

Education & Learning Committee: Safer Sacred Space training

D

Agreed by Mission Council on 12 March 2014

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Revd Fiona Thomas fiona.thomas@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council agrees that URC-approved Safer Sacred Space training should be mandatory for every minister of Word and sacraments and church related community worker according to the provisions outlined in Paper D.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	To institute mandatory training which raises the awareness of ministers/CRCWs to appropriate boundaries in interpersonal relationships within the Church
Main points	Appropriate training, by the URC or other approved providers, should be mandatory. The purpose, content and outcomes of the training are given. Sanctions are listed.
Previous relevant documents	General Assembly resolution 16 (Book of Reports p. 250) Preserving the Integrity of the Body (May 2006) Mission Council Resolution, November 2013: Minute 13/35
Consultation has taken place with...	Synod Training & Development Officers, Head of Children and Youth, Secretary for Ministries, synod moderators

Summary of Impact

Financial	Training costs will be covered in the usual way.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Courses offered by ecumenical partners may be authorised to fulfil the requirement for URC ministers/CRCWs.

EM3 Mandatory Training

Safer Sacred Space (safe sexual boundaries) Implementation Plan

1.1 Introduction: Mandatory Training

1.1.1 At General Assembly 2012, the United Reformed Church agreed the resolution:

1.1.2 “General Assembly accepts that it will sometimes be appropriate to make certain additional training mandatory under our EM3 provisions for Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers. It will be for Mission Council to agree the nature, expected outcomes, and monitoring of such training.” (General Assembly 2012, Book of Reports, Resolution 16)

1.1.3 All ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers serving in URC pastorates or other recognised posts in the URC shall be required to undertake Education for Ministry Phase 3 (EM3) Mandatory Training, as has been agreed by Mission Council.

1.2 Introduction: Safer Sacred Space background and training

1.2.1 The Sexual Ethics Steering Group (SESG) was formed in January 2006 with a remit to oversee the implementation of recommendations passed by Mission Council and published in *Preserving the Integrity of the Body: Sexual Ethics within the United Reformed Church* (May 2006). In August 2007, the final meeting of the All-Synods Group for Declaration of a Safe Church was held. The initial meeting of the Sexual Ethics Advisory Group (SEAG) was held in June 2008 with the remit “to oversee all the systemic (not individual case-based) sexual ethics matters in the church, focused on all levels of the church.” It anticipated setting up systems and training, working toward activities to be incorporated into URC structures. Mission Council in May 2013 accepted the final Report of SEAG, setting out that each person within the URC shall be made aware of safe sexual boundaries and should pursue best practice.

1.2.2 The name given to the overall issue is Safer Sacred Space, indicating a desire that all sacred space becomes safer sacred space. This document sets out the kind of training required for all EM3 ministers to fulfil the requirement of training towards Safer Sacred Space. The requirement is that EM3 ministers should receive training and updates at regular intervals.

1.2.3 It is not required that this training is either created or delivered by members of the URC, but that EM3 ministers engage with training which is approved by the URC as that which meets the requirements following.

2. Safer Sacred Space Purpose and Outcomes

This section sets out the intention of any Safer Sacred Space education and learning as that of encouraging best practice in behaviours for the widest possible benefit. It clarifies that the learning is not only for the improved practice of the minister, but also for improved practice from those with whom ministers share ministry in every possible situation. This would include the local pastorate, schools where a minister works, places where a minister is regarded as chaplain, community groups with which a minister is engaged; wherever the minister exercises ministry, it is hoped that with Safer Sacred Space issues embedded in the ministers' practice, the minister will feel empowered to raise those issues as appropriate.

It may be helpful to explain and discuss this section with groups of people - ordained, commissioned and lay. Safer Sacred Space learning is not designed to be a URC burden against people's will, but a trusted process to ensure that all those who share in any aspect of the life of the URC and its ministries may expect honourable and holy encounters.

This section includes information for timing of education and updating. It is important to understand that if an EM2 minister has not received Safer Sacred Space issue education in EM1, then the EM2 minister should engage in this as soon as possible in EM2.

*** A potential outcome of Safer Sacred Space issue training may be that the EM3 minister encounters triggers within the training which raise personal 'boundary injury' issues. Any sensitive course will allow the learner to leave the learning environment to manage their response. However, if the absence amounts to more than 25% of the course content, the course may not have been effectively delivered for that learner. It will be up to the Synod EM3 Officer and the EM3 minister to make arrangements for any counselling and any renewal of learning.

Framework	Guidelines and Implementation
2.1 Learning Purpose is to	<p>An EM3 Minister is a person in a recognised place of ministry, including non-URC ministers in posts or partnerships recognised by the URC.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The place of ministry may be recognised by a Synod, by General Assembly, by another organisation as employer (for instance in a chaplaincy or academic post) or by another organisation managing volunteers with responsibility (for instance, by a charity). 2. The place of ministry may be stipended, salaried or voluntary. 3. The minister may be formally retired, but in a Synod or area named and recognised post. 4. Though the mandatory framework does not apply to those well into retirement who work in churches in ad hoc ways, it is considered good practice to include them in any ministerial training.
2.1.1 Understand safe sexual boundaries so that the EM3 minister exercises best practice	
2.1.2 Understand safe sexual boundaries in order that EM3 minister's place of ministry exercises best practice	
2.1.3 Understand safe sexual boundaries in order that, where influence is possible, best practice is exercised within the EM3 minister's wider community and the wider URC	
2.1.4 Understand safe sexual boundaries and their impact upon the URC, including the risk to the URC of a minister not undertaking this training and any potential negative consequences of failure to exercise best practice in observing	

safe sexual boundaries	<p>5. From time to time, Moderators may recommend that specific ministers undertake Safer Sacred space issues training.</p> <p>6. Where a minister from another denomination is serving the United Reformed Church, it will be for the Synod Moderator to decide if it is appropriate for them to be encouraged to undertake Safer Sacred Space training.</p>
2.2 The expected outcome will be for the EM3 minister to gain	
2.2.1 A better understanding of safe sexual boundaries and potential personal behaviour change	<p>The core outcome is that the minister is aware of boundaries and of the need for appropriate identification of such boundaries. The minister will be aware of what to set in place for protection of self and others and will be aware of how to encourage a church culture of appropriate sacred spaces.</p>
2.2.2 Increased understanding of URC and non-URC support for safe sexual boundaries	
2.2.3 Strategies to manage safe sexual boundaries within the local pastorate, within the wider URC and where possible, within the wider community	
2.2.4 Strategies to manage safe sexual boundaries within URC procedures	
2.2.5 Important professional development	
2.3 Frequency	
2.3.1 EM3 ministers must have engaged in Safer Sacred Space training within the first four years of recognised ministry, provided that they received training within their EM1 learning. If they have not received training within EM1, Ministers will engage in Safer Sacred Space training during their EM2.	<p>If Safer Sacred Space issue training is first taken up in EM2, it will supersede normal EM2 requirements.</p> <p>If Safer Sacred Space issue training has already been taken up by an EM3 minister currently in post, that training must have been completed no more than four years prior to the institution of EM3 Mandatory Safer Sacred Space training. Prior learning must fulfil the EM3 Mandatory Safer Sacred Space framework, Section 3 (The Nature of Safer Sacred Spaced Education)</p>
2.3.2 Updates of training are required at no more than four year intervals.	

3. The Nature of Safer Sacred Space Education

This section gives detailed information about the recommended education and learning content, delivery and provision. It will be for Synod EM3 Officers to understand the nature of the recommended learning so that they will be able to assess whether a particular course fulfils the criteria. Course information should have details including those listed in this section with full information about accreditation/authorisation of the course and content as well as information about the quality of the leadership/educators. It is anticipated that courses may be delivered by education authorities, hospital trusts, universities and colleges as well as by church denominations and faith groups.

This section also includes information about finance. The URC provides funding for EM3 and also sets criteria for where that funding will be spent. Claims will be made in the usual way, with expenses covered as is customary within each EM3 minister's Synod and pastorate.

Framework	Guidelines and Implementation
3.1 Learning Content areas	
3.1.1 Awareness of the importance of boundaries in pastoral care	These content areas are not the only content which may be delivered within a Safer Sacred Space issues training event, but are the core content expected for any course.
3.1.2 The practical and emotional effects of poor or good boundaries	
3.1.3 Boundaries in specific pastoral situations including an understanding of transference and counter-transference	
3.1.4 Models of pastoral care and their implications for power and vulnerability in pastoral contexts	
3.1.5 Self awareness and understanding of personal and theological issues relating to boundaries, power and vulnerability within a pastoral setting	
3.1.6 Listening and responding skills.	
3.2 Learning outcomes:	
3.2.1 An understanding of the importance of effective boundaries, and the consequences when boundaries break down	Fundamental to this training is that the EM3 minister improves personal self awareness and as a consequence, their own ability to note and to sensitively manage boundaries for themselves and for others.
3.2.2 An ability to reflect on their own practice in pastoral care, and their own areas of strength and vulnerability.	
3.2.3 An awareness of participants' own emotional needs, and the	

motivations which they bring to pastoral care.	
3.2.4 A basic understanding of the concepts of projection, transference and dual/multiple relationships in the pastoral context	
3.2.5 Listening and responding skills	
3.3 Existing training available to EM3 Ministers	
3.3.1 URC Safer Sacred Space Training modules	These are modules available from and commissioned by the Education & Learning Committee. The modules may be used in a variety of ways, over a range of time frames and can be delivered by people with the attributes described in Section 3.5 of the framework.
3.3.2 Safe Space Training created by other denominations and faith groups	Other denominations (Methodists, Quakers, Salvation Army) have excellent training material and training programmes. Provided that they meet at least the criteria and guidelines at Sections 3.1 and 3.2, these are appropriate courses.
3.3.3 Other safe sexual boundary training which meet the URC requirements	Local Authorities, large employers, hospitals, colleges, universities and independent organisations run safe sexual boundary training to varying degrees. Where necessary, appropriate additional theological reflection may be required (guideline, Section 3.1).
3.4 Recommended training delivery methods and materials	
3.4.1 Module One Pastoral Boundaries from the training programme Creating Safer Sacred Space for Pastoral Encounter, commissioned by the URC from the face2face project, Holy Rood House.	Education & Learning will distribute the Safer Sacred Space for Pastoral Encounter training modules to people identified as Preferred Trainers, as given in Section 3.5.
3.4.2 Other training delivery and modules which meet URC requirements.	The Education & Learning Programme Officer will review alternative courses against the Learning Content areas and Learning Outcomes described in Sections 3.1 and 3.2 and provide a list of appropriate alternative providers.
3.5 Preferred Trainers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognised trainers with a background in Safer Sacred Space issue training 	It is important that any trainer understands the learning context and the variety of church life experience. There are a range of URC and non-URC trainers who

