



CORNERSTONE

Hythe United Reformed Church

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

July 2019

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CORNERSTONE (HYTHE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH) SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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1. Introduction

This policy and attached guidelines are based upon the United Reformed Church (URC) Good Practice 4 Safeguarding children and adults at risk. (fourth edition 2015).

Hythe URC (the church) takes seriously the need to provide a caring and safe environment for children, young people and adults regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs and aims to ensure they are welcomed into a safe, caring Christian environment with a happy friendly atmosphere. We consider that the welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount. We will follow legislation, statutory guidance and recognised good practice in order to protect vulnerable people in our church. Safeguarding is a whole church responsibility. This policy aims to encourage every member to play their part.

The aim and purpose of this policy

The aim and purpose of this policy is to provide procedures for promoting safeguarding, preventing abuse and protecting children and adults at risk and staff. This includes clear procedures for taking appropriate action when safeguarding concerns are raised involving children and adults at risk within our church, or those who attend our activities and events.

Who this policy applies to

This policy is approved by the Church Meeting and is endorsed by the Minister and the Elders and applies to:

- all those who attend our church
- our trustees and staff
- Families Matter staff and volunteers where this policy exceeds that of the Families Matter safeguarding policy.
- Organisations who hire the building having given agreement to operate under the church safeguarding policy. (NB Organisations wishing to hire the building for groups with organised leadership with children or adults at risk must confirm in writing that they will follow the principles of this safeguarding policy as a condition of the letting agreement.)
- Organisations that have frequent long-term hire of the building must provide a copy of their own safeguarding policy to be kept on file.

2. Definitions

Children

The term children refer to those under the age 18 as defined by the Children Act 1989.

The purpose of safeguarding children is to promote the safety and wellbeing of children by being preventative as well as reactive.

Parental Responsibility

Parental responsibility is defined by the Children Act 1989 in the following way:

- The mother of a child whether married or unmarried.
- The father of the child if he was married to the mother at the time of conception or birth.
- An unmarried father if he has acquired parental responsibility through a court order or by agreement registered in court.
- An unmarried father if he is listed on the birth certificate of the child after 1st December 2003 in England and Wales.
- Any person who holds a residence order in relation to a child.
- The Local Authority shares the responsibility with parent/parents if the child is the subject of a care order.
- The parents of an adopted child.

- Same sex parents, who were not civil partners leading to conception; the second parent gains parental responsibility if they jointly register the birth, become a civil partner of the other parent and make a parental responsibility agreement and apply for parental responsibility.

In most cases a person holding parental responsibility can act alone.

Adults

The term adult refers to everyone 18 years or over.

The term adult at risk refers to any adult who due to disability, mental function, age, or illness or traumatic circumstances, may not be able to take care or protect themselves against the risk of significant harm, abuse, bullying, harassment, mistreatment or exploitation.

Safeguarding adults involves the prevention, empowerment and protection of adults, enabling them to retain independence, wellbeing and choice as well as ensuring that they can access the support necessary to live a life free from harm and abuse.

What are we protecting people from?

The definitions of abuse differ between children and adults. A copy of the definitions relating to children is attached to this policy as Appendix A4. A copy of the definitions in relation to adults is attached as Appendix A5.

3. Policy statement

We will seek to provide a caring and safe environment in which there is an informed vigilance about the dangers of abuse which is underpinned by Jesus' command "love one another as I have loved you" (John13:34) and can be seen as a witness to the trustworthiness of God.

We will implement, maintain and regularly review the procedures outlined in this policy, which are designed to prevent and help us to be alert to abuse.

The church meeting has appointed a Safeguarding Officer and two Deputy Safeguarding Officers, who have specific responsibility for safeguarding, although we recognise that safeguarding is a whole church responsibility. The Safeguarding Officer is the person to whom all concerns or allegations should be addressed. In the absence of the Safeguarding Officer, one of the Deputy Officers should be contacted. Their contact details should be found in Key Contacts. A description for these roles may be found in Appendix A2.

We will follow a safer recruitment process for the selection and appointment of people to work with children or adults at risk, whether voluntary or paid, lay or ordained.

We are committed to providing support, supervision, resources and training to those who work with children and adults.

We will use rigorous and careful supervision to protect people from the risks associated with known offenders within the congregation, including implementing contracts with known offenders and those who have been assessed as posing a risk.

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

We believe that domestic abuse in all its forms is unacceptable and inconsistent with a Christian way of living and recognise that it can affect both adults and children.

All concerns and allegations of abuse will be responded to appropriately, including referring to the Statutory Authorities, if necessary.

