

# Paper R1

Safeguarding Advisory Group  
Report on current work

United Church 2015  
Church 2015  
Reformed Church 2015  
Church 2015



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## Safeguarding Advisory Group

### Report on current work

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Before Mission Council: John Proctor john.proctor@urc.org.uk  After Mission Council: Richard Church richard.church@urc.org.uk
<b>Action required</b>	Take note.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>None.</b>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To report on the work of the group.
<b>Main points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) We expect to publish, during May, an up-to-date resource for the safeguarding of children and young people. This will need to be complemented with other material.</li> <li>b) We plan to use a new agency for the provision of various safeguarding services to the URC.</li> <li>c) Our joint safeguarding officer appointment with the Baptist Union of GB will end later this year.</li> </ul>
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	None.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Baptist Union of GB.

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Publication costs.</li> <li>b) Saving on the cost of safeguarding services.</li> <li>c) Extra staff costs, if we increase the scoping of our own post.</li> </ul>
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Our credibility in the current climate of opinion and awareness depends on dealing properly with safeguarding matters.

## Safeguarding: current work

1. In 2004 the URC set up a Safeguarding Reference Group (now the Safeguarding Advisory Group [SAG]), to support and anchor the work of Assembly staff in safeguarding, and to promote good and careful practice in this important area. The group, which is chaired by the deputy general secretary (discipleship), includes representatives from ministries, education and learning and children's and youth work. The group reports to Mission Council through the Mission Council advisory group.
2. The group has worked hard in the last year, in an area that is always sensitive and at a time of intense public concern. The report ahead deals with several matters that are moving rapidly forward through a period of development and change.
3. The URC has been working for a long time on the fourth edition of our *Good Practice* resource (GP4), and reporting on this requires to be done in three parts:
  - 3.1 We expect to publish the comprehensive version of our material on children and young people during May, initially on the URC website with print copies to follow.
  - 3.2 We shall then need a condensed version of the above resource for wide use among local church volunteers. A writing group is already actively under way with this.
  - 3.3 A large additional chapter will also be needed to address the concerns and well-being of vulnerable adults, a group on which increasing emphasis is presently being placed. This writing is clearly in view, but not yet in hand.
- 4.1 A good deal of our safeguarding work is serviced on a contract basis by the Churches' Agency for Safeguarding (CAS). They process a large number of Disclosure and Barring Service (England and Wales)/Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) (DBS/PVG) clearances, offer training events, and give telephone advice to local churches. As a founding member of CAS, we also nominate a trustee to its board, currently our safeguarding officer, Amy Slennett. However, our needs have evolved, the SAG has been concerned about whether CAS gives us all the support we require, and a decision was taken in 2014 to seek tenders for our needs in the three years ahead.
  - 4.2 Our contract with CAS requires a year's notice, and we gave this in August 2014. When we then went to tender for the three years ahead, we received five tenders in all, shortlisted four, and worked jointly with the Baptist Union of GB in considering the four potential providers.
  - 4.3 Although CAS was one of the organisations that submitted a tender, members of the panel from both denominations were most favourably impressed with another bidder, with whom we are now entering more detailed conversation, in the hope of moving towards a formal contract. This would begin in September 2015. Firmer news may be available by the time Mission Council meets.
4. Our safeguarding officer, Amy Slennett, has worked for us and the Baptist Union of GB on a 50:50 basis for almost two years. This arrangement has brought some strains, as the two denominations' needs differ in more ways than were apparent at the start. However, the Baptists, who have recently completed the triage stage of their historic review, have now let us know that a 50% post will no longer meet their needs. The sharing arrangement will therefore come to an end in September 2015. With that in mind, and with a possible historic review ahead, we are ourselves actively considering whether we need to expand our present 50% scoping of this work.

