



The
**United
Reformed
Church
Yorkshire**

Yorkshire Synod Safeguarding Policy

children and adults



1. Aim and purpose of this Policy

The aim of this policy is to promote and highlight safeguarding, prevent abuse, provide support to the survivors of abuse and protect all vulnerable people (both children and adults) at Synod level, and in local churches within the Synod. This ensures that we have 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 ensures that there is an understanding within the Synod and its local churches of safeguarding issues and to seek assurance that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place within its local churches.

The policy should be interpreted in the light of and alongside the most recent United Reformed Church Safeguarding Guidance Policy, Good Practice 5, which is available on the national URC website and via links on the Synod website.

2. Definitions

Yorkshire Synod is the regional administrative grouping of United Reformed Churches across Yorkshire. There are 94 churches in this grouping. A small team of staff support the functioning and ministry of these churches.

URC (Yorkshire 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 Yorkshire Synod and to URC (Yorkshire Province) Trust Ltd. Where the term 'Yorkshire 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 as guidance to local churches within the Synod, as it clarifies the relationship between churches and the Synod relating to safeguarding, as well as the responsibility that the Synod has to both support and monitor the safeguarding practice within local churches.

4. Introduction

Safeguarding everyone is a primary responsibility within the Yorkshire Synod. The Synod has three key responsibilities in this respect.

1. To safeguarding those most vulnerable within our society including children, young people and adults at risk within the sphere of the Synods own activities and events.
2. To provide support and assistance to those who are survivors of abuse.
3. Assure ourselves that all local churches within the Synod have appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place and are aware of their roles and responsibilities relating to all aspects of safeguarding.

We acknowledge and 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 at all times. 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 knowledgeable and caring environment in which there is an informed vigilance about the signs and 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 all activities in such a way as to promote a safe environment for all whilst minimising the risk of harm to both children and adults.

- Follow a comprehensive and detailed safer recruitment process for the selection and appointment of all people who may work with children or adults in need of protection, whether voluntary or paid, lay or ordained.
- Follow current URC Safeguarding Good Practice Guidance (GP5), including assessing risk and managing known offenders involved in Synod activities whilst working effectively with other agencies, including social services and the police on safeguarding matters.
- Respond appropriately and correctly 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 establish good practice in safeguarding, in line with the URC Safeguarding Good Practice Guidelines (GP5).
- 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 comprehensive and up to date safeguarding resources and training to all those who attend our churches including specific training for those who work with children and adults and develop leadership within local churches in relation to safeguarding.
- Provide specialist 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 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.

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.’

Yorkshire Synod will encourage and assist all local churches to adopt and implement the URC Safeguarding Good Practice Guidelines (GP5). A vital aspect of this is the requirement for every church in the Yorkshire 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. It is also suggested that the Minister at the church does not hold the role of safeguarding officer unless there is no other option available within the church.

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 some number of adults at risk at all times.

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

The Yorkshire Synod will undertake an annual audit of compliance with the URC Safeguarding Good Practice Guidelines through an 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

Yorkshire Synod 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 fundamentally three types of safeguarding courses available

1. **Basic Training** - This training should be undertaken every three years by everyone who attends our churches in any capacity but especially those who work with children and adults at risk in local churches. This training provides a basic awareness of safeguarding including different types of abuse as well as being able to recognise, respond, record and report any safeguarding concerns. It also covers how to keep local churches as safe as possible including basic knowledge of health and safety around our buildings and meetings.

2. **Intermediate Training** – This training also should be undertaken every three years by those who hold a specific role within our churches including trustees and those who may come into contact with children and adults at risk. This training gives the opportunity to go into greater depth relating to some safeguarding issues and is generally directed to those who hold a leadership role within the church at all levels, specifically church safeguarding officers, Ministers and leaders of groups within the church setting. It gives a deeper understanding on how to manage safeguarding risks, safer recruitment and manage offenders within a church setting as well as other issues appropriate to the roles.
3. **Advanced Training** – Aimed at specific areas of safeguarding for leadership roles within the Synod and local churches. Advanced training seeks to allow participants to understand more complex and nuanced safeguarding ideas and to take an active role in directing others in the church whilst promoting effective practices in and beyond their Church. It also demonstrates how to work effectively alongside statutory authorities and other denominations / agencies within the safeguarding arena.

All local authorities across the Yorkshire Synod provide online basic 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 course is not available locally.

8. Preventing abuse and harm in Synod events and activities

All activities will be organised in accordance with URC Safeguarding Good Practice Guidelines (GP5) 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 3) 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 fully 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 recognises indicators of possible abuse

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

- Respond correctly by informing the person responsible for safeguarding at the event as soon as possible. This is often the leader in charge of an event. Sometimes this may not be possible so responsibility to report the abuse may fall to that person. Within 24 hours the Synod Safeguarding Advisor must be informed directly. Do not discuss with anybody else. However, if there is immediate concern over a safeguarding issue then the emergency services must be contacted straight away. DO NOT wait 24 hours to report in this instance.

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 at any point 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 (in the case of a child).
- Inform the person responsible for safeguarding at the event as soon as possible. This is often the leader in charge of an event. Within 24 hours the Synod Safeguarding Advisor must be informed 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 point 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:

Matt Knowles

Contact phone number: 07761 525592

Email address: matt.safeguarding@urcyorkshire.org.uk

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 safeguarding Committee 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 2020. Date of next review: October 2021

Signed:(on behalf of Synod)

Appendix1

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 Yorkshire Synod events and activities.

Name:

Signed:

Date: