

Barton Baptist Church

Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

November 2023

Section 1 – Safeguarding Policy Statement

SAFEGUARDING POLICY STATEMENT FOR BARTON BAPTIST CHURCH

Based on the Model Policies and Procedures document from the Baptist Union

Our vision

To be "a family church, for everyone".

To fulfil this vision, we:

- Welcome children and adults at risk into the life of our community
- Run activities for children and adults at risk
- Make our premises available to organisations working with children and adults at risk

Our safeguarding responsibilities

We in this church recognise our responsibilities in safeguarding all children, young people and adults at risk, regardless of gender, ethnicity or ability.

We, the members of this church commit ourselves to the nurturing, protection and safekeeping of everyone associated with our church and its activities, and will pray for them regularly. In pursuit of this, we commit ourselves to this policy and to developing sound procedures to make sure we implement our policy well.

- **Prevention and reporting of abuse**

  We recognise that it is the duty of every church member to help prevent the abuse of children and adults at risk, and to act if we become aware of any concerns that a children or adult at risk may be being harmed physically, sexually, emotionally, spiritually, or in any other way.

- The action that we all have a duty to take, is to pass on any concerns we may become aware of to the church's Designated Person for Safeguarding, whether those concerns are things seen, heard or suspected. We understand that it is not our task to decide whether the concerns are "serious enough" to pass on – this is for the Designated Person to decide.

- The Designated Person will work with the rest of the church's Safeguarding Team to determine if any actions are needed in response to a concern. All concerns will be held in confidence within the Safeguarding Team. The Safeguarding Team will take advice from the SWBA Safeguarding Advisor when significant response may be needed, and they will implement all steps that they advise.

- The church's Safeguarding Team will at all times respond to any abuse that is disclosed, discovered or suspected by following the procedures in this policy, and reporting concerns where appropriate. The church will fully cooperate with any external investigation into any suspected abuse linked with the church.

- **Safer recruitment, support and supervision of workers**

  We will exercise proper care in the selection and appointment of those working with children and adults at risk, whether paid or voluntary. All workers, whether paid or voluntary must undertake appropriate training at intervals determined by the Safeguarding Team, and will be provided with support and supervision in their role to promote the safeguarding of all.

- **Respecting children and adults at risk**

  The church has adopted a code of behaviour for all who are appointed to work with children and adults at risk so that all children and adults are shown the respect and care that is due to them.

- **Safer working practices**

  We are committed to providing an environment that is as safe as possible for children and adults at risk and we will work with them only in ways that promote their safety and well-being.

- **A safer community**

  We expect high standards of behaviour and strong adherence to safeguarding practices from everyone in our church and we will not permit anyone to be an exception to the rules.

  We are committed to the prevention of bullying in all situations.

  We are committed to ensuring that the participation in our church life of any individuals who may pose a risk to children, young people and adults at risk in the community of the church is managed appropriately, and in accordance with Baptist Union recommendations.

Safeguarding contact points within our church

The church has appointed the following individuals to form part of the church safeguarding team:

Lorraine Wills, Designated Person for Safeguarding - Lead (DPS)
Hannah Barker, Designated Person for Safeguarding (DPS)
They will advise the church on any matters related to the safeguarding of children and adults at risk and take the appropriate action when abuse is disclosed, discovered or suspected.

Lorraine: 07925 145610 safeguarding@bartonbaptistchurch.co.uk

Hannah: 07956 006688 safeguarding@bartonbaptistchurch.co.uk

If you have a concern you do not feel comfortable raising with either of the Designated Persons, please speak to one of the ministers, who will take advice from Kath Needham, SWBA Safeguarding Advisor, as necessary.

Our church ministers are also an important part of the Church Safeguarding Team. Where possible, the Church Safeguarding Team will work together if and when issues arise. However, each person has a responsibility to report allegations of abuse as soon as they are raised.

Putting our policy into practice

- A copy of the safeguarding policy statement will be displayed permanently on the church noticeboard and is available on our church website.
- Each worker with children and/or adults at risk will be given a full copy of the safeguarding policy and procedures and will be asked to sign to confirm that they will follow them.
- A full copy of the policy and procedures will be made available on request to any member of, or

other person associated with the church.

- The policy and procedures will be monitored and reviewed annually, and any necessary revisions adopted into the policy and implemented through our procedures.
- The policy statement will be read annually at the church AGM, together with a report on the outcome of the annual safeguarding review.
- All church trips will have a named person to oversee and coordinate safeguarding matters for the duration of the trip.

Section 2 – Safeguarding Policies, Procedures and Expectations

1. What to do

If you observe, hear or become aware of something that concerns you, or if a child or adult shares something with you that causes you concern:

Remember the 4 R's

RECOGNISE recognise there may be something significant here that you need to take note of

RESPOND respond to the person or child in the moment – reassure them, make sure they know you are taking them seriously

RECORD write everything down as soon as possible – use the person or child's actual words as much as possible

REPORT pass your concern on to a Designated Person within 24 hours, including passing over your notes

And remember Little TED

If you need to ask any questions, use ONLY open questions:

- **Tell** me a bit more about….
- **Explain**….
- **Describe**…..



It's <u>not</u> your job to investigate. Your job is to notice, reassure, write it down and pass it on.

WHAT TO DO	WHAT NOT TO DO
• Listen to and acknowledge what is being said. • Try to be reassuring & remain calm. • Explain clearly what you will do and what will happen next. • Try to give them a timescale for when and how you / the DPS will contact them again. • Take action – don't ignore the situation. • Be supportive. • Tell them that: They were right to tell you; You are taking what they have said seriously; It was not their fault; That you would like to pass this information on to the appropriate people, with their permission; • Be open and honest. • Give contact details for them to report any further details or ask any questions that may arise.	• Do not promise confidentiality. • Do not show shock, alarm, disbelief or disapproval. • Do not minimise what is being said. • Do not ask probing or leading questions, or push for more information. • Do not offer false reassurance. • Do not delay in contacting the DPS. • Do not contact the alleged abuser. • Do not investigate the incident any further. • Never leave a child or adult at risk waiting to hear from someone without any idea of when or where that may be. • Do not pass on information to those who don't need to know; not even for prayer ministry.

You cannot promise confidentiality to, or about, a child. If you become aware of concerns relating to a child, our responsibility is very clear – it MUST be passed on to a Designated Person.

An adult does have the right to say they don't want you to tell anyone BUT you can over-ride this if:

- There is a child in the situation, particularly if the abuse is directed at the child, but also even if the abuse is not directed at the child eg. domestic abuse between partners
- There is a potential risk to others from this abuser

Always make the Designated Person the **first person you talk to about it**. They will work out what, if anything needs to be done, or whether the situation can simply be monitored.

Don't make a decision on your own about whether the matter is serious. The Designated Person may have other information about that child or person which you are not aware of – you may just have one piece of a larger jigsaw.

You should not share the information you have with anyone other than the Designated Person. In particular, it is very important that you give no hint to the alleged abuser.

All of the above applies to abuse which may be perpetrated by children as well as adults.

2. Abuse of trust/abuse of power

Any intimate relationship between someone in any kind of leadership role, and someone under their leadership or care, is deemed "abuse of trust" or "abuse of power". This is because there is an imbalance of power in the relationship. **It is not acceptable for anyone with any leadership or caring role to form an intimate relationship with anyone over whom they have leadership or to whom they are offering care.**

3. Investigation

If an investigation is deemed necessary, it must be done by the person the Baptist Union advises is appropriate. If the person being investigated holds a paid or voluntary role within the church it is likely that they may be asked to step away from that role until the investigation is completed. If appropriate, a Contract may be put in place for a temporary period, for the protection of all involved.

4. Supporting those who have experienced abuse

As a church we take seriously the harm that is caused by abuse of all forms. We are committed to caring for those who experience abuse, whether it is in their past, or more recently. We affirm the Baptist Union's guide "Supporting those who have experienced abuse" to inform our practice and our life as a church.

We recognise the importance of speaking and communicating with care when any sensitive matters need to be discussed. We will strive to use affirming language and terminology, and to avoid being dismissive or ever give the impression that living with the effects of abuse is a simple or easy matter.

We will strive to affirm to all those who have experienced abuse

- That what happened to them was not their fault and they are not to blame; that they are accepted and loved unconditionally here and will not be put under pressure to "forgive"
- That God loves them completely and unconditionally and that nothing can or will change this truth
- That as a church we want to support them in their journey towards healing, however long that journey may take, and acknowledging its pain and complexity

5. Safer Recruitment

As a church we are committed to safer recruitment practices, for the safety of our children, young people and all who may be at risk. When we are recruiting new paid or volutary workers for church activities, the following process will be applied:

i) A clear written role description will be produced and shared

ii) All persons will be asked to provide the names and contact details of two referees – normally at least one of these must be from outside our church

iii) All roles involving work with children or adults at risk will be subject to a DBS check. DBS checks should be renewed every 5 years for those continuing in their role.

iv) A conversation will be held with the applicant (a more formal interview for a paid role) and references will be taken up

6. Training

Everyone serving in a paid or voluntary role in a church activity which brings them into contact with children, youth or adults at risk must undertake safeguarding training every 5 years. We will normally use the Baptist Union's training programme for this. The purpose is to keep refreshing our awareness and understanding of safeguarding principles and practices so they don't sink out of sight in our thinking.

7. Safer Behaviour - general

Our church has a code of behaviour for all those working with children and/or adults at risk so that everyone is shown the respect that is due to them:

- Treat everyone, regardless of age or circumstance, with care and respect. Allow everyone's voice to be heard.
- Use language and tone that is age and ability appropriate. Be aware of your body language and be alert to the effect you may be having on the child or other person.
- Listen well to everyone. Be careful not to assume you know what the child or other person is thinking or feeling. Listen attentively to what is being spoken and how it is said. Observe the individual's body language to better understand what is being said.

- Respect each child or person's personal space. Do not crowd them or be in too close proximity unless there is a justifiable reason, and there are others present (eg. playing a group game)
- Be aware of all physical contact you may have with a child or adult at risk and record it when necessary. For instance, if you need to stop a fight, administer First Aid, give a hug to someone in distress, or protect yourself or others from danger. Make a record of any significant incidents or concerns on a Safeguarding Incident Form (see Appendix 3). Enter the names of all those present and anything of note which you observe, e.g. details of any fights broken up by the workers, allegations made, etc. All workers who witnessed the incident, overheard it or responded in any way should record the details and sign and date the form.
- Sexually suggestive comments or language are never approprate within our church family and activities, to or by anyperson of any age, even made in fun.
- We will not scapegoat, belittle, ridicule or reject a child or other person.

- We will not talk about a child or other person to others in ways we would not feel comfortable doing in their presence. This would be gossip.

- No adult should be alone with a child, young person or adult at risk at any time. If you find yourself in this situation you must immediately move to seek the presence of others.

8. Safer Behaviour – additional considerations around children

Specific considerations when working with children:

- Do not invade the privacy of children when they are using the toilet or showering
- The level of assistance with personal care (eg. toileting) must be appropriate and related to the age of the child, whilst also accepting that some children have special needs.
- Avoid rough games involving physical contact between a worker and a child
- Avoid sexually provocative games
- When it is necessary to discipline children, this should be done without using physical punishment or restraint. There may, however, on the rare occasion be circumstances where a child needs to be restrained in order to protect them or a third person. If this happens, you must ensure you use a minimum level of physical restraint, and ask another adult present to assist you. Explain to the child or person why you are doing what you are doing (eg. I'm holding onto to so you can't hurt xx again). Ensure that any action of this nature is recorded on a safeguarding form signed by two adults who were present, and passed promptly to a Designated Person (see Code of Behaviour)
- Only invite children and young people to your home, or on trips, in groups and always make sure that another worker is present. A spouse is not eligible as a second worker if they are the only other adult present.
- Notify the DPS of any children's trips which take place in the name of the church. Parental permission must always be sought.
- Do not give lifts to children or young people on your own. Ensure that if transporting children as part of your church role, you have the correct insurance cover in place as well as signed parental permission (see paragraph 14 on transportation)
- No person under 18 years of age should be left in sole charge of any children of any age. Nor should children or young people attending a group be left alone at any time.

No one should normally be left working alone with children, young people or adults at risk, but should instead work as part of a team. If there are insufficient leaders for groups:

- Consider whether you could combine groups together or rearrange planned activities.
- Reconsider whether you can run the group safely, carrying out a Risk Assessment to record your findings.
- At least two people should be present before external doors are opened for an event.

9. Physical Contact - children

Our policy and expectations around physical contact with children are:

- Keep everything public. A hug within a group context is very different from one behind closed doors. **Only hug or comfort a child in a public place where other adults are present. Hugging or other intimate physical contact in any location away from other people is not acceptable.**
- Touch should be addressing the child's needs, not the worker's.
- Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the worker.

- Workers should avoid any physical activity that is, or could be thought to be, sexually stimulating to the adult or the child.
- Children are entitled to privacy to ensure their personal dignity.
- Children have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others, except in exceptional circumstances such as when they need medical attention.
- When giving first aid (or applying sun cream, etc), workers should encourage the child to do what they can manage themselves, but consider the child's best interests and give appropriate help where necessary.
- Team members should monitor one another in the area of physical contact. They should help each other by constructively challenging anything which could be misunderstood or misconstrued.

