

Northern Synod

Safeguarding Policy: Children & Adults

October 2018

1. Aim and purpose of this Policy

The aim of this policy is to promote safeguarding, prevent abuse and protect the vulnerable (both children and adults) at Synod level, and in local churches within the Synod. This includes clear procedures for taking appropriate action following the raising of safeguarding concerns involving children or adults within our Synod, or those who attend our activities and events. It also sets out the responsibility of the Synod to seek assurance that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place within its local churches.

The policy should be interpreted in the light of the most recent United Reformed Church Safeguarding Good Practice Guidance which is available on the national URC website.

2. Definitions

Northern Synod is the regional administrative grouping of United Reformed Churches in the north east of England. There are xxx churches in this grouping. A small team of staff support the functioning and ministry of these churches.

URC (Northern Province) Trust Ltd is a Charitable Trust and accountable synod body. It oversees financial governance and probity of the Synod, employs Synod staff and ensures that the Synod is complying with Charity Law and carrying out its responsibilities appropriately and in the public interest. An important aspect of these responsibilities is safeguarding. The Charities Commission describes how 'safeguarding is a matter that goes to the heart of being a charity; it's about treating people with respect, protecting the vulnerable and doing the right thing'

Children and young people includes anyone aged under 18 years who is therefore vulnerable due to their age. With certain disabilities, it may include young people up to the age of 25.

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 2015)* 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.

Adults at risk includes 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. Statutory guidance (the Care Act 2014) describes adults at risk who need safeguarding as those who:

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

The main types of abuse that may be experienced by children or adults at risk are set out in Appendix 1.

3. Who this policy applies to

This policy applies to both Northern Synod and to URC (Northern Province) Trust Ltd. Where the term 'Northern Synod' is used within this policy it refers also to the Synod Trust.

It is therefore relevant to Synod trustees, paid Synod staff, volunteers and those who supervise them. It is also helpful to local churches within the Synod, as it clarifies the relationship between churches and the Synod regarding safeguarding, and the responsibility that the Synod has to both support and monitor the safeguarding practice within local churches.

4. Introduction

Safeguarding is taken seriously by Northern Synod. We have two key responsibilities in this respect. Firstly, to safeguard children, young people and adults at risk within our own activities and events, and secondly to assure ourselves that local churches within the Synod have appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place.

We agree 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 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.

Within the Synod we will:

- Seek to establish a caring environment in which there is an informed vigilance about the dangers of abuse.
- Appoint a Safeguarding Advisor for the synod, whilst recognising that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Ensure that a named person in the office can act as a verifier to carry out DBS checks and that all those requiring DBS checks in the synod, are up to date with this process.
- Organise activities in such a way as to promote a safe environment and minimise the risk of harm to children and adults.
- Follow a safer recruitment process for the selection and appointment of people to work with children or adults in need of protection, whether voluntary or paid, lay or ordained. For further information on safer recruitment the Synod will refer to the comprehensive version of Good Practice 4 (safeguarding good practice guidelines for the URC section 6, pages 31 to 38)
- Follow URC Safeguarding Good Practice Guidance, including assessing risk and managing known offenders involved in Synod activities, and working effectively with other agencies, including social services and the police on safeguarding matters.
- Respond appropriately to any safeguarding concerns relating to our staff, whether volunteers or paid, lay or ordained, including making referrals to the Local Authority Designated Officer, if appropriate.

Within local churches we will:

- Encourage and support good practice in safeguarding, in line with the URC Safeguarding Good Practice Guidelines
- Seek assurance that local churches have adequate safeguarding arrangements in place, including a safeguarding co-ordinator and an up to date safeguarding policy
- Support churches in protecting people from the risks associated with known offenders within their congregations, including carrying out risk assessments and establishing Covenants of Care.

- Provide safeguarding resources and training to those who work with children and adults and develop leadership within local churches in relation to safeguarding.
- Provide support with safeguarding investigations in churches, including liaison with the police and social services, whilst maintaining confidentiality of any investigations to those directly involved.

5. Duty of care and confidentiality

We have a duty of care to beneficiaries of the Synod, both adults or children. We will maintain confidentiality except in circumstances where to do so would place the individual or another individual at risk of harm.

Where an issue or concern that has been investigated occurs in a LEP the Synod Safeguarding Advisor will ensure that relevant information is shared with the designated safeguarding persons in all relevant LEP denominations. Where an individual who poses risk in one of our churches, may also be attending other churches of different denominations, we will share information appropriately with relevant district safeguarding officers from other denominations.

6. Promoting and monitoring safeguarding in local churches

General Assembly Resolution 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.’

Northern Synod will encourage all local churches to adopt and implement the URC Safeguarding Good Practice Guidelines. An important aspect of this is the requirement for every church in the Northern Synod to have 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. The Synod Safeguarding Advisor will provide advice to churches in meeting these requirements.

Churches actively working with children or adults should implement these requirements to safeguard the vulnerable, reassure parents / carers & partner organisations, and protect leaders from false allegations. Churches not currently working with children or adults at risk should still be prepared with a policy and a co-ordinator, 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.

Maintaining a safeguarding ethos at all times brings churches in line with the expectations of the Charities Commission, shows an understanding of their duty of care and demonstrates a commitment to implement the General Assembly resolution 2 1997.

The Northern Synod will undertake an annual audit of compliance with the URC Safeguarding Good Practice Guidelines through the annual safeguarding return. This will be co-ordinated by the Synod Safeguarding Advisor and the information derived from the returns will be reported annually to the Synod Executive, identifying where there is non-compliance and therefore potential safeguarding risk. Ultimately this will be reported back to the Synod Trust and potentially to the Charities Commission.

7. Training opportunities

Northern Synod currently provides safeguarding training in association with the Methodist Church in the North East. We will offer and publicise safeguarding training opportunities to those in local churches who work with children or adults, encouraging them to undertake safeguarding training every 3 years.

There are basically two types of safeguarding courses available:

1. **Foundation training** which should be undertaken every three years by all those who work with children and adults at risk in local churches. This aims to give an awareness of safeguarding and how to keep local churches as safe as possible, to recognise safeguarding concerns and know who to discuss them with in church.
2. **Leadership training** is an additional course aimed at Ministers and Church Safeguarding Co-ordinators. It is also relevant to those who have very significant roles in church in relation to children, young people or adults at risk. It should be undertaken every three years and it builds on the foundation training by helping participants to feel confident about leading a safeguarding response in church, should a safeguarding incident occur. It also gives an understanding of how to manage safeguarding risk effectively, such as where a known sex offender is part of the congregation.

In addition to these courses, network meetings for safeguarding co-ordinators may provide opportunities to learn about specific safeguarding themes or issues.

All local authorities across the North East provide online foundation safeguarding training. Although this is not specific to issues that may arise in a church setting, it can be accessed if an urgent need exists when a URC/ Methodist training course is not available locally.

8. Preventing abuse and harm in Synod events and activities

Activities will be organised in accordance with URC Safeguarding Good Practice Guidelines so as promote a safe environment and healthy relationships whilst minimising opportunities for harm and misunderstanding or false accusation. 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, and adequate insurance will be in place.

DBS checks will be carried out on individuals working for the Synod in regulated activities, or those such as the Synod Safeguarding Advisor, whose role gives them access to vulnerable individuals and confidential information about them.

All paid staff and volunteers who work with children and young people will agree to work within a code of conduct (see appendix 2) and understand that there may be action taken if this code is not followed, possibly involving suspension or termination of working/volunteering with us.

9. Safer recruitment

We are committed to safer recruitment and appointment of all paid staff and volunteers that we engage, including those who work within projects for local churches. We 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

- Completion of Self Declaration forms
- Obtaining Disclosure and Barring checks where legally entitled to do so
- Taking up two references (not family) and
- Interviewing candidates

Training in safeguarding will be provided and volunteers and paid staff will be given support and supervision in their role.

10. Responding to concerns of abuse at Synod events and activities.

What to do if a worker notices indicators of possible abuse

If indicators of possible abuse give cause for concern, then the worker should

- Inform the person responsible for safeguarding at the event as soon as possible. This is often the leader in charge of an event. Also inform the Synod Safeguarding Advisor directly. Do not discuss with anybody else.
- Make a written record of the allegation, disclosure or 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. Any such records will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet at the Synod Office.
- If any of the Synod Safeguarding Advisor is implicated in the allegation, refer to the Synod Moderator.

What to do if there is 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 them that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Does not investigate or ask leading questions.
- Does not promise to keep secret what they have been told.
- Explains that they will need to tell someone else.
- Inform the person responsible for safeguarding at the event as soon as possible. This is often the leader in charge of an event. Also inform the Synod Safeguarding Advisor directly. Do not discuss with anybody else.
- Make a written record of the allegation, disclosure or 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. Any such records will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet at the Synod Office.
- If any of the Synod Safeguarding Advisor is implicated in the allegation, refer to the Synod Moderator.

Procedure in the event of a concern

If there is an immediate threat of harm the Police should be contacted.

Where it is judged that there is no immediate threat of harm the following will occur:

- The concern will be discussed with the Synod Safeguarding Advisor and a decision made as to whether the concern warrants a referral to statutory agencies.
- 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.
- 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.

11. Sources of advice, guidance, and support

Synod Safeguarding Advisor:

Geraldine Sands

Contact phone number: 07427857495

Email address: gsands.safeguardingurc@outlook.com

United Reformed Church Safeguarding Officer:

Ioannis Athanasiou

Contact phone number: 0207 520 2729

Email address: 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)

12. Statutory referrals and notifications

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 would have done so had that individual not resigned, retired, been made redundant or been transferred to a position which does not involve work with children. Such referrals would be made because the employer believes that the individual has engaged in relevant conduct or satisfied the harm test or committed an offence that would lead to automatic inclusion on a barred list.

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

13. Review

This policy should be reviewed by Synod Executive annually, amending and updating it as required. It should also be approved annually by the Synod's March meeting.

