allegations when they arise. We recognise that sometimes bullying is based on one of the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act (for example, gender, race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender transition, disability) at which point the legal definition is changed to harassment. We need to provide clear guidance for churches on how they might work to avoid such harassment in the first place, and how to handle allegations of harassment when they arise. We understand that some of these areas of discrimination are especially sensitive in our Baptist life together, but we believe that now is the time to provide clear and practical safeguarding guidance.

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- **Mental health**

Lockdown has added to the number of people who live with mental health issues every day and we want our churches to be places where those who are struggling in body or mind can come and receive love and care. We also want churches to be aware of where they need to access professional help and support for those they are providing pastoral care to. There are many excellent resources available to help people understand the impact of mental health problems on general wellbeing and we plan to collate a set of helpful materials and resources and put them in the context of best safeguarding practice.

All four of these areas require urgent work to produce helpful guidance and resources and we propose to make this an NSCG priority for Q1 and Q2 of 2022.

6.2 THE THEOLOGY OF SAFEGUARDING

The national and regional safeguarding leads continue to have conversations with church leaders on the theology of safeguarding. Most of these conversations are positive and constructive, but occasionally this can be a view expressed that safeguarding is a primarily a bureaucratic and secular requirement, although this is heard less and less in recent years. We are clear on the Biblical instructions to love and care for those in need and those who are vulnerable, and to love justice. We think that there is value in producing a series of short articles on the theology of safeguarding, both to add to our website and to share more widely through our Baptist publications.

6.3 SCHEDULED UPDATE OF GUIDES, POLICIES AND MATERIALS

Whilst we have not included it in this plan, we continue to use a schedule of update and review dates for all of our core safeguarding materials. This means that all of our materials will be subject to formal review at least once in the 2022-2025 period.

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7. Ensuring pastoral care and support for survivors of abuse

7.1 GUIDE TO SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OF ABUSE

We developed and published the first edition of our guide to supporting survivors of abuse in 2018. The guide has been well received, and there is now opportunity to update it and add to the resources that accompany it.

Aimed at	Requirements	Tasks and projects	Timing
All ministers, leaders and DPSs	Information on trauma and trauma informed practice	Video resources already available – add to supporting survivors section of our website.	Q1 2022
		Use trauma resources for ministers annual safeguarding update.	Q1 2022
Victims and survivors of abuse	Opportunity for those who have experienced abuse to share their perspectives in a safe setting.	Review how survivors groups work in other denominations.	Q3 2022
		Create safe opportunities for survivors to share their stories and have input into our resources.	Q2 2023

7.2 PASTORAL CARE FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF ABUSE

The Church of England have been running and testing a new telephone support service for those who have experienced abuse in a church setting. Called ‘Safe Spaces’ it is running for an initial two-year period and is managed by the charity Victim Support. The aim of the service is threefold:

- A central hub helpline with skilled first response advocates trained in trauma informed advocacy support and advice
- The development of a ‘Safe Spaces’ website to provide information and advice to survivors, families and professionals
- Up to 10 community-based survivor led therapeutic support groups (both faith-based and secular)

There is potential for this service to continue after the initial two-year contract, which ends in 2022. At that point the Church of England have indicated that they might be open to discussing the involvement of other denominations in the use and financial support of the service if it continues. This type of support service has

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been on the cards for many years, and the initial feedback on the pilot is very positive. We have talked before at trustee board about the opportunity to become part of an ecumenical listening and support service, and this is the first venture that might fit with our needs.

There are no further details available, and it is likely that any decision about opening the service up to other denominations won't be considered until later in 2022. However, if this becomes viable, then it would be a great way for us to work ecumenically in the provision of professional support to those who experience or have experienced abuse in a church-based setting.

In the meantime, we continue to encourage Regional Safeguarding Leads and church DPSs to research and keep details of survivor support organisations in their area, as well as publishing lists and contact details for national organisations in our safeguarding guides and our training packs.

As we hear from those who have been abused by ministers or church leaders it is clear that on occasion those in positions of trust step across sensible pastoral care boundaries in order to create opportunities for intimate relationships that we would regard as a breach of trust and potentially abusive. We plan to review the guidance we publish on pastoral care to ensure that this risk is identified and that churches are aware of the most common situations in which pastoral care boundaries are breached.

8. Management of casework at national and regional level

8.1 NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING TEAM

The current caseload in the national safeguarding team runs at between 90-100 cases each year, focused on concerns involving accredited ministers or other church leaders, but also reflecting some of the more complex cases locally where national advice is sought by the regional safeguarding leads. Over the last year we have been saddened to see an increase in the number of cases which refer to potential spiritual abuse, particularly in relation to allegations of bullying and harassment, and we have also seen an increase in the number of concerns about domestic abuse and cyber-abuse.

Holding safeguarding policy development in the same team as our complex case work provides us with regular opportunities to review themes, improve policy and procedures and to continually review the content and quality of advice that we give to associations, colleges and churches. We also review our processes and workload on ministerial safeguarding and conduct investigations in the light of the ministerial recognition and discipline processes, working alongside the Ministries Team Leader to look for opportunities to review, to improve and to learn from recent cases. We note that churches continue to find it hard to understand investigation timetables and the need for confidentiality in relation to safeguarding cases, and we will continue to explain these issues as clearly as we can.

The National Safeguarding Caseworkers each take responsibility as the lead contact point for named associations and colleges so that a good working relationship develops between the Regional Safeguarding Lead or College Safeguarding Lead and the national team. The National Safeguarding Caseworkers also offer professional support to the Regional Safeguarding Leads, calling or meeting with them online once a month to talk through challenging issues or cases and to encourage them in their work. Feedback tells us that this additional support fits well alongside the normal line management support provided within association teams.

8.2 REGIONAL SAFEGUARDING LEADS

Seven of the thirteen Regional Safeguarding Leads have been appointed in the last 3 years, and we have provided a national induction programme for each of them consisting of four training modules spread over two weeks. This has proved helpful both in terms of content and relationship building, and we intend to continue to offer this for all new Regional Safeguarding Leads.

We note that SWaBA, SWABA and WEBNET have just appointed a Partnership Safeguarding Lead who will work across all three associations, and we are excited about this new appointment, and the joint working opportunity it presents.

Regional Safeguarding Leads have worked hard to introduce more formalised record-keeping arrangements in recent years, as well as starting to gather regular statistical information that helps us to tailor our resources to the direct needs of churches. The information sharing agreements between BUGB and each of the regional associations have made it easier for us to work smoothly together and to provide direct support in urgent

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situations when needed. The working relationships between the national and regional leads are generally excellent, and we believe that this ability to work well together is of significant benefit to churches facing major safeguarding situations.

One of the outstanding tasks from the last safeguarding review was the formation of a discussion group for those who take on the role of Association Safeguarding Lead. We will address this as a priority in Q1 of 2022.

8.3 SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL SAFEGUARDING LEADS AND REGIONAL MINISTERS

As part of our ongoing support for our association colleagues, we will offer the following in the next three years:

Aimed at	Requirement	Action or project	Timing
Regional Safeguarding Leads	Ongoing formal learning sessions for NSCG	We will be running our annual 24-hour training session for NSCG members each June in 2022, 2023 and 2024.	June each year
Regional Safeguarding Leads	Updates on changes and additions to safeguarding legislation	We will use one of the six NSCG meetings each year to focus on forthcoming changes to legislation or published good practice	April each year
Regional Ministers	Regular safeguarding policy and procedure updates	We will provide RSLs with materials to run short update sessions with their own colleagues.	May each year
New Regional Safeguarding Leads	Induction on appointment	We will continue to offer our RSL induction programme to all new RSLs	As needed
Association teams	Safeguarding training days	We will continue to offer structured training days to association teams on request	On request
Regional Safeguarding Leads	Professional support	Monthly support calls for each RSL	On request

8.4 NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING CONTACTS GROUP

The National Safeguarding Contacts Group have discussed arrangements for its meetings and events and have agreed to continue to meet online on a bi-monthly basis for the time being. In addition, we will re-introduce our residential training session in June of each year to give us time to learn together.

9. Next steps

If the trustees are happy to approve the key priorities, actions and timescales described in this report, the National Safeguarding Team will work with the National Safeguarding Contacts Group to start to allocate people and resources to these priorities. The majority of actions and projects can be carried out within existing staffing structures, with a commitment of time rather than significant additional budget being needed. Where the need for additional budgetary provision is required, we will bring this to the BUGB trustees before the budget cycle starts each year.

Thank you!

All the members of the National Safeguarding Team and National Safeguarding Contacts Group wish to thank the BUGB trustees for their ongoing and unequivocal support for the development and implementation of excellent safeguarding practice across all the bodies that make up our Union.

Rachel Stone

HR and Safeguarding Team Leader

November 2021

STRATEGIC SAFEGUARDING REVIEW REPORT



This report has been produced for the use of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and is not designed for publication in full or extract form.

This information is confidential to the BUGB Trustee Board unless specifically authorised by the General Secretary.

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