

The United Reformed Church Wheatley URC safeguarding policy



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.
- A commitment to be guided by the URC guidance on safeguarding 'Good Practice 6' available online at <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Good-Practice-6-2023.pdf>.

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.

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).

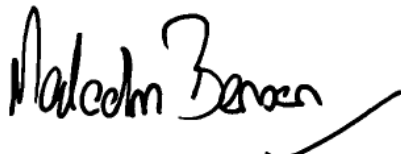
In line with Chapter six of Good Practice 6, we will:

- 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. Review

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

Signed by:



(On behalf of the church Elders)

Date of most recent review: 6th June 2024

Date of next review: 5th June 2025

This policy is available online at: www.wheatelyurc.org.uk/safeguarding

Key contacts

Church Safeguarding Coordinator

the person to whom all concerns or allegations should be addressed:

Name: **Malcolm Benson**
Telephone number: 01865 873843
Email: mkb@doctors.org.uk

Deputy Church Safeguarding Coordinator

can be contacted in the absence of the Safeguarding Coordinator):

Name: **Phyllis Williams**
Telephone number: 01865 876288
Email: secretary@wheatleyurc.org

Synod Safeguarding Officers

Synod Safeguarding Co-ordinator and Adults at Risk Officer:

Name: **Sharon Barr**
Telephone number: 07776 178246
Email: safeguarding@urcwessex.org.uk

For children in this church

Name: **Philip Ray**
Telephone number: 07787 171678
Email: cydo-n@urcwessex.org.uk

URC Safeguarding Office

if you are unable to contact the Synod Safeguarding Office

email: safeguarding@urc.org.uk

Local statutory services: Children

Oxfordshire Children's Social Care Department

Tel: 0345 05 07 666 (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) Out of hours Tel: 0800 833408

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Name: **Alison Beasley**
Telephone number: 0345 05 07 666 (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub)
email: LADO.SafeguardingChildren@Oxfordshire.gov.uk
Website: <http://www.oscb.org.uk/reporting-concerns/>

Local statutory services: Adults

Oxfordshire Adult Social Care Department

Tel: 0345 05 07 666 (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) Out of hours Tel: 0800 833408