



Safeguarding policy

This policy is in alignment with URC's safeguarding procedures and guidance as set out in Good Practice 6. See <https://urc.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding-good-practice/> for full process and support documents and templates.

1. Aim and purpose of this policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure that protecting people from abuse, harm or neglect is central to our culture. It provides procedures for promoting safeguarding, preventing abuse and protecting children, adults at risk and staff. This includes clear procedures for taking appropriate action when safeguarding concerns are raised.

Who this policy applies to

This policy is approved and endorsed by the Elders and applies to:

- All members of our church
- All those who attend and serve our church/place of worship and its services
- Our Trustees and Elders
- Paid staff (both internal and external eg contractors or consultants)
- Volunteers

Principles underpinning the policy

- Our theology and values
- Our commitment to put the welfare of children and adults at risk first
- A willingness to be open and listen
- A commitment to comply with relevant legal and regulatory requirements.

Definitions

The term 'children' refers to those under the age of 18 years.

The term 'adult at risk' refers to any adult aged 18 or over who, by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation, are permanently, or for time being, unable to take care of themselves, or to protect themselves against significant harm, abuse or exploitation.

Duty of care and confidentiality

We have a duty of care to all beneficiaries of the church, whether children or adults.

We will always maintain confidentiality, except in circumstances where to do so would place the individual or another individual at risk of harm or abuse.

Sections 2-6 below follow the structure of Good Practice 6 and each section lists the 'key responsibilities' for local churches outlined in the corresponding chapter of GP6.

2. Creating a safer culture

We are committed to creating a safer culture in our church which will help us to prevent harm from occurring and provide an environment in which all can flourish.

In line with Chapter two of Good Practice 6, we will:

- Appoint a Church Safeguarding Coordinator and ensure contact details are available for anyone to report a concern
- Have a safeguarding policy which is reviewed annually and updated when necessary
- Practice safer recruitment procedures for paid and volunteer roles
- Ensure all those working with children and/or adults at risk are given copies of relevant Codes of Conduct
- Follow the requirements of the training framework
- Comply with legal requirements in respect of data protection
- Complete the Annual Church Safeguarding Return
- Ensure safeguarding is a regular agenda item for church and Elders' meetings.

3. Ensuring safer activities

Whilst it is not possible to guard against every eventuality, we are committed to providing as safe an environment as possible for activities both on and off church premises.

In line with Chapter three of Good Practice 6, we will:

- Ensure appropriate insurance is in place for buildings and activities
- Consider the implications of data protection and health and safety requirements for specific activities
- Carry out risk assessments for relevant activities or events
- Ensure adequate staffing for activities and that leaders have suitable training, are aware of relevant guidance and agree to follow relevant Codes of Conduct
- Ensure the hirer's agreement is in place for other organisations using church premises
- Seek advice from the Synod Safeguarding Officer for complex or sensitive risks.

4. Recognising and responding to concerns

We acknowledge that, although promoting Safer Culture and Safer Activities will help to protect all those in contact with the church, some concerns will inevitably arise and we are committed to responding well in such circumstances.

In line with Chapter four of Good Practice 6, we will:

- Promote awareness of different kinds of abuse, other vulnerabilities and types of safeguarding concern
- Seek to create a 'listening culture' and help people develop listening skills to respond appropriately in situations where sensitive information is disclosed
- Inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer as a minimum of any situations where involvement from statutory services is/may be required
- Share information with statutory services as appropriate and co-operate with them during any investigations
- Report any serious safeguarding incident to the Charity Commission and notify the Synod Safeguarding Officer.

5. Managing allegations and people who may pose a risk to others

Where allegations are made against individuals within the Church, we are committed to following all required investigative and regulatory procedures. We will work in collaboration with the Synod, wider Church staff, statutory agencies and other relevant organisations.

In line with Chapter five of Good Practice 6, we will:

- Co-operate fully with any investigative or disciplinary procedures
- Inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer immediately on becoming aware of anyone in the church who may present a risk to others
- Work with the Synod Safeguarding Officer and contribute relevant information for risk assessments
- Alert the Synod Safeguarding Officer or statutory agencies to known breaches of a safeguarding agreement.

6. Supporting victims and survivors

The key principle underpinning our policy and practice in this area is that all those who have experienced abuse, whether recently or in the past 'will be listened to and offered the pastoral care and support they deem appropriate and relevant, irrespective of type of abuse, context, or when this occurred' (General Assembly policy statement 2021).

In line with Chapter six of Good Practice 6, we will:

- Recognise that the Elders' meeting has responsibility for provision of pastoral care
- Be aware of local support services that people can be referred or directed to
- Ensure those in relevant roles attend appropriate training
- Seek advice from the Synod Safeguarding Officer about provision of appropriate support when necessary.

7. Key contacts

Church Safeguarding Coordinator

Name and contact details: **Gavin McCall via 01376 500 958**

Deputy Church Safeguarding Coordinator (if applicable)

Name and contact details: none

Synod Safeguarding Officer

Name and contact details: **Candice Hart 07849 276 750**

Email: **safeguarding@urceastern.org.uk**

URC Safeguarding Office (This should only be used if you are unable to contact your Synod Safeguarding Office)

Email: **safeguarding@urc.org.uk**

Local statutory services: Children

Contact details, including an out of hours number: 0345 603 7627

Out of hours telephone: 0345 606 1212

Local statutory services: Adults

Contact details, including an out of hours number: 0345 603 7630

Out of hours telephone: 0345 606 1212

Email: socialcaredirect@essex.gov.uk

Local Authority Designated Officer/Designated Officer/Designated Officer for safeguarding

Contact details: 03330 139 797

Enquiries email: lado@essex.gov.uk

8. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, updated as required and adopted by the church meeting.

Date of most recent review: 11th March 2025

Date of next review: 10th March 2026

Signed by:

(On behalf of the church Elders)

9. Details of other organisations and support services

Public sector services

Local authority

Every local authority provides services to the community, including statutory services such as Children's Services, Adult Care Services, housing and environment. Your local council will have a website with contact details for your local services: www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council

NHS

The National Health Service can provide advice, guidance, support and signposting to local services for all health issues: www.nhs.uk/service-search

Police www.police.uk

Telephone: 999 in an emergency.

Telephone: 101 – provides a service for non-emergency issues and will connect you to your local Police service, wherever you call from in the UK.

General support, advice and helplines

Association of Christians in Counselling

Provides a facility to search for Christian counsellors: www.acc-uk.org

Citizens Advice

Providing free general advice and guidance around a range of concerns such as benefits, debt, relationships, housing, law, discrimination, tax, money, healthcare and education:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Premier Lifeline

A confidential telephone helpline offering a listening ear, emotional and spiritual support from a Christian perspective, prayer and signposting: www.premierlifeline.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 111 0101 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday

Samaritans

A crisis helpline, providing a listening service for any worries or concerns: www.samaritans.org

Telephone: 116 123

Victim Support

Independent charity supporting victims of crime: www.victimsupport.org.uk

Children

Barnardo's

Protecting, supporting and nurturing the UK's most vulnerable children, including campaigning to end child sexual exploitation. Provides leaflets in both English and Welsh for parents, children, young people and professionals, showing how to spot the signs of child sexual exploitation and how to keep safe: www.barnardos.org.uk

Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP)

CEOP is a law enforcement agency which helps to keep children and young people safe from sexual abuse and grooming online. They provide advice and accept direct reporting from young people, parents/carers or other concerned adults about online abuse: www.ceop.police.uk

Childline

A free 24-hour support and counselling service for children and young people up to age 19:

www.childline.org.uk

Freephone helpline for children: 0800 1111

Lucy Faithfull Foundation

Lucy Faithfull Foundation is a UK-wide child protection charity dedicated solely to preventing child sexual abuse including: young people with inappropriate sexual behaviours, adult male and female sexual abusers, and other family members: www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk

NSPCC

Providing support and advice for keeping children safe from harm and abuse:

www.nspcc.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 800 5000

Parents Protect

Helping parents and carers to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation:

www.parentsprotect.co.uk

Telephone: 0808 1000 900

UK Safer Internet Centre

Helping children and young people stay safe online: www.saferinternet.org.uk

We Stand

Provides a range of support services and information for families affected by child sexual abuse:

www.westand.org.uk

Helpline: 0800 980 1958

Older people

Age UK

Support and advice services for older people: www.ageuk.org.uk

Advice Line: 0800 678 1602

Alzheimer's Society www.alzheimers.org.uk

Telephone: 0333 150 3456

Anna's Chaplaincy

Offering spiritual care in later life: www.annachaplaincy.org.uk

Telephone: 01865 319 700

Faith in Later Life

Providing resources to help churches support older people, including guidance on developing a dementia friendly church:

www.faithinlaterlife.org/fill-resource/developing-dementia-friendly-churches-livability/

Hourglass (previously Action on Elder Abuse)

Provides information and support to an older person or anyone concerned about an older person who is at risk of, experiencing or recovering from any form of abuse or neglect:

www.wearehourglass.org

Helpline: 0808 808 8141

Linking Lives

Helping churches run befriending schemes and reduce loneliness amongst older people:

www.linkinglives.uk

People with additional needs

Additional Needs Alliance

Help churches support and spiritually grow children, young people and young adults with additional needs or disabilities: www.additionalneedsalliance.org.uk

