



Promoting Safeguarding

Preventing Abuse

Protecting The Vulnerable

Safeguarding Policy ***Children & Adults***

Northern Synod

NORTHERN SYNOD SAFEGUARDING POLICY – Revised following March Synod 2015- Final

PART ONE: – POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1. Introduction

Northern Synod believes that children, young people and adults have a right to live in a way that does not cause them harm or impede their human rights. We therefore acknowledge their right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs. We consider that, in accordance with legislation, the welfare of children and adults at risk is paramount. We will follow legislation, statutory guidance and recognised good practice. We believe that domestic abuse in all its forms is unacceptable and inconsistent with a Christian way of living.

Safeguarding is taken seriously by Northern Synod.

- We will encourage good practice in safeguarding in local churches within the Synod.
- We will seek to establish a caring environment in which there is an informed vigilance about the dangers of abuse.
- We will organise activities in such a way as to promote a safe environment and minimise the risk of harm to children and adults at risk.
- We will follow a safer recruitment process for the appointment of people who work with children or adults in need of protection, whether voluntary or paid, lay or ordained.
- We are committed to supporting and resourcing those who work with children and adults at risk.
- All concerns and allegations of abuse will be responded to appropriately, including referring to the Police and Local Authority if necessary.
- We will co-operate with the Police and Local Authorities in any investigation, will follow multi agency decisions and will maintain confidentiality of any investigations to those directly involved.

All concerns or allegations concerning Northern Synod activities, staff or volunteers should be addressed to:

Synod Safeguarding Officer:

He or She can be contacted as detailed below:

Name:-

Contact Phone Number:-

Email:-

2. Aim and purpose of this Policy

The aim of this policy is to provide policy and procedures to promote safeguarding, reduce the risk of abuse and protect the vulnerable (both children and adults) across the Synod. It provides the wider framework in which local church safeguarding policies should sit. It details procedures for appropriate action in the event of safeguarding concerns involving children or adults within our Synod, or those who attend our activities and events.

3. Definitions of children and adults at risk

Children and Young People

The Children Act 2004 (section 11) places a duty on a range of organisations to have in place arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Details of the arrangements required are set out in Chapter 2 of *Working Together to Safeguard Children- A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children (HM Government 2013)* and includes the need to report serious safeguarding situations to statutory authorities. Chapter 2 makes specific reference to the need for faith organisations to have procedures.

A 'child' is a person aged under 18 years who is therefore deemed vulnerable by their age.

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm.

Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger for example, via the internet. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Adults at Risk

Safeguarding responsibilities apply to an adult who:

- *Has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and*
- *Is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect: and*
- *As a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.*

The Care Act 2014 – Statutory Guidance – October 2014

An adult at risk is therefore any adult of any age, who may be vulnerable due to a permanent or temporary illness or disability, or who has been made vulnerable by their circumstances which include domestic abuse and discrimination.

The cross government 2013 definition of abuse of an adult is:

Any incident, or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to; psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse'

This definition of abuse encompasses domestic settings and domestic abuse.

Details about signs and symptoms of abuse can be found in Appendices 4-7

4. Who this policy applies to

This policy applies to Synod trustees, paid staff, volunteers and those who supervise them (collectively referred to as 'workers' throughout this policy). A code of conduct for people working with young people can be found in Appendix 9.

5. Approval, endorsement and review of this policy

This policy is approved and endorsed by the Synod. Synod Executive is responsible for ensuring that it is reviewed on an annual basis. Synod Executive will recommend any changes to this policy to the October Synod meeting each year. Details of monitoring arrangements can be found in Appendix 2.

6. Duty of care and confidentiality

We have a duty of care to adults and children. We will maintain confidentiality except in circumstances where to do so would place the individual or another individual at risk of harm or if the synod is co-operating with statutory agencies.

7. Promoting safeguarding in synod

General Assembly Resolution 2 of 1997 states that:

'General Assembly resolves to ensure that the aims of the document 'Good Practice' are implemented and monitored in the life of local churches in the United Reformed Church through the Provincial Synods and District Councils overseen by the Assembly Youth and Children's Work Committee.'

Therefore, the Synod will appoint:

- A Synod **Safeguarding Officer** for children and adults at risk

He/She will be available to offer advice and support to local churches on safeguarding matters, particularly in dealing with specific protection issues within the Synod (an illustrative role description is Appendix 10).

The synod **Moderator** will also be responsible for offering advice and support to local churches as appropriate, for example, when there are concerns about a Minister or an individual with responsibility for safeguarding.

8. Promoting safeguarding in local churches

It is a requirement of this policy, that every church in the Northern Synod has a **safeguarding policy** and an identified **Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator**, and where possible this will be an Elder. In churches with very small congregations this role could be undertaken by one person on behalf of more than one church. It is suggested that this is limited to no more than five churches.

Northern Synod expects all local churches to adopt and implement and review policies for safeguarding children and adults, in line with the latest national good practice resources. The rationale for all churches to do this is:

- Churches actively working with children or adults at risk (i.e. undertaking any form of communication or outreach) should do so in ways that safeguard the vulnerable, reassure parents / carers & partner organisations, and protect leaders and volunteers from false allegations.
- Maintaining a safeguarding ethos at all times, demonstrates care for the wellbeing of all members of the congregation, those engaging with the church or passing through its doors.
- Churches not currently working with children or adults at risk should still be prepared with a policy so that they are ready as and when, children, or adults at risk get involved in the church. Churches should recognise that their congregations are very likely to include adults at risk.
- Northern Synod and United Reformed Church as a whole, expects member churches, as a body, to take safeguarding seriously, and be able to demonstrate, that they do so.
- To implement the General Assembly resolution 2 1997

9. Preventing abuse and harm in Northern Synod events and activities

Activities will be organised in accordance with contemporary good practice guidelines, so as to promote a safe environment and healthy relationships, whilst minimising opportunities for harm. For each event, a risk assessment will be carried out, appropriate consent forms will be used for activities with children and young people, appropriate records will be kept (see URC Record Keeping policy for further details) and adequate insurance will be in place for each event.

10. Safer Recruitment

We are committed to safer recruitment and appointment of all paid staff and volunteers and will ensure that these procedures are followed, which include

- Asking applicants to complete an application form
- Providing workers with role/job descriptions and person specifications

- Obtaining Disclosure and barring checks where legally entitled to do so (see Appendix 11)
- Taking up two references (not family) and
- Interviewing candidates

11. Codes of Conduct for Employees/Volunteers

All trustees, paid staff and volunteers will agree to work within a code of conduct (see Appendix 9) and understand that there may be action taken if this code is not followed, possibly involving suspension or termination of working/volunteering with us.

Synod staff and volunteers using Facebook or other social networking websites to communicate with young people as part of Synod initiatives should comply with the policy set out in Appendix 3.

12. Training

Training in safeguarding will be provided and volunteers and paid staff will be given support and supervision in their role. The source of this support will vary dependent upon the role and setting. All volunteers and churches can attend safeguarding training provided by their respective local authorities.

Northern Synod will publicise safeguarding training opportunities encouraging staff and local churches to undertake safeguarding training every three years. Local Church Safeguarding Co-ordinators will be offered training and expected to attend at least every 2 years. Ministers will be requested to complete safeguarding training at least every 3 years.

13. Recognising and responding to concerns of abuse arising

i. How to recognise abuse

It is important to be aware of possible signs and symptoms of abuse. A list of such possible signs and symptoms in relation to children and adults is attached at Appendices 4-7. Some signs could be indicators of a number of different categories.

It is essential to note that these are only **indicators** of **possible** abuse. There may be other, innocent, reasons for any of these signs and/or behaviour. They will, however, be a guide to assist in assessing whether abuse of one form or another is a possible explanation for a child or adult's behaviour or appearance.

ii How to respond to a disclosure or allegation of abuse

If a child or an adult makes a disclosure that they are being abused and / or an allegation of abuse against someone, it is important that the person being told:

- Stays calm and listens carefully.
- Reassures the child/adult that they have done the right thing in telling you.

- **Does not investigate or ask leading questions.**
- Explains that they will need to tell someone else.
- Does not promise to keep secret what they have been told.
- Informs the person responsible for safeguarding at the event as soon as possible. This is often the leader in charge of an event. Alternatively inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer.
- Makes a written record of the incident and sign and date this record and pass this onto the person responsible for safeguarding at the event, who will liaise with the Synod Safeguarding personnel to decide what action needs to be taken. **There is a pro-forma in Appendix 8.** Any such records will be stored securely in a locked cabinet at the Synod Office.
- Contacts the Synod Moderator immediately if the allegation or disclosure relates to someone responsible for safeguarding in the synod.

iii WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF A CONCERN ABOUT ABUSE OF A CHILD OR ADULT AT RISK.

- 1) If there is an immediate threat of harm, contact the Police, without delay.
- 2) Where it is judged that there is no immediate threat of harm the following will occur:-
 - a. The concern will be discussed with the Synod Safeguarding Officer and a decision made as to whether the concern warrants a referral to statutory agencies. This may involve discussions with the national URC Safeguarding Officer. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) can help guide whether a referral is needed if a child is involved, and the local Adults Safeguarding Team will assist if your concern is about a vulnerable adult.
 - b. A confidential record will be made of the observations and / or conversation and the surrounding circumstances. This record will be kept securely in a locked filing cabinet at the Synod Office. A copy will be passed to statutory agencies if a referral is made.
 - c. The person about whom the allegation has been made must not be informed by anyone in the Synod, if it is judged that to do so would place a child or adult at increased risk of further abuse.

iv What to do if someone working for the Synod (paid or volunteer) is alleged to have harmed a child or adult at risk

- 1) The Moderator will liaise with the Synod Safeguarding Officer, and relevant others, as appropriate i.e Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator. In doing so they will follow the advice offered in the United Reformed Church Good Practice 4 in Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk, the Handbook for the Churches and Adult Safeguarding procedures found here: <http://www.urc.org.uk/good-practice-policy-and-procedures.html>

- 2) An approach will be made to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for the relevant local authority and the relevant Safeguarding teams for Adults in accordance with the denominational procedures referred to above.
- 3) A decision will be taken about when to inform the member of staff or volunteer. The timing and method will be discussed and agreed with the LADO/Adults Safeguarding Teams, and the Synod should follow this decision
- 4) The Synod Safeguarding Officer, Moderator, relevant Synod staff and the Safeguarding Co-ordinator of the local church to which that person belongs, will co-operate fully with any statutory investigation including advice on the person's activity in the local church and Synod both during any investigation and following the outcome of any investigation. Information will be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis.

14. Procedure if a known offender against children or adults at risk is present in the church community

Where known offenders are identified within local churches, the Synod Safeguarding Officer, and other relevant synod staff (if appropriate), will work with the church to draw up an appropriate contract with all relevant parties, following the guidelines in Appendix 1

15. Referral to Disclosure and Barring Service

In accordance with the law, a referral will be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) if the church withdraws permission for an individual to engage in work with children or adults. A referral will be still be made if the individual has resigned, retired, been made redundant or been transferred to a position not involving working with children or adults at risk because the employer believes that the individual has engaged in relevant conduct, or satisfied the harm test, or has committed an offence that would lead to automatic inclusion on a barred list.

16. Notifying the Charity Commission

As a registered charity the Synod would be required to notify the Charity Commission of any safeguarding concerns.

17. Sources of advice, guidance, and support

United Reformed Church Safeguarding Officer:

Cassi Wright Tel. 0207 520 2729 Email safeguarding@urc.org.uk

Churches Child Protection Advisory Service 24 hour helpline: Tel 0845 120 4550

(n.b. out of office hours this should only be used for urgent advice which cannot wait until the following day).

18. Complaints

Should anyone have any concerns or complaints about safeguarding in Northern Synod please contact the Synod Moderator:

Revd Lis Mullen,

Synod Office, 4 College Lane, Newcastle NE1 8JJ

Tel. 0191 232 1168

Email moderator@urc-northernsynod.org.

It would be helpful to have complaints in writing as this avoids any possible misunderstanding about what the issue is. However, whether verbal or in writing complaints will be acted upon.

Any written complaint will be responded to within 10 days.

19. Monitoring of safeguarding practice

Safeguarding good practice in the Synod will be monitored. Churches will be requested to complete questions relating to their safeguarding practice annually. These will include up to date contact details of their safeguarding co-ordinators which will be retained on a synod database. Results from these questionnaires will be collated by the Synod Safeguarding Advisor. Synod Executive will be required to consider and recommend any resulting actions.

Those responsible for Local Ministry and Mission Reviews (LMMR) will be encouraged to use a questionnaire to ascertain the use of Good Practice by the church. These monitoring systems are set out in more detail in Appendix 2.

20. Serious Incidents: learning the lessons

The Synod is committed to reviewing serious cases where safeguarding has, or could have taken place. A specific protocol will be followed for these situations to ensure that we learn lessons to improve our practice, and prevent such situations recurring.

21. Review

This policy should be reviewed by Synod Executive annually, amending and updating it as required in the light of such changes as: Synod safeguarding personnel and contact details; changes to URC Good Practice guidance; changes to statutory safeguarding requirements; changes to procedure arising from review of safeguarding cases;

Due to the changing nature of safeguarding custom and practice, this policy should be reviewed annually by the Synod's March meeting.

Date of most recent review: .16th February 2016 by Melanie Campbell, Synod Clerk

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Date of next review: .March 2017 Synod.....

Signed:(on behalf of Synod)