

Bethesda Baptist Church Safeguarding Policy Statement

This statement was agreed at the church meeting held on 1st February 2022. It will be read annually at the church AGM where progress in carrying it out will be monitored.

Our Values (Who we Are)

Loving

At Bethesda, we aim to be person centred, believing that people are more important than projects. We try to operate in a relational way and offer a pastoral care structure alongside an encouragement for people to form caring friendships with others.

Accepting

People tell us that they feel welcome and accepted at Bethesda. We have a high percentage of children in our church family who are neurodivergent with additional needs such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, attachment issues etc. Everyone is welcome irrespective of their age, disability, race or sexual orientation. We are committed to continually come back to scripture to try to ensure that we are hearing and obeying what it is saying and not just following what has been commonly understood amongst Christians.

Learning together

At Bethesda we aim to be interactive. We are exploring the Biblical emphasis on learning and growing together, and we are continuing to experiment with ways to make space in our gatherings for this.

Children & Young People are Valued

We are continuing to develop as a loving and nurturing community where children and young people can grow and flourish. A number of people have noted how well we love, care for and learn from those who are neurodiverse in our church family. We believe that we have a lot to learn from our children and young people and we make space in our gatherings for this.

Relaxed Atmosphere

Our gatherings are informal and relaxed in nature, and we want people to feel at ease as they explore and grow in faith. We don't want people to feel that they need to be someone who they are not to fit in at Bethesda.

Creative

We love seeing creativity expressed and are considering ways we can make even more space for this. We believe that people learn in a variety of ways and we want to enable those who learn more visually or in a hands on way to have the opportunity to do so.

Life Focused

At Bethesda, we are committed to whole life discipleship. We are aiming to work together to discover more about what living with and for Jesus means in our everyday lives.

Hope

As a caring church, we feel strongly about wellbeing. Life can be difficult and cruel at times and we want to help one another to discover the fullness of life and hope that Jesus promised. We believe that God is at work, restoring us so that we can live freely as the people who He created us to be.

In upholding these values, we:

- Welcome children and adults who are at risk into the life of our church family
- Organise and arrange all activities with their safety and wellbeing in mind

Our safeguarding responsibilities

The church recognises its responsibilities in safeguarding all children, young people and adults at risk, regardless of gender, ethnicity or ability.

As members of this church we commit ourselves to the nurturing, protection and safekeeping of all associated with the church and will pray for them regularly. In pursuit of this, we commit ourselves to this policy and to the development of sound procedures to ensure we implement our policy well.

- **Prevention and reporting of abuse**

It is the duty of each church member to help prevent the abuse of children and adults at risk, and the duty of each church member to respond to concerns about the well-being of children and adults at risk. Any abuse disclosed, discovered or suspected will be reported in accordance with our procedures. The church will fully co-operate with any statutory investigation into any suspected abuse linked with the church.

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

The church will exercise proper care in the selection and appointment of those working with children and adults at risk, whether paid or voluntary. All workers will be provided with appropriate training, support and supervision to promote the safekeeping of children and adults at risk.

- **Respecting children and adults at risk**

The church will adopt 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 that is due to them.

- **Safer working practices**

The church is committed to providing an environment that is as safe as possible for children and adults at risk and will adopt ways of working with them that promote their safety and well-being.

- **A safer community**

The church is committed to the prevention of bullying. The church will seek to ensure that the behaviour 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.

Safeguarding contact points within our church

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

Lynette Hodges - 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.

Eleanor Shergold – Safeguarding Trustee

eleanor@bethesdabaptistchurch.co.uk

They will raise the profile of safeguarding within the church and oversee and monitor the implementation of the safeguarding policy and procedures on behalf of the Leadership Team.

Graeme & Tracey Ross – Ministers

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 church office 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.