

Private and Confidential

Mr Martin Smith
Solicitor to the Inquiry
The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse
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London
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By email to: solicitors@iicsa.org.uk

4 February 2022

Dear Mr Smith,

Response of The Baptist Union of Great Britain ('BUGB') to Recommendation 1 of the Child Protection in Religious Organisations and Settings Investigation Report

We write in response to your letter of 19 November 2021 where you have asked for our response and actions in relation to Recommendation 1 of the Child Protection in Religious Organisations and Settings Investigation Report.

Since the Report was published, we have taken time to discuss the findings and recommendations in several contexts. We are grateful to the Inquiry for their statement that the safeguarding policies and procedures used by The Baptist Union of Great Britain are effective, and that these are appropriately communicated and implemented across our network of churches. However, we recognise that there is always more work to do to understand and implement good practice.

In terms of Recommendation 1 we note that our evidence to the Inquiry set out our current approach to safeguarding which includes:

- Supporting all our churches to have safeguarding policies and procedures in place, and to review them regularly (including but not limited to child protection). This includes provision of a DBS checking service where costs are met through our national budgets, making this free of charge to our churches.
- Providing advice and guidance on responding to disclosures of abuse and supporting the needs of victims and survivors – we do this through our policy and procedures templates, as part of our training for leaders, staff and volunteers, through an advice and support service available through our regional and national safeguarding leads, and through additional guidance and resources available to all of our churches. All our safeguarding resources are provided to churches free of charge.
- Our policy and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis, and we take advice from those with professional experience in child protection in our review process
- For our accredited ministers, regular attendance at our safeguarding training is a condition of continuing accreditation
- For our church leaders, trustees, staff and volunteers, including those holding the role of Designated Person for Safeguarding in their churches, we provide three levels of safeguarding training relating to their specific needs. During lockdown, when face to face training has not been

possible, we have provided online training covering the key points of our programmes, accompanied by online question and answer sessions with our safeguarding trainers.

Moving on to outline the action we have taken since the publication of the Report:

- You have already seen our initial statement, published on our website on 2 September 2021, which sets out our early response.
- Our Safeguarding and Ministries Teams have taken time to look at the findings and to review our working practices to look for opportunities for improvement.
- Our National Safeguarding Contacts group, made up of our Regional Safeguarding Leads, national safeguarding trainers and national safeguarding team, have met and reviewed the Report's findings in the light of their joint responsibility for advice and guidance to our churches.
- At their meeting in September 2021 our Trustee Board met to review the Report and its recommendations and at their subsequent meeting in December 2021 they received and approved the next three-year safeguarding plan, which incorporates the key projects and activities we will be focusing on in terms of improving safeguarding standards across our network of churches. A copy of that plan is attached for the Inquiry Panel. We hope that this demonstrates our ongoing commitment to excellence in safeguarding, and to a pattern of review and continuous improvement.

We are grateful to the Inquiry Panel for the chance to provide our response to Recommendation 1. We are committed to listening carefully and applying the learning from the Inquiry's findings, and to continuing to support all our member churches and organisations as they work towards excellence in safeguarding.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Stone
HR and Safeguarding Team Leader