

# Independent Culture Review Titus Trust

**Executive Summary & Recommendations**  
November 2021



## About Thirtyone:eight

Thirtyone:eight is an independent Christian safeguarding charity which helps individuals, organisations, charities, faith, and community groups to protect vulnerable people from abuse. Our vision is a world where every child and adult can feel, and be, safe, and to achieve this vision we work together with a network of thousands of organisations across the UK helping them to create safer places.

### To achieve this, we look to:

- **Equip** society with the knowledge and skills to create safer environments for children and adults at risk.
- **Empower** society to respond appropriately to those who are vulnerable or have experienced abuse.
- **Encourage** society to stand against oppression and exploitation by informing legislation and striving to raise the standards in safeguarding practice.

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This publication is available at [thirtyoneeight.org/titustrustreview](https://thirtyoneeight.org/titustrustreview)

## Thanks to participants

As a review team we acknowledge that this review and subsequent report would not have been possible without the many people who have contributed in various ways. We have considered all the responses from people who contributed and are immensely grateful for the time they have given to the review, whether on paper, online or by interview.

We want to extend our special thanks for the patience, understanding and flexibility shown to us by all, given that much of the review was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the country was in lockdown. We faced some restrictions about travelling and meeting people, which required us to adapt and, in some cases, delay our work.

We were struck by the thoughtfulness and insight given by many on the issues raised during the review process and recognise that for some, this was a difficult and costly process, raising some difficult memories.

We would like to thank the staff and trustees of the Titus Trust who contributed to the review, for their time, commitment, and availability for interview. We would especially like to thank the Operations Director and Safeguarding trustee for their comments and for the time taken to prepare and make documentation available to us, to help facilitate the review. In addition, Trust staff and leaders were very helpful to us when we visited the camps and went out of their way to make the visits as useful as possible.

We believe we have captured the essential themes participants have raised and have sought to reflect these in the writing of the report.

## Note to readers

Whilst we acknowledge that this executive summary may be helpful to many in accessing the detail explored within this extensive review, we strongly recommend that readers use this summary report in conjunction with the full report in order to fully understand the background, process, findings and conclusions reached.

## Executive summary

Over recent years, two volunteer leaders on Iwerne camps have faced separate allegations of harmful behaviour. The Titus Trust itself has come under criticism for some aspects of the culture of different camps it runs for young people, and for the way it has handled these allegations and its response to survivors.

Taking into account other reviews that are currently being undertaken into specific and related cases and having already done some work to make changes to its culture and practice, the Trust has commissioned this independent review into its wider culture, including how it relates to safeguarding. This review will help to identify any aspects that may have contributed to recent concerns or prevented appropriate action from being taken so that the charity may continue to improve its culture and safeguarding practice moving forwards.

Although not an investigation into specific allegations or individuals, this review has aimed to establish a clearer understanding of how the events and practices of the past may continue to influence the present culture of the charity, as well as to identify any areas where positive changes have been made and measures taken to prevent similar issues from occurring in the future.

It is important at the outset to acknowledge that the review found that a significant amount of contributors were happy with the culture of the Trust and its camps and did not have any issues with how they had been treated, nor any concerns about safeguarding, particularly in relation to the children on its camps. Many contributors valued the impact of the camps on their faith and on the development of long-standing friendships.

However, others did raise issues around their treatment as leaders, about the hierarchy on camps, the controlling nature of some interactions, and about poor responses to concerns which raise questions about the wider culture and how this has led to a less safe environment, particularly for those serving as leaders.

### Common cultural themes

While the culture of each individual camp group within the Trust is different and distinct depending on its location, catchment area, and the background of the young people and leaders who attend, the review identified nine key cultural themes which were common across all camp groups to different degrees. These similarities are due, in part, to each camp being based and run on the same original model historically established by the Iwerne camps.

This commonality across the camps is one of the factors which contribute to the overall culture across the Trust. The nine key cultural themes which the review has identified are:

- **Similarities and differences across camps**
- **Positive experiences for young people**
- **Impact and application of theological beliefs**
- **Exclusivity and a lack of diversity**
- **Leadership training**
- **Hierarchy structure**
- **Culture of excellence**

- **Slow pace of change**
- **Experience of women**

What is particularly significant about these themes, is the complex way they interrelate and combine to create the overall culture and environment of the Trust. It is the very interrelation of these themes, some of which on their own are not necessarily problematic, but when brought together are an important contributing factor that has at times increased the risk of abuse occurring. These nine themes are expanded upon below.

### **Positive experiences for young people**

One dominant and overarching theme which emerged throughout the review, has been the environment of fun and care that the Trust creates for the children and young people who attend the camps. Nearly all the contributors expressed how much they enjoyed the camps, and how valuable they have been to their own personal, emotional, and spiritual development. Comments from young people at camps this year echoed these views.

It is clear there is a deliberate effort on behalf of the staff and volunteers at the camps to genuinely care for the young people and ensure they have a positive experience. People described the camps as fun places where they felt welcomed and accepted and made life-long friendships. Even where people had concerns about the wider culture of the Trust, many stated that their criticisms did not outweigh their overall positive regard for the holidays themselves.

### **Impact and application of theological beliefs**

The Trust places great value on its belief in the authority of the Bible, its interpretation of scripture, and the centrality of the Christian gospel message to its work. These beliefs have a significant impact on the overall culture of the Trust and camps, influencing not only the charity's mission, but also the structure of the camps, and on the leadership of the Trust. This is to be expected and in many ways is one of the positive attributes of the Trust.

The review found several issues in how these beliefs were applied in practice however, which included greater levels of authority, respect and value being placed on those who held roles in Bible teaching and in Christian ministry. This has reinforced a sense of hierarchy in the leadership of the camps and contributed to imbalances in power, influence, and control which previously had increased the risk of abusive or poor behaviours being excused or ignored. Other significant issues resulting from the way these beliefs have been applied are explored further under their own headings within the report.

### **Exclusivity and a lack of diversity**

The single focus of the Trust on independent boarding and day schools has meant the Trust and its camps mirror the exclusive nature of these schools and reflect a lack of diversity in the children and young people who attend the camps and in its leaders. The lack of an open recruitment practice for staff and volunteers further compounds and maintains this lack of diversity. While not necessarily a risk on its own, it could not be regarded as best practice and this narrow focus has impacted on the culture of the Trust in several ways which have increased certain safeguarding risks.

One outcome is a uniformity of thought amongst staff and volunteers which has created a culture that risks being unable to fully see problems in its thinking and where leaders are

less likely to be challenged by different perspectives or diverse views. This has increased the risk that people may be less willing to share their concerns. Other issues include increased vulnerabilities in working with children who are boarding or living away from home, and a lack of challenge in the past around inappropriate behaviours which have been excused on the grounds of being 'typical' of public-school life.

### **Leadership training**

It is significant that the camps, which are activity holidays for children and young people, should have such an emphasis and focus given to theological and ministerial training for its leaders and staff. The leadership training on offer is valued by many, however, there are concerns about the level of control and expectation when leading which increases the risk of coercion and its harmful consequences.

Some leaders felt there has been pressure to conform, or to behave in certain ways. The selection process for leaders has increased the risk of young people feeling that they must please others to become a leader: it can also lead to a power imbalance between leaders and assistant leaders. There is also an emphasis on 'self-sacrifice' which has increased the risk of leader burn-out and potential exploitation.

### **Hierarchical structure**

It is generally accepted that there is a structure and hierarchy in place across the camps, and although this is seen as necessary in the context of running busy and well organised holidays, there is a sense that with this comes an attitude that some people and roles are more highly valued than others, that questioning is more acceptable from some than others, and that some could feel intimidated. This contributes to increasing the risk of abuse happening and not being reported on camps, and of abuse being tolerated.

### **Culture of excellence**

The pursuit of excellence is highly regarded by the Trust and its staff and seen as important in providing its high-quality holidays for young people. This is to be applauded. However, there is evidence that this had led to a pride in the work of the Trust which has restricted its ability to take constructive challenge and criticism. and at times some leaders felt the pressure to perform and always 'get things right'.

The review found that self-reflection was not routinely encouraged making accepting new ideas, comments, or criticisms from those outside the Titus Trust more difficult, which could prevent a proper appreciation of any prevalent risks.

### **Slow pace of change**

There was a mixture of views regarding how quick or slow camps were to change. Overall, people felt that change within camps and across the Titus Trust was slow, which has negatively impacted on safeguarding and the risk of abuse. There appears to have been a narrow view about safeguarding within the Trust generally, with most of the focus being on the safeguarding of children. In general, the camp model has not fundamentally changed over the years, particularly the nature of its one-to-one work with young people, together with the risks this model brings when considering best practice in pastoral care and other direct work scenarios.

The lack of formal monitoring systems, quality assurance processes, and the slow introduction of some policies has meant that the Trust has missed out on important internal learning and on implementing processes for dealing with abusive or poor behaviour until recent years.

### **Experience of women**

One of the main issues presented during the review has been the impact of how a complementarian theological viewpoint regarding the role of women, specifically in relation to women not being authorised to teach adult men or hold spiritual authority over men, has been practiced within the Trust.