Date of most recent review: October 2018. Date of next review: October 2019

Signed:(on behalf of Synod)

Appendix 1

What is abuse and neglect - Children.

These definitions are taken from *Working Together 2013*

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.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.

It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.

It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

What is abuse? Adults in need of protection

The following definitions of abuse are laid down in *'No Secrets: Guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults (adults at risk) from abuse (Department of Health 2000):*

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. In giving substance to that statement, however, consideration needs to be given to several factors:

Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented or cannot consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

Physical Abuse

This is the infliction of pain or physical injury, which is either caused deliberately, or through lack of care.

Sexual Abuse

This is the involvement in sexual activities to which the person has not consented or does not truly comprehend and so cannot give informed consent, or where the other party is in a position of trust, power or authority and uses this to override or overcome lack of consent.

Psychological or Emotional Abuse

These are acts or behaviour, which cause mental distress or anguish or negates the wishes of the vulnerable adult. It is also behaviour that has a harmful effect on the adult at risk's emotional health and development or any other form of mental cruelty.

Financial or Material Abuse

This is the inappropriate use, misappropriation, embezzlement or theft of money, property or possessions

Neglect, or Act of Omission

This is the repeated deprivation of assistance that the adult at risk's needs for important activities of daily living, including the failure to intervene in behaviour which is dangerous to the adult at risk or to others. A vulnerable person may be suffering from neglect when their general well being or development is impaired

Discriminatory Abuse

This is the inappropriate treatment of an adult at risk because of their age, gender, race, religion, cultural background, sexuality, disability etc. Discriminatory abuse exists when values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that denies opportunity to some groups or individuals. Discriminatory abuse links to all other forms of abuse.

Organisational Abuse

This is the mistreatment or abuse of an adult at risk by a regime or individuals within an institution (e.g. hospital or care home) or in the community. It can be through repeated acts of poor or inadequate care and neglect or poor professional practice.

Domestic violence – including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so called 'honour' based violence.

Self-neglect – this covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

Modern slavery – encompasses slavery, human trafficking, and forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

APPENDIX 2

Code of Conduct for working with children or young people

We should all be aware that behaviour in a worker's personal life (including online) may impact upon their work with children and young people. Therefore, all workers agree not to behave in a manner which would lead any reasonable person to question their suitability to work with children or act as a role model within the United Reformed Church.

More specifically, all workers agree to the following code of conduct:

- Do treat all people with dignity and respect.
- Don't abuse the power and responsibility of your role. Don't belittle, scapegoat, put down, or ridicule a young person (even in 'fun') and don't use language or behaviour with sexual connotations (e.g. flirting or innuendo).
- Do act inclusively, seeking to make all people feel welcome and valued.
- Don't exclude other children or workers from conversations and activities unless there is a good reason.
- Do treat people with equal care and concern.
- Don't show favouritism (e.g. in selection for activities, in giving rewards, etc.) or encourage excessive attention from a particular child (e.g. gifts).
- Do encourage everyone to follow any behaviour agreement or ground rules and apply sanctions consistently.
- Don't threaten or use sanctions which have not been agreed or make empty threats.
- Do refer to a more senior worker if a child does not respond to your instructions despite encouragement and warning of possible consequences.
- Don't feel you have to deal with every problem on your own.

- Do seek to diffuse aggressive or threatening behaviour without the use of physical contact.
- Don't use physical restraint except as a last resort to prevent injury. This should be the use of minimum force.
- Do relate to children in public. If a child wants to talk one-to-one about an issue, tell another worker and find somewhere quieter, but still public, to talk.
- Don't spend time alone with children out of the sight of other people and without the knowledge of someone in leadership.
- Do make sure that any electronic communication is done with parental consent, and in a way which is transparent, accountable and noted / recorded and adheres to safeguarding policies.
- Don't keep communication with children secret, while still respecting appropriate confidences.
- Do allow the designated photographer to take and share photos of event activities, in line with parental consent and URC good practice guidelines.
- Don't take photos and video of young people at the event if you are not the designated photographer.
- Do use physical contact wisely - it should be:
 - in public
 - appropriate to the situation and to the age, gender and culture of the child.

- in response to the needs of the child, not the adult.
 - respectful of the child's privacy, feelings and dignity.
- Don't use physical contact which could be misconstrued as aggressive (e.g. rough games) or sexual.
- Do respect children's privacy.
- Don't assume that children should tell you anything you ask just because you are a worker.
- Do respect the right of children to wash, change and use the toilet in private.
- Don't walk in unnecessarily or unannounced/
- Do listen to children and do tell the safeguarding officer if you have any concerns about a child's welfare.
- Don't promise to keep something secret if it is about a child at risk of harm, but only tell those who need to know.
- Do respect and promote the rights of children to make their own decisions and choices.
- Don't work in ways that put your needs and interests before those of the children you work with.
- Do respect and encourage respect for difference, diversity, beliefs and culture.
- Don't discriminate or leave discrimination or bullying unchallenged.

I agree to abide by the above code of conduct while working with children & young people at Northern Synod events and activities.

Name:

Signed:

Date: