



CHRIST CHURCH
Swanley

Promoting Safeguarding
Preventing Abuse
Protecting The Vulnerable

Safeguarding Policy

Christ Church URC, Swanley
Southern Synod

Version 9, 2023

Safeguarding in the United Reformed Church (URC) is underpinned by Jesus' command to his followers to "love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34-35).

Above all, the URC aspires to be a loving community, offering a welcoming environment in which people can flourish, safe from harm.

Contents

1	3
2	3
2.1	3
2.2	4
3	5
4	5
5	6
6	7
7	9
7.1	9
7.2	9
7.3	9
8	13
8.1	13
8.2	14
8.3	15
8.4	16
9	17
9.1	17
9.2	17
10	18
11	18
12	19

1 Introduction

Christ Church United Reformed Church (URC), Swanley agrees that children and adults at risk have a right to live in a way that does not cause them harm or impede their human rights.

We will follow statutory, denominational and specialist guidelines in relation to safeguarding children and adults at risk.

Child protection is activity undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

More than simply child protection, the practice of safeguarding children seeks to promote the safety and welfare of children by being preventative as well as reactive.

Adult safeguarding means protecting a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.

Safeguarding is taken seriously by all at Christ Church.

We will organise activities in such a way as to promote a safe environment and minimise the risk of harm to children and adults at risk.

We will follow a safe recruitment and selection process for the appointment of people to work with children or adults at risk.

We are committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with children and adults at risk.

All concerns, disclosures and allegations of abuse will be responded to appropriately, and we will co-operate with the Police, Children and Adult Services in any investigation, will follow multi agency decisions and will maintain confidentiality of any investigations to those directly involved.

2 Sources of advice and support

2.1 United Reformed Church

A Safeguarding Co-ordinator is the person to whom all concerns, disclosures or allegations of abuse within Christ Church must be reported.

If the Safeguarding Co-ordinators are unreachable, please contact the Minister or Elder responsible for Safeguarding (in absentia).

Position	Name	Telephone	Mobile
Safeguarding Co-ordinator	Sue Ryan		0783 473 7864
Safeguarding Co-ordinator	Mark Price Haworth		
Church Minister	Revd Dr George Kalu		
Elder responsible for Safeguarding	Dave Dodd		

If nobody above is reachable, then the URC Southern Synod Safeguarding Officer, Belinda Nielsen must be contacted on 07716 640 596.

2.2 Other Agencies

To be used for urgent advice if you are unable to reach a URC contact.

2.2.1 Kent County Council Social Services

During the day and in office hours:

- Concerned about an adult? Call 03000 41 61 61
- Concerned about a child? Call 03000 41 11 11

Out of hours and in an emergency, call 03000 41 91 91.

2.2.2 Local Authority Designated Officer (DO)

The County LADO Service deals with allegations against staff who work with children either in education or the wider children's workforce.

County LADO Service: 03000 41 08 88

E-mail: kentchildrenslado@kent.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.kscmp.org.uk/procedures/local-authority-designated-officer-lado>

If a call is urgent i.e. a child is in immediate danger and requires safeguarding, call 03000 41 11 11.

If a call is urgent and outside of office hours call 03000 41 91 91.

2.2.3 thirtyone:eight

An independent Christian charity which helps individuals, organisations, charities, faith and community groups to protect vulnerable people from abuse.

Their Safeguarding Helpline (0303 003 11 11) can be called, anonymously if needed, to get advice and guidance about what to do in a particular situation, when to take action, and who to report issues to.

It is staffed Monday - Friday, 09:00 - 17:00, with an out of hours emergency only service.

If you think someone is in immediate danger, the best thing to do is call 999 for the emergency services.

3 Purpose Of This Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide an overview of how Christ Church will promote safeguarding by preventing abuse and protecting both children and adults.

To achieve this, and when safeguarding concerns are raised involving children and/or adults within Christ Church, or those who attend our activities and events, internal procedures are to be implemented and followed.

This policy document includes some, but not all, of the procedures we will be using.

