

Public statement of 14 February 2018

Completion of the historic safeguarding case review at The Baptist Union of Great Britain

Background

The Baptist Union of Great Britain has now completed a confidential review of the files of all accredited Baptist ministers including those currently serving, retired and deceased ministers, as well as ministers who have had their accreditation removed. The specialist team handling this work have looked for any historic incidents of inappropriate behaviour or abuse recorded in these files recognising the need to reflect on past decisions and actions, particularly those matters that were not always dealt with by our Union in accordance with best practice of the time or of today. Where past actions and decisions have led to ongoing consequences for those involved we have taken steps to address these.

The review process

This review process, approved by the BUGB Trustee Board, started with the review of 4,370 files – all the records we still hold of everyone who is or who has been an accredited Baptist minister, including files dating back to the 1940s. Any file containing information that suggests a safeguarding incident involving a minister has been passed to an independent reviewer with specialist safeguarding expertise and experience. Where immediate action has been needed, the appropriate statutory authorities have been informed and we have cooperated fully with them in their investigations. Where our independent reviewer recommended that cases needed further consideration, they were presented to an independent panel of safeguarding experts. Where, in the view of the panel, there was a clear case to consider removing a minister from the accredited list, these cases have been passed to our Ministerial Recognition Committee and handled using our normal ministerial disciplinary procedures.

Outcomes and actions

The BUGB Trustee Board have received and approved a full report on the outcomes of the review and the learning points arising, together with details of the actions and improvements already in place, and an action plan for continuing improvement.

The number of cases where further action was needed was low compared to the number of files reviewed. However, we have identified a number of historical cases where the safeguarding of children or adults at risk had not been treated as a priority, and where it was hard for victims of abuse to be heard. Wherever possible, and even where many years have passed since the original concerns were raised, we have taken steps to address these failings and to offer fresh support to survivors and their families.

As part of the review we have made substantial changes and improvements to our safeguarding and disciplinary processes, and these changes have been incorporated into our safeguarding training for churches and ministers. Additional training is being provided for our regional association and college teams to help them as they advise and support churches in this vital area. In addition, we continue to work to make sure that the voices and perspectives of those who have experienced abuse are heard and listened to in the way we deal with safeguarding concerns across our Union.

Lynn Green, General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain commented on the outcomes of the review, saying

“We must continue to pray for all those who have been abused by someone they should have been able to trust, whether that was a Baptist minister or church leader. Alongside our prayers, our practical and whole-hearted commitment to good practice will be the lasting legacy of the historic case review.”

Ministries Team

February 2018