

A. POLICY STATEMENT

The British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (BUC) is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and adults across the Conference. We recognise our duty and responsibilities as a church to provide an environment which seeks to eliminate the risk of abuse. We will take all reasonable steps to safeguard the welfare of children and adults at risk.

- (a) In affirming the dignity and worth of each human being we will not condone neglect, bullying or any form of physical, sexual, emotional or spiritual abuse of any individual whether in the church or in the community.
- (b) The Seventh-day Adventist church has a responsibility to protect children and adults at risk who are involved in any of its programmes. We will do so through the creation of safe environments, and the provision of training, advice and support to all staff and volunteers.
- (c) The church will demonstrate senior management committmeny to safeguarding and maintain arrangements to reflect this, with clear lines of accountability.
- (d) The church will report to the appropriate agency all allegations of abuse and will cooperate fully with other professional agencies who will identify the perpetrators and to protect children and adults who may be at risk.
- (e) The church will help persons in need to identify and access the range of professional services. It will assist families in grief over relationships that cannot be restored. It will address the spiritual questions confronting abused persons, seeking to understand the origins of abuse and family violence.
- (f) When changed attitudes and behaviour open possibilities for forgiveness and new beginnings, the church will provide a ministry of reconciliation, but intervention by appropriate agencies must occur to hold the perpetrator accountable for his or her actions and safeguard children and adults.
- (g) The church will promote and hold its staff and volunteers to the highest form of personal and professional behaviour as we reflect Christ in all aspects of our conduct. We will carefully select and support all those with a responsibility towards our children and adults who may be at risk. (See Appendix 1: Code of Conduct).

1. DEFINITIONS

Forms of abuse

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment¹. Children and adults may be abused or neglected by someone inflicting harm, exploiting them or failing to prevent harm. The categories of abuse include physical, sexual, emotional and neglect. Other forms of harm come from bullying and exposure to domestic abuse and for adults may also include financial and institutional abuse. Additionally, the Church is concerned about spiritual abuse of children and adults and recognises the presence of other harmful practices. These include child sexual exploitation; female genital mutilation (FGM); abuse in the context of beliefs about spirit possession, and lack of online and digital safety. Further information about these areas, their definitions and possible indicators can be found within your country procedures. (See Part III Country Procedures.)

Children and young persons

The terms 'child' and 'young person' are both used throughout this document. Both relate to any person under the age of 18 (under 16 in Scotland) with whom the church has contact through any of its activities.

Adult at risk

An adult at risk is someone aged 18 or over (16 or over in Scotland) who is, or may be, in need of community services due to age, illness or a mental or physical disability. They are someone who is, or may be, unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

¹What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: Advice to practitioners – HM Government, 2015

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419604/What_to_do_if_you_re_worried_a_child_is_being_abused.pdf

It should be noted that the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stipulates that in order for disabled children to be able to realise their rights, they need to be provided with age-appropriate disability assistance. Disabled individuals are more likely to be abused and exploited.

Legislation for protecting adults and children

Across the United Kingdom (UK) the protection of adults is governed by legislation and statutory guidance that reflects the European Convention on Human Rights (the Convention). Child protection legislation likewise, is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Laws are passed to prevent behaviour that can harm individuals or to enable action required to protect a person.

Guidance sets out what organisations should do to play their part to keep children safe. Each UK nation is responsible for its own policies and laws around education, health and social welfare. Although the protection systems are different in each nation, they are all based on similar principles; most notably, that the welfare of the child or adult at risk is the paramount consideration.

Volunteers will be taken to include church members unless specifically stated.

2. SAFEGUARDING STRUCTURE

The British Union Conference has set in place the following levels of safeguarding structure to manage and support the effective safeguarding of children and adults at risk across the conference. An outline of the responsibilities for some of these roles are provided under Appendix 2: Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities.

BUC SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE (BSC)

The British Union Conference Safeguarding Committee (BSC) is a sub-group of the Executive Committee and provides oversight of safeguarding across the British union of churches. It will ensure the annual updating of these policies and the coordination of legal and practice measures necessary for keeping our church family safe.

CONFERENCE/MISSION SAFEGUARDING OFFICE

Conferences and missions play an important role in safeguarding. They disseminate the safeguarding policies and guidelines to churches and provide oversight and support to churches in discharging their safeguarding responsibilities. It would be for each conference and mission to determine how best they organise a safeguarding office and make provision for the following roles:

1. A **Designated Safeguarding Person** is the nominated lead for compliance with safeguarding practices, who oversees matters on behalf of the conference or mission. They ensure our safeguarding policy and guidance are followed and provide the support, guidance and training to staff and volunteers. In larger settings one or more deputies should be appointed.
2. A **Communication Spokesperson** should be appointed by each conference/mission to supply information to the public, as appropriate and required, concerning incidents of child abuse, whether actual or alleged. It is essential that such a person has full and accurate knowledge of the situation but is sensitive to the confidentiality to which people are entitled. If there is only one spokesperson, confusion can be avoided and the information supplied will be kept within the legal limits when court proceedings are envisaged. This person is the focal point for the media.

Additionally, specific people (e.g. victims, survivors, parents and the accused) have a right to information. It may be that a local district, school or church organisation must be informed, and such a task will be executed by an individual identified by the conference/mission. The individual providing information to those personally involved should be distinct from the conference/mission spokesperson who is the focal point for the media.

3. A **Disclosure Clerk** (formerly Child Safety Officer) is responsible for administrating the safeguarding and protection activities across the conference. These include organising the DBS/PVG/AccessNI checks and keeping up-to-date records of these activities. They will be responsible for collating and reporting the periodic returns of these checks from churches to the Conference.



SAFEGUARDING ROLES WITHIN EACH CHURCH/ORGANISATION

Each church or organisation is called to appoint the following safeguarding roles to coordinate and manage safeguarding activities locally:

1. The **Safeguarding Person** is the designated church/department officer who leads on safeguarding matters on behalf of the church or department. They ensure our safeguarding policy and guidance is followed and provide the support, guidance and training to staff and volunteers. In larger settings one or more deputies should be appointed.
2. A **Responsible Person** is each head of a department, whether an employee or church member who has been appointed by the local church/management to be responsible for a specific sphere of activity involving children and adults. A Sabbath School Leader, Choir Leader, AYS Leader, Adventurer and/or Pathfinder Leader, Camp Director, Supplementary School Leader, Family Life Leader or pastor are all Responsible Persons. Within their role the responsible persons would ensure that the right staff are appointed and follow safe working practices. (See Appendix 2 for roles and responsibilities.)
3. The **Disclosure Clerk** (formerly Child Safety Officer) is responsible for undertaking the safeguarding administrative tasks within a church. These include organising the DBS/PVG/AccessNI checks for church officers, issuing role descriptions (see Appendix 3: Sample Role Description) and keeping up-to-date records of these activities. They will be responsible for periodic returns to the conference and will receive training for their role from the Conference secretariat.

INDEPENDENT SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS

The local church must let children and adults at risk know of their right to talk with an independent person or service, and that independent support is available for them. To this end each local church must ensure that it displays a poster (with child-friendly wording) advertising the name and telephone number of a recognised independent national organisation that individuals can contact; e.g. for Children: ChildLine, Kidscape, Children 1st, NSPCC; for adults: Samaritans, Age UK, Citizens Advice and Victim Support. This information should also be included from time to time in church bulletins and newsletters where these are produced.