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognised trainers with a background in boundary issue training of any kind 	<p>could deliver such courses. Synods may independently contract recognised trainers from the church or the secular world. Courses delivered by non Church providers need to demonstrate the quality of their trainers.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognised trainers with experience in boundary protection with churches 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognised trainers with a personal resilience and vocation to boundary integrity 	
<p>3.6 Learning Structure areas and Alternative Providers</p>	
<p>3.6.1 Course length should be substantial enough to deliver content in a meaningful way to optimise EM3 engagements.</p>	<p>1. The preferred method of training is group work, rather than distance learning or one-to-one training. The dynamics of group work ensure that the learner fully engages with the content, often at a difficult level.</p>
<p>3.6.2 Courses should be interactive with the provision of support if sensitive issues arise. It is not recommended that course delivery is by distance or e-learning.</p>	<p>2. Ideally (but not absolutely), the first course (not the updates courses) should be four 1.5 hour sessions. These could be delivered in one day within a Synod, or delivered in separate sessions through a longer period of time.</p>
<p>3.6.3 Alternative training to URC training is acceptable provided that</p>	<p>3. If a training provider is not from a theological background, evidence of some theological reflection from the learner will be required. A small paper (a few sides of A4) should be presented with the selected course’s learning evidence to the Synod Officer for final receipt of the URC Certificate for Mandatory Training.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The suggested course meets the URC outcomes 	<p>4. If a training provider is not from a church background and therefore does not use the phrase ‘pastoral care’, the course needs to demonstrate its content around formal and informal relationships, particularly where no formal contract guides the relationship.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Learning Provider was accredited/authenticated by the provider’s relevant accrediting/authenticating body 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presenters/teachers/facilitators were shown to have relevant expertise, knowledge and skills 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The subject information was up-to-date and accurate 	
<p>3.6.4 Prior learning by the EM3 minister is acceptable as long as it has met the criteria in 3.1 and 3.2.</p>	<p>If prior learning was more than four years before the date of the EM3 mandatory requirement, training must be updated.</p>
<p>3.7 Finance</p>	
<p>3.7.1 The cost of any course or training will be set by the course provider.</p>	<p>In most cases Safer Sacred Space training can be delivered within Synods in the usual process for Synod Training days, including sub-contracting of external trainers. In this case, the course is paid for within Synod and not a draw on a</p>
<p>3.7.2 EM3 ministers will agree appropriate courses and costs with</p>	

<p>their relevant Synod EM3 Officer. Course payments may also be met through other sources (chaplaincy or other employer funds, for example). Individual EM3 allowances may be used if a Synod – run course is not available.</p>	<p>minister’s EM3 funding.</p>
<p>3.7.3 EM3 minister expenses costs will be met by the usual procedures for EM3 funding which may include a non-URC employer, a local pastorate or placement, or a Synod.</p>	<p>It is expected that Safer Sacred Space issues training will be given priority within the Assembly EM3 funding framework.</p>

4. Monitoring of Safer Sacred Space Training

This section details that records will be kept and that monitoring is anticipated. Records of training undertaken and learning outcomes will be kept in the customary way for each Synod, and encouragement to learn will be exercised in the customary way for each Synod.

General Assembly in 2012 passed a resolution on mandatory EM3 training, and Mission Council in November 2013 designated Safer Sacred Space training as an appropriate subject for mandatory EM3. Therefore lack of engagement with Safer Sacred Space training can be considered to be a disciplinary matter. It will be for the Synod EM3 Officer to report lack of engagement with Safer Sacred Space training to the Synod Moderator.

Framework	Guidelines and Implementation
4.1 Evidence of Safer Sacred Space training will be kept in	
4.1.1 Synod Records	Records will be kept within the Training records of a Synod, as well as in a Minister’s File.
4.1.2 EM3 Minister Records	A data base within Education & Learning will hold records of all certificates of completion of EM3 Mandatory Safer Sacred Space issue training.
4.1.3 Assembly Records	The URC core database will keep completed Safer Sacred Space issue training records within the whole of ministers’ records.
4.2 Effectiveness of learning will be seen by	
4.2.1 Initial Feedback, reflection and evaluation with the course provider	Evaluation will be conducted at each Safer Sacred Space training event and it will be anticipated that reflection on boundary issues will be raised in EM3 reflection (development meetings, MASA)
4.2.2 Follow up reflection and evaluation at intervals throughout ministry, especially at refresher/update courses	