

BUC Policy - Section 8

KEEPING THE CHURCH FAMILY SAFE

(revised Nov 2018)

This policy should be read in conjunction with the guidelines and appendices that are annually revised and maintained by the Safeguarding Subcommittee.

A. Policy Statement (revised Mar 2018)

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 commitment 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.

1. Definitions

Forms of Abuse. Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment. 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.

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 (Vulnerable Adult). 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.

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.

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:

- a) 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. This should be someone in a leadership role.
- b) 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.

- c) A **Disclosure Clerk** (formerly Child Safety Officer) is responsible for administering 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:

- a) 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. This should be someone in a Board level role unless it is their professional discipline
- b) 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.
- c) 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 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.

B. Choosing the Right Staff (revised Mar 2018)

To minimise the risk of abuse to a child/young person the church should adopt a careful selection process otherwise known as a safer recruitment approach. The screening procedure for employees/volunteers working with children/young people should include the following elements:

- a) Local church officers must be appointed through the process outlined in the Church Manual. The process of church family voting on officers provides a protective and transparent process for securing the right people to work with our children and adults at risk.
- b) Employees/volunteers for formal roles will follow recruitment processes. This involves face-to-face interviews, verbal and written reference checks, identity verification, induction and supervision. They shall be required to complete an information form and provide references.
- c) Those in contact with children and vulnerable adults will be required to apply for a Disclosure check (i.e., DBS/PVG) and/or complete a Self-Declaration Form.
- d) First-time appointees should be subject to a probationary period of twelve months. Job descriptions and outlines of work should be reviewed bi-annually or when the job changes significantly.
- e) Where the Conference/Mission runs specific courses for those working with children or adults at risk, course directors should ensure that applicants meet all the safeguarding requirements. Should any concerns arise regarding their suitability, these should be addressed with the individual and their line manager or local pastor as appropriate.

- f) Employees and volunteers with a known history of sexual abuse and/or violence towards children/young people should never again be allowed to work with minors, even after participating in rehabilitation programmes. Those barred from working with adults at risk must not be allowed to do so.
- g) Where employees/volunteers are subsequently found to have had a history of sexual offending and/or violence and have failed to disclose it, they shall be immediately removed from their appointment. Any disputes within safeguarding should be referred to the next level of authority.

C. Managing Staff, Church Members and Volunteers (revised Mar 2018)

1. Role Definition

Confusion over roles, responsibilities and accountability is the very framework within which child abuse can occur and be perpetuated. Therefore, the church must ensure that everyone who works with children and adults at risk has a clear understanding of their role, responsibilities and to whom they are accountable. Persons requested to be church officers will be presented with a copy of their proposed role description and access to the KCFS policy document. Their acceptance must involve signing an agreement form indicating that they have read and understood the policy and job role. A copy of the signed role with their DBS/PVG number on it is to be kept by the Disclosure Clerk. A full set of sample role descriptions will be made available to each Disclosure Clerk by the Conference Secretariat.

2. Accountability

There is the need for good lines of accountability to keep children safe, thus the following measures are necessary.

- a) Each Responsible Person must meet with their team of workers/committee on a regular basis (at least once a quarter) to:
 - (i) Review and plan the work for their particular activity area.
 - (ii) Provide an opportunity for team members to raise any concerns regarding any child or young person and highlight any observations. However, the reporting of any concerns should not be delayed until this meeting.
- b) Keep minutes of each meeting. Where situations of suspected abuse are being discussed the minutes should be detailed with a clear decision regarding future action. Copies of the minutes must be shared with the local pastor who is then responsible for passing relevant information to the appropriate Conference departmental director or Mission sponsor.
- c) Inform team members which person will take over responsibility when particular individuals are absent.
- d) Every individual is to act to safeguard children and adults at risk by following the safeguarding and child protection procedures.

D. Training (revised Mar 2018)

Written policy and guidelines, however good they are, will not protect children from abuse. These are strengthened by staff and workers undergoing safeguarding and child protection training and remaining alert and responsive to the care and well-being of children and adults who may be at risk.

Training is important and equips individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge.

- All paid or voluntary personnel appointed to work with children and adults at risk are expected to complete the core safeguarding training or an equivalent package provided in the local area.
- All Responsible Persons are expected to complete the core training.
- Safeguarding Persons will complete the core training; plus a further module or an equivalent package provided in the local area.
- The Disclosure Clerk's training will be the responsibility of the Secretariat.

Training for our church family may be provided by the Conference; organised by your Designated Safeguarding Person or the Local Safeguarding Children/Adults Board. The Safeguarding Persons must arrange awareness training for all whom they serve and use appropriate mediums (e.g. bulletin/newsletter) to keep the church/department alert to the safeguarding needs within their remit.

E. Working Safely (revised Mar 2018)

1. Good Working Practices

To keep our church family safe we need to adopt working practices that lessen the opportunity for harm to our children and adults. This involves:

- Planning the work of the department to prevent abuse.
- Using supervision to prevent abuse.
- Teaching children to be appropriately aware of how to remain safe.
- Recognising and responding to concerns or disclosures of abuse.
- Undertaking risk assessments and implementing risk mitigation measures for all church activities.

The Church also promotes best practice in the taking of photographs and filming and the use of digital technology and social media across all its activities.

2. Creating Safe Environments

Creating safe environments for our church family is a matter of applying good working practices across all our activities. The means we should:

- a) Arrange, as far as possible, that no adult is left alone with a child or young person without the activity being observed by others. This may mean that doors will have to be left open or that small groups work simultaneously in the same room.
- b) Organise and monitor activities so as not to allow individuals to create relationships or arrangements that exploit or abuse a worker's position of trust in relation to an individual, e.g. an elderly person feeling obliged to pay the debts held by someone helping them.
- c) In a one-to-one situation with a child or adult at risk, where privacy and confidentiality are important, try to make sure that another adult knows the interview is taking place and with whom. If possible, another adult should be in the building, and the child or adult at risk should know they are there.
- d) As far as possible, ensure that there are always at least two adults working with a group of children or vulnerable persons, especially when it is the only activity taking place on the premises. Consideration must be given to matching the gender of the workers with that of the group. The two-adult provision applies in changing areas and toilets, even if only one or two children are present.
- e) Never do anything of a personal nature for children or adults that they can do for themselves. Be mindful of how and where one touches minors and adults at risk. Always seek consent before any physical touching.
- f) Arrange when transporting children or young people by car or minibus to have more than one passenger in the vehicle. Require leaders/workers to keep others informed if they have to drive a minor home on his/her own.
- g) Provide an adequate number/ratio of adults to supervise events for children/young people according to the activity and especially where overnight activities are involved. There should always be more than one adult for any group and they should reflect the gender of the group. Helpers under 18 years old count as children and not adults in the ratios below. For further guidance see the OFSTED Guidelines www.ofsted.gov.uk or its equivalent within your country. An example of a minimum ratio is provided below:

For 0 to 2 years – one adult to every three children (1:3)

For 2 to 3 years – one adult to every four children (1:4) (1:5 in Scotland)

For 3 to 8 years – one adult to every eight children (1:8)

For over-8s – one adult for the first eight children, then one for every additional ten children.

- h) Any activities outside of church Sabbath School should be risk assessed and accordingly managed.
- i) In the event of any injury to a person, accidental or otherwise, ensure that it is recorded on an Accident Form and that the record is witnessed by another adult. Ensure that any necessary health and safety actions are undertaken.

3. International Safeguarding

Our disaster response work includes services to children and adults often in urgent need. In meeting these needs we also prioritise their welfare and protection.

Where church activities involve work in another country, it must be ensured that our KCFS policy requirements are met. This includes completing safeguarding checks to personnel working on behalf of the church; a risk assessment, and maintaining our code of conduct and all safe working practices throughout all our activities in that country. Additionally our work in those countries will be fully compliant to the safeguarding legislation, policy and standards of those countries.

4. Third Party Hire of Church Premises

Where a church building is hired out to third parties for activities involving children and or adults at risk it should be ensured that the hirer has their own safeguarding policy or agrees to abide by our KCFS procedures. A formal record of this agreement should be made.

5. Safeguarding Within the Diversity of the Christian Family

Safeguarding, child, and adult protection require us to make sensitive and well-informed judgements about a child's needs, a parent's ability and an adult's capacity in any given circumstance. It is important that we are sensitive to differing family patterns and lifestyles that vary across different ethnic and cultural groups within our churches.

We must also be aware of the broader social factors that serve to discriminate against people from ethnic communities or particular groups, e.g. recent migrant groups or adults with learning disabilities. Christians should guard against myths and stereotypes, whether positive or negative, that would in any way obstruct them from treating every individual and situation with objectivity and the highest respect for individuals created in the image of God.

F. Responding to Concerns (revised Mar 2018)

Life circumstances as well as illness can contribute to placing an adult at risk of harm. In those situations the Church is committed to working together across its departments and with external organisations, to support and protect adults who are unable to safeguard themselves, their property and their rights. Similarly, children rely on adults for their protection and well-being. Their age and developmental stage can make them dependent and therefore vulnerable to forms of treatment that are abusive or neglectful. The Church is committed to early action in the recognition and response to concerns where individuals may be at risk of, or experiencing, any form of maltreatment.

