

Strategic Priority (9) – Safeguarding

Aim:

- Evaluate our approach to the safeguarding of our children, young people, and vulnerable adults, including the elderly.

Objectives:

- Create a safeguarding hub to support the work of the conferences, missions, educational and other institutions.
- Establish/review a safeguarding advisory committee to keep abreast with changing legislation.
- Develop digital media safeguarding strategies which address safeguarding and emerging technology.



Be quiet now . . .

by Pastor Eglan Brooks,

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One troubling story in the Bible is that of Tamar, raped by her half-brother, Amnon (2 Samuel 13). When her brother, Absalom, discovers the heinous deed, he says, 'Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother. Don't take this thing to heart' (vs. 20). Subsequently, she became a 'desolate woman' (NKJV).

According to *The Oxford Languages Dictionary*, 'desolation' means 'complete emptiness or destruction', 'great unhappiness and loneliness'. Such is Tamar's existence after she has been manipulated, raped, discarded. She is silenced by those in authority, undefended by her so-called protectors, and left to suffer the pangs of 'outrageous fortune'. Safeguarding is absent.

Does this ancient story somehow sound familiar? Unfortunately so. Abuse exists in society, families, the Government, and even sometimes in faith spaces . . . our faith spaces.

Safeguarding: a definition

Safeguarding is the preventive and precautionary approach to planning and procedures needed to protect individuals from any potential harm and deal with issues when they arise. All organisations owe a duty of care to employees,

volunteers, service users and others they come into contact with.

Safeguarding duties apply to both statutory and voluntary organisations, and come from legislation, statutory and non-statutory guidance. They're outlined in the *Charity Commission's Strategy for Dealing with Safeguarding Issues*. Regarding children, the key statutory guidance is *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (updated in 2022). Regarding vulnerable adults, the key statutory guidance is *Care and Support Statutory Guidance* (updated in 2022).

The *Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006* (SVGA 2006) was introduced to prevent people who are deemed unsuitable to work with **children and vulnerable adults** from gaining access to them. Everyone has the right to protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation. The SVGA 2006 places legal obligations on organisations to safeguard children and vulnerable adults; promote their welfare; conduct additional checks on employees and volunteers; and communicate concerns to relevant local agencies.¹ We are subject to this legislation.

Safeguarding hub

Prevention is better than cure. We need to establish a safeguarding hub, **with trained personnel**, that will support all the conferences, missions, and institutions of the BUC, to keep abreast of the changes in safeguarding legislation and to provide guidance when incidents of abuse arise. In establishing this hub, we will consult with safeguarding specialists.

Safeguarding Advisory Committee

The BUC has a standing Safeguarding Committee that looks at our policies around safeguarding and updates them when required. We will review this committee and its remit to ensure that our policies do more than meet the minimum requirements, and will communicate updates across the territory.

Digital media safeguarding

According to an inquest, 'social media content played a part in the death of teenager, Molly Russell.'² The *Online Safety Bill* is intended to ensure that digital media providers are held responsible for the content shared on their platforms. Strategies and policies around online safety need to be created, especially with the rise of emerging technologies.

Conclusion

Tamar, the desolate woman, represents all those who are abused in our world today. As a church, charity and corporation, let us tackle abuse through rigorous policies, appointing trained personnel and demonstrating a heart of compassion for those who are suffering.

¹<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/involving-volunteers/volunteers-and-the-law/safeguarding-vulnerable-clients/#>²<https://news.sky.com/story/molly-russell-friend-of-14-year-old-who-died-from-self-harm-speaks-out-over-online-safety-bill-12758062>