



## SAFEGUARDING CONTRACT

Your questions answered

## What is a Contract of Agreement?

A Contract of Agreement ('Contract') is a written agreement between an individual and the appointed representatives of a church, outlining conditions under which they can attend church services and activities and be part of church life.

## When does a Contract need to be put in place?

- ❖ When someone has an allegation of inappropriate or abusive behaviour towards children and young people or adults at risk made against them
- ❖ When someone is convicted of offences relating to harm caused to children and young people or adults at risk
- ❖ When someone is cautioned for offences relating to harm caused to children and young people or adults at risk
- ❖ When the church, local association or national safeguarding team receive information from the statutory authorities that they have concerns about the behaviour of an individual in relation to children and young people or adults at risk

## Why are Contracts important?

Contracts help to safeguard everyone involved in church life, especially those who are vulnerable. A contract also helps those who are subject to it by ensuring that they have strong, supportive and accountable relationships within the church. These accountable relationships help minimise the risk of them reoffending or behaving inappropriately.

## Who needs to be involved in putting a contract in place?

A small group of people will be chosen to confidentially oversee the contract and support the offender / alleged offender in church life. Details should not be shared with other people within the church. This will usually be:

- ❖ Church Designated Person for Safeguarding
- ❖ Minister
- ❖ Safeguarding trustee
- ❖ A couple of church trustees

The appointed team are responsible for:

- ❖ putting the contract in place
- ❖ ensuring that it is implemented
- ❖ checking that the individual abides by the conditions outlined within it.

The contract will usually be reviewed at least every 6 months, to check that it is being adhered to and that the individual remains accountable to the appointed team.



A regular review will also ensure that the contract contains all the relevant points and that any updates in the case (eg the individual being charged by the police or found guilty by the court) are reflected within it.

Outside of the church, the Local Association Safeguarding Contact also needs to be involved in the process of putting a contract in place, and depending on the circumstances, possibly also the statutory authorities and the Baptist Union National Safeguarding Team.

## What is the process for putting a contract in place?

- ❖ It is vital that you contact your local **Association Safeguarding Contact** before putting a contract in place as they can offer valuable advice and support. They also have access to an example contract for you to use as a template for your church. They can help you to adapt the wording so it is appropriate for your situation.
- ❖ If anyone from the statutory authorities (police, social services, probation service) has been in contact with you about the individual, or you know that the statutory authorities are involved, you should show the contract to them to check that they are happy with the suggested wording.
- ❖ Once you have agreed the contract wording with the Association Safeguarding Contact and any relevant statutory authorities, you will need to arrange to meet with the subject of the contract so that you can talk them through it. Your Association Safeguarding Contact will be happy to come along to the meeting if that would be helpful.

## What happens at the meeting?

Be aware that the process for agreeing a contract process can invoke strong emotions and that the individual may feel nervous or angry and may be upset or defensive about the process in hand. We suggest that you start the meeting with a time of prayer.

It is helpful to outline at an early stage the ways in which you are able to support the individual and take this time to remind them that they are a valued part of your church family.

It can also be helpful to provide reassurance that this is the procedure recommended by the Baptist Union of Great Britain, that it is consistently followed in the same way and is nothing personal.

Once you have talked through the specific contract wording and had a chance to clarify any questions they may have, the contract needs to be signed and dated both by the individual and the appointed team monitoring it. A review date should also be agreed and recorded on the contract.

Spend some time talking through the contract in the meeting. It is important to clearly explain the process being followed and the reason for the contract being put in place in the first place, in a way that the individual can understand.

Following the meeting a copy of the contract should be given to the Association Safeguarding Contact, along with the relevant person within the statutory authorities involved. The individual subject to the contract should also receive a copy, and another copy should be stored securely by the church Designated Person for Safeguarding.

### **What if an individual refuses to sign the contract?**

If an individual won't sign the contract, then your church is left in a position of potentially unmanaged risk. It is crucial that your church is as safe a place as possible for the sake of everyone involved in church life. We strongly advise that the individual is not allowed to attend your church unless a signed contract is put in place.

### **What if an individual breaches the terms of the contract?**

This will need to be addressed on a case by case basis, seeking advice from your local Association Safeguarding Contact. It may be that as a result of the breach the individual is asked to stop attending your church, as you are no longer in a position where potential risks are being well managed. Depending on the nature of the breach, it may also be that you need to report the situation to the statutory authorities. Again, always seek advice from your local Association Safeguarding Contact, who is there to support you.

### **What if an individual moves to a new church?**

If the individual moves to a new church the appointed team are responsible for ensuring that the new church are aware of the safeguarding concerns and the need for a contract.

### **What if our church has already got someone else on a contract?**

If you're already managing somebody else on a contract, you will need to assess whether your church has the capacity to safely manage and monitor an additional individual. Unless you have a specialist ministry in this area we wouldn't recommend having more than two people on a contract at any one time within your church. The safest solution is for any additional individuals to attend another church in your area, ensuring that the new church is aware of the safeguards needed and that they are equipped to put them in place.

## **What support is there for the people that are managing the contract?**

It is important that those people who are responsible for managing the contract also receive support. It is worth remembering that the circumstances leading to a contract being put in place often illicit a strong emotional response. It might also be that the individual who is subject to the contract has been in the church for a long time or is a well-liked member. Sometimes this makes it difficult to believe that they could be a risk to others within the church; particularly if they have not yet been to Court/convicted.

The subject of the contract might also be giving explanations for their past behaviour or deny that the behaviour took place. People involved in offending are usually very plausible and can groom those around them.

The people managing the contract are just as vulnerable to grooming as other members of the congregation. Whilst it is important that confidentiality is maintained (including not sharing information about the contract for prayer purposes) the people involved in this contract should feel able to talk and reflect on their thoughts and feelings in a safe, confidential and supportive environment.

It is important that this support is offered outside of the immediate church environment to maintain confidentiality, and to ensure some objectivity in the discussions. For this reason, we encourage you to contact your local Association Safeguarding Contact and they will help to arrange this support with an external organisation.

**If you are unsure about anything in the contract process**

**please contact your local**

**Association Safeguarding Contact in the first instance**



**This guide has been produced for use in Baptist churches in England and Wales**

**Issue Date: May 2017**

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