



MISSION COUNCIL

13 – 15 MAY 2013

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Sexual Ethics Advisory Group

Issue 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 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.

This report details the activity since June 2008 and shows how the work is now incorporated into URC structures.

SEAG revised the remit:

To ensure that all members and leaders in the URC are safe from abuse and harassment

To meet this remit, the Group agreed three groups of activities:

- Ensure awareness raising for prevention
- Ensure safe structures to handle events
- Ensure safe structures to handle effects of events

Each group of activity was broken down in detail:

1. Ensure awareness raising for prevention

Specifically,

- a. Encourage information, understanding and guidance events
- b. Encourage training at locations where URC Church Leaders meet and identify and/or provide training materials
- c. Encourage training at locations where RC Church Members meet and identify and/or provide training materials
- d. Ensure that commitments are made in Codes of Conduct
- e. Ensure appropriate record keeping and record sharing

2. Ensure safe structures to handle events

Specifically,

- a. Ensure that there are Pastoral Response Team resources for churches in cases of Clergy misconduct

- b. Ensure that there are Synod Advisors to handle information about lay misconduct
- c. Ensure that there are Synod Hearing Panels to adjudicate on cases of lay misconduct
- d. Ensure that that there is appropriate guidance and training for all those who operate the structures

3. Ensure safe structures to handle effects of events

Specifically,

- a. Ensure that there are Pastoral Response Team resources for churches in cases of Clergy misconduct

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Summer 2012

Following are three tables showing where this remit now fits within the URC structures.

Glossary:

APRT	Assembly Pastoral Reference Team
PRWC	Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee
E&L	Education and Learning (department) of the URC
SEAG	Sexual Ethics Advisory Group
SESG	Sexual Ethics Steering Group

1. Ensure awareness raising for prevention

Remit	SEAG Activity	Place in URC from 2012
a. Encourage information, understanding and guidance events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Boundaries/Sexual Ethics training delivered in 11 Synods ▪ Local Resource packs made available in Synods ▪ Mission Council approves “<i>URC Policy and Procedure in Response to Alleged Incidents of Sexual Harassment and Abuse</i>” [the Policy] & agrees to review after three years. ▪ 2008 Policy and Procedures, Flow Chart on Sexual Harassment placed on URC Website, January 2009 ▪ Presentation to Synod Moderators on SEAG work, December 2009 	PRWC and E&L
b. Encourage training at locations where URC Church Leaders meet and identify and/or provide training materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Boundaries/Sexual Ethics training delivered to most ministers in 11 Synods ▪ Sexual Ethics issues included in all EM2 residential weekends ▪ E&L Committee agrees to fund development of modular training with EM2 and EM3 material. Audit of available sources to complete by April 2012 and training material for delivery of modules by Autumn 2012. 	E&L in partnership with Synod Training and Development Officers
c. Encourage training at locations where RC Church Members meet and identify and/or provide training materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Resource packs made available to churches in Synods ▪ E&L Committee agrees to fund development of modular training material. Audit of available sources to complete by April 2012 and training material for delivery of modules by Autumn 2012. 	E&L in partnership with Synod Training and Development Officers
d. Ensure that commitments are made in Codes of Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ministerial Codes of Conduct were updated ▪ EM2 2012 Guidelines specify EM2 Pastoral Adviser support to adhere to Codes of Conduct 	E&L in partnership with Resource Centres for Learning
e. Ensure appropriate record keeping and record sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Synod Training and Development Officers maintain records of Synod attendances at training events. 	E&L in partnership with Synod Training and Development Officers

2. Ensure safe structures to handle events

Remit	SEAG Activity	Place in URC from 2012
a. Ensure that there are Pastoral Response Team resources available for churches in cases of Clergy misconduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assembly Pastoral Reference Team (APRT) Coordinator appointed December 2008 	APRT now accountable to Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee (PRWC), September 2011
b. Ensure that there are Synod Advisors to hear and handle information about lay misconduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Residential Synod Adviser training events held, January & February 2009 & March 2010; Guidelines produced March 2009 ▪ APRT pool training completed, January 2010. ▪ Detailed Adviser status in 12 Synods updated, February 2012 	PRWC agrees to ensure “that each Synod has a named advisor for its response to any allegation of sexual abuse”, February 2012
c. Ensure that there are Synod Hearing Panels to adjudicate on cases of lay misconduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Model guideline produced for hearing panels under Appendix D of Policy, January 2010 	PRWC
d. Ensure that there is appropriate guidance and training for all those who operate the structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ E&L Committee agrees to fund development of modular training to embrace Synod Adviser, Spring 2012 	E&L and PRWC

3. Ensure safe structures to handle effects of events

Remit	SEAG Activity	Place in URC from 2012
a. Ensure that there are Pastoral Response Team resources available for churches in cases of Clergy misconduct	(as Activity at 2 a)	PRWC