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## Safeguarding Report

### Annual Church Returns

The current Appendix H1 Annual Church Safeguarding Return form is being revised to ensure that the data captured is meaningful and in line H2 report form that Synod Safeguarding Officers use. The form is also aimed to be more user friendly and an electronic form is being formulated in preparation for the roll out of the Annual Church Returns in January. The form will be sent to the Church Safeguarding Coordinators to complete.

The major trends that were observed within the Synod in relation to safeguarding were that more concerns related to adults at risk than children and that there was an increase by 44% of referrals to Adult Social Care services than those referrals to Children's Social Care. In addition, the main categories of abuse reported were domestic abuse, physical abuse, self-neglect, sexual abuse and bullying.

### Training

The ACR identified 595 needing training though, this number is likely skewed as not all returns were completed, sometimes this information was left blank or not completed by the Safeguarding Coordinator who oversees who needs training locally.

Since the beginning of the roll out of online training in August 2020, over 700 people have been trained.

The online training modules are very popular though there is still a request for face to face training locally. This now creates a positive way forward for mixed training options both online and face to face.

The following dates are available for the **FOUNDATION** module:

- 2nd November 2021 6.30pm
- 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021 6.30pm
- 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022 12pm
- 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022 6.30pm

(This training will last for approximately 2 hours long).

### **The roles mandated to attend this training are:**

Managers of Synod Safeguarding Officers / Advisors, Church Safeguarding Coordinators, Deputy Church Safeguarding Coordinator, Members of the Safeguarding Advisory Group (or its successor), Synod Safeguarding Committees and Reference Groups, Active Ministers and CRCWs (including retired ministers who meet the requirements of active ministry), Synod Moderators, Youth and Children Workers including volunteer leaders, Youth and Children's Workers (volunteer helpers), Adult Workers including volunteer leaders, Adult Workers (volunteer helpers), Managers of Children, Youth and Adults Workers

Pastoral Workers / Visitors, Synod Clerks, Section O Investigation, Commission and Appeal Panel Members, Worship Leaders and Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers, URC Trustees and Synod Trustees

Elders as local church trustees.

The following dates are available for the **INTERMEDIATE** module:

- 19th October 2021 11am
- 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021 6.30pm
- 4th November 2021 6pm
- 9th December 2021 6pm
- 27<sup>th</sup> January 2022 12pm
- 17th February 2022 6pm

(This training will last for approximately 2.5 hours long).

**The roles mandated to attend this training are:**

Synod Safeguarding Officers / Advisors, Church Safeguarding Coordinators, Deputy Church Safeguarding Coordinator, Active Ministers and CRCWs (including retired ministers who meet the requirements of active ministry), Synod Moderators, Youth and Children Workers including volunteer leaders, Youth and Children's Workers (volunteer helpers), Adult Workers including volunteer leaders, Adult Workers (volunteer helpers), Pastoral Workers / Visitors, Worship Leaders and Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers.

\*Please note that you will be required to enrol and attend the Foundation training before being enrolled on to the Intermediate training, despite any previous workplace training or expertise.

To book on to this training, please email your name, church, role and preferred date to:  
[safeguarding@urcsouthern.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@urcsouthern.org.uk)

### **Supporting Survivors**

The Annual Church Return identified that there is no specific support available for survivors of abuse (although pastoral support and support from the Synod Safeguarding Officer/ Safeguarding Coordinator is always offered and available). I was part of a working group looking at how the URC can support survivors of abuse however, Elizabeth Gray -King, the SAG representative taking this forward now no longer sits on the Safeguarding Advisory Group following moving on to do work within Eastern Synod, this group has been put on hold until the new Denominational Safeguarding Lead has been appointed and will be one of the key priorities to be addressed by the successful candidate.

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## **Areas for further development**

### **Safer recruitment**

There has been a noted over reliance on using DBS checks as the only procedure used for safer recruitment however, not all roles are DBS check eligible and DBS check do not determine one's suitability or competencies in a given role, which may be better evaluated by using other safer recruitment methods such as informal interviews or application forms. There is a need for increased awareness about what constitutes safer recruitment and that this also applies to the selection of volunteers as well as paid workers. The appendix on Safer Recruitment should be ready in the coming months which will provide an additional resource to support the local Church. Safer recruitment is also a key aspect of the Intermediate Safeguarding training module.

