

Union of Welsh Independents, Baptist Union of Wales
& the Presbyterian Church of Wales

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Handbook

*A practical guide to the churches' policy and practice
when working with children and young people,
and vulnerable adults*



Contents

1. Introduction and Statement of Intent

Foreword

- 1.1 What is safeguarding?
- 1.2 About this handbook
- 1.3 Role of the panel and the three denominations
- 1.4 Statement of Intent
- 1.5 Individual church safeguarding policy statement

2. Safer Recruitment and Selection

Introduction

- 2.1 The safer recruitment process
- 2.2 What is a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check?
- 2.3 What is regulated and non-regulated activity?
- 2.4 Disclosure and Barring eligibility
 - Chart 2: work with children
 - Chart 3: work with adults
- 2.5 Examples of roles
- 2.6 DBS application process
- 2.7 Blemished disclosures

3. Children and Young People

Introduction

- 3.1 Good practice when working with children and young people
- 3.2 Child protection
- 3.3 Guidelines for specific activities

4. Vulnerable Adults

Introduction

- 4.1 General good practice when working with vulnerable adults
- 4.2 Protecting vulnerable adults

5. Pastoral care

- 5.1 Supporting people who have suffered abuse in the past
- 5.2 Supporting those affected by suspected abuse and disclosures
- 5.3 Good practice when dealing with people who are known offenders or abusers
- 5.4 Treatment for offenders and sources of support

6. Appendices

- 1 Further resources and sources of support
- 2a Safeguarding code of conduct
- 2 Guidelines and safe working practices
- 3 Relevant legislation
- 4 Carrying out a risk assessment
- 5 Policy statement: the handling, use, retention of disclosures and disclosure information
- 6 Policy statement: the recruitment of ex-offenders
- 7 Charity trustees and safeguarding
- 8 Using and sharing images of children: model policy
- 9 Additional definitions
- 10 The safer church - safeguarding checklist

7. Forms

UK GDPR and panel forms

1. Volunteer application form
2. Self-declaration form
3. Individual applicant check list
4. Reference letter and form
5. General information and consent form under 11
6. General information and consent form over 11
7. Special activity consent form
8. Photograph consent form
9. Accident and incident form
10. Risk assessment form
11. Reporting a concern form

Foreword

As a panel we have every reason to offer our sincere thanks to the churches of the three denominations throughout Wales for their support and dedication to safeguarding work. Even throughout the lockdown period, we were able to hold training sessions with different church members and leaders, and several referrals were made to our Safeguarding Officer. We greatly appreciate the fact that so many churches consider safeguarding a matter to be taken seriously, and the continued use of our website and its various resources is a source of pride to us. It is with gratitude that these words of introduction are written, and we very much trust that the partnership will continue to flourish in the future.

The year 2021 was a turning point in the history of protecting vulnerable groups within our religious institutions. That is when the report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Religious Institutions was published, and the findings were shocking to say the least. The Inquiry, chaired by Professor Alexis Jay, concluded that far too many religious organisations are reluctant to act in cases where children are sexually abused. In some examples, the reason for not taking the matter further was to protect the good name of the organisation, and that arises from a culture of blaming the victim or refusing to accept that church leaders can offend.

The report estimates that around 250,000 children in England and Wales regularly receive additional religious education within the faith communities. Yet, many of these communities do not have any kind of protection policy, and there are no details available about the number of children who attend the classes or who is responsible for them.

We always like to think that religious organisations give priority to teaching moral values and protecting the innocent and the vulnerable. That is what their mission is all about. But this is what Professor Alexis Jay says: “Religious organisations are defined by their moral purpose of teaching right from wrong and protection of the innocent and the vulnerable. However, when we heard about shocking failures to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse across almost all major religions, it became clear many are operating in direct conflict with this mission.”

Her words are shocking, and the message should be a clear warning to all denominations and all religions that we have no reason to feel complacent. We are grateful for the efforts of the officers of the three denominations who have championed the Interdenominational Safeguarding Panel over the years to ensure we have effective policies in place, and that the training work progresses from strength to strength. The panel’s staff will offer firm guidance when the need arises and respond effectively and quickly to any changes and developments in the field.

The world has changed since the panel was established in the first place, and with the publication of the report on the sexual abuse of children in religious institutions, there is no excuse for failing to reinforce our policies and procedures and for not giving high priority to safeguarding issues in every church. With that in mind, we have updated the handbook and extended the training programme. We would like to see all churches promoting Safeguarding Sunday during the autumn, and there is devotional material available for that purpose, as well as a new video to raise the profile. Our hope is that all churches within the Union of Welsh Independents, the Baptist Union of Wales and the Presbyterian Church of Wales will commit anew to giving safeguarding a prominent place.