4 Who This Policy Applies To

This policy applies to those who attend Christ Church, our trustees, our workers (both paid and volunteer, lay and ordained).

A worker is a person who is appointed by Christ Church to work with children or adults on behalf of Christ Church, on a paid or voluntary basis.

The legal definition of a child is someone under the age of 18¹. Some legislation in the UK allows young people from the age of 16 to make certain decisions for themselves (e.g. consent to medical treatment), but safeguarding legislation applies to anyone under the age of 18 because this is the legal definition of a child.

Throughout this document when we refer to a child our meaning (unless otherwise stated) is a person under the age of 18.

It follows that some adults because of circumstance or particular vulnerability or risk may be in need of protection. Such adults are also known as 'Adults at Risk'.

Section 42 of the Care Act 2014 (that came into effect in 2015) defines an 'Adult at Risk' as a person aged 18 or over who:

- a) has needs for care and support,
- b) is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
- c) as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

An adult at risk of abuse or neglect is someone who, by nature of their circumstances, physical or mental health, is unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation.

The person must have care and support needs, although they do not have to be receiving help or services from the Local Authority, the NHS, or elsewhere to fall within the definition.

¹ This is in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and UK legislation - the Children Act 1989 and the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

5 Confidentiality

All concerns, disclosures and allegations will be treated confidentially, but this does not restrict Christ Church from passing this information onto statutory agencies that have a legal duty to investigate.

However, certain people will need to be told of all concerns, disclosures and allegations in order for them to fulfil their role of safeguarding children and adults at risk at Christ Church. These are:

- Minister (Elder responsible for Safeguarding in absentia), Christ Church URC, Swanley
- Safeguarding Co-ordinators, Christ Church URC Swanley
- URC Southern Synod Safeguarding Officer

In addition, the Christ Church Eldership team will be informed that a safeguarding case is being dealt with and the actions being taken, without divulging confidential details of the case, such as the people involved or the precise nature of the issue.

Note: The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) do not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare of children and adults at risk and protect their safety.

6 What Are We Protecting From?

Abuse is the violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons, and it arises from the misuse of the power and control that someone has over another.

Abusers come from all sections of society, and are often perceived by others as respectable, reliable and trustworthy people. The vast majority of abusers are well known to the victim, and often hold a position of trust or authority.

The following definitions of the different types of abuse are extracted from the URC Good Practice 5² and have been included to demonstrate the level of training required for those who work with children and adults, most of which is not common knowledge.

This is not an exhaustive list and relates to abuse of both children and adults.

It is essential to note that the definitions below are only indicators of possible abuse, and there may be other, innocent reasons for these signs and/or behaviour.

These definitions are not to be used for training purposes in isolation.

Form of Abuse	Brief Definition
Physical abuse	To inflict pain, physical injury, impairment or suffering.
Emotional abuse	The use of threats, fear or power, gained by another's position, to invalidate the person's independent wishes. Such behaviour can create very real emotional and psychological stress. In children, it can cause severe and persistent adverse effects on their emotional development.
Sexual abuse	For a child – forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. For an adult – any non-consenting sexual act or behaviour. No-one should enter a sexual relationship with someone for whom they have pastoral responsibility or hold a position of trust.
Neglect	A person's well-being is impaired, and their physical and/or psychological care needs are not met. In a child, neglect is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect can be deliberate or can occur as a result of not understanding what someone's needs are.
Self-neglect	An unwillingness or inability to care for oneself and/or one's environment.

/Contd.

² URC Good Practice 5: Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk (January 2020).