The church is not an investigative agency and therefore employees/volunteers must understand their role when working in child or adult-centred programmes of the church. Under no circumstances should any person attempt to carry out any 'investigation' into the allegation or suspicions of abuse. This is the responsibility of local statutory services, whose task it is to investigate the matter, under specific legislation and statutory guidance. Our role is to recognise concerns; undertake a rapid preliminary evaluation solely for the purpose of clarification and refer child or adult protection matters to our local statutory agencies.

What can the church do to safeguard children and adults at risk?

By 'safeguarding' and 'protection' we simply mean acting to keep our church family safe and this is a responsibility we all share. To meet this means each of us must undertake our roles to the highest standards of Christian conduct. Within our Mission there already exist the commands to care for those in need. We must make ourselves aware of the protection procedures, so we know how to respond and where to turn for advice or guidance where there are safeguarding concerns. We should then report any concerns without

delay so that the appropriate support or protection is made available. Early help and support can prevent situations becoming or continuing to be harmful or exploitative. Details of how to respond in line with your national legislation and local procedures are located in the accompanying procedures for your nation. Please see Part III: Country Procedures.

The welfare of the child or adult must be of paramount concern. Adults may need support to take actions to protect themselves and others from abusive situations. In all situations informed and timely action should be taken. Country procedures should be followed without delay and concerns should be responded to appropriately.

The Designated Safeguarding Person with the pastor will evaluate all concerns and refer these on where needed.

Allegations against children and young people

Children and young people have always been curious about the opposite sex and/or experimented sexually. However, where a child is in a position of power has responsibility over another child (as in a babysitting arrangement) and abuses that trust through engaging in sexual activity, this is likely to be regarded as abusive. The same applies where one child introduces another child to age-inappropriate sexual activity or forces themselves onto a child. This is not mutual exploration. Such situations should be taken as seriously as if an adult were involved, because the effects on the child victim can be as great.

G. Caring for Those Affected by Abuse (revised Mar 2018)

1. Pastoral Care for the Victim/Survivor and their Family

Abuse is traumatic for those who are victims and their family members. It destroys the essential basis of trust and safety, especially where the perpetrator is a parent or a trusted church member. Abuse all too commonly breaks up families, and shatters beliefs about Christian conduct and human behaviour. These situations are never without pain and suffering by a child or adult at risk. They significantly challenge our church family in coming to terms with the fact that a professed Christian, and church member, has the capacity to abuse a child or vulnerable adult.

Children may be abused by children or adults who are not family members, but who are known by the child and often the child's family. The abuse inflicted is varied but often sexual or exploitative of a vulnerable person. Whatever has happened to a child or adult, their basic needs as an individual or family remain and they should continue to receive support from our church family.

Pastoral care for the victim/survivor and his/her family may include continued contact, prayer support, help to find legal advice, and accompaniment to court hearings. The church should ensure that:

- It does not become involved with possible inter-family disputes but should always focus on the needs of the victim as a priority.
- It works hard to maintain those links that the child or adult at risk has with the church so that their life within the church remains as normal as possible.

Recognising the confidential nature of the information available to the members of a child/adult protection Conference, the pastor should seek an interview with the identified social worker to establish what risk the alleged perpetrator poses to the victim and others when they attend church-based activities.

2. Pastoral Care for the Alleged Perpetrator

During the difficult period of investigation following an allegation of sexual or other form of abuse, the church should arrange appropriate support for the alleged perpetrator, who is a church member, without compromising the position of the victim/survivor, their family or the church.

- a) Pastoral care for alleged perpetrators may include continued contact, prayer support, help to find legal advice, and accompaniment to court hearings. It is unlikely that the same person would be able to provide support to meet the conflicting needs of the various parties, i.e. victim/survivor, victim's family, alleged perpetrator. The church may find it helpful if one person is responsible for dealing with the authorities, while another offers support to the victim and his/her family, and a further person gives pastoral care to the alleged perpetrator.

- b) Pastoral care for an alleged perpetrator must not be given at the expense of the victim, the victim's family, or justice. The victim/survivor should not sense that the church is in collusion with or taking the side of the alleged perpetrator.

3. Agreement of Care

For individuals whose history or behaviour pose a risk to children or adults at risk, an Agreement of Care should be completed. This would serve as a measure of protection for others from further or future concern.

4. Pastoral Care of Known Abusers

An adult who is a high-risk offender for sexual and other offences may also be receiving a high level of intensive supervision from Probation Services via a community risk management plan (e.g. MAPPA [Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements]). The offender could have restrictions placed upon them in terms of where they live, visit and work. Where they are on licence or on the Sex Offender Register, they will be reporting to, and monitored by, the police.

