

Paper R1

Good practice standards on child and adult protection

Safeguarding advisory group

Good practice standards on child and adult protection

Basic information

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Action required	For information only.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Report on the work of the safeguarding advisory group (SAG).
Main points	The completion of the past case review instigated a range of developments and initiatives to standardise good practice in all aspects of child and adult protection procedures and safeguarding practices of the URC.
Previous relevant documents	Papers R2 and R3 at Mission Council, November 2018.
Consultation has taken place with...	Members of the SAG. Synod safeguarding officers. Church safeguarding coordinators.

Summary of impact

Financial	The costs related to good practice 5 are covered by the budget of the safeguarding office at Church House. Delivery of safeguarding training and on-going work with adult survivors of historical abuse will require financial support from the Church in the future.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None.

1. Following the completion of the past case review (PCR), the safeguarding advisory group has developed a joined-up approach, in order to implement systemic changes and set up standards on safeguarding throughout the United Reformed Church. The learning process evolved since the last Mission Council has already supported the Church on the next steps that need to be taken to effect cultural change in the safeguarding policies, practices and procedures across the denomination.
2. As instructed by Mission Council in November 2018, the safeguarding advisory group consulted with Synod Moderators and Synod Safeguarding Officers and produced a comprehensive strategic safeguarding plan to enable the Church to implement the recommendations of PCR learning group report (paper R2 at this Mission Council). The aim of the plan is to improve best practice standards in child and adult protection across the denomination and support the synods and local churches in this important area of work in the years to come.
3. The next edition of URC's safeguarding policy – *Good Practice 5 – Safeguarding for Children and Adults at Risk* - will be produced by the end of this year to reflect new laws and regulatory requirements. SAG is committed to consulting with internal groups and committees and using the expertise of current safeguarding practices of synods and local churches. A safeguarding policy review group of synod and local church safeguarding designated persons was established for this purpose. The Group recognised the need for a common safeguarding policy across the URC that will be compact, user-friendly and easily accessible to local churches, synods, institutions and bodies of the Church. The handbook will no longer be in use. *Good Practice 5 – Safeguarding for Children and Adults at Risk* will combine best practice guidance on all forms of abuse and practices of safeguarding with the advantages of downloadable appendices from the main website of the URC and an index within the document. SAG aims at publishing guidance of high standard and supporting everyone at the URC in dealing confidently with safeguarding concerns and incidents and protecting children, young people, and adults from abuse, harm or neglect.
4. Raising the standards of safer recruitment remains a priority for the SAG. In addition to fully updated sections about safer recruitment procedures and vetting, disclosure and barring checks in the next edition of good practice, Due Diligence Checking Ltd (DDC) is planned to be the only processor of criminal records checks for all paid and voluntary roles and positions within the URC. Checks for ministers, Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs), Assembly accredited lay preachers, and other relevant denominational staff in the URC in England, Wales and Scotland will shortly be transferred to and processed by DDC. The ministers, lay preachers and CRCWs will receive timely information about this change, whose purpose is to ensure fair and transparent processing of criminal offence data throughout the denomination.
5. As a result of the recommendations of the past case review to engage and work directly with survivors, a reference group of adult survivors of historical abuse was created in November 2018 (chaired by the URC's Safeguarding Adviser). Although there has been a slow process due to the lack of relevant structures and the sensitive nature of this work, the SAG will receive at its June meeting the group's recommendations on how to improve current safeguarding policies and

practices of the Church and to co-produce with them guidance on pastoral care and support work. SAG will be ready to update the Mission Council on the work with survivors of abuse in November 2019.

6. Safeguarding training – practice guidance for the URC has been developed with the support of the safeguarding training review group (consisted of URC's Safeguarding Adviser, Education and Learning Programme Officer, and Safeguarding Officers of four synods). Following the recommendations made by the Past Case Review (PCR) Learning report, safeguarding training in the URC must ensure that all individuals working in URC affiliated churches, groups, offices and institutions understand the safeguarding processes and policies of the URC. In alignment with good practice 4, synods lead the delivery and dissemination of suitable safeguarding training for relevant staff and volunteers. Each synod offers regular safeguarding training for church workers and those responsible for the care of children and/or adults at risk. All those working with children and adults at risk as well as those responsible for their care need to know how to work with them and promote the welfare of those in their care in ways that reduce the likelihood of harm. They also need to know how to respond effectively to concerns or allegations of abuse.
7. The new guidance introduces a three-level modular framework to assist the synods in resourcing and developing high quality safeguarding training for local churches and deliver it consistently. Basic and advanced level training modules on child and adult protection are recommended to be mandatory for all those at the URC who engage with children, young people and adults at risk. These two modules will enable all synods to lead a standardised approach to safeguarding training and develop the capacity of all relevant staff and volunteers in the matters of safety and protection. Further, there will be added specialism modules on specific policy areas indicated by the PCR learning group and other priority areas of public policy (responding to survivors of historical abuse, safer recruitment, domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation, spiritual abuse, mental health support and Care Act 2014, on-line safety, transgender inclusion, the Prevent Agenda and spotting the signs of radicalization, etc.).
8. The safeguarding training – practice guidance will be ready by the next Mission Council. Further work is required to have a fully-fledged guidance tailored to the internal culture of the URC. The need for developing the knowledge of serving elders and trustees in safeguarding, a full list of specialist courses and other important parts of this guidance (accreditation, monitoring quality, cost implications, etc.) are still being considered by the safeguarding training review group. However, SAG believes that this matter requires consultation and careful attention at this Mission Council.
9. Any feedback and comments on safeguarding training guidance or on the existing table of required training for specific roles and positions of the URC (attached below as an appendix on this paper) should be sent to safeguarding@urc.org.uk not later than 10 May 2019, as it can be difficult to respond quickly and properly to detailed questions that are raised during a plenary session at Mission Council.

Safeguarding training required by URC staff and volunteer roles

	Basic	Advanced	Specialist
	Required for anyone who has safeguarding responsibilities or who have contact with children, young people and/or adults who may be at risk	Required for anyone who has safeguarding leadership responsibilities or responsibility for leading activities involving children, young people and/or adults who may be at risk	Recommended for anyone who needs awareness of specific areas of safeguarding
Synod Safeguarding Officers	✓	✓	✓
Church safeguarding coordinators /deputies	✓	✓	✓
CRCWs/active Ministers of Word of Sacrament	✓	✓	
Youth/children/adult/pastoral workers	✓		✓
Synod/other Moderators	✓	✓	✓
Synod Clerks	✓		
DBS/PVG verifiers			✓
Members of the joint panel and the Assembly Commission		✓	✓
Worship leaders	✓		
Lay preachers	✓		
Pastoral visitors	✓		✓
Recognised Synod Officers	✓		
Relevant Church House staff	✓		