Form of Abuse	Brief Definition
Self-harm	<p>The intentional damage or injury to a person's own body. It is often used as a way of coping with, expressing or releasing overwhelming emotions and distress.</p> <p>It may also be about converting emotional pain into physical pain, expressing something that is hard to put into words, or giving a feeling that they are in control.</p>
Financial abuse	The inappropriate use, misappropriation, embezzlement or theft of money, property or possessions.
Discriminatory abuse	The inappropriate treatment of a person because of their age, gender, race, religion, cultural background, sexuality or disability. This is often referred to as hate crime.
Institutional abuse	<p>The mistreatment of a person by a regime or individuals within an institution. It can occur through repeated acts of poor or inadequate care and neglect, or poor professional practice or ill-treatment.</p> <p>The church as an institution is not exempt from perpetrating institutional abuse.</p>
Spiritual abuse	<p>The inappropriate use of religious belief or practice.</p> <p>Coercion and control of one individual by another in a spiritual context.</p> <p>The abuse of trust or misuse of power by someone in a position of spiritual authority, such as a minister.</p> <p>A person experiences spiritual abuse as a deeply emotional personal attack.</p>
Modern slavery	<p>The illegal exploitation of people for personal or commercial gain.</p> <p>Includes human trafficking, where people are moved from one place to another into a situation of exploitation, using deception, coercion and violence.</p>
Radicalisation	<p>The process that moves a person to legitimise their support for, or use of, violence.</p> <p>The promise of an ideology which gives purpose and belonging.</p> <p>Can take place over a long time period, or happen quickly.</p> <p>The person may not understand that they have been radicalised.</p>
Child sexual exploitation	<p>A type of sexual abuse.</p> <p>The child is given gifts, drugs, money, status or affection in exchange for performing sexual activities.</p> <p>The tricking or grooming of children to believe they are in a loving and consensual relationship.</p> <p>Can be in person or online.</p> <p>The child may not understand that they have been abused. They may seem to be condoning, or even encouraging, the abusive behaviour.</p>

7 Preventing Abuse

7.1 Safe Recruitment

We are committed to safe recruitment and selection of all paid and volunteer workers, as laid out in our “Safer Recruiting” policy³.

The procedures include, but are not limited to:

- Providing role/job descriptions and person specifications
- Asking candidates to complete an application form
- Interviewing candidates
- Obtaining Disclosure checks
- A probation period

7.2 Supervision and Training

Training in safeguarding will be provided and volunteer and paid workers will be given support and supervision in their role.

Training must be renewed every 3 years.

All trustees, our workers (both paid and volunteer, lay and ordained) must comply with the URC Code of Conduct for Working with Children or Young People⁴ and understand that action will be taken if this code is not followed, possibly involving suspension or termination of working/volunteering with us.

The same action will also be taken should staff not renew their Disclosure checks or fulfil their training requirements.

7.3 Activities and Events

Activities will be organised in accordance with URC Good Practice ⁵ so as to promote a safe environment and minimise opportunities for harm.

7.3.1 Indoor Activities

For indoor activities such as Spectrum Meetings (Sunday School) or other Youth Group meetings the following, minimum good practices apply:

- A register of those attending is kept
- A brief program summary is recorded
- A safeguarding log is made of any concerns or incidents
- Adults to children ratios are appropriate
- No adult is to work alone with a group or an individual child/adult at risk.

³ Christ Church URC, Swanley Safer Recruiting Policy, Version 5, 2023.

⁴ Appendix A3, URC Good Practice 5: Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk (January 2020).

⁵ URC Good Practice 5: Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk (January 2020).

7.3.2 Outings and Residential Events

Outings and residential events organised by Christ Church or Christ Church Groups require the same good practice as for Indoor Activities, with the following additional requirements:

- Risk Assessments
- Financial planning
- Parental consent and medical forms
- Adults to children ratios are reviewed
- Insurances checked
- Publicised program
- Emergency contact arrangements

For detailed check lists for planning any activity or event, refer to the URC Good Practice Guidelines as referenced above.

7.3.3 Safeguarding Area

To ensure that the Christ Church Youth & Family Centre (The Centre) is a safe environment for Children it has been designated as a Safeguarding Area when groups with Children are running.

This specifically applies to our Spectrum and other youth groups, but also to Swanley Kindergarten, Swanley Dance Academy and the Hyo Gen Do Karate Club.

On Sundays when Spectrum Groups are meeting in The Centre, members of the congregation are required to adhere to the following:

- Parents & carers taking children to their groups are to return to their seats in the Church as quickly as possible, and not to loiter in The Centre or use the toilet facilities there.
- When a parent/carer needs to stay with a child in a Spectrum group, and at the leader's discretion, they must stay in that group's room until the end of the meeting and only tend to their own child.

Arrangements for children with other requirements will be made in advance on a case-by-case basis.

- No members of the congregation, including parents & carers, are to then enter The Centre until after the Service has finished.

The only exception being the members on the Tea & Coffee rota towards the end of a Service, who are to restrict themselves to the kitchen & lounge area until after the Service has finished.

- As far as possible, members of the congregation requiring toilet facilities are to use those by the front entrance of the Church.
- Any member of the congregation found within the Safeguarding Area by a Spectrum leader or helper will be asked to return to the Church.

On Mondays to Thursdays in term-time during and before school hours, i.e. before 15:15, access to any part of The Centre must be through the Church Office and under escort of the Church Administrator or Premises Manager.

The only exceptions to this are our cleaning staff, who work before or after Kindergarten, and for members of the Handicraft & more! Group, who meet after Swanley Kindergarten has finished on Monday afternoons.

During term-time, from 15:15 to 19:00 on weekdays, access to any part of The Centre must be arranged in advance with the Church Administrator.

However,

- Parents & carers taking children to weekday, late afternoon/early evening groups are permitted to enter The Centre through the main entrance but are to leave as quickly as possible and not to loiter in the Centre or use the toilet facilities.
- For groups where it is acceptable for parents & carers to remain in The Centre then, as far as possible, they must not use the toilet facilities.

Note: Access to any part of The Centre at other times must still be arranged in advance with the Church Administrator as it may have been booked for other activities.

7.3.4 Safe Communications between Workers and Group Members

Up until the very recent past, the only way that paid and volunteer workers could communicate with children and adults at risk outside of Christ Church Group meetings was by the household telephone or a newsletter.

It is now possible to easily communicate with children and adults at risk through text messages, instant messaging, e-mail or social networking websites to name just a few of the common methods of new media communication.

At present, Christ Church sees no reason why paid and volunteer workers should have any regular requirement to communicate with members of Groups which are wholly comprised of children and/or adults at risk outside of meetings.

However, for those instances when it is required the URC Safeguarding and Digital Communications policy⁶ must be followed.

7.3.5 Behaviour and Relationships

All adults working with children and adults at risk are in positions of trust. It is therefore vital workers ensure they do not, even unwittingly, use their position of power and authority inappropriately.

Workers should always maintain professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted. Any kind of sexual relationship between an adult and a child is never acceptable⁷, and if concerns arise in this area this should be recorded and reported to a Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

Some behaviour such as cuddling a child when they are hurt or distressed or spontaneous activity such as celebratory embraces would not normally be construed as sexual. However, this should generally be initiated by the child and be for their benefit and not the adult's.

There must be an appropriate age gap between workers and the age range of children or adults at risk in their Group.

⁶ Appendix V, URC Good Practice 5: Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk (January 2020).

⁷ In 2022, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 in England and Wales was amended to expand position of trust roles to include sports coaches and faith group leaders.

8 Allegations, Disclosures and Concerns

8.1 Procedure in the Event of a Disclosure or Allegation

If a child or adult makes an allegation or disclosure of abuse against an adult or another child to you, it is important that you:

- Stay calm and listen carefully.
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Do not question or investigate what they are saying, even for clarification.
- Avoid passing judgement on what you are told.
- Never promise confidentiality or to keep what you have been told secret.
- Explain what you intend to do (the remainder of this list), and do not delay in taking action.
- Immediately contact a Safeguarding Co-ordinator.
- If they, or an immediate family member, are implicated in the disclosure or allegation refer to another Safeguarding Co-ordinator or the URC Southern Synod Safeguarding Officer as detailed in Page 3 to this policy.
- Preferably within an hour, write down the content of your conversation, sign and date it. Where possible use a URC Safeguarding incident Recording Form⁸.
- Pass all your information to a Safeguarding Co-ordinator or the URC Southern Synod Safeguarding Officer within 24 hours.

The Safeguarding Co-ordinator(s) will then liaise with the Minister (Elder responsible for Safeguarding in absentia) and the URC Southern Synod Safeguarding Officer and make the necessary referral(s) to the Police and/or Social Services (Adult's or Children's) as required.

⁸ URC Good Practice 5, Appendix A5: Safeguarding Incident/Concern Form. Also included in this Policy as an Appendix.

8.2 Procedure in the Event of a Concern

If any member of the Church congregation or family members has a concern of abuse of child or an adult, it is important that they should:

- If there is an immediate threat of harm, the Police should be contacted without delay.
- Contact the Safeguarding Co-ordinator(s) or Minister (Elder responsible for Safeguarding in absentia) within 24 hours.

If they, or an immediate family member, are implicated in the concern refer to another Safeguarding Co-ordinator or the URC Southern Synod Safeguarding Officer as detailed in Page 3 to this policy.

- The concern will then be discussed between the Safeguarding Co-ordinator(s) and the Minister (Elder responsible for Safeguarding in absentia) and a decision made as to whether the concern warrants a referral to statutory agencies.
- Where the concern of abuse is sexual the Safeguarding Co-ordinator(s) should respond as for a Disclosure or Allegation as above.
- A confidential record will be made of the conversation and circumstances surrounding it. This record will be kept securely, and a copy passed to statutory agencies if a referral is made.

8.3 When a Worker is Implicated

Most staff work well and safely with children. However, it is a sad fact that some people will cause harm to those they work with. On occasion, this is intentional and, regrettably, a part of their motivation to work with children. For others, it may be as a result of poor attitudes, low standards of care or inadequate awareness of professional boundaries.

Regardless of the circumstances surrounding harm caused to children by workers, The URC believes it is never acceptable.

A referral of concerns about workers' (paid and unpaid, lay and ordained) conduct with children to the Local Authority Designated Officer (DO) in England must be made without delay where it is alleged a worker has:

- behaved in a way which has harmed a child or may have harmed a child
- has, or possibly has, committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way which indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children

For concerns about workers' (paid and unpaid, lay and ordained) conduct with adults at risk, Adult Social Care will be contacted.

The URC Southern Synod Safeguarding Officer must be informed in respect of any referral made to a DO or Adult Social Care. The Moderator must also be informed if the allegation relates to an ordained minister. Moderators will inform the General Secretary as appropriate.

The worker concerned will be informed as soon as possible after consultation with the DO or Adult Social Care, but with due regard to protecting evidence. A decision about who will inform the worker will be made in consultation with the DO or Adult Social Care and the URC Southern Synod Safeguarding Officer.

Concerns which fall outside of the above criteria may nevertheless amount to inappropriate conduct. The church should seek advice from the URC Southern Synod Safeguarding Officer to decide whether to handle this by way of advice, supervision, training, disciplinary processes or a combination of some or all of these.

In accordance with the law, a referral needs to be made to the DBS for consideration of barring to share information about any individual in regulated activity where for safeguarding reasons the organisation has either terminated the employment, failed to appoint, or would have terminated the employment had the individual not moved on through resignation, retirement or re-deployment. In such cases, the URC Southern Synod Safeguarding Officer needs to be advised/informed.

Depending on the seriousness of incidents or allegations, a report to the Charity Commission will also need to be considered at the Elders/Trustees' meeting, as they deem such a referral to be a 'serious incident' and require notification.

A record will be kept of all allegations made.

8.4 Whistleblowing

To fulfil its commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults, and based on the learning gained by the Past Case Review process The URC recognises the importance of creating a culture where there is a mechanism in place for workers to be able to raise legitimate concerns about other workers. This is commonly referred to as whistleblowing⁹.

All staff, volunteers and members of a congregation should be encouraged to acknowledge and take individual responsibility by bringing matters of unacceptable practice, performance or behaviour to the attention of any of the following:

- Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator(s)
- Elders
- Minister or Interim Moderator
- URC Southern Synod Moderator
- URC Southern Synod Safeguarding Officer

⁹ Appendix Y, URC Good Practice 5: Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk (January 2020)

9 Pastoral Care

9.1 Supporting those Affected by Abuse

The Christ Church Eldership team is committed to offering pastoral care, working with appropriate statutory agencies, and support to all those who have been affected by abuse who have contact with or are part of Christ Church.