Whilst the primary purpose of this review has not been to explore or critique any underpinning theological or doctrinal position, it is clear, and expected that these factors will manifest themselves in different areas of culture and practice. Within this, the complementarian theology of Titus Trust has created, at times, a largely uncritical acceptance of the attitudes and behaviours of male leaders and has had a negative impact within the camps on how women are seen by some men, how some women view themselves and their abilities, and crucially, in the context of safeguarding, on the confidence of some women to speak into critical issues or raise concerns.

We acknowledge that the Trust has been more attentive recently to these risks and have taken deliberate steps to involve women in decision-making and to be more active in including and valuing female perspectives, but there is a historic legacy here which will require continued deliberate effort to redress.

### **External cultural influences**

In addition to the nine key cultural themes outlined above, the review also found several external factors which have had a significant influence on the culture of the Trust and its camps. These have been grouped together under four headings:

- **The historical legacy of the Iwerne camps**
- **Public and independent school culture**
- **Conservative Evangelicalism**
- **Online opposition to the Trust and camps**

Although the current camps and holidays are very different from these established in the 1930's, there are clear echoes from the past which continue to influence some aspects of the Trust's current culture and life. The perceived success of the Iwerne camps, has had an impact on how people within and outside the Trust view its work. This also plays a part in how the Trust has approached and responded to the crises it has faced over recent years.

There are also very clear links between the Trust and the broader Christian community, particularly the Conservative Evangelical Church in England that are based on and driven by a shared set of beliefs. This is a symbiotic relationship, which to some degree reinforces the theology and cultural views on the camps, leading to a greater risk of a narrowness of thinking or a lack of diversity among its leaders. Within this context, it is more likely that concerning cultural norms and unhealthy or harmful individual behaviours are missed, and that opportunities are created to develop relationships with individuals outside the activities of the Trust which has the potential to increase the risk for future grooming or abuse.

In addition, the value of the patronage of some of the more influential and powerful leaders within the wider Evangelical community could be seen to have been one inhibitor to disclosing abuse and why some people may not have been called out about behaviour as they should have been.

The outside pressures and criticisms which the Titus Trust has faced, particularly online and through social media, together with a more general shift in societal culture has led trustees to be concerned about how its views and theology are seen, particularly in the context of its work with schools. This is understandable, but nevertheless requires consideration to ensure transparency in mission, ethos and values for the Titus Trust.

### **Addressing the scope of the review**

Although the terms of reference led the review to focus primarily on the last five years, it did look back beyond this short period where it was relevant to the more recent culture, although no further back than 1997.

Some of the recent criticisms of the Titus Trust relate to the response of Iwerne trustees to past abuse and particularly to the Ruston Report in 1982, as well as the response of the Titus Trust since then. Our hope is that the Makin Review<sup>1</sup> will consider the response of the Iwerne Trust to the abuse committed by John Smyth at that time within the broader scope and context of its work. We are unable to answer questions relating to this as it falls outside the scope of this review.

What we have seen however, is a clear difference in the response of the Titus Trust and the positive action taken in responding to more recent issues relating to Jonathan Fletcher which have showed that changes have been made in this area in recent times.

In general, there has been a greater sense of the Titus Trust being willing to consider and implement change since 2017. Over recent years, the Trust has undertaken a review of the role of women in leadership on its camps and the balance of women holding more senior roles has changed. Camps have also made better provision for mothers and their children to help include mothers more in camp life. There are also signs in the adaptations made during Covid-19 that the Trust can respond quickly and positively to change although this is yet to be fully tested in adapting to more fundamental changes to the underlying model, values or vision.

### **Conclusion**

As a result of its findings, the review has made 14 recommendations. These relate to issues of governance; the Trust's mission, model, and values; the implementation of policy; safer recruitment processes; practice developments; training of staff and volunteers; and how the trust deals with and learns from its past.

During this review, we have seen the impact that not dealing with safeguarding issues or abuse at the time of their discovery has had and what the repercussions for victims and survivors have been and continues to be. The Trust continues to face criticism about why it did not report past abuse sooner and how it has responded to survivors since which it needs to address.

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<sup>1</sup> John Smyth Review | The Church of England (expected publication in 2022)



While the Trust has made some significant changes to the culture of its camps and has indicated its willingness to change in commissioning this report, some of the recommendations made by this review will be challenging to implement as they go beyond surface changes, and are more about its core mission, values, and model of working. Whilst recognising this challenge, the review believes that this could be an exciting time and opportunity for the Titus Trust, in exploring new models of working and providing fresh vision for its future work with children and young people within a safer, healthier environment.

## Recommendations

**We have set out the recommendations from the findings of the review below. In doing so, we recognise some as being more straight forward to implement and some as being more challenging.**

### Trustees and governance

1. The trustees should review recruitment of trustees to include those with varied expertise, particularly in legal and financial spheres, who are from outside the Trust network and who are from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.
2. Trustees should fully review the governance relationships between the trustees and the operational side of the charity; to ensure a proper division between oversight and executive functions, and the level of direction they are providing to, the camp groups; and to recruit a CEO or similar role to ensure clear lines of accountability within the charity.

### Mission, model and values

3. The trust should review its mission, model and values to consider:
  - The Trust should review its mission, including the consideration of wider outreach.
  - Ensure the mission statement is consistent across the trust and camps and is publically accessible.
  - Consider if the mission is purely evangelistic or involves discipleship as well.
  - The Trust should review ways of creating opportunities for increased inclusion and diversity at all levels of their work.
  - The Trust should review its model of work in relation to its focus on evangelism and/or discipleship.
  - The trustees should review the model of work used by Titus Trust and to explore other possible ways of working.
  - Trustees should deliberate and clarify the Trust's values and promote these throughout the Trust. These values should embody how the Trust would like to see itself, its staff and volunteers.
  - Trustees to publicise the mission and values of the Trust accordingly.

## **Policy**

4. The trust should review or introduce and promote the following policies in line with the main body of the report:
  - Safeguarding
  - Supervision and appraisal policy
  - Allegations
  - Complaints
  - Data protection
  - 1-2-1 Ministry
  - Women and leadership
  - Valuing Diversity
  - Pastoral care policy for camps

## **Recruitment**

5. The Trust should review its recruitment practice to include:
  - All volunteering roles and job positions should be openly advertised.
  - Recruitment for volunteers should include a clear process including interview and feedback.
  - All job and role descriptions to include a statement about the Trust's commitment to safeguarding and the expectation of the worker to safeguard others.
  - Application forms should have a full employment history and explanations of any gaps in employment.
  - All interviews to include safeguarding questions.
  - Volunteers should not be allowed on camps where they do not have a clear and up-to-date DBS check. In exceptional circumstances a full risk assessment should be carried out.

## **Dealing with the past**

6. For the Trust to apologise for the way in which it has distanced itself over recent years from the historical legacy of the Iwerne camps:
  - Make every effort to ensure all of Smyth's survivors have been contacted.
  - Respond to each survivor, according to their views and wishes.

## **Training**

7. Staff and trustees should undertake relevant training including:
  - Allegations and complaints training for senior staff.

- Safer recruitment training for trustees.
8. The Operations Director to keep a central training matrix for staff training, including core training.

### **Learning and change**

9. To support learning and change across the charity, the Trust should establish:
- Quality assurance and monitoring processes.
  - Young people's advisory groups
  - A greater range of partnerships or relationships, both Christian and secular, in order to inform the charity of legal, policy and other issues, and to develop learning in those areas.
  - A Trust-wide Innovation group.

### **Practice developments**

10. The Trust should review practice on camps to include:
- To consider having a pastoral support leader on camp.
  - To make it an expectation that leaders have some allocated time during a week of leading on camp.
  - The Trust to review the issue of parents on camp from both a policy, and practice perspective, allowing for different views to be expressed and accommodated.
  - For all feedback on talks to be done on an individual basis.
11. If leaders find it difficult to raise issues or concerns, they should be able to discuss this with their pastoral care lead (see previous recommendation).
12. All complaints raised should be logged and feedback given. Every effort should be made for the issues to be resolved and for the complaints process to be followed.
13. That 1-2-1 ministry outside of camp with students and teachers should only occur with the express knowledge and permission of the local church.
14. For the Trust to review their data processes and delete non-needed information.

## Sources of Support

Anyone who has been affected by the events that led to this review or in reading this report may find the following links helpful:

Thirtyone:eight  
Helpline: 0303 003 1111 (Quoting: 'Titus 2020')  
[www.thirtyoneeight.org](http://www.thirtyoneeight.org)

Association of Christian Counsellors (ACC)  
<https://www.acc-uk.org>

British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)  
<https://www.bacp.co.uk>

Samaritans  
<https://www.samaritans.org>  
or by phone on 116 123

The Survivors Trust  
<https://www.thesurvivorstrust.org>

Minister & Clergy Sexual Abuse Service (MACSAS)  
<http://www.macsas.org.uk>

National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC)  
<https://napac.org.uk>

This does not represent an exhaustive list and should not be taken as an endorsement or recommendation.



Call us 0303 003 1111  
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