

Quick Guide to Faith & Safeguarding

For Statutory Professionals

A practical guide for statutory professionals to understand the safeguarding structures, leadership, and theological perspectives of major UK faith groups –supporting culturally competent and inclusive safeguarding practice.



Hello there!

Welcome!

This guide is designed as a reference tool for statutory professionals working with people of faith. It offers a snapshot of the structures, leadership, and safeguarding approaches across six major UK religions.

While it provides useful context, it is not a substitute for engagement. As our panellists emphasise, **effective safeguarding relies on dialogue, trust-building, and professional curiosity**. Use this guide to inform your understanding—but always be prepared to ask questions, listen actively, and learn from the communities you serve.

Your Thirtyone:eight Training Team

Safeguarding in the major faith groups in the UK



CHRISTIANITY

Churches often have formal safeguarding structures in place, but practices vary by denomination, so it's important to identify the specific governance and safeguarding lead.



ISLAM

Mosques are typically independent and community-led, so building relationships with local Imams and committees is key to effective safeguarding.



HINDUISM

Temples are usually managed by local trusts, and safeguarding practices may be informal—professional curiosity and respectful engagement are essential.



SIKHISM

Gurdwaras are community-run and often open to collaboration, especially when safeguarding is approached with cultural sensitivity and respect for Sikh values like seva (selfless service).



BUDDHISM

Buddhist centres vary widely in structure and tradition, so understanding the specific lineage and leadership is important when addressing safeguarding concerns.



JUDAISM

Synagogues often have clear safeguarding policies, particularly within larger umbrella organisations, but practices may differ between Orthodox and Progressive communities.



“I think there needs to be an honest dialogue between the teams, to explain and understand each other’s roles and how we can support an investigation.”

— Safeguarding advisor in a Humanist Church in England



Ask if you should **remove shoes** or **cover your head**.

Check what’s **respectful to wear**.

Use **correct titles** for faith leaders.

Be **mindful of gender dynamics**



Don’t **assume everyone practises** the same way.

Don’t touch **sacred items** without permission.

Don’t joke about religious beliefs or customs.

	Places of worship	Faith leaders	UK Diaspora
Christianity	Church, Chapel, Cathedral	Priest, Pastor, Minister, Vicar, Reverend	Widespread across all ethnicities; includes African, Caribbean, Eastern European, and Latin American communities
Islam	Mosque	Imam	Large South Asian (Pakistani, Bangladeshi), Arab, Somali, and Turkish communities
Hinduism	Mandir (Temple)	Pujari, Pandit	Predominantly Indian diaspora, including Gujarati and Punjabi communities
Sikhism	Gurdwara	Granthi	Predominantly Punjabi Sikh communities
Buddhism	Vihara, Temple, Centre	Monk, Lama, Teacher	Thai, Tibetan, Sri Lankan, Chinese, and Western converts
Judaism	Synagogue	Rabbi	Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities, including from Eastern Europe, Middle East, and North Africa

Different faith communities **approach safeguarding in different ways**, have access to different resources and have different religious views on many situations that overlap with Safeguarding in the UK, such as physical chastisement. This is a guide only, there's no one-size-fits-all.



Christianity

Safeguarding Bodies: Church of England Safeguarding Team, Methodist Safeguarding, Thirtyone:Eight and others

Physical Chastisement: Increasingly discouraged; opposed by major denominations

Disability: Emphasis on inclusion, dignity, and spiritual equality

Elderly & Vulnerable Care: Strong pastoral care and community support

Safeguarding Bodies: Muslim Council of Britain, Faith Associates

Physical Chastisement: Debated; many scholars discourage it

Disability: Seen as a test from God; inclusion encouraged, though stigma may persist

Elderly & Vulnerable Care: High value on family-based care



Islam

"Safeguarding is faith. Faith is safeguarding. There is no tension—and if there is, we have to remove it."
— Sukhvinder Kaur, Sikh Women's Aid





Hinduism

Safeguarding Bodies: Local temple committees, NSPCC, interfaith partnerships

Physical Chastisement: Traditionally accepted, increasingly challenged in diaspora

Disability: Sometimes linked to karma; inclusive practices growing

Elderly & Vulnerable Care: Elders revered; care often family-based

Safeguarding Bodies: Sikh Women's Aid, local Gurdwara committees

Physical Chastisement: Discouraged; dignity and equality emphasised

Disability: Not seen as punishment; promotes equality and service

Elderly & Vulnerable Care: Strong tradition of seva (selfless service)



Sikhism



Buddhism

Safeguarding Bodies: Local sanghas, SCIE, interfaith networks

Physical Chastisement: Generally rejected; non-violence is central

Disability: Viewed through compassion and suffering; varies by tradition

Elderly & Vulnerable Care: Compassionate care and mindfulness valued

Safeguarding Bodies: United Synagogue, Reshet

Physical Chastisement: Traditionally permitted, now widely discouraged

Disability: Increasingly inclusive; historical views vary

Elderly & Vulnerable Care: Honouring elders is a mitzvah; strong community care



Judaism

Common* Safeguarding Practices Across FBOs

According to legislation, guidance and policy – including charity regulators' requirements – all faith-based organisations should:

- 1) Have a designated safeguarding lead. The title may change, but the role broadly remains the same.
- 2) Have a written safeguarding policy that includes safer recruitment.
- 3) Conduct criminal record checks (DBS, PVG, AccessNI) for staff and volunteers where applicable.
- 4) Take reasonable steps to ensure staff and volunteers are suitable.
- 5) Maintain records, conduct risk assessments, and provide training.
- 6) Follow relevant charity regulators' guidance on safeguarding and governance (if they are a registered charity).

*All religious groups will have some locations/local faith communities that have these in place, but the adoption of these practices is not universal in any religion.

Who we are:

Thirtyone:eight is an independent Christian safeguarding charity working across the UK. While rooted in Christian values, we serve organisations of all faiths and none, equipping them to protect vulnerable children and adults through training, consultancy, and resources. Our vision is for a world where every child and adult can feel—and be—safe.

Each year, we provide **safeguarding training** to over **11,000** people from the faith and community sector, support more than **12,000 organisations**, and respond to around **9,000 safeguarding helpline calls**. Our name comes from a verse in the bible, Proverbs 31:8: “Speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the rights of those who are vulnerable.” This is our mandate and the foundation of our work.

This resource has been developed to support statutory professionals in engaging confidently and respectfully with faith communities in safeguarding contexts.