9.2 Working with Offenders

If we become aware of someone in our congregation who is known to have harmed children or adults, or is known to be a risk, we will inform the URC Southern Synod Safeguarding Officer and co-operate with them and the relevant statutory agencies to put in place a plan to minimise the risk of harm to children and adults.

An appropriate Church Member will supervise the individual concerned and offer pastoral care, but in its safeguarding commitment to the protection of children and adults, Christ Church will set boundaries for that person which they will be expected to keep.

This will be in the form of a formal Safeguarding Agreement signed by both the individual and Christ Church and will be tailored to the specific circumstances by the Safeguarding Co-ordinators in liaison with the URC Southern Synod Safeguarding Officer.

No-one who is known to have harmed children or adults, or is known to be a risk, will be permitted to be involved in work with children or adults with care and support needs.

10 Review

This policy was approved and endorsed by the Christ Church Elders at their meeting on ??th Mmmm 2022 and approved by the Christ Church Members at the ??th Mmmm 2021 meeting.

After the above meetings, a copy with contact details redacted was made publicly available on-line at <http://christchurchswanley.org.uk>.

Updates and amendments will be made when necessary, and the policy will be reviewed annually and then re-presented to the Christ Church Elders and Christ Church Members.

11 Version History

Version	Date Ratified by Elders	Date Adopted by Membership
1	13 th May 2008	27 th May 2008
2	7 th May 2014	20 th May 2014
3	12 th May 2015	20 th September 2015
4	10 th May 2016	15 th May 2016
5	6 th June 2017	11 th June 2017
6	17 th April 2018	10 th June 2018
7	11 th June 2019	22 nd June 2019
8	5 th January 2021	21 st March 2021
9	September 2023	21 st April 2024

Note: The 2022 reviews of the Safeguarding Policy and Safer Recruiting Policy concluded that there was no requirement to update the current versions.

12 Appendix - URC Safeguarding Incident/Concern Form

Appendix A5

Safeguarding Incident/Concern Form

Where a person is in imminent danger of harm or a criminal act may have been committed, the police must be notified immediately on 999. Otherwise, call 101 to report a crime or any other concerns that do not require an emergency response.

- Please fill in this form with the information available within 24 hours after becoming aware of a safeguarding incident or concern. You do not have to fill in all sections.
- Please ensure you are as accurate and detailed as possible. Use quotes wherever possible, and do not interpret what was said using your own words.
- Record what you said as well as what the child, young person or adult said.
- Include details such as tone of voice, facial expression and body language.
- If you have formed an opinion please state it, making it clear that it is your opinion and give reasons for forming that opinion.
- The completed form must be passed on or sent by secure email to the designated safeguarding person, and immediately followed up after sending.

Date on which this form is completed			
Full name of the person reporting the concern/incident			
Relationship to child, young person, or adult concerned of being at risk			
Church details, if known	Synod	Church	Number
Contact details of church or organization, if known	Address	Phone numbers	Email
Full name of child, young person, or adult concerned of being at risk			
Date of Birth, if known			
Contact details, if known	Address	Phone numbers	Email
Has the individual given consent to report? (or report as appropriate)	Yes	No	Reason for no consent:
If under 18, have the parents/carers /guardians of the child been informed?	Yes	No	Reason for no consent:

Please give a summary of the safeguarding incident/concern	
Date/time of incident	
What happened? Please provide detailed information about the circumstances and the person experiencing or being at risk of harm, abuse or neglect (preferably as a timeline)	
When did it happen? (date, time)	
Where did it happen? (specific location)	
What action/s were taken, and by whom?	
Name of anyone involved and in what way, including witnesses	
Other services or agencies involved <u>Note:</u> If referred to statutory authorities, or other services, please include name and contact details	
Next steps or recommendations	
INTERNAL USE	
Date received	
Full name of Designated Person	
Progress	
Conclusion	