We believe that safeguarding means much more than completing DBS checks and following procedures. It is about what is central to the gospel, as we strive to create the appropriate conditions where everyone can enjoy life in all its fullness in the light of the unconditional love revealed in the life of Jesus Christ.

It is encouraging to know these words will fall on fertile ground, as the goodwill from the churches towards the work of the panel is always a source of joy. We thank you for your co-operation and your willingness to make safeguarding such a central part of your churches’ work. We also thank Julie Edwards and Sian Jones for their diligent and tireless work in managing and administering the work of the panel on a day-to-day basis, and we appreciate Julie’s sterling efforts in updating the handbook.

Emlyn Davies,
Chair, Interdenominational Safeguarding Panel
August 2022

Section 1:

Introduction and Statement of Intent

1.1 What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding is everybody's business- we all have a role to play.

We are by now more familiar with the term 'safeguarding'. We acknowledge that churches have a safeguarding responsibility and need to have a safeguarding policy that underpins all their work with vulnerable groups. We do this to conform to Charities Commission and insurance companies' requirements, but as Christian churches, we have an additional motivation to get safeguarding right. We seek to reflect the character and commands of Jesus, to protect the weak (James 1:27) and speak up for those whose voices are not heard (Proverbs 31:8). We want to do this to the best of our ability and operate in an exemplary manner with the children and vulnerable people that God has entrusted to our care.

So, what does safeguarding mean ?

Safeguarding means PROTECTING vulnerable people from abuse, neglect and harm. It means RECOGNISING the signs and symptoms of abuse and RESPONDING appropriately. It is PREVENTATIVE as well as PROTECTIVE - there is no requirement for abuse or neglect to have already occurred before deciding to act. This means that it is important to consider who may be AT RISK and take action to keep them from harm¹. Safeguarding also involves PROVIDING SAFE ACTIVITIES along with appropriate care.

In practical terms, a church that is following good safeguarding practice would usually have evidence of:

- Safer recruitment practices for workers and volunteers
- Good working practices in all aspects of its work and have
- Workers who are trained and supported and able to recognise the signs of abuse and know how to respond to concerns.

This handbook, the panel website and the Interdenominational Safeguarding Panel officers are here to help you to do this.

It is encouraging to be able to say that, since the publication of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Handbook in 2014, thousands of people from our churches throughout Wales and beyond have received and read the handbook and attended safeguarding training. Many of you have taken significant action to make your churches safer places for the vulnerable and for everyone and have responded to concerns and sought advice. But there is always more that we can do...

1.2 About this handbook (2022)

The guidance and advice in this handbook forms the adopted safeguarding policy of the Union of Welsh Independents, Baptist Union of Wales and Presbyterian Church of Wales when working with vulnerable groups. It aims to give clear practical guidance to those working, volunteering and those who are responsible for activities with vulnerable groups in the local setting.

¹ Considering who may be at risk and taking action to protect them is emphasised in a key piece of Welsh legislation – Section 7 of The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 which came into force in 2016.

Much of this handbook remains the same, as the basic principles that prompted the new handbook in 2014 have not changed. However, we are pleased to bring you some updates and new additions which we detail below, section by section. We hope that they will help you to make the safeguarding policy a reality as you work with children and vulnerable people in your local setting.

Future updates will appear on the panel website <https://panel.cymru> as this is a more efficient and effective way to ensure that we are sharing information and updates with you promptly. We suggest that you regularly visit the website to make sure you are accessing the latest information and forms etc.

As you add these updates to your existing file, we invite you to reread the entire document and use it as an opportunity to assess your local safeguarding process and practice. Consider working through the new safeguarding self-assessment checklist at appendix 10 to see how you're doing.

Section 1 has been updated, so please replace the original Section 1 with this new version. It includes a new and important [individual church safeguarding policy statement](#). Previously the safeguarding policy statement was to be found at the beginning of Sections 3 and 4 but we have now prepared a separate document for you to use and display. The policy statement aims to help you to clearly state your church's commitment to safeguarding vulnerable groups. It is highly recommended that each church appoints a safeguarding coordinator to help facilitate the effective operation of the safeguarding policy locally. You will find more information about this and other safeguarding roles in the notes section of the new policy statement document. You can also access the document at the Policies section of the panel website.

The statement of intent is unchanged, but we have created a new code of conduct based on this statement. It outlines the main responsibilities and practices for those working and volunteering with vulnerable groups and should enhance communication and accountability. You can find the code of conduct at Appendix 2a.

Section 2 has been rewritten. You will find step by step guidance on the recommended recruitment process that responsible organisations working with vulnerable groups should take when selecting and appointing workers and volunteers. This process aims to make sure that every reasonable measure has been taken to ensure that our vulnerable groups are cared for by safe and suitable individuals. There are forms and checklists in **Section 7** to guide you through the recruitment process.

This section now includes flow charts to help you to understand who needs to do a Disclosure and Barring Service Check. We would never claim that the DBS process is easy to understand but we hope that the charts will help bring some additional clarity. Our current policy of repeating a check every 4 years remains unchanged and we now ask that churches keep a record of their volunteers and their DBS status, to ensure that this is done in a timely manner.

Section 3 is unchanged. You will find some good practice guidance about working with children and young people and **Section 7** contains the consent forms needed to help you to operate this guidance. This section also contains information regarding child protection and how to respond if you suspect or are told about abuse, neglect or harm.

Section 4 is unchanged and contains good practice guidance and information when working with vulnerable adults and how to respond if you suspect or are told about abuse, neglect or harm.

Section 5 is unchanged and looks at how we can support those affected by abuse and contains useful contacts and information. These contact details are updated on our website.

Section 6 - Appendices, has some important new additions. Please add the new appendices to the existing section retaining **appendix 2, 5 and 6**

Appendix 1: the section containing **contacts and further information** has been updated. A further and more comprehensive list of contacts is on the Advice and Support page of our website.

Appendix 2a: a new code of conduct based on our statement of intent . It outlines some good practice and responsibilities for those working and volunteering with vulnerable groups.

Appendix 3: is an updated **relevant legislation list**.

Appendix 4: an updated guide to conducting a **risk assessment**.

Appendix 7: a new addition outlining the safeguarding responsibilities of **charity trustees**.

Appendix 8: a new addition based on an NSPCC resource with guidance on **using and sharing images of children** and a model policy.

Appendix 9: contains **additional definitions**. The main categories of abuse are described in sections 3 and 4 but some new and specific definitions are now also being commonly used.

Appendix 10: a checklist and assessment tool to help you assess your church's safeguarding situation.

Section 7 contains all the forms referred to in this handbook. We have prepared an additional sheet explaining how UK GDPR relates to the forms in this section which should be added at the front of **Section 7**. The forms themselves have not been changed in the paper copy of the handbook but they are all available electronically on our website as word documents that you can adapt to suit your specific requirements and activities.

1.3 Role of the panel and the three denominations

The panel was established in 2001 to serve and advise the Presbyterian Church of Wales, Baptist Union of Wales and Union of Welsh Independents on safeguarding matters in relation to their work with children, young people and vulnerable adults. The panel became a company limited by guarantee in 2009 and its directors include the general secretaries from the “the three denominations” with the position of chair rotating between the three denominations. In 2022 our name changed from Interdenominational Protection Panel to Interdenominational Safeguarding Panel and we adopted a new simpler domain name: panel.cymru

The panel is a small organisation working exclusively for the three denominations. It employs a safeguarding and training officer and an administrative officer. The panel safeguarding officer is the lead safeguarding officer for the three denominations.

The panel provides safeguarding training for the denominations' ministers, staff and volunteers as well as safeguarding and policy information and guidelines.

As a registered body with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) the panel processes DBS checks for ministers, employees and volunteers within the three denominations. In 2008 it became an ‘umbrella body’ enabling it to provide disclosure checks for external organisations and agencies.

The panel's officers and directors meet regularly to manage and oversee the work of the panel and a wider panel, made up of representatives from the 3 denominations, meets at least annually. The panel also facilitates, when necessary, confidential small panel meetings to make decisions and advise on cases and blemished disclosures. These meetings usually involve panel representatives or independent individuals nominated because of their expertise, interest or professional background. The panel members adhere to a strict confidentiality code.

1.4 Statement of Intent

1. Members of the church² community have an obligation to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults in every activity.
2. The church undertakes to operate its policy and procedures in relation to the protection of children and vulnerable adults.
3. The church undertakes to comply with statutory requirements in relation to selecting and appointing individuals to undertake paid or voluntary work.
4. The church undertakes to provide a system whereby those who care for children, young people and vulnerable adults are trained and supported.
5. The church undertakes to recognise situations where children and young people and vulnerable adults could potentially suffer harm during the course of church activities.
6. The church undertakes to challenge any misuse of authority by an individual.
7. The church undertakes to listen to children and vulnerable adults and to respond sensitively and in line with its policy and guidelines.
8. The church undertakes to respond immediately when a suspicion of abuse is drawn to its attention, and to co-operate with the local authority or the police if an investigation is launched. It also undertakes to share information responsibly to facilitate an effective investigation.
9. The church undertakes to provide pastoral care to those who suffer abuse or direct them to pastoral care.
10. The church undertakes to provide pastoral care for offenders or suspected offenders, or to refer them to pastoral care.
11. The church undertakes to work with the panel's safeguarding and training officer, and/or the general secretaries of the three denominations, who will provide advice and guidance to local churches in relation to safeguarding. The church will cooperate with those tasked with responding to and collating information in relation to cases giving cause for concern within the three denominations.
12. The church undertakes to support and encourage parents and carers as they care for their children.

1.5 Individual Church Safeguarding Policy statement

Please display the following policy statement in your church.
You can also download an electronic copy of the document from our website.

² The term 'church' includes both central denominational structures and local churches

Our Safeguarding Policy Statement



As leaders and trustees of _____ church we are fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of our members and those entrusted to our care. This safeguarding policy statement along with the guidelines and procedures outlined in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Handbook, forms our safeguarding policy and procedures.

We acknowledge that children, young people and adults can be the victims of abuse and neglect and we recognise our obligation to ensure their safety in the activities carried out in the name of this church. We aim to provide a caring environment and to respond sensitively and immediately to any concerns. Members of the church, paid staff and volunteers will show respect to others, promote the ethos of listening to children and vulnerable people and conduct themselves in a manner that reflects the principles of the Christian church.

The church will care for children, young people and vulnerable adults and safeguard them by following good practices in relation to the following:

- **Responding appropriately to concerns and allegations** (Handbook Sections 3.2 and 4.2) In line with our policy and guidelines we undertake to respond immediately when a suspicion of abuse or any other concerns or allegations are drawn to our attention. We undertake to co-operate with the Local Authority or the Police if an investigation is launched.
- **Safer Recruitment for workers and volunteers** (Handbook Section 2) including DBS checks every 4 years for eligible workers, leaders and trustees.
- **Training and supporting our workers and volunteers** in their role and in the protection of children and vulnerable people.
- **Promoting good working practices** (Handbook Sections 3.1 and 4.1) and creating a safe environment.

Our responsibility

We acknowledge that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and we should report any concerns directly to the Interdenominational Safeguarding Panel, to our local safeguarding coordinator or to statutory authorities in an emergency. Trustees/deacons/elders of this local church have a responsibility to ensure that the safeguarding policy and best practice is carried out. They will work with the Interdenominational Safeguarding Panel on safeguarding matters.

OUR SAFEGUARDING CONTACT POINTS

We have nominated the following as our local safeguarding contacts :- (Name)

SAFEGUARDING COORDINATOR: _____

Contact details _____ (Name)

SAFEGUARDING DEACON / ELDER / TRUSTEE: _____

Contact details _____

Dated _____

Denominational safeguarding officer: : (Interdenominational Safeguarding Panel) JULIE EDWARDS

Contact details: post@panel.cymru

01745 817584

NOTES ON THIS CHURCH SAFEGUARDING POLICY STATEMENT

The aim of this individual church policy statement is to clearly state your church's commitment to safeguarding vulnerable groups. This is in line with best practice and a requirement of many insurance companies.

This safeguarding policy statement along with the guidelines and procedures outlined in the **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Handbook** (see endnote 1), and any subsequent updates, forms your safeguarding policy and procedures.

They have been adopted by all Presbyterian Church of Wales churches and all churches that are members of the Union of Welsh Independents and the Baptist Union of Wales (the 3 denominations) unless they have formally informed their relevant denomination that they have adopted other procedures due to a local ecumenical partnership agreement or other interdenominational arrangement.

