

# Paper D

## Safer Sacred Space

Education & Learning Committee





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## Education & Learning Committee: Safer Sacred Space

### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Revd Fiona Thomas fiona.thomas@urc.org.uk
<b>Action required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<b>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, and asks the Education and Learning Committee to put provisions in place.</b>
<b>Alternative options to consider, if any</b>	

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To raise the awareness of ministers/CRCWs to appropriate boundaries in interpersonal relationships within the Church
<b>Main points</b>	Appropriate training, by the URC or other approved providers, should be mandatory. Sanctions are listed.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	General Assembly 2012 resolution 16 (Book of Reports p. 250) Preserving the Integrity of the Body (May 2006)
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Former Sexual Ethics Advisory Group Synod Training & Development Officers, Ministries Committee, Education for Ministry Phase 2/3 Committee

### Summary of Impact

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

# EM3 Mandatory Learning

## Safer Sacred Space (safe sexual boundaries)

### 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 Book of Reports 2012 p 250)
- 1.1.3 All Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs) serving in URC pastorates or other recognised posts in the URC shall be required to undertake whatever EM3 Mandatory Training has been agreed by Mission Council.
- 1.1.4 “EM1” is initial training prior to the ordination of Ministers of Word and Sacraments and commissioning of CRCWs. “EM2” refers to training given in the first years of ministry. “EM3” refers to continuing education for experienced ministers/CRCWs.

### 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 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

### 2.1 Learning Purpose is to

- 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.

## **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
- 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 Timing**

- 2.3.1 The time limits below have been set in order to provide a feasible schedule of training and reporting.
- 2.3.2 If they have not received the mandatory training within EM1, ministers will engage in Safer Sacred Space training during their EM2. They must have engaged in Safer Sacred Space training within the first four years of recognised ministry.
- 2.3.3 Existing EM3 ministers must have satisfied the requirements of mandatory training on Safer Sacred Space within a maximum of four years from the passing of the Mission Council resolution, taking into account point 3.6.4 below.
- 2.3.4 Refresher updates of material are required at no more than four year intervals.

## **3. The Nature of Safer Sacred Space Education**

### **3.1 Learning Content areas**

- 3.1.1 awareness of the importance of boundaries in pastoral care
- 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
- 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
- 3.3.2 Safe Space Training created by other denominations and faith groups
- 3.3.3 Other safe sexual boundary training which meet the URC requirements

### **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, is recommended.
- 3.4.2 Other training delivery and modules which meet URC requirements may be used.

### **3.5 Preferred Trainers**

- URC Training and Development Officers
- URC Resource Centres for Learning
- Accredited non-URC Providers

### **3.6 Learning Structure areas**

- 3.6.1 Course length should be substantial enough to deliver content in a meaningful way to optimise EM3 engagements.
- 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.
- 3.6.3 Alternative training to URC training is acceptable provided that
  - The suggested course meets the URC outcomes
  - The Learning Provider was accredited/authenticated by the provider's relevant accrediting/authenticating body
  - The presenters/teachers/facilitators were shown to have relevant expertise, knowledge and skills
  - The subject information was up-to-date and accurate
- 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.

### **3.7 Finance**

- 3.7.1 The cost of any course or training will be set by the course provider.
- 3.7.2 EM3 ministers will agree appropriate courses and costs with their relevant Synod EM3 Officer and course fees and expenses will be met by the usual procedures for EM3 funding. In some cases, as with any training, the costs may be met through other sources (chaplaincy or other employer funds, for example).

## **4. Monitoring of Safer Sacred Space Learning**

### **4.1 Evidence of Safer Sacred Space learning will be kept in**

- 4.1.1 Synod Records
- 4.1.2 EM3 Minister Records
- 4.1.3 Assembly Records

## 4.2 Effectiveness of Learning will be seen by

- 4.2.1 Initial Feedback, reflection and evaluation with the course provider
- 4.2.2 Follow up reflection and evaluation at intervals throughout ministry, especially at refresher/update courses

## 4.3 Sanctions may be imposed by

- 4.3.1 Referral to the Synod as a disciplinary matter
- 4.3.2 Referral to the Caution Stage of the Disciplinary process
- 4.3.3 Potential referral to the Mandated Group stage of the Disciplinary Process
- 4.3.4 Potential recording within the minister's profile
- 4.3.5 Potential suspension from ministry

## 5. Resolution

**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, and asks the Education and Learning Committee to put provisions in place.**