10. Physical Contact – adults

Our policy and expectations around physical contact with adults are:

- Recognise that although hugs and other physical contact is generally intended as a loving gesture, not everyone is comfortable with physical contact. If the person is someone new, or someone you haven't hugged before, check with them first if it's ok to give them a hug. Each person has the right to decide how much physical contact they are comfortable with.
- If placing your hand on someone for prayer, you should ask them first if that's ok.
- Keep everything public. A hug within a group context is very different from one behind closed doors. **Only hug or comfort in a public place where other adults are present. Hugging or other intimate physical contact in any location away from other people should be avoided.**

11. Electronic communications and social media

Our policy and expectations for communications with children and young people are:

- An adult within the church should not accept a friend request on Facebook from a child or young person, of any age, attending church activities
- Emails and other electronic communications should be restricted to sharing generic information, and as far as possible always copied to parents
- Only group messaging should be used between workers and children/young people, with parents included in the group. Private messaging should not be used. If a worker receives a private message from a child or young person they must show that message to a member of the safeguarding team before replying. You should discuss and agree together how to respond appropriately and it should be reported to the next meeting of the Safeguarding Team.
- Do not take photographs of any of the children or young people on your phone or any other device. If photographs of an activity are wanted, this must be arranged officially with the Leadership Team.
- All phones should be put away during sessions – this includes everyone present: leaders, helpers, children and young people

12. Financial Integrity

Our policy and expectations for financial integrity are:

- All funds relating to any church group activities must be overseen by the Church Treasurer
- No paid or voluntary worker should accept any financial gift for activities undertaken on behalf of the church. If a person wants to make a gift, you should encourage them to give it directly to the church.
- If a gift is made to you without your agreement (eg. arriving by post) you should report it to the Church Treasurer and discuss what to do.
- Church and personal finances must always be kept separate
- If, in pastoral support, you become involved in handling money on behalf of someone else eg. for shopping, banking etc, always keep a written record, agreed with the person and checked by someone on the Leadership Team at regular intervals so there is good awareness and transparency in the arrangement
- If a person wishes to alter their Will in favour of someone who has been visiting or helping them pastorally, this should be reported to the Leadership Team. Church workers, whether voluntary or paid, should not act as Executors for a person they know through their work or pastoral role.
- External legal advice must always be sought on matters such as Power of Attorney.

13. Pastoral Relationships

Our policy and expectations for all pastoral relationships between persons of any age are:

- All those involved in pastoral ministry will work with clearly agreed procedures and boundaries, to protect those carrying out the pastoral ministry as well as those receiving it
- Workers should be aware of the power imbalance within pastoral relationships and the potential for abuse of trust (see paragraph 2 on abuse of trust)
- Behaviour that suggests favouritism or gives the impression of a special relationship should be avoided
- Workers should be aware of the dangers of dependency within a pastoral relationship
- Workers should never engage in sexual activity with someone with whom they have a pastoral relationship (see paragraph 2 on abuse of trust)
- All people receiving pastoral ministry should be treated with respect and encouraged and empowered to make their own decisions about any actions or outcomes
- Workers should not pastorally minister to anyone, in any setting, whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Workers must recognise the limits of their own abilities and expertise, and get further guidance and help when working with issues of significant need or concern
- Workers must record and pass on any safeguarding concerns in accordance with the procedures outlined in this document

14. Health and Safety

Consent forms

The church must hold a completed form for each child and young person involved in any church activity. On the first time of attending, their name, and the name and contact details of their parent/carer must be recorded, along with any medical/allergy information. On the second time of attending a form should be sent home which must be returned completed on their next visit.

Health & Safety Policy
All church activities must comply with the church's current Health & Safety Policy.

Fire
It is the responsibility of all group leaders to ensure the safety of themselves and those in their care in the event of a fire. It is a legal requirement that all group leaders are familiar with the church's emergency procedures in the event of a fire.

First Aid
The help of a trained First Aider should be sought for all but basic injuries. All incidents or injuries should be recorded in the session log, along with actions taken.

Risk Assessment
The group leader will complete a Single Activity Risk Assessment form for any activity which is out of the ordinary.

Transport
These expectations apply to all drivers involved in the transportation of children, young people and adults at risk when they do so on behalf of the church. They do not apply to private transport arrangements made between friends.

- Drivers should have gone through our Safer Recruitment process
- Drivers will read and agree to the church's Safeguarding Policy
- Drivers must be aged 21 or over and have held a full driving licence for at least 2 years
- Drivers should inform their insurer that they are undertaking this transportation, and ensure that the vehicle used is in good repair
- Parental consent should be given for all journeys
- All children and young people should be returned to an agreed drop-off point, to be collected by an appropriate adult. They should never be left unattended.
- At least two workers should be present when transporting children

15. Bullying

Bullying is another form of abuse, and it can be verbal or physical. Bullying doesn't just happen to children, often adults can be victims too. There is no legal definition of bullying, but it is usually defined as a repeated pattern of behaviour intended to cause emotional or physical harm to another person, or exert power over them. The effect of bullying on the victim can be profound, both emotionally and physically, regardless of their age, ability or status.

It is important to recognise that bullying happens within churches, and it is not isolated to the children and young people. Anyone in the church can be a victim of bullying, just as anyone in the church can be the bully, including those in leadership.

Some examples of bullying that could arise in the church context are:

- Being verbally or physically abusive towards another person
- Isolating or deliberately ignoring someone, or excluding them from group activities
- Spreading rumours and malicious untruths about another person in the church
- Use of email, phone or social media to publicly challenge or undermine someone
- Name calling and personal insults
- Making false accusations
- Sending abusive messages or degrading images via phone, email or social media

Bullying will always cause a great deal of pain and harm for those on the receiving end. Many people affected by bullying, both children and adults, believe they have nowhere to turn. They are scared to speak out and often blame themselves. They can become fearful and reclusive. It is important that churches are able to recognise when bullying is occurring and are prepared to take action to resolve the situation.

Some signs that can indicate a person is being bullied are as follows:

- Withdrawal from group or church activities; appearing anxious, tearful or more reticent than usual, particularly in a certain context; development of mental health difficulties, such as depression or anxiety disorders; drop in performance relating to any church roles; physical injuries.

In order to help prevent bullying, the following procedures will be adopted within the church:

- The children and young people will be involved in agreeing a code of behaviour for their groups, which makes it clear that bullying is unacceptable. This should then be displayed somewhere visible to the whole church.
- The church will display signs stating the importance of valuing and respecting each other even in disagreements and this will be practically embedded into the leadership approach to others.
- Everyone in the church, whether children or adults, should know how they can report any incidents of bullying.
- All allegations of bullying will be treated seriously and details will be carefully checked before action is taken.
- The bullying behaviour will be investigated and bullying will be stopped as quickly as possible.
- An attempt will be made to help bullies change their behaviour.
- All allegations and incidents of bullying will be recorded, together with the actions that are taken.
- Where an allegation of bullying is made against a church or group leader, advice will be sought from the local Baptist Association Safeguarding Contact as this should be addressed.
- Incidents of bullying may be reported to the statutory authorities in line with the church safeguarding procedures.

It is important to distinguish bullying from other behaviour, such as respectfully challenging or disagreeing with someone else's beliefs or behaviours, setting reasonable expectations with regard to work deadlines and activities or taking legitimate disciplinary action.

16. Working with alleged or known offenders

Where we have someone wishing to attend church services or activities who is a known offender, or who has a current investigation of their behaviour in progress, an attendance contract will be put in place. The

Designated Person(s) will consult with the Association and/or Baptist Union Team to draw up an appropriate contract and monitoring measures. The contract will identify and define appropriate behaviour and establish clear boundaries for the person's involvement in the life of the church. If the person does not agree to the contract, or fails to abide by its terms, they will be told they cannot attend.

Final thoughts

These policies, procedures and expectations are us showing that we take seriously our responsibility to keep everyone safe within our church family and all those who may attend our activites. Safeguarding is also about protecting our workers and volunteers, and responding to, and caring appropriately for, those who have experienced abuse.

We want everyone to have the opportunity to learn about Jesus and God's all-surpassing grace with us, and to do so safely, protected from those who would want to abuse, and protected from unwarranted accusations of inappropriate behaviour.

Scripture clearly instructs us to protect those who are weak and vulnerable, and to speak up for those who have no voice. The command is clear, as well as the uncompromising view of God towards those who cause harm to the vulnerable.

Proverbs 31:8-9 says

> *"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice." (NLT)*

And Matthew 18 says:

> *"Whoever becomes simple and elemental again, like this child, will rank high in God's kingdom. What's more, when you receive the childlike on my account, it's the same as receiving me. But if you give them a hard time, bullying or taking advantage of their simple trust, you'll soon wish you hadn't. You'd be better off dropped in the middle of the lake with a millstone around your neck." (MSG)*

We want everyone to embrace our policies and procedures willingly and positively, recognising why they are important and that they are for the safety of everyone, and the fulfilling of our God-given mission to communicate his love to the world.