### **Local Church Safeguarding Policies**

There were recorded issues such as policies not being reviewed annually and policies not being applicable to adults and children but in some case just adults or just children. This may be due to reduced awareness of how often this review process should happen or who has this responsibility within the local church. This is an area that I am focussing on during the follow up process so that churches are supported to have a complete and robust approach to safeguarding.

### **Safeguarding Contracts**

Safeguarding contracts and agreements are in place to help mitigate any identified risks that are posed by individuals who may want to attend church as well as safeguarding church members, attendants of the church, workers or anyone using church premises who may be at risk.

The Synod Safeguarding Officer would be contacted in such cases and would assist, guide and support in the compilation of Safeguarding contracts. Advice should be sought from the Synod Safeguarding Officer in these situations, as specialist help or contact with statutory agencies may be required (p22-23 *Good Practice 5*). A risk assessment can also be utilised and should be conducted by the Synod Safeguarding Officer to support the individual and the church and to assess whether support from additional external agencies is required.

Section 13.2 of the Good Practice 5 p. 88 onwards highlights the procedure on how we can support those who are cautioned or convicted of sexual offences which includes consulting the Synod Safeguarding Officer on the constitution of the group supporting and supervising the person subject to the agreement, following advice from the Synod Safeguarding Officer, drawing up a formal safeguarding contract between the church, the person who is considered to pose a risk and any statutory agencies involved. This is a highly confidential process involving a select group of people within the church. Any information-sharing should be given careful consideration and be done in consultation with the Synod Safeguarding Officer.

Any contract should involve two representatives of the Church, the offender (or alleged offender) and the person's partner or relevant family members if desired. Contracts will need to be personalised in each case, taking into account the needs of the individual concerned, local circumstances, support needs and other factors. This should be in line with the risk thought to be posed, determined in consultation with the Synod Safeguarding Officer. The contract will be

finalised with all parties involved, signed and dated by all those named within it (*p.90 Good Practice 5*).

From the ACR, information gathered showed that contracts were implemented without the awareness or support of the Synod Safeguarding Officer which presents concerns around how risks are being managed or access and additional support or resources that may be needed at the local level.

### **General Assembly Safeguarding updates**

Resolution 44 and 45 adopted in recognition that safeguarding hadn't previously been incorporated into the URC structures. This resolution sets out the safeguarding responsibilities at each stage of the URC Councils including an appointed safeguarding lead, implementing and promoting the URC safeguarding policy and good practice and preparing report. All are encouraged to look at these resolutions to inform how these will be implemented across the Synod.

### **SAG- Safeguarding Advisory Group**

At the close of General Assembly 2022, the SAG will be disbanded. The Safeguarding Committee, a standing Committee of the General Assembly will be established. This Committee will be implementing the lessons learned from IICSA (Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse) and the Past Case Review.

### **General Assembly adoption of a Safeguarding Statement**

This statement underpins the implementation of safeguarding through all Councils of the URC, as well as providing a reference point for governance in the URC. The Good Practice 5 is the URC safeguarding guidance and can be downloaded from here: <https://urc.org.uk/clergy-and-office-holders/safeguarding.html>

### **Safeguarding Training Framework**

The Safeguarding Training Framework was adopted. The framework sets out who (what roles) are mandated to have training and at what level as well as the 4 levels of training available. This was a recommendation of the PCR (to have mandated and standardised safeguarding training available).

The training is broken up into 4 levels:

**Pre- Foundation:** available for anyone involved in the life of the church and is the minimum level of training.

**Foundation:** building on the basis of the Pre- Foundation in addition to good practice, reporting and awareness.

**Intermediate:** focussing on safer church, safer practices, safer recruitment and record keeping.

**Advanced:** face to face module, for those who have safeguarding leadership roles and looking at decision making, managing safer recruitment, multi agency working, identifying and responding to abuse and systemic grooming.

Within paper T5, there is also a list of the mandated roles and corresponding level of training and a flow chart to support determining who needs training.

Training is currently available for August and September for Foundation and Intermediate modules but the Advanced training module is not currently available. When this is being rolled out, this information will be relayed to the Committee.

**DBS check eligibility**

Paper T6 sets out the different roles in the church and the corresponding level of check that is required. The changes to the eligibility criteria are that:

- Elders and Trustees now require an Enhanced without barred list check.
- Assembly accredited Lay Preachers and locally recognised Worship Leaders in training require an Enhanced without barred list check.
- Church Caretakers, Cleaners, Church Administrators and Treasurers require a Basic check.

Belinda Nielsen  
Synod Safeguarding Officer  
October 2021