Putting your policy into practice

- A copy of this safeguarding policy statement (page 1) should be displayed prominently and permanently in the church building and replaced annually / when contact details change.
- The policy statement (page 1) should be read annually at a church meeting / AGM.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, but local church leaders (trustees/deacons/ elders and ministers) have additional responsibility to ensure that the policy is put into practice. The appointment of a local safeguarding coordinator is advised. See roles and responsibilities below.
- All those who work or volunteer with children and/or adults should have access to a full copy of the safeguarding policy and procedures and sign to confirm that they will follow them. (See also our safeguarding code of conduct appendix 2a). They should attend training to ensure that they are familiar with the policy and understand what to do if they are concerned about a situation or individual.
- The policy and procedures and additional information can be found in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Handbook which is available in each church and is also on the panel website. panel.cymru

Roles and responsibilities

To facilitate the effective operation of the safeguarding policy it is highly recommended that each church appoints a safeguarding coordinator. (A church can also appoint a safeguarding trustee.) See endnote 2 on the following page for details of these roles and responsibilities.

Each church is expected to notify the panel office of the name and contact details of the safeguarding co-ordinator but if the panel office has not received a notification of a named safeguarding coordinator it will be assumed that the church secretary is the church safeguarding contact and all DBS correspondence and any queries will be directed to them.

The local safeguarding contact(s) will work closely with the Interdenominational Safeguarding Panel officers to ensure that DBS checks are carried out in a timely manner and be the first point of contact if there are any safeguarding queries or concerns.

PLEASE NOTE:

**It is not the role of the local safeguarding person to make final decisions regarding safeguarding incidents or disclosures.
The church should contact the panel safeguarding officer.**

End Notes

1. **THE SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE GROUPS HANDBOOK:** details safeguarding practice and guidelines. All churches should have received a copy of this document. It is also available online <https://panel.cymru/en/safeguarding-vulnerable>
More information on the Interdenominational Safeguarding Panel and additional safeguarding advice and information and resources is available on the panel website <https://panel.cymru> or by contacting the panel office (see 2 below)

2. **SAFEGUARDING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

Please email post@panel.cymru or call 01745 817584 with the name, role and contact details of the **SAFEGUARDING COORDINATOR** for your church. Without this notification the panel will continue to contact the church secretary or minister on safeguarding / DBS matters.

The term **SAFEGUARDING CONTACTS** includes both role A and B.

A. SAFEGUARDING COORDINATOR

1. Make sure that all relevant and eligible persons working with children and vulnerable adults /adults at risk have an up to date (4 yearly) DBS check and have attended training. Maintain a confidential record of all volunteers noting dates of DBS checks and ensure renewals are completed. Liaise with the panel office on DBS matters and receive notifications of completed DBS from the panel.
2. Ensure that all safeguarding concerns or allegations are reported to the panel safeguarding officer promptly. Liaise with the panel safeguarding officer when there are safeguarding concerns or matters in the church.
3. In an emergency, report allegations and concerns promptly to the police or social services.
4. Liaise with external agencies where necessary.
5. Ensure any agreements or risk assessments to manage persons who may pose a risk are managed and monitored locally. Liaise with the panel safeguarding officer.
6. Report to the church meeting on safeguarding issues in a general and awareness raising manner without compromising confidentiality.

B. SAFEGUARDING TRUSTEE / ELDER/ DEACON

(If a church does not appoint someone to this post, points 1+2 below may be part of the work of the safeguarding coordinator and points 3 +4 may be part of the Local Church Trustees / Deacons / Elders role)

1. Make sure that all necessary safeguarding measures are in place (including policy, procedures, training, safe recruiting, etc.).
2. Take the lead on safeguarding matters on behalf of the trustees/deacons/elders.
3. Maintain regular communication with the safeguarding coordinator and ensure safeguarding is on the agenda at church meetings.
4. Keep the safeguarding policy relevant and up to date. Annually review and update as necessary.

C. ALL TRUSTEES/DEACONS/ ELDERS OF LOCAL CHURCH

1. A duty of care and responsibility for ensuring the safe and effective running of the church including safeguarding vulnerable groups.
2. Promote and facilitate a culture of safeguarding best practice throughout church life.
3. Support and assist the safeguarding contacts.

D. MINISTER

1. DBS Verifier (this role can also be carried out by other church officers with panel agreement)
2. Support and assist the safeguarding contacts, deputising if they are implicated in any allegation.
3. Promoting and facilitating a culture of best practice throughout the church life.

E. PANEL SAFEGUARDING OFFICER

1. The safeguarding lead for the denomination.
2. Provide safeguarding guidance and support to local churches.
3. Work closely with local churches to deal with concerns and allegations including contact with statutory authorities.
4. Work closely with the panel and the local church to assess and manage those who may pose a risk including drafting contracts of agreed behaviour.