Mencap

Supporting and resourcing people with learning disabilities, their families and carers. The website has specific advice on safeguarding: www.mencap.org.uk

Respond

A national charity providing therapy and specialist support services to people with learning disabilities, autism or both who have experienced abuse, violence or trauma:

www.respond.org.uk

Telephone: 020 7383 0700

Mental health

Hub of hope

UK-wide mental health service database which lets you search for local, national, peer, community, charity, private and NHS mental health support: www.hubofhope.co.uk

Kintsugi Hope

Working in communities through the local church to provide safe and supportive spaces for people who feel or have felt overwhelmed: www.kintsugihope.com

Mind

Providing a range of advice and services on mental health: www.mind.org.uk

Renew Wellbeing

Helps churches open spaces of welcome and inclusion in partnership with mental health teams to improve mental and emotional wellbeing: www.renewwellbeing.org.uk

Rethink

Providing services and advice to those severely affected by mental illness: www.rethink.org

Shout

A free, confidential, anonymous text support service: www.giveusashout.org

Text: 85258

Domestic abuse

Forced Marriage Unit

The unit works both inside and outside the UK. It provides help and support to victims of forced

marriage/those at risk of a forced marriage: www.gov.uk/forced-marriage

Telephone: 020 7008 0151

ManKind

Helping men escape domestic abuse: www.mankind.org.uk

Telephone: 01823 334 244

National Domestic Abuse Helpline (for women) www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 2000 247 (lines free and open 24 hours).

Also options for live chat and British Sign Language interpreter service.

National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline

Telephone: 0800 999 5428

Refuge

Provides a range of specialist domestic abuse services to women and children.

www.refuge.org.uk

Telephone: 020 7395 7700

Respect: Men's Advice Line

A helpline phone and website service for male victims of domestic abuse:

www.mensadviceline.org.uk

Helpline: 0808 801 0327

Restored

A Christian charity working to raise awareness of domestic abuse, support survivors, and equip the church to do the same. They also provide a Survivor's Handbook: www.restored-uk.org

Helpline: 020 8943 7706

Safe in Faith

Providing survivors of domestic abuse, who are part of a faith community, with safe, faith based support and counselling that is tailored to their needs as believers: www.safeinfaith.org.uk/about

Women's Aid

A national charity working to end domestic violence against women and children. Supports a network of over 500 domestic and sexual violence services across the UK:

www.womensaid.org.uk

Survivors

Galop

Provides support for LGBT+ people who have experienced abuse and violence:

www.galop.org.uk

MACSAS (Ministry and Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors)

A support group for women and men from Christian backgrounds who have been sexually abused by Ministers or Clergy, as children or as adults. They support both survivors who have remained within their Christian communities and those who have left: www.macsas.org.uk

NAPAC (The National Association for People Abused in Childhood)

Provides support to adult survivors of all types of childhood abuse: www.napac.org.uk

Free confidential support line: 0808 801 0331

One in Four

Specialising in supporting childhood survivors and current survivors of sexual violence, domestic violence, abuse and trauma: www.oneinfour.org.uk

Rape Crisis England and Wales

An organisation supporting the work of Rape Crisis Centres across England and Wales, and raising awareness and understanding of sexual violence and abuse in all its forms:

www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 500 2222

SurvivorsUK

Helping men who have been sexually abused and raises awareness of their needs. Sexual violation includes both childhood sexual abuse and adult sexual assault/rape:

www.survivorsuk.org/ways-we-can-help/

Telephone: 0808 800 5005

The Survivors Trust

An umbrella agency for over 135 specialist voluntary sector agencies providing a range of counselling, therapeutic and support services working with women, men and children who are victims/survivors of rape, sexual violence and childhood sexual abuse:

www.thesurvivorstrust.org

Thirtyone:Eight Listening Service

Telephone service which offers the chance for adults with lived experience of abuse to talk about their experiences in detail and in confidence with a sensitive listener:

www.thirtyoneeight.org/safeguarding-services/consultancy/listening-service/

Modern slavery

Clewer Initiative

Seeks to raise awareness of all aspects of modern slavery and help support victims and vulnerable groups by mobilising local churches and communities: www.theclewerinitiative.org

Hope for Justice

Fighting human trafficking and helping victims and survivors all around the world:

www.hopeforjustice.org/church-partners

Telephone: 0800 0121 700

Services for those considering or displaying harmful behaviour

Respect Phoneline

A confidential helpline, email and webchat service for domestic abuse perpetrators:

www.respectphoneline.org.uk

Helpline: 0808 802 4040

Stop it Now!

Confidential helpline for people who are struggling with sexual thoughts and behaviours towards children, or are concerned about someone else's behaviour: www.stopitnow.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 1000 900