



The
United
Reformed
Church



The United Reformed Church
**Safeguarding
Coasts**



The 'e a ked e _obe a safeguarding coordinator

Introduction

This booklet has been written for those who are considering taking up, or have recently taken up, the role of safeguarding coordinator, or deputy, in their local United Reformed Church (URC). It seeks to define safeguarding in the context of Church, as well as setting out the core responsibilities and necessary skills and abilities of safeguarding coordinators.

Please note that the information also applies to churches of the URC that are part of a Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs) which use the URC Safeguarding Policy rather than one of the other denominations in the LEP.

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding refers to both the actions taken to promote the welfare of children/young people and adults, specifically putting preventative measures in place to protect those who are at risk of, or experiencing abuse, harm or neglect; and having effective procedures in place should something go wrong.

The URC's safeguarding policy **Good Practice 5** defines a child as anyone under 18 years of age, and an adult as anyone aged 18 years or over. It recognises that, for certain purposes, Scottish law treats 16- and 17-year olds as adults.

Adults at risk replaces the term 'vulnerable adults' and refers to adults who 'by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation are permanently, or for the time being, unable to take care of themselves, or to protect themselves against significant harm, abuse or exploitation.'

Safeguarding and the URC

Safeguarding in the United Reformed Church (URC) is underpinned by Jesus' command to 'love one another as I have loved you' (John 13:34-35).

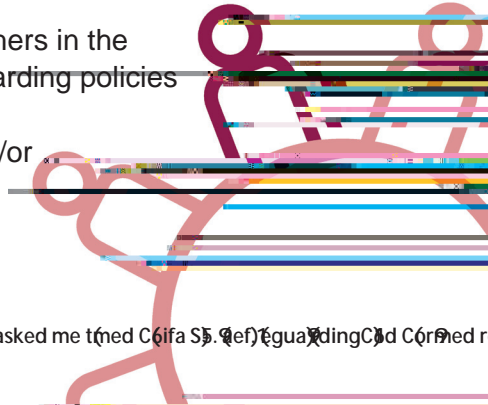
Best practice, and the URC's aim, is that everyone involved in church life – as an expression of the love of God – shares the responsibility of protecting the most vulnerable and upholding the rights of the least powerful.

Although the safeguarding coordinator may be seen as overseeing the church's safeguarding work, all church members and workers should be encouraged always to be vigilant and to play their part by:

- creating and maintaining a safe and inclusive environment for all,

agencies to whom a safeguarding referral is being made (such as Children's or Adult Services and/or the police). The Synod Safeguarding Officer should always be informed whenever referrals are made to any statutory agency.

- Calm, consistent, fair, hard to shock – you may be involved with challenging situations concerning people you/the church have long trusted ... you must act appropriately and in line with church policies at all times.
- You must be willing to be easily contactable – and prepared to make your details public to enable anyone to contact you directly at any time. Best practice would be to have a dedicated safeguarding email address (a free one from Gmail or Hotmail would be adequate) accessible only by you, alongside a mobile number. (You might want to think about a safeguarding mobile; a cheap phone and sim, for receiving safeguarding calls. A key advantage of this is that the phone can be passed on to those covering for you when you are away etc.)
- To be wise and have sound judgement – including knowing when to seek advice and from whom.
- Accurate record keeping – when confidential safeguarding information is shared, a record should be made of when it was shared, with whom, in what form, for what purpose and whether it was disclosed with or without informed consent. Similarly, any decision not to share any such information should also be recorded.
- An efficient and organised administrator – among other things safeguarding coordinators are responsible for completing the safeguarding section of the Annual Church Return. For more information on the Annual Church Return, specifically how to complete the safeguarding section, please see Appendix H1 to *Good Practice 5*.
- To advocate effectively – making others in the church aware of all relevant safeguarding policies and procedures.
- To report annually to the Elders and/or Church Meeting and the Synod Safeguarding Officer – anonymising information as appropriate.



Sources of information and support

There's plenty of information and support available for local church safeguarding coordinators. In addition to regular training, *G. oad P. ac ice 5* is an invaluable source of information. The URC website has an extensive safeguarding section containing resources, guidance documents and excellent information on all areas of safeguarding children and adults at risk. We strongly recommend that you familiarise yourself with *G. oad P. ac ice 5*.

Seek to develop a good working relationship with your Synod's Safeguarding Officer ([a full list can be found here](#)) and consider asking for a mentor – perhaps a safeguarding coordinator at a nearby United Reformed church, or the outgoing safeguarding coordinator at your church if appropriate.

And of course, the national safeguarding office at United Reformed Church House in London is there to help and can be contacted at safeguarding@urc.org.uk or on 0207 520 2729.

And finally ...

Please don't be overwhelmed by the scope of the role, or the amount of information to read. Don't forget you've been approached about this role because someone has seen in you the necessary combination of drive, characteristics, experience and abilities needed for 'your' local church.

Speak to the outgoing safeguarding coordinator and/or ask the person/people who approached you for more information on the realities of the role in your local church. And remember, advice and guidance is readily available from those mentioned above; although this is a crucial role it's not meant to be a burden!

Safeguarding people is an important part of the URC's mission. We are called to journey together alongside both those who have been abused and those who have abused; and together we work to ensure the Church is a sustained community of care where everyone – particularly the most vulnerable – find a place of love, pastoral care and support.

This is one in a series of booklets designed to give information to those who have been asked to consider taking on a role in the United Reformed Church.

The booklets can be read and downloaded at www.urc.org.uk/ask

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Written by Gill Nichol, a freelance writer and former Head of Communications of the URC. Designed and produced by the URC Communications Team.

The United Reformed Church, Church House,
86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT
020 7916 2020

