

NSPCC
Faith, Religion and Safeguarding

NSPCC Internal Briefing Paper

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Introduction

This paper provides a brief overview of some key factors relating to faith, religion and safeguarding children. It aims to provide NSPCC staff with information about safeguarding children where faith or religion is part of the context. The paper provides advice and an appendix of useful contacts. It has derived from practice and consultancy experience.

The NSPCC has had contact with or is working with the following faith organisations:

- Catholic Office for the Protection of children and vulnerable adults COPCA
- Church of England
- The Methodist Church
- The Jesus Christ Church Latter Day Saints
- The Baptist Union of Wales
- Islamic Relief
- Kent Muslim Welfare Association
- Churches Agency for Safeguarding
- Seventh Day Adventist
- Churches Together in Britain and Ireland – Minority Ethnic Christian Affairs

The legislation and guidance that shapes safeguarding and child protection in all 4 nations advise that faith and religion of the child and family should be considered when working to safeguard children. The degree to which this actually happens varies.

No faith or religion encourages or supports the abuse of children. Any practice that causes significant harm to children should be the subject of child protection enquiries, whether or not religion or faith is part of the context. There are likely to be very sensitive issues to consider in any intervention. The focus should always remain on the child and their welfare should be paramount. There are powerful factors which can influence individuals and agencies endeavouring to maintain this basic premise when cases involve religion and faith.

Many faith groups have developed safeguards for children and have policy and procedures in place about how to manage concerns. Again, however, there will be factors which influence the implementation of these processes at a local level. The following cases illustrate this.

Examples

An allegation was made against a priest that he had sexually and physically assaulted a young man of 19 years old. The priest had known the young man through his role as school priest. The Bishop did not want to pursue the concern within child protection procedures as the young man was 19 years old at the time of the allegation. The priest was still active in the school.

A CRB disclosure for a woman wanting to take up a post as a Sunday school teacher was returned with information that she had convictions of cruelty to her own children 5 years previously. She was appointed on the basis that she had sought redemption in the eyes of the Lord and her adult children had forgiven her. No consideration to risk was given to this appointment. No other volunteers had come forward to take on the post.

A nun as a teacher physically and emotionally abused a 5 year old over a period of weeks. The incidents were reported to the parents, who attended a meeting at the school. The nun was retired from her teaching position and the parents agreed not to take any further action as they didn't want to jeopardise their children's places in the upper schools. The nun remained active within the school.

A police authority was faced with 20 separate allegations about physical abuse within a Madrassah. The children had reported incidents to their school teachers over a period of time. None of the parents wished to pursue the complaints and claimed it was a normal practice of the Imman to physically chastise the children when necessary. The police took no further action.

Several allegations were made by teenage boys of inappropriate sexual behaviour by a youth leader. The youth leader was also a pastor, well respected and managing worship and youth activities in a highly deprived London borough. When he was appointed they knew he had a conviction of indecent assault 20 years previously. He claimed that it had been sexual experimentation into homosexuality, which he had since renounced as sinful and the work of the devil. The faith based organisation reprimanded the leader and put safeguarding measures in place that he was not to have boys visiting his home after dark.

Safeguarding children within a context that involves faith or religion can be inhibited. These inhibitors can be explored within three aspects:

1. The individual
2. Organisation
3. External agency

The inhibitors within each of the aspects all interact, influence each other and subsequently impact on effective working together.

1. Individual Inhibitors

Whether or not you practice a faith or religion, your life, your beliefs, will at some level be touched if not shaped by religion. In the UK our legal system and calendar has evolved from religious beliefs and values. The media constantly influences us with news and information about faith groups, often inaccurate. As an individual you should take time to stop and think about your personal views and opinions about different religions. It is difficult to maintain objectivity. If you do hold religious beliefs how do you manage these when they are in conflict with situations that arise in your professional life?

For example questions or cases involving:

- Women's rights and roles in society
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans gender people
- Child sexual abuse and homosexuality
- Children born outside of marriage
- Abortion
- Physical punishment
- Fasting
- Circumcision
- Disability
- Blood transfusion
- Divorce
- Power of prayer
- Deliverance ministry
- Exorcism
- Witchcraft
- Spirit Possession

These are often the controversial topics which as individual you may hold very strong views about. There are many others that are not quite so obvious.

When dealing with inquiries or cases that involve a faith dimension the individuals with whom you communicate may also hold very different views about such topics. Therefore judgments, decisions and safeguarding intervention can often be influenced by these conscious or sub conscious views.

Individuals will have personal value and belief systems which may or may not be consciously shaped by faith and religion. Everyone is entitled to their personal values. However, individuals need to think about their personal beliefs and how these may influence their judgements or capacity to safeguard children. There are many influences on our lives that originate in faith but we do not consciously recognise as such now.

Practical tips

- Find out and use the correct terminology for
 - the venue/building where worship takes place e.g. Church, Synagogue, Mosque
 - the religious leader e.g. Rabbi, Pastor, Priest, Imman
 - the service or type of worship e.g. Mass, Meeting, House Ministry

- the focus of their faith e.g. God, Jesus, Allah, Confucius, and the language of prayer
- It is ok to say you are unfamiliar with a religion and will need some help in understanding the context of that faith.
- If concerns are raised about how children are treated or disciplined and it is explained that this 'practice' is usual within that faith – it is OK to check this out with authoritative sources. A key question to bear in mind is 'what might be the impact of such a practice on a child's development and well being?'
- Take account of and manage your own feelings and thoughts about different faiths and religions.
- Do not make assumptions; many faiths and religions have very different branches which practice and believe different things. Also people who belong to a particular faith may practice their religion in different ways and adhere to only some or all of the religion's practices.
- Do not discriminate – either by minimising concerns or being influenced by negative prejudicial opinions – cultural or religious relativism

2. Faith Organisation Inhibitors

As with all effective protection it is important to consider the context in which both safeguarding and/or abuse occurs.

There are several elements that influence safeguarding within situations where faith or religion plays a part. These factors need to be considered at every level and within every section of the faith community including:

- recruitment and selection
- direct services and contact with children
- management and strategic planning
- pastoral care and support to people/children who have been harmed, offenders and communities.

One of the primary lessons from research and experience is that a failure in leadership to protect children in organisations is grounded in an institutional and social context that allows misconduct to happen. This is not because of the weakness of one person but that there is a context that permits abuse to happen and go unchallenged.

Faith and religious communities provide a specific context which can be examined to explore the relationship between their circumstances and with patterns of abuse, offending cycles, and the power and spiritual influences that operate.

There are factors which may affect how faith organisations respond to safeguarding concerns. All of the factors affect the interface between faith organisations and child protection agencies.

Relationships/ perceptions of women and children -how are women and children perceived? Are women seen as equals? Do children have a voice and their rights respected? How are women or children perceived who have been sexually abused?

Social structure— which is established and permits history to continue. Society may not believe that religious people could abuse and abusive practices are explained away as being necessary on religious grounds.

Belief systems— the language of many faiths identifies that there is good and evil, victims and offenders within life and so a level of acceptance, that perpetrators of abuse exist. However, it is also believed that people who abuse children are outside of the faith community and in not following the values of the religion, have strayed and need saving.

Management tradition – this deals with how faith communities manage offenders and people who have been abused. Many faiths have strong beliefs that redemption and forgiveness can absolve people of their wrong doings. This is alongside strong beliefs around sexual virginity, sexual behaviour, purity and innocence which influence how children who have been abused are treated.

Manipulation of the System by Offenders – There have been many high profile cases in the media about religious leaders who have sexually abused children but it may not be just leaders who manipulate their positions to abuse. Any individual can/could use the system to obtain or sustain power through a position of trust, virtuous role, or by being an indispensable member and then manipulate their position to exploit or abuse others.

Wider society -There are the wider societal systems, which do not challenge the power and trust that religious leaders or representatives receive.

Faith organisations may:

- believe ‘outsiders’ cannot understand them
- have had bitter experience of disrespectful practice by external agencies
- feel fear and shame about exposing failures in their people and system
- need to believe that abuse just couldn’t happen in their community
- not want to appear disloyal to their community

Faith organisations or religious groups may need advice about their safeguarding responsibilities. The appendix provides some useful contacts and local groups may not realise their religion has national systems for safeguarding children. The NSPCC consultancy service and evaluation department can assist faith organisations in developing safeguarding strategies. The diversity and awareness team work with black and minority ethnic faiths and religions and NSPCC external training services can provide training.

3. External agency inhibitors including child protection agencies

There are factors which may affect how external organisations respond to safeguarding concerns when faith or religion issues are involved. External organisations may:

- lack knowledge about the faith which inhibits usual good practice

- practice reverence to faith systems and religious individuals which they (consciously or unconsciously) believe are inherently non-abusive
- not wish to question or challenge faith groups for fear of being deemed discriminatory or prejudiced
- may fear hostile reactions including community unrest
- be unintentionally disrespectful and therefore alienate potential allies who would assist in any intervention

Practical Tips

- develop local links and relationships with key individuals within faith communities
- consult a diary of faith festivals and regular days of worship
- consider meeting in a neutral venue, not the place of worship
- consult national organisations for advice about religious practice and beliefs
- involve faith communities in children and young people partnerships and LSCB work
- if concerns do not reach a threshold for statutory intervention the faith group may have internal processes for dealing with concerns. So enter dialogue with the faith group about how the concerns can be addressed. This may also assist them improve practice and safeguards when working with children.
- many faith organisations are managed by committees or leaders who would need to be consulted about any concerns or safeguarding issues.
- hold onto what you know about what harms children and be questioning of any practises that contribute to harm however they might be justified.

Factual Information

No-one can know everything about all faiths. But when a case involves faith it is sensible to do some research. The following information provides broad guidance about many faiths and religions. It is not comprehensive. If you have any other information about anything listed here or faiths that are not included please contact Helen Edwards, (hedwards@nspcc.org.uk).

Note about the Appendix

There are many faiths and religions, which whilst highly organised do not have national structures of governance. Organisations are managed locally often by committees and often registered with the Charities Commission. This might include: Mosques, Synagogues, Temples, Gurdwaras. Therefore some of the organisational contacts listed do not have any management or governance over individuals or places of worship but will be able to provide general information about the faith.

The information is listed alphabetically. Some faiths may be members of affiliation bodies, so the main information may be given under this. There may also be different entries under different categories so for example Judaism is represented by British Jews, Reform of Synagogues, Liberal Judaism etc.

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Faith/ Religion	Structure/ safeguarding systems	Useful Contacts
Apostolic Church of Great Britain and Ireland	Pentecostal Trinitarian denomination with national organisation.	Apostolic Church PO 389 24-27 St Helen's Road Swansea SA1 1ZH 01792 473992 admin@apostolic-church.org
Association of Christian Counsellors (ACC)	Gives advice about training, accreditation and supervision of Christian counsellors.	ACC 29 Momus Boulevard, Coventry CV2 5NA 02476449694 http://www.acc-uk.org office@acc-uk.org
Baha'i Faith	The Faith has no clergy, or individuals in positions of personal leadership, and is administered by elected bodies at local, national and international levels.	Carmel Momen, Public Information Officer, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the UK. 020-7590 8785. opi@bahai.org.uk
Baptist Union	A member of Churches Agency for Safeguarding (CAS).	Baptist House PO box 44 129 Broadway, Didcot Oxfordshire OX11 8RT 01235517700 info@baptist.org.uk http://www.baptist.org.uk/ http://www.scottishbaptist.org.uk/ advisor (England) Alan Elson. aelson@baptist.org.uk
Baptist Union of Wales	Nation safeguarding advisor in post.	http://www.bedyddwyr-baptistwales.co.uk/ Clive Sheridan – safeguarding advisor 01437 765067

Board of Deputies of British Jews	The essence of the Board is its representative character. This is based upon a system of delegates (or Deputies) elected from the great majority of Jewish communal organisations, including synagogues, social and welfare organisations, local community bodies and many others.	The Board of Deputies, 6 Bloomsbury Square, London, WC1A 2LP 020 7543 5400 http://www.bod.org.uk/bod/
Buddhist Society	The Object of the Society is to publish and make known the principles of the major Buddhist Schools and traditions and to encourage the study and practice of those principles.	The Buddhist Society, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PH 020 7834 5858 info@thebuddhistsociety.org
Catholic Church in England and Wales	A national safeguarding strategy including: policy and procedures “a Programme for Action” 2001, parish and diocese child protection designated persons. Catholic Office for the Protection of children and vulnerable adults COPCA – available for consultation.	Eileen Shearer Director COPCA Cathedral house, 4 th Floor St Chads Queensway Birmingham B4 6EX 0121 2331963 eileen.shearer@copca.org.uk http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/ http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/copca/copca.htm
Child protection in the Madrasah sector	A booklet providing guidance for Madrasah’s. Also see Lancashire Madrasah project.	http://www.blackburn.gov.uk/server.php?show=ConWebDoc.1076
Christian Survivors of Sexual Abuse And Ministers and Clergy	An organisation for Christian adults who have experienced abuse A group for women and men sexually	BM-CSSA, London WC1N 3XX

Sexual Abuse Survivors MACSAS	abused by clergy or ministers as children or as adults	C/O as CSSA above
Church of England	A national safeguarding strategy including: “Protecting all God’s Children” House of Bishops 2004, parish and diocese child protection designated persons. National Child protection advisor Pearl Luxon AC Secretariat.	Church of England Church House Great Smith Street London SW1P 3NZ 02078981330 pearl.luxon@c-of-e.org.uk http://www.cofe.anglican.org/
Church of Scotland (in England).	A member of CAS.	Contact CAS for advice.
Churches Agency for Safeguarding	The CAS is an ecumenical Umbrella Body initially set up by 10 denominations. It operates through the Methodist Church as an umbrella body under terms of CRB. Manages disclosures and available for advice. Rev Pearl Luxon Director of CAS	The Methodist House 25 Marylebone road London NW1 5JR 02074865502 020 7467 5216 Application form requests – call - 020 7467 5206 CAS@methodistchurch.org.uk http://www.filewiz.co.uk/cas/safeguarding_standards_in_recruitment___final.pdf
Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS)	Provides support and training, and can advise on policy formulation and help in individual cases of abuse.	CCPAS PO box 133, Swanley Kent BR8 7UQ 08451204550 helpline:08451204551 http://www.ccpas.co.uk info@ccpas.co.uk
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)	There are many different Christian churches and denominations they often need to work together. CTBI is the member organisation they use to do this. Supported and facilitated by a skilled and committed staff team, it networks specialists across the churches, arranges	Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) 3rd Floor, Bastille Court, 2 Paris Garden, London, SE1 8ND 020 7654 7254 info@ctbi.org.uk www.ctbi.org.uk

	regular meetings of church representatives - including periodic major assemblies - and links the churches to a wide range of inter-church organisations.	
<p>Churches Together Membership includes: African Instituted Churches, Anglican Churches, Baptistic Churches Bodies that group Churches across different traditions, Congregational Churches, Lutheran churches, Methodist Churches, Orthodox Churches, Oriental Orthodox Churches, Pentecostal Churches, Reformed Churches, Roman Catholic Church, Other Traditions</p>		
Congregational Federation	A member of CAS.	<p>The Congregational Federation 8 Castle Gate, Nottingham NG1 7AS 0115 911 1460 National Advisor Stephen Haward stephenhaward@Congregational.org.uk admin@congregational.org.uk Contact for Wales: http://www.haverfordwest.freeserve.co.uk/cfwales/</p>
Friends of the Western Buddha Order	This is an international network which is dedicated to Buddhists truths.	http://www.fwbo.org/
Habonim Dror UK	Habonim Dror is a nationwide youth movement and who run weekly activities all over the country as well as residential summer and winter camps. We seek to create a unique environment at our events, based on our ideology of Zionism, Cultural Judaism and Socialism.	<p>523 Finchley Road, London, NW3 7BD 020 7435 9033</p> <p>28 Wilton Road, Crumpsall, Manchester, M8 4WQ 0161 795 9447</p> <p>http://www.habodror.org.uk</p>
Hindu Council UK Hindu Council UK represents an amalgamation of all the Hindu	The main purpose of the council is to give the UK Hindus an effective voice on policy matters with the Government of the day whilst enhancing mutual understanding among the major faiths	<p>Hindu Council UK 126-128 Uxbridge Road, London, W13 8QS info@hinducouncil.org.uk</p>

