

Paper R1

Safeguarding advisory group

Safeguarding Update



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Basic information

Contact name and email address	Ioannis Athanasiou – URC Safeguarding Officer ioannis.athanasiou@urc.org.uk
Action required	No specific action is requested or required by the information in this paper.
Draft resolution(s)	N/A

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Safeguarding
Main points	Update on safeguarding practice within the URC.
Previous relevant documents	N/A
Consultation has taken place with...	Richard Church, Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship) Elizabeth Gray-King, PCR Project Manager.

Summary of Impact

Financial	N/A
External (e.g. ecumenical)	N/A

Safeguarding Update

1. **New Safeguarding Officer**

The URC's new Safeguarding Officer was appointed in December 2017. Special thanks and appreciation to Richard Church, Craig Bowman, Elizabeth Gray-King, Carole Sired and all safeguarding designated professionals at the synod level (SSOs and CYDOs) whose on-going support in this sensitive area of the Church's life has been very important over the interim period since Cassi Wright left post in June 2017.

2. **Policy Developments**

Several developments in reviewing and establishing safeguarding policies and procedures have either commenced or been progressed this year. The Past Case Review has utilised support from experts, and a Learning Group of specialists has studied the process of the last two years, in order to analyse the findings and inform our safeguarding policies and practices in future. In the light of the new legislation and recent guidance by Charity Commission, safeguarding is also one of the priority areas for the working group focused on the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) that come into force in May 2018.

3. **External agencies and partnerships**

Partnership work with external agencies (Due Diligence Checking/DDC and CCPAS) and close collaboration with other departments and denominations (Christian Forum for Safeguarding, Church of Scotland) continue to help update internal policies and practices and formalize standards in strategic areas of safeguarding operations, such as safer recruitment and recording and sharing data and information. All of these developments and policy updates will be incorporated in relevant sections in the current Good Practice Guide and will be shared through briefings, reports and on-line resources to assist local churches, Assembly and synod staff and contribute to a safer church environment across the URC.

4. **Safeguarding advisory group (SAG)**

The overall structure of safeguarding has been standardised in the life of our Church throughout 2017. The safeguarding advisory group (SAG) met three times to review the development of safeguarding policies and processes within the URC. The SAG agreed on a strategic plan (2017 to 2022) which will be further developed and put into operation, with specific goals and actions that reflect new laws and requirements and protect both children and adults at risk.

5. **Synod Safeguarding Officers (SSO's)**

All thirteen synods have made their own arrangements to organise safeguarding matters and/or employ appropriate staff to act as safeguarding designated professionals at synod level. It is a positive point that twelve synods each have a single point of contact to respond to and act upon any safeguarding concerns and provide guidance and training to local churches. The Synod of Scotland has not placed safeguarding responsibility upon a single individual but within an on-going service agreed with the Church of Scotland and compliant with their safeguarding standards.

6. **Team collaboration**

Safeguarding team meetings with all synod safeguarding designated professionals will continue to provide an opportunity for peer-to-peer learning, knowledge exchange

and development of good practice and appropriate training resources across the denomination. Synod Safeguarding Officers will also complete and send their safeguarding returns and reports to Church House by the end of February 2018. Responses from the synods will integrate frontline and synod experience in the process of reviewing and finalising the strategic plan and consolidating our safeguarding practices and operations, including safer recruitment, training development, data protection, risk assessment and safeguarding adults at risk.