

Bridge Church Totton

Safeguarding Policy 2025

Safeguarding Children and Safeguarding Adults who need care and support

This Policy was approved by Bridge Church Totton Trustees on 28 February 2025 and will be reviewed in February 2026

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Section 1: Policy Statement – Safeguarding children and adults who need care and support

1.1 Bridge Church Totton details

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Safeguarding Lead Name: Pauline Athill

Safeguarding Lead Contact Telephone: 077699 70546

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Charity Number: xxxx

Insurance Company: xxxx

The following is a brief description of our place of organisation and the type of work / activities we undertake with children and adults with care and support needs:

1.2 Leadership Safeguarding Statement

Bridge Church Totton's Elders and Trustees hereafter referred to as the Leadership recognises the importance of its ministry/work with children, young people and adults in need of protection and its responsibility to protect everyone entrusted to our care.

Specifically:

- We recognise that we all have a responsibility to help prevent any form of abuse and to report any such abuse that we discover or suspect.
- We believe every child should be valued, safe and happy. We want to make sure that children we have contact with know this and are empowered to tell us if they are suffering harm.
- We believe all children and young people have the right to be treated with respect, to be listened to and to be protected from all forms of abuse.
- We recognise that we all have a responsibility to help prevent the physical, sexual, psychological, financial and discriminatory abuse and neglect of adults who have care and support needs and to report any such abuse that we discover or suspect.
- We recognise the personal dignity and rights of adults who find themselves victims of forced marriage or modern slavery and will ensure all our policies and procedures reflect this.
- We believe all adults should enjoy and have access to every aspect of the life of Bridge Church Totton (BCT) unless they pose a risk to the safety of others.
- We undertake to exercise safe recruitment processes and provision of on-going safeguarding training for all BCT roles working with children, young people and adults with care and support needs.

We undertake to develop a culture of awareness of safeguarding issues and safe working practices to help protect everyone.

- We offer pastoral care, working with statutory agencies as appropriate and support to all those who have been affected by abuse who are part of BCT.
- We undertake to follow BCT's Policy on "Working with Offenders" (policy available on request) when someone attending BCT is known to have abused children or is known to be a risk to children or adults with care and support needs.
- We support the Safeguarding Team in their work and in any action, they may need to take to protect children and adults with care and support needs.
- We are committed to creating and enabling a healthy culture in BCT where the value of all people is recognised and challenges are responded to appropriately.

- We accept the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant of Human Rights, which states that everyone is entitled to “all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”. We also concur with the Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that children should be able to develop their full potential, free from hunger and want, neglect and abuse. They have a right to be protected from “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s), or any other person who has care of the child.”

As Leadership we have therefore adopted the procedures set out in this safeguarding policy in accordance with statutory guidance.

- We are committed to building constructive links with statutory and voluntary agencies involved in safeguarding and to following the Charity Commission Safeguarding guidelines.

The policy and attached practice guidelines are based on the ten Safe and Secure safeguarding standards published by thirtyone:eight.

- We are committed to endorse and follow all national and local safeguarding legislation and procedures, in addition to the international conventions outlined above.

Tom Williams

Lead Elder

Phil Wild

Chair of Trustees

1.3 Governance

The Elders of the Church have overall responsibility and authority for spiritual leadership.

Trustees are appointed by the Elders and have legal capacity as directors of the CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation), Bridge Church Totton.

As such, they are jointly accountable for safeguarding matters within the Church.

The Elders and Trustees are jointly referred to as “leadership” within this policy.

The Board of Trustees includes a Trustee with Safeguarding Lead responsibilities to lead and advise the Board on safeguarding matters.

The Leadership has appointed the Safeguarding Lead to build a safeguarding team who will act on behalf of the Leadership in operational aspects of safeguarding, including liaison with the statutory authorities.

As a church we have put together various practical guidelines for our volunteers and staff, the most notable of which are “Additional Guidelines for volunteers and staff working with children and young people” and “Additional Guidelines for volunteers and staff working with Adults who need care and Support.”

(see page xxxx). Our other practical guidelines are available on request.

The Charity Commission requires that where a charity is funding other organisations, including overseas partners that work with children and adults at risk, Trustees will carry out due diligence so that they can be confident that their partner has in place appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures. As such we have developed a checklist of information BCT requires before supporting other organisations financially.

See Policy here: xxxx

Positions of Trust

All adults working with children, young people and vulnerable adults are in a position of trust.

All those in positions of trust need to understand the power that this can give them over those they care for and the responsibility they have because of this relationship.

It is vital that all workers ensure they do not, even unknowingly, use their position of power and authority inappropriately. They should always maintain professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which could be misinterpreted.

As of April 2022 it is illegal for those in positions of trust in a faith setting to engage in sexual activity with a 16 or 17 year old under their care or supervision.

1.4 Description of Purpose

BCT is an all-age church based in Totton, currently meeting on Sunday mornings at Hounsdown School, Totton.

BCT is made up of people from all backgrounds in life across Totton and the surrounding areas.

We seek to teach, understand and follow the whole message of the Bible, which shows us how we can reconnect with God our Father – our most important need whatever our age.

BCT are involved in several groups, activities and courses within and outside of a normal Sunday morning meeting, all overseen by individuals or couples within the church at homes and other sites.

These change from time to time but currently include the following groups and activities:

Children up to and including Year 6:

- Children's Meetings on a Sunday morning from age 1 to Year 6
- Other activities outside of Sunday mornings.

Young people – Year 7 to Year 13 (upper sixth)

- Periodic Sunday morning meetings for Years 7 to 11
- Mid-week meetings
- Socials
- Discipleship
- "Newday" camp

Midweek Toddler Group

- Toddler Group for age 0 to Preschoolers attending with their Parents and Carers who remain responsible for their own child(ren)

Daytime Ministries

- Totton Creatives Group

Connect Groups

- Groups centered around smaller gatherings in the church designed to foster social relationships, spiritual growth and support. Typically home-based and midweek.

Pastoral Care

- Home and Hospital visiting
- BCT Care: practical, emotional and spiritual support delivered via a variety of media in response to requests for help
- Freedom in Christ
- Individual Appointment for Prayer

Online Activity

BCT provides various ways to connect online. These include the production of filmed/photographed online content and may (but does not currently) include livestream. Our process and the steps we take to protect people (specifically children and vulnerable adults) are set out in a separate filming and photography policy and referenced in our Additional Guidelines: Children and Young People.

Video conferencing is occasionally used for a variety of Church meetings across the whole spectrum of the Church demographic. Social media is also used to connect people via church and individual ministry accounts including a closed Facebook page.

Wider Community and Abroad

BCT plan to be involved with other church based community projects, in Totton and the surrounding area.

BCT is currently engaged in working with another church abroad: New Jerusalem International Church, Arusha, Tanzania

Section 2. Understanding abuse and neglect and responding appropriately.

2.1 Defining Abuse

Defining child abuse or abuse against an adult is a difficult and complex issue. A person may abuse by inflicting harm or failing to prevent harm. Children and adults in need of protection may be abused within a family, an institution or a community setting. Very often the abuser is known or in a trusted relationship with the child or adult.

For the purposes of this policy, a child will be referred to as someone under 18 years old.

An adult at risk of harm will be defined in this policy as the following: xxxx

To safeguard those within BCT we adhere to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and have as our starting point as a definition of abuse, Article 19 which states:

1. Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.

Also, for adults the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights with reference to Article 5 which states:

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Detailed definitions, and signs and indicators of abuse, as well as how to respond to a disclosure of abuse, are included here in our policy (see Appendix 1 and 2).

2.2 Responding to allegations or suspicion of Abuse

The Safeguarding Lead and Deputies (The Safeguarding Team) are nominated by the Leadership to act on their behalf in dealing with the allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse, including referring the matter on to the statutory authorities.

Under no circumstances should a worker carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse, they are to follow the procedures below:

- The person in receipt of allegations or suspicions of abuse should report concerns as soon as possible to:
 - The Safeguarding Lead: Pauline Athill 077699 70546
 paulineathill53@gmail.com
 - Where the concern is about a child, a member of the Safeguarding Team should contact Children's Social Services.
 - Where the concern is regarding an adult in need of protection, a member of the Safeguarding Team should contact Adult Social Services or take advice from thirtyone:eight, PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ. Telephone 0303 003 1111.
 - The local Children's Social Services office telephone number is:
Office hours, between 08.30 – 17.00 is 0300 555 1384
Out of hours emergency number is 0300 555 1373
 - The local Adult Social Services office telephone number is:
Office hours, between 08.30 – 17.00 is 0300 555 1386
 - The Police Protection Team can be contacted via 101 or for an Emergency dial 999
 - The Safeguarding Lead may need to inform others depending on the circumstances and/or nature of the concern (for example the Chair of Trustees to log that a safeguarding concern is being dealt with, and/or Hampshire's Safeguarding Designated Officer (LADO) on 01962 876364 if allegations have been made about a person who has a role with under 18s elsewhere.

Additionally, BCT Safeguarding Lead together with BCT Chair of Trustee and BCT Lead Elder (as appropriate) may need to contact the Charity Commission and BCT's Insurance company to log that there is a possibility of a serious incident concerning safeguarding.

- Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above. A written record of the concerns will be made in accordance with these procedures and kept in a secure place.
- Whilst allegations or suspicions of abuse will normally be reported to the Safeguarding Lead, the absence of the Safeguarding Lead or one of the Safeguarding Deputies should not delay referral to Social Services, the Police or taking advice from thirtyone:eight.
- The role of the Safeguarding Lead is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass this information to statutory agencies that have a legal duty to investigate.
- The Leadership will support the Safeguarding Lead in their role and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need to know basis.
- It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make a direct referral to the safeguarding agencies or seek advice from thirtyone:eight, although the Leadership hope that members of BCT will use this procedure. If, however, the individual with the concern feels that the BCT Safeguarding Lead has not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the Safeguarding Lead as to the appropriateness of a referral, they are free to contact an outside agency direct.

We hope, by making this statement, that the Leadership demonstrate its commitment to effective safeguarding and the protection of all those who are vulnerable.

Additional subject specific BCT Policy and Guidelines are available via these links:

- xxxx [Additional Guidelines - Children and Young People](#)
- xxxx [Additional Guidelines – Adults who need care and support](#)
- xxxx [Additional Guidelines - Pastoral Care](#)
- xxxx [Additional Guidelines - Safer Recruitment & Management of Volunteers & Staff](#)

Section 3: Safeguarding training

The Leadership is committed to on-going safeguarding training and development opportunities for all workers, developing a culture of awareness of safeguarding issues to help protect everyone. All our workers will receive induction training and undertake recognised safeguarding training on a regular basis.

The Leadership will provide or facilitate all staff/volunteers undertaking basic safeguarding training which will be renewed every three years.

The Leadership will provide or facilitate the Safeguarding Lead/Deputy Safeguarding Lead undertaking advance safeguarding training which will be renewed every two years. Where possible, the Leadership will provide or facilitate additional training for the requirements of the role.

The Leadership will provide or facilitate specialist safeguarding training for the board of trustees and BSK Elders which will be renewed every three years.

The Leadership will also ensure that children and adults with care and support needs are provided with information on where to get help and advice in relation to abuse, discrimination, bullying or any other matter where they have a concern.

A copy of this policy is available by request by emailing xxxx

Because this safeguarding policy is a "living" document based on a thirtyone:eight policy templates, it is not to be copied by other churches or organisations.

Appendix 1 - Definitions and Signs and Symptoms of Abuse (Children)

The legal definition of a child is someone under the age of 18.

The four definitions (and a few additional categories) of abuse below operate in England based on the government guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)'.

What is abuse and neglect? Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger for example, via the internet. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical abuse: may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse: is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.

It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse: involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.

They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave

in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect: is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Child sexual exploitation: Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Extremism: Extremism goes beyond terrorism and includes people who target the vulnerable – including the young – by seeking to sow division between communities on the basis of race, faith or denomination; justify discrimination towards women and girls; persuade others that minorities are inferior; or argue against the primacy of democracy and the rule of law in our society.

Signs and Symptoms of Possible Abuse (children & young people)

The following signs could be indicators that abuse has taken place but should be considered in context of the child's whole life.

Physical

- Injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries that occur in places not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc
- Injuries that have not received medical attention
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises on babies, bites, burns, fractures etc which do not have an accidental explanation*
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse*

Sexual

- Any allegations made concerning sexual abuse
- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour
- Age-inappropriate sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Eating disorders - anorexia, bulimia*

Emotional

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging
- Depression, aggression, extreme anxiety
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away/stealing/lying

Neglect

- Under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses
- Inadequate care, etc

*These indicate the possibility that a child or young person is self-harming. Approximately 20,000 are treated in accident and emergency departments in the UK each year.

Appendix 2 - Definition and Signs and Symptoms of Abuse in Adults who need care and support

Adult at risk - a person aged 18 or over, whose risk of harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their personal characteristics or life circumstances.

The Safeguarding duties apply to an adult who has need for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect and because of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

BCT will always promote the adult's wellbeing in their safeguarding arrangements. BCT will work with the adult to establish what being safe means to them and how that can be best achieved. BCT will advocate 'safety' measures that take account of individual well-being, as defined in Section 1 of the Care Act.

Link: The Care Act 2014

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted>

Link: Care and Support Statutory Guidance under the Care Act 2014

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance>

Definitions of Abuse (Adults)

This section considers the different types and patterns of abuse and neglect and the different circumstances in which they may take place. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list but an illustrative guide as to the sort of behaviour which could give rise to a safeguarding concern.

Physical abuse: including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions.

Domestic violence: including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so called 'honour' based violence.

Sexual abuse: including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

Psychological abuse: including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

Financial or material abuse: including theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Modern slavery: encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

Discriminatory abuse: including forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

Organisational abuse: including neglect and poor care practice within an Institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home.

This may range from one off incidents to ongoing ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice because of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Neglect and acts of omission: including ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Self-neglect: this covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding. Incidents of abuse may be one-off or multiple, and affect one person or more.

Signs and Symptoms of Possible Abuse in Adults

Physical abuse

- History of unexplained falls, fractures, bruises, burns, minor injuries.
- Signs of under or over use of medication and/or medical problems left unattended.
- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Bruising and discolouration - particularly if there is a lot of bruising of different ages and in places not normally exposed to falls, rough games etc.
- Recurring injuries without plausible explanation
- Loss of hair, loss of weight and change of appetite
- Person flinches at physical contact and/or keeps fully covered, even in hot weather;
- Person appears frightened or subdued in the presence of a particular person or people

Domestic violence

- Unexplained injuries or 'excuses' for marks or scars
- Coercion and controlling and/or threatening relationship including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so called 'honour' based violence and Female Genital Mutilation.
- Age range extended to 16 yrs.

Sexual abuse

- Pregnancy in a woman who lacks mental capacity or is unable to consent to sexual intercourse
- Unexplained change in behaviour or sexually explicit behaviour
- Torn, stained or bloody underwear and/or unusual difficulty in walking or sitting
- Infections or sexually transmitted diseases
- Full or partial disclosures or hints of sexual abuse
- Self-harming
- Emotional distress
- Mood changes
- Disturbed sleep patterns

Psychological abuse

- Alteration in psychological state e.g. withdrawn, agitated, anxious, tearful
- Intimidated or subdued in the presence of a carer
- Fearful, flinching or frightened of making choices or expressing wishes
- Unexplained paranoia
- Changes in mood, attitude and behaviour, excessive fear or anxiety
- Changes in sleep pattern or persistent tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Helplessness or passivity
- Confusion or disorientation
- Implausible stories and attention seeking behaviour
- Low self-esteem

Financial or material abuse

- Disparity between assets and living conditions
- Unexplained withdrawals from accounts or disappearance of financial documents or loss of money
- Sudden inability to pay bills, getting into debt
- Carers or professionals fail to account for expenses incurred on a person's behalf
- Recent changes of deeds or title to property
- Missing personal belongings
- Inappropriate granting and/or use of Power of Attorney

Modern slavery

- Physical appearance; unkempt, inappropriate clothing, malnourished
- Movement monitored, rarely alone, travel early or late at night to facilitate working hours.
- Few personal possessions or ID documents.
- Fear of seeking help or trusting people.

Discriminatory abuse

- Inappropriate remarks, comments or lack of respect
- Poor quality or avoidance care
- Low self-esteem
- Withdrawn
- Anger
- Person puts themselves down in terms of their gender or sexuality
- Abuse may be observed in conversations or reports by the person of how they perceive themselves.

Institutional Abuse

- Low self-esteem
- Withdrawn
- Anger
- Person puts themselves down in terms of their gender or sexuality
- Abuse may be observed in conversations or reports by the person of how they perceive themselves
- No confidence in complaints procedures for staff or service users.
- Neglectful or poor professional practice.

Neglect and acts of omission

- Deteriorating despite apparent care
- Poor home conditions, clothing or care and support.
- Lack of medication or medical intervention

Self-neglect

- Hoarding inside or outside a property
- Neglecting personal hygiene or medical needs
- Person looking unkempt or dirty and has poor personal hygiene
- Person is malnourished, has sudden or continuous weight loss and is dehydrated – constant hunger, stealing or gorging on food
- Person is dressed inappropriately for the weather conditions
- Dirt, urine or faecal smells in a person's environment
- Home environment does not meet basic needs (for example no heating or lighting)
- Depression