

Brighton & Hove Hebrew Congregation: Safeguarding Protection Policy and Procedures

Policy Document – December 2025, updated July 2026

1. Introduction

Everyone has the right to live a life free from harm and abuse, and to feel safe while attending Brighton & Hove Hebrew Congregation (BHHC). This policy aims to foster a safeguarding ethos and inform all members of BHHC about its principles and procedures.

These guidelines are intended for all individuals participating in BHHC activities, including employees, volunteers, community members, and visitors. The policy will be accessible via the BHHC website, with a hard copy kept in the synagogue office's policy and procedures manual.

BHHC acknowledges its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults, asserting that all children and adults have the right to be protected from abuse and to feel secure at BHHC events and activities.

There is a duty of care to safeguard every member of the community, including children at risk and adults at risk involved in worship and related activities. BHHC is committed to making all services, activities, documents, and policies inclusive and accessible to the entire community.

It is important that all congregation members and visitors feel safe and welcome when attending BHHC services and activities.

BHHC will operate within the legal framework of the Children Acts 1989 and 2004. Under the Children Act 2004, anyone under 18 years is considered a child or young person. The organisation will also adhere to the Care Act 2014 to protect vulnerable adults, defined as anyone over the age of 18.

The Key Points of the Care Act 2014 for Adults

- **Empowerment:** Supporting and encouraging people to make their own decisions and give informed consent.
- **Prevention:** Acting before harm occurs is preferable.
- **Proportionality:** Responding with the least intrusive approach appropriate to the risk.
- **Protection:** Providing support and representation for those in greatest need.
- **Partnership:** Delivering local solutions through collaboration with communities. Communities play a role in preventing, detecting, and reporting neglect and abuse.
- **Accountability:** Ensuring transparency and responsibility in safeguarding practices.

Always Remember

The belief that neglect and abuse do not occur within the Jewish community is misguided.

While it may be difficult to accept that abuse can happen within places of worship, any community group or organisation working with children and adults is vulnerable.

It is the responsibility of everyone in BHHC to prioritise the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable adults, and to recognise behaviours that may place them at risk. Safeguarding is a collective responsibility.

All members, staff, and volunteers must understand the safeguarding policy. BHHC aims to offer a safe space for anyone feeling abused, neglected, threatened, or unsafe, enabling them to approach staff or volunteers confidentially for support.

If you believe a child, young person, or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger, call 999.

Abuse can be perpetrated by anyone, regardless of gender, age, or beliefs.

Our Safeguarding Policy Promotes Good Practice By:

- Providing an environment where children and adults at risk feel safe and valued.
- Offering representatives clear guidelines and procedures to follow, helping to avoid inappropriate behaviour and ensuring clear action steps if concerns arise.
- Protecting the reputation of BHHC by following safeguarding protocols when working with children, young people, and vulnerable adults.
- Promoting a safe environment for all members and visitors.
- Encouraging everyone to recognise attitudes and behaviours that may put vulnerable adults at risk.
- Acknowledging that children, young people, and adults can be victims of various abuses and adverse social factors.

BHHC strives to create an environment where children, young people, and adults can thrive, supported by clear guidance.

2. Take Immediate Action

ONLY call 999 if you believe abuse is life-threatening.

If you believe a child, young person, or adult is being abused and it is life-threatening:

- Dial 999 immediately and request Police and Ambulance services. Follow their instructions.
- Do not become involved or put yourself at risk.
- Do not discuss the incident with those involved or bystanders, as this may contaminate evidence.
- Make a detailed written record of the incident as soon as possible, including date, time, place, attendees, and a factual account of what happened and actions taken.
- Report the incident to the Designated Safeguarding Lead at BHHC.
- If the Designated Safeguarding Lead is unavailable or implicated, report to the Deputy Safeguarding Lead or BHHC Board Chair.