Sexual offences are often addictive. The perpetrator may well be tempted to re-offend; to fantasise about abusing; to gain access to children and young people by befriending their parents and other trusted adults. Abusers of vulnerable adults may seek environments that allow them ready access to unprotected individuals. Therefore the church must continue to take protective action.

The individual who has a previous record of abusing minors and who enters the church presents a delicate situation for the pastor and the congregation. The church has a responsibility to extend love and fellowship to the individual while at the same time protecting the children and youth in its midst.

The local pastor and/or elder should:

- Talk to the offender's Probation Officer who should know the person and be able to advise on management.
- Meet with the offender and the church elders and lay out the boundaries that the offender will be expected to keep. Explain what support the church will give. Get the offender to sign an Agreement of Care form. While this sounds formal it helps in dealing with the potential manipulative ways of the sex offender, which might pose a risk.
- Inform key people, (elders, the Sabbath School leader, Youth leader, Adventurer and Pathfinder leaders, etc.) for the events that the offender is attending, that the individual should have no contact with children or young people. This is always on a 'need to know' basis. Offenders must never be on their own with children or adults at risk, to whom they pose a threat.
- Inform the offender that a failure to keep to these conditions may lead to him/her being barred from attending the church, and in such circumstances the church leadership may choose to inform the statutory agencies (Probation and Social Services) and any other relevant organisation.
- Provide the appropriate Conference/Mission personnel with the details of the offender along with a copy of the completed Agreement of Care.

5. Pastoral Care for Employed Workers

Pastoral work with children, young people and adults in the aftermath of an incident of child or adult abuse will be extremely stressful. As the main burden of this work will inevitably fall upon the shoulders of the employee, they should be provided with a counsellor while they are working in this specialised area. The employee should not feel guilty in accepting the services of a counsellor, but should see it as a necessary support for them to remain objective while working in a highly emotional and stressful situation.

H. Implementation of Policy (revised Mar 2018)

1. Local Church

Local churches are responsible through their Church Board for ensuring that the Keeping Our Church Family Safe policy is implemented with respect to all personnel whose work involves contact with children and adults at risk.

Each Church Board will appoint a Disclosure Clerk. This individual will be responsible for reporting to the Conference/Mission office, in a manner prescribed by the latter. This information will relate to those individuals currently working in a paid or voluntary capacity with children or adults at risk; it will record their compliance in completing the necessary forms as outlined in the policy and detail the level of training they have completed.

Churches must also appoint a Designated Safeguarding Person to coordinate the response to safeguarding concerns and arrange training for those coming into contact with children and adults at risk. The church should display a safeguarding statement and must also maintain oversight of safeguarding through the work of the Church Board. Local pastors will be responsible for holding their churches accountable for the full implementation of the Keeping Our Church Family Safe policy and procedures.

2. Conference/Mission

The local Conference/Mission will monitor the implementation of the Keeping Our Church Family Safe policy within its territory. It will be responsible for:

- a) Holding the local churches accountable for implementing the policy at the local church level.
- b) Organising an annual schedule of training seminars, doing so in consultation with the departmental directors/sponsors and the training team personnel of their Conference/Mission.
- c) Providing core training to those with safeguarding roles using the BUC training materials or an equivalent package.
- d) Assembling a training team in consultation with the appropriate departmental directors/sponsors of their Conference/Mission to facilitate the provision of training for local church officers and volunteers.
- e) Appointing a Communication Spokesperson to supply information as required to the public concerning incidents of child abuse, whether actual or alleged.
- f) Nominating an individual who will be responsible for coordinating the above duties.

3. Union Conference

The Executive Committee of the British Union Conference will appoint a sub-group who will be charged with:

- a) Overseeing the implementation of the Keeping Our Church Family Safe policy in the Conferences and Missions.
- b) Reviewing and recommending amendments to the Keeping Our Church Family Safe policy to the British Union Conference Policy Committee. This will be undertaken annually.
- c) Working with the Conference/Mission nominated personnel to produce standardised training materials for core training and beyond.
- d) Assuring the BUC fulfils its safeguarding responsibilities.

4. Support, advice and referral information

Designated Persons should ensure that they keep a current list of support and advice points for effective coordination of safeguarding matters. This should include a full list of referral agencies indicating how to access support and advice at all times, whether in normal working hours or outside them. This should be a comprehensive list of contact addresses and telephone numbers, including relevant national and local voluntary bodies.

5. Governance

The overall responsibility for the full implementation of child and adult protection arrangements is held by the President at Conference level and the Pastor at church level. Where the identified roles are not appointed, the President or Pastor should ensure that those functions are carried out until an appointment has been secured.