denominations in the UK	predominant in the UK. Hindu Council UK is itself a non-partisan faith organisation.	
<p>Hindu Denominations : Sanatan Dharma, including the Iskon (Hare Krishna) movement and Swami Narayan Hindu Mission in the UK, Arya Samaj, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Others</p>		
Independent Methodist Church	A member of CAS.	Contact CAS for advice. http://www.imcgb.org.uk/
Inter Faith Network for the UK	The Inter Faith Network for the UK works to build good relations between the different religious communities in the UK at both national and local levels. It works with its member bodies to help make the country marked by mutual understanding and respect between religions where all can practise their faith with integrity.	The Inter Faith Network for the UK 8A Lower Grosvenor Place, London, SW1W 0EN 020 7931 7766 ifnet@interfaith.org.uk
<p>Inter Faith Network for the UK members - Arya Pratinidhi Sabha (UK), Baha'i Community of the UK, Board of Deputies of British Jews, Buddhist Society, Churches Agency for Inter Faith Relations in Scotland, Churches' Commission for Inter-Faith Relations Council of African & Afro-Caribbean Churches (UK), Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, Hindu Council (UK), Imams and Mosques Council (UK), Islamic Cultural Centre, Regents Park, Jain Samaj Europe, Jamiat-e-Ulama Britain (Association of Muslim Scholars), National Council of Hindu Temples, Network of Buddhist Organisations (UK), Network of Sikh Organisations (UK), Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations, Roman Catholic Committee for Other Faiths, Bishops' Conference of England & Wales, Sri Lankan Sangha Sabha of G.B, Swaminarayan Hindu Mission, The Muslim Council of Britain, Unitarian and Free Christian Churches Inter Faith Panel, Vishwa Hindu Parishad (UK), World Ahlul-Bayt Islamic League, World Islamic Mission (UK), Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe</p>		

<p>Islamic Cultural Centre & The London central Mosque</p>	<p>The ICC acts on behalf of all British Muslims vis-a-vis the government. local authorities and official bodies. The ICC runs a comprehensive Health & Social Services Department dealing with all aspects of health affecting the community. If you need any of the following, then the ICC may be able to help you: Public Health advice; Food safety info; Health & Safety at work; Halal food guidance</p>	<p>The Islamic Cultural Centre & The London Central Mosque 146 Park Road. London. NW8 7RG info@iccuk.org www.iccuk.org</p>
<p>Jehovah Witness</p>	<p>There are many websites that provide some information on this faith.</p>	
<p>Jesus Christ Church of Latter Day Saints</p>	<p>The headquarters of this faith are USA based. There are some regional offices. Use website for more information and look in “newsroom”.</p>	<p>Church Offices, 751 Warwick Road, Solihull, West Midlands, B91 3DQ 0121 712 1207 http://www.lds.org.uk</p>
<p>Kent Muslim Welfare Association</p>	<p>Contact Shaffiq Din shaffiqdin@hotmail.com</p>	<p>Kent Muslim Welfare Association 114 Canterbury St, Gillingham, Kent, ME7 5UH 01634 850878 http://www.kmwa.org.uk/index.htm</p>
<p>Lancashire Mosques Project</p>	<p>This project provides guidelines, available in different ethnic mediums, to enable Madrasah administrators to further enhance their current management policies and practices regarding child welfare issues.</p>	<p>http://www.lancashiremosques.com/projects_details.asp?ID=6</p>

<p>Liberal Judaism</p>	<p>The organisation was founded in 1902 by men and women committed to the ideal of a liberal philosophy in order to ensure the continuity of Jewish faith, tradition, practice and ethics within a contemporary framework. This is through services, public meetings, sermons, writings and inspiring leadership. The movement they founded, the Jewish Religious union, was later renamed the Union of Liberal & Progressive Synagogues, now known as Liberal Judaism.</p>	<p>Liberal Judaism The Montagu Centre, 21 Maple Street, London, W1T 4BE +44 (0) 20 7580 1663 montagu@liberaljudaism.org http://www.liberaljudaism.org/index.htm</p>
<p>Lutheran Council of Great Britain</p>	<p>A member of CAS. The Council represents and co-ordinates the common work of ten different Lutheran churches that have congregations or chaplaincies in Great Britain. Each church will be encouraged to implement child protection policies and procedures.</p>	<p>Lutheran Council of Great Britain 30 Thanet Street London WC1H 9QH +44 (0)20 7554 2900 enquiries@lutheran.org.uk</p>
<p>Methodist Church</p>	<p>A national safeguarding strategy “Safeguarding – a policy for good practice in the care of Children and Young People” National child protection officer Rev. Pearl Luxon</p>	<p>The Methodist House 25 Marylebone road London NW1 5JR 02074865502 LuxonP@methodistchurch.org.uk http://www.methodist.org.uk/</p>
<p>Moravian Church in the British Province</p>	<p>A member of CAS. Guidelines “Safe Space” are issued to local churches for them to develop their own policy and procedures.</p>	<p>Moravian Church House, 5 Muswell Hill, London N103TJ 020 8883 3409 office@moravian.org.uk Sheila Mitchell: youth@moravian.org.uk</p>

		http://www.moravian.org.uk/
Muslim Council of Great Britain	To co-ordinate, encourage consensus on Islamic affairs in the UK. To promote education about Islam, eradicate discrimination and foster good relations with wider society.	Boardman House, 64 Broadway, Stratford, London E15 1NT 0208 432 0585/6 admin@mcb.org.uk
Old Baptist Union	A member of CAS.	Contact CAS for advice.
Reform Synagogues of Great Britain	Purpose to build a Movement in which dynamic, growing communities of faith and learning live out the values of Reform Judaism.	RSGB London Office: The Sternberg Centre, 80 East End Road, London, N3 2SY 020 8349 5700 admin@reformjudaism.org.uk
Salvation Army	National safeguarding policy and procedures "Safe and Sound" 2000. National child protection person Mr Dean Juster The Haven, Springfield London SE26 6HG 02086768957	http://www1.salvationarmy.org.uk/uki/www_uki.nsf/vw-dynamic-index/C111C0A6DAF3431F80256EF9004C856D?openDocument
Seventh Day Adventist Church	National child protection policy and procedure "Keeping Our Church Family Safe".	Communication Department Seventh-day Adventist Church Headquarters, Stanborough Park, Watford WD25 9JZ 01923 672251 info@adventist.org.uk http://www.adventist.org.uk/
Sikh Information websites		http://www.info-sikh.com/ http://www.sikhchamber.com/ http://www.sikhworld.co.uk/page1.html

Society of Friends	Previously known as “Quakers”. A member of CAS. This faith does not have a model of national governance as such. Regional and national meetings do take place but locally meetings are organised by committees, mostly unpaid staff.	Friends House, 173 Euston Road London NW1 2BJ http://www.quaker.org.uk/
United Reformed Church	A member of CAS.	Church House 86 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9RT, United Kingdom 020 7916 2020 urc@urc.org.uk
United Synagogue Agency for Jewish Education	The United Synagogue Agency for Jewish Education seeks to be the professional training and curriculum resource for Jewish enrichment in the schools and synagogues of the modern, orthodox community	Bet Meir 44a Albert Road London, NW4 2SJ 020 8457 9700 info@aje.org.uk
Wesleyan Reform Church	A member of CAS	Contact CAS for advice.