If the person is not in immediate danger:

If you have concerns based on observation or disclosure, but the individual is not in immediate danger:

- Report the incident to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in person, by email, or phone.
- If unavailable or implicated, report to the Deputy Safeguarding Lead or Board Chair.

- Make a detailed written record of the incident as soon as possible.

Where it is not an emergency, the Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for referral to appropriate agencies. This is not the responsibility of individual members of the BHHC community.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead may discuss concerns in confidence with other members of the safeguarding team, the police, or a care agency.

Allegations or Disclosures of Abuse

If a child, young person, or vulnerable adult makes an allegation or discloses abuse:

- Listen attentively and observe their behaviour.
- Take their account seriously through active listening without interruption or leading questions.
- Do not attempt to question or interview them yourself.
- Do not fill in gaps or make statements about what has been said.
- Inform them that you need to tell someone else to help them; do not promise secrecy.
- Report to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. If unavailable or implicated, report to the Board Chairperson, who is trained in safeguarding.
- Make a detailed written report as soon as possible.

The same protocols apply if an adult discloses abuse.

3. Recognising Signs of Abuse

Recognising abuse can be difficult. Signs listed are indicators and may have other explanations. Children and adults may behave strangely or seem unhappy for various reasons.

It is important to be alert to signs that may indicate abuse and to seek further advice.

- Abuse can be inflicted by causing harm or by failing to prevent harm.
- It can occur in families, institutions, community settings, by telephone, or online.
- Abuse may be carried out by someone known or unknown to the victim.

Definition of Categories of Abuse

- **Physical Abuse:** Includes hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, drowning, suffocating, or causing harm. Also includes fabricated symptoms or induced illness. Signs include unexplained injuries, secretive behaviour, aggression, withdrawal, compulsive eating or loss of appetite, loss of coordination, and confusion.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Persistent maltreatment causing severe and lasting emotional effects. May involve conveying worthlessness, silencing, inappropriate expectations, serious bullying, exploitation, or corruption. Signs include low self-esteem, unhappiness, anxiety, attention-seeking, withdrawal, and radicalisation.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Forcing or enticing participation in sexual activities. Activities may involve physical contact or non-contact acts, including online grooming. Signs include

awkwardness, tiredness, stomach pains, aggression, and sexually explicit behaviour or drawings.

- **Neglect:** Persistent failure to meet basic needs. May occur during pregnancy or involve lack of food, clothing, shelter, protection, supervision, medical care, or access to support. Signs include abnormal growth, unkempt appearance, smelly, hunger, poor social skills, concentration, and low self-esteem.

Forced Marriages, Underage Marriages, and Ritualistic Abuse

Forced marriage should not be confused with arranged marriages between consenting adults. Forced marriage is a criminal offence in the UK, including causing a child under 18 or a person lacking mental capacity to marry. Underage marriage is defined as causing a child under 18 to marry, regardless of coercion. The legal age of consent for sexual activity is 16.

4. Code of Conduct and Good Practice for Adults

Adults working with or participating in activities involving children, young people, or vulnerable adults must adhere to the following:

- Do not treat children or young people in a patronising way.
- Do not allow allegations to go unreported.
- Do not develop inappropriate relationships, including contact outside project activities without approval.
- Sexual relationships between staff/volunteers and children/young people are strictly prohibited.
- Do not share personal contact details with children or young people.
- Do not act in a threatening, intrusive, rude, or abusive manner.
- Do not make inappropriate promises, especially regarding confidentiality.
- Do not make suggestive or derogatory remarks or gestures.
- Do not jump to conclusions without verifying facts.
- Do not touch anyone except in emergency first aid situations, with another adult present and clear explanation provided.

Staff and volunteers must ensure, whenever possible, that more than one adult is present during activities, or at least maintain visibility or audibility with others.

- Respect a young person's right to privacy.
- Encourage individuals to speak out about behaviour that makes them uncomfortable or unsafe.
- Ensure everyone feels safe and listened to at all times, making services and activities inclusive.
- Exercise caution when discussing sensitive issues.
- Operate within the principles and specific procedures outlined in this guidance.

- Be aware of the vulnerability of the community, especially with visitors present.
- Be alert to strangers waiting outside premises without clear purpose.
- Ensure children and young people are only collected by parents or known adults unless notified.

5. Allegations Made Against BHHC Employees, Volunteers, and Community Members

The BHHC community must be aware that allegations of abuse or violence may be made against any member, employee, or volunteer. Allegations can arise for various reasons:

- Actual abuse has occurred.
- Past events are triggered by current situations, even if circumstances and people differ.
- Misinterpretation of language or actions.
- Children may make allegations as a form of retaliation or for attention.
- Cultural or generational differences can result in allegations.

All allegations must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay. If the DSL is unavailable or implicated, approach the Board Chairperson, who is trained in safeguarding. Contact details are available in the synagogue office.

If neither step is possible, ensure the person is safe and removed from the alleged abuser. Use local reporting procedures for children, contacting the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership or Board for their area. Investigations by social workers or police should result in the alleged abuser being prevented from working with children until cleared. Consider informing other organisations where the alleged abuser has access to children. All incidents must be reviewed internally after external investigations conclude, to improve organisational practice and prevent recurrence.

6. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

BHHC follows guidance from Brighton & Hove Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Government regarding information sharing. Where there are concerns that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of significant harm, information may be shared without consent. BHHC aims to balance confidentiality with the necessity of protecting individuals.

Information sharing with external agencies occurs only to prevent abuse. Information must be shared when:

- A child or young person discloses abuse, or there are serious concerns about abuse.
- Other children are at risk, such as siblings in the same situation.
- A person under 18 is at risk and disclosure could prevent harm.
- There is immediate risk of violence or harm to self or others.
- A young person is unable to make rational decisions due to alcohol, drugs, or mental health breakdown.
- There is risk-taking behaviour that places the young person in immediate danger.
- Disclosure of acts of terrorism (legal obligation to inform Police).

- An allegation of misconduct is made against a Volunteer or Employee.

Whenever possible, the young person should be kept informed and supported. If breaching confidentiality is necessary, BHHC will seek consent, but may proceed without it if it is unobtainable, a legal obligation exists, or the person cannot take responsibility for their actions.

Parents are usually informed at the same time as the report is made, except where local guidance advises against it, typically when the parent or family member is the likely abuser.

7. Safe Recruitment

Rigorous recruitment procedures for employees and volunteers are crucial to reducing risk. Minimum standards include:

- All prospective employees and volunteers must complete an application form detailing past employment or volunteering and provide two referees.
- All involved with children must undergo a new Enhanced DBS check before starting work.
- Anyone refusing a DBS check cannot work with children or young people.
- No one should start work with children until references are received.
- Referees should provide honest and complete references.
- All appointments are subject to a probationary period.
- Employees and volunteers should be clear about responsibilities and work to an agreed job description.
- All working with children must receive regular child protection training.
- Guidelines must be available and discussed during induction.

8. Reporting Procedures Within BHHC

If you believe anyone may be being abused and the situation is life-threatening, dial 999 and follow instructions from emergency services.

For non-emergency situations, or after emergencies have been reported, report concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. A member of BHHC safeguarding team If unavailable or implicated, report to the Board Chairperson. Make a detailed written record of the incident, including date, time, place, attendees, and actions taken.

9. Designated Safeguarding Lead Within BHHC

The Designated Safeguarding Lead at BHHC is Rachelle Silver. Contact details are available on the BHHC website and through the admin office. To disclose a concern, email Rachelle with the subject "Safeguarding" at safeguarding@bhhc-shul.org. deputy designated safe guarding leads are Ian Ashleigh and Johnathan Polins

10. Safeguarding Team

The safeguarding team is responsible for supporting BHHC's safeguarding and compliancy practice and ensuring concerns are addressed in line with this policy.