We will co-operate with the Statutory Authorities in any investigation, will follow multi-agency decisions and will maintain confidentiality of any investigation to those directly involved.

We will refer concerns about staff – volunteers and paid, lay and ordained – that meet the relevant criteria to the Local Authority Designated Officer as well as to the appropriate level within the United Reformed Church.

We will offer support to those who have been abused.

4. Duty of care and confidentiality

We have a duty of care to all beneficiaries of the church, whether adults or children. We will maintain confidentiality at all times, except in circumstances where to do so would place the individual or another individual at risk of harm. In these situations, information will only be shared on a 'need to know basis'. When confidential safeguarding information is shared, a record will be made of when it was shared and with whom, in what form, for what purpose and whether it was disclosed with or without informed consent.

5. Appointment of workers

The appointment of workers (voluntary or paid) with children, young people or with adults at risk should follow the guidelines set out on page 20 of the URC Practice Policy and procedures 2015 ([Good Practice 4](#)). In addition, this is a requirement of the Charities Commission.

The safer recruitment process includes

- Providing a job description and person specification
- Completion of an application form (see Appendix CH3)
- A self-declaration of criminal history
- A face to face interview
- Taking up two written references. (see Appendix CH4)
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check
- Induction /training process
- A minimum trial period of three months.
- Signed agreement to the code of conduct (see Appendices CH7 & CH8)
- Signed agreement to have received, read and to abide by the Church safeguarding Policy.

The same rigorous procedures apply equally to volunteers as to paid workers.

The principal leader of an organisation must be a church member and be appointed at a church meeting. The person's name should be included in the list of office holders.

The leader making the appointment will complete a recruitment checklist (Appendices CH1 or CH2), making a recommendation as to the suitability of the appointment. All appointments for work with children, young people and adults at risk will be agreed by the Elders Meeting or Leadership Team Meeting.

If a worker has moved frequently from one organisation to another it is necessary to explore the reasons for this and to obtain appropriate references. For example, from the last church the person attended.

Known abusers are attracted to working with children/adults at risk and such an individual continues to be a risk as there is an addictive quality about this type of offence, which means that any offender would need to be carefully supervised in the presence of children/adults at risk. Therefore, they cannot undertake any role that requires a DBS check. This should not prevent them from taking some part in the life of the church. The minister, safeguarding coordinator and elders should consider how the children, young people and adults at risk should be protected and the adult supported and properly supervised.

6. Criminal Record Checks – Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

There are three types of DBS checks.

- Standard disclosure
- Enhanced disclosure
- An enhanced disclosure plus barred list check.

Please refer to the guidelines as to the required DBS check on page 23 of the URC Good Practice 4 Handbook for Churches. 2015.

For those working with children

In summary, in respect of children, most roles which include teaching, supervising or providing advice and guidance to children on a frequent (weekly) basis will require an enhanced disclosure plus barred list check. For those who work in the above roles but less frequently will require an enhanced DBS without a barred list check as would young leaders (16 or 17-year olds) working under the supervision of an adult.

For those working with Adults at risk

In respect of DBS eligibility for those working with adults at risk in the church setting this would apply to those who help with personal care, helping with a person's financial transactions or driving someone on account of their illness, age or disability in order to receive health, personal or social care. For roles involving the above an enhanced DBS plus Barred list check must be carried out. For other church roles in which a worker has a significant level of involvement with adults at risk, an enhanced DBS check without a barred list check should be carried out as a matter of good practice.

DBS checks should be renewed every 5 years.

The church secretary and one other person (see contacts list), are the nominated verifiers for the DBS checks. The DBS certificate is now sent only to the applicant who then needs to show it to the church verifier who will record the necessary details. A copy of this can only be kept with the permission of the applicant. Due Diligence Check (DDC) is the DBS service provider for the church.

In the event of there being a blemished disclosure the service provider will gather the necessary information and liaise with the Assembly Safeguarding Officer who will conduct

a risk assessment regarding the safety of the appointment. The verifiers will be informed of the outcome.

Abuser in Congregation

If we become aware of someone within our congregation who is known to have harmed children or adults in the past, we will inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer and co-operate with him/her and the relevant statutory authorities to put in place a plan to minimise the risk of harm to children and adults.

7. Preventing harm

Health and Safety

Please also see separate Health and Safety Policy.

All facilities within the building will be maintained in a safe condition and used in a safe way and checked regularly.

Security

It will be ensured that no child/young person would be able to leave the premises unchecked and that no unauthorised person can gain access to the parts of the building where children and young people are meeting.

Fire Safety

In the case of fire, the fire alarm should be sounded. A fire evacuation procedure is in place and is clearly displayed. A fire drill should be carried out annually by each organisation. A record should be kept of all checks, drills and tests. If the threat is outside the church, assess the area and withdraw to the safest part of the building

First Aid/Medical issues

The first aid box must be kept appropriately stocked and where possible, there should be a trained first aider on site. First aid should be administered in the presence of others if at all possible. If no first aider is present call 111 for advice on illness and minor injuries. All incidents requiring first aid must be recorded in the accident book kept with the first aid box. Parents should be notified of any accidents and any first aid given.

No medication should be given to anyone under the age of 18 without prior written consent of the parent. A doctor or ambulance should be summoned when urgent medical attention is required.

Food and drink safety and hygiene

The standards required by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) will be adhered to.

Insurance

The church will provide adequate insurance cover for children, young people and adults on church premises and for organised activities taking place away from the church premises.

Transport

General points

Each driver will have their driving credentials checked as well as checking that they have the necessary documentation for their vehicle including MOT if required and the necessary level of insurance. Drivers should check with their insurance company to make

sure they are covered to transport children or adults on behalf of the church. (See Appendix CH10)

Children

Transport arrangements to or from church activities are the responsibility of the parents. In transporting children /young people as part of planned activities, signed consent from the person holding parental responsibility is required and all journeys are carried out with the knowledge of the leadership of the organisation.

Drivers have a legal responsibility to ensure that seat belts are used by children in their car and that appropriate car seats and booster cushions are used in transporting younger children.

Ideally there should be adequate supervision in the car, one driver and one additional leader and wherever possible a leader should avoid giving lifts to children alone. There may be emergency occasions when this is not possible and in these instances the leader concerned should ensure another leader is aware of the situation and the reasons for it. On these occasions the child should always sit in the back of the car to avoid any potentially compromising situation.

Adults

Minibus drivers must have passed a MIDAS test (unless they have D1 on their driving licence). In addition, there should always be an escort on a minibus

Risk Assessments

Risks assessments should be undertaken annually for regular children and young people's groups/activities, for unusual activities which might present different risks and for each activity away from base which should include travel arrangements. These should also address safeguarding issues and will help to identify potential hazards and help to minimise them. These assessments should be carried out in writing and passed to the Admin Team Leader.

Digital Communication

Being mindful that safeguarding now involves online interaction in addition to the traditional off-line interactions the church will ensure that access to the internet at the church premises is as safe as possible and leaders will encourage children/young people to stay off-line whilst on church premises. Please see Appendix C for online safety policy.

8. Management, supervision and training

Management

For each activity clear guidelines, job descriptions and person specifications are in place and training is provided as appropriate on an ongoing basis.

Support and supervision

Leaders should meet regularly (at least every term) with the principal leader for support and supervision.

Records should be kept of each session and cross referenced with any safeguarding concerns.

Safeguarding training

Safeguarding training will be provided and volunteers and paid staff will be given support and supervision in their role. As required by the URC Assembly, all leaders and

volunteers working with children, young people or adults at risk are required to attend safeguarding training provided by the Synod every three years.

Code of Conduct

All trustees, paid staff and volunteers will work within the code of conduct for workers, (Appendices CH7 and CH8) and understand that there may be action taken if this code is not followed, possibly involving suspension or termination of working with the church.

9. Supervision of activities for children

Behaviour Policy

A behaviour policy should be drawn up with each group of children/ young people and reviewed regularly.

Adult – child ratio

There must be a sufficient number of adults for the number of children or young people to ensure the safety of everyone in the group.

The minimum number of adults should be 2 and preferably 3.

	Indoor activities	Outdoor activities
• 0-2 years	1 adult to 3	1 adult to 3
• 2-3 years	1 adult to 4	1 adult to 4
• 3-7 years	1 adult to 8	1 adult to 6
• 8-13 years	1 adult to 10	1 adult to 8
• 13+ years	1 adult to 10	1 adult to 10

These are minimum ratios and may need to be increased to take into account of things such as

- The nature of the group (in particular children with challenging behaviour or additional needs)
- The nature of the activities and the venue (activities spread across a number of rooms, outings, or residential events all require more supervision).
- The purpose of the group (developing nurturing relationships with children will require more leaders than is needed for simply facilitating safe activities).
- The competence and experience of the workers.
- Contingency for the unexpected – an extra adult with a willingness to listen or be an extra pair of hands is more often than not invaluable.

For mixed gender groups, if at all possible, there should be at least one male and one female leader.

Young leaders and Helpers

Young people aged 16 or 17 may help to lead groups and supervise children, but themselves must be supervised by an adult worker and cannot be counted as part of the staffing ratios. Young people under 16 years of age may act as helpers but should not have responsibility for supervising children and must themselves be supervised.

Although the age of 18 marks the legal definition between adulthood and childhood, it is good practice to have a minimum of a three-year age difference between the ages of young adult workers aged 18-20 and the age of the children they supervise.

Register

At the start of each meeting a register must be taken. At the end of the meeting leaders should be aware of how the children/young people are getting home. Children leaving the premises must only be released to adults known to have permission to do so.

Leaders must know the whereabouts of those in their care at all times.

Visitors

When either the Boys' or Girls' Brigades or youth club are meeting any person entering the building will be asked to sign in and wear a visitor's badge. At these times key holders are asked to use the main entrance and not the side entrance.

Duty Elder

On a Sunday morning, the duty elder will remain in the foyer area to respond to anything that may happen and to be alert to any potential safeguarding issues.

Lone Working

As far as possible an adult will not be left alone with a child or young person, who is a member of a group, where there is little, or no opportunity of the activity being observed by others.

There may be occasions when a worker has to work individually with a young person. In these instances, it is essential that the line manager/group leader knows the time and place of the meeting and for it to take place in a public venue. It is essential to keep a full record of the session and to immediately report anything of concern.

Leaders should never go to a child/young person's home if their parent is absent.

Trips and outings

Where activities include trips away from normal venues and/or overnight stays, a site visit should be undertaken in advance to plan, carry out risk assessments and agree arrangements for care, including sleeping arrangements. Children, adults and carers should be informed of these arrangements prior to the start of the trip. The Youth and Children's Ministry Team Leader should be kept fully informed.

When participating in hazardous activities, always abide by the policies and rules of any external organisation as well as external staff running these activities. It is the church's responsibility to check that external organisations have safety policies and procedures in place and that external staff are suitably qualified.

Overnight stays

Sleepovers, residential events and camps should be discussed and arranged well in advance, so the best care can be provided.

When organising residential events:

- There must be adequate insurance cover for any premises used in the activity, including any limits on numbers.
- If using an established residential centre, checks should be made that it operates a safeguarding policy and carries out training and criminal records checks on workers, as well as full risk assessments for health and safety.
- If using premises that are not established as a residential centre such as a church hall; prior to the event, the building should be checked for suitable fire exits and workers should know where the water, electricity and gas can be turned off, as

well as the location of fire extinguishers. A fire drill should be carried out as soon as possible.

- Parents/carers must complete medical/activity consent forms detailing their children's medical requirements and other relevant information pertaining to their child's participation in any element of the programme. (see Appendix CH11).
- Parents/carers should be given written details of all arrangements, particularly the contact telephone numbers of an identified worker.
- Specific responsibilities should be designated to workers to ensure clarity of roles.
- There should be a nominated safeguarding person.
- There must be a qualified first aider.
- Both male and female leaders are needed for a mixed gender group.
- Male and females should sleep separately.
- Workers should not sleep in the same rooms as children unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- Changing and showering facilities should be single sex and separate for children and adults. If there are limited facilities, timetables are needed to ensure separate access.
- All medical information and emergency contact numbers must be easily accessible, and workers should have access to a telephone or mobile.

Physical contact

Any physical contact between a child and a leader needs to be transparent and in public view and always only in response to the child's need. Physical contact is to be avoided whenever possible if a child is in the sole care of an adult.

Intimate Care for young children and children with disabilities

The most common instance this will be needed is in changing nappies and clothes for babies and toddlers. It may also be necessary for young children who have soiled their clothes or children with disabilities who need assistance in using the toilet. In order to respect the child's privacy, the care may need to be carried out by a single adult. In such situations another adult should be in the vicinity. Older children should be encouraged to be as involved as possible in their own intimate care.

Supervision of personal care situations

Children are entitled to privacy especially when they are in a state of undress or undertaking any form of personal care. There may be occasions when there will be a need for a level of supervision, and this will be appropriate to the needs and age of the child. In these instances, workers will avoid physical contact when a child is in a state of undress, avoid any visually intrusive behaviour, and announce their intention of entering a changing area and wait before doing so if asked. In these instances, it is essential that another worker is in the vicinity.

Photographs

Permission from a person holding parental responsibility is required for the display of photographs of children which will not give their names, ages and where they may be found. If any pictures are used, they should be of groups of children rather than an individual child/young person.

10. Reporting and Record Keeping

Administration of records and reports of children, young people and adults at risk are held in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Each regular group or event for children or young people should record

- The date, time and venue of event/group
- An attendance list of both children and workers (with a note of their roles)
- Consent forms for attendance at regular groups and occasional events
- A brief outline of the programme
- Any significant incidents together with action taken
- Details of accommodation, including sleeping arrangements for residential events.
- A record of risk assessment
- Details of accidents recorded on an appropriate accident sheet.

For events away from the church premises, a consent and medical form must be completed by the parent/person holding parenting responsibility.

Some of this information need only be recorded annually alongside a session by session record which would include a brief programme outline and a record of any noteworthy incidents.

A written record will be kept of the child/young person's details – name, address etc. as well as details of each person holding parental responsibility, particular instructions concerning the child/young person.

The URC record keeping standard states that records to be archived must be in paper form.

- Databases, contact lists etc. should be destroyed when no longer in use.
- Accident records relating to children should be kept until they are 21 years of age
- General records relating to work with children should be kept for 25 years.
- Safeguarding records, (including unsubstantiated concerns) should be kept for 75 years in a secure place.

Safeguarding incident records are kept in the office safe.

11. Responding to abuse

How to recognise abuse

It is important to be aware of the possible signs and symptoms of abuse. Please see Appendices A6 and A7 giving more details of these. Some signs could be indicators of a number of different categories of abuse.

It is essential to note that these are **only indicators of possible abuse**. There may be other, innocent, reasons for these signs and/or behaviour. They will, however, be a guide to assist in assessing whether abuse of one form or another is a possible explanation for a child or adult's behaviour.

Children

What to do if there is a disclosure or allegation of abuse.

Please see the flow chart in Appendix CH5

If a child, young person or adult makes a disclosure that they are being abused and / or an allegation of abuse against someone, it is important that the person being told:

- Stays calm and listens carefully
- Reassures them that they have done the right thing in telling
- Does not investigate or ask leading questions

- Explains that they will need to tell someone else if anyone is at risk of harm, in order to help them
- Does not promise to keep secret what they have been told
- Informs the church Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible and does NOT have prior discussion with any other leaders. If the Safeguarding Officer is implicated in the allegation, then either one of the Deputies is informed or the Synod Safeguarding Officer
- Makes a hand-written record of the allegation, disclosure or incident and signs and dates this record. This should be given to the church Safeguarding Officer.

Procedure in the event of a concern of abuse

In an emergency it is necessary to act at once. If a child is in distress from a physical injury seek medical attention immediately by taking the child to A&E or by calling an ambulance. Tell the medical services what the child has said and any suspicions you may have. If there is an immediate threat of harm, the Police should be contacted without delay. A record needs to be kept of the action taken and given to the church Safeguarding Officer as a priority.

Where it is judged there is no immediate threat of harm the following will occur.

- The concern should be discussed with the church Safeguarding Officer and a decision made as to whether the concern warrants a referral to the statutory authorities. (See key contacts p22)
- A confidential record will be kept of the conversation and the circumstances surrounding it. This record will be kept securely, and a copy given to the statutory authorities if a referral is made.
- The person about whom the allegation is made must not be informed by anyone in the church if it is judged to do so could place a child or adult at increased risk. If the statutory authorities are involved, they should be consulted beforehand.
- The Synod Safeguarding Officer should be kept informed of any serious concerns.

Whilst allegations would normally be reported to one of the Safeguarding Officers their absence should not delay a referral to the Children's Services Department of Hampshire County Council.

The role of the Safeguarding Officer is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and to pass the information onto the Children's Services. It is the Children's services task to investigate the matter under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989. They might possibly convene a Child Protection Case Conference to which leaders might be asked to attend to either provide information or to be there in a support capacity.

If the allegation concerns a church staff member or volunteer, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be informed. The timing and method of any action to be taken will be discussed and agreed with the LADO. This will cover communication with the worker, suspension, investigation and possible strategy meetings. A decision will be taken by the LADO about when to inform the worker, and the church will follow this advice. For LADO details, see key contacts (p22)

If the allegation is in respect of an adult at risk then Hampshire County Council, Adult Services will be contacted. See key contacts for details. In accordance with the law, a referral will be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Note: The Local Authority will wish to be informed in decisions/actions about informing the alleged perpetrator, including removing them from their duties. Always discuss this with

the statutory authorities before taking any steps. This is because you may alert a perpetrator to remove evidence or important information.

If the church withdraws permission for an individual to engage in work with children / adults at risk OR would have done so had that individual not resigned, retired, been made redundant or been transferred to a different position because the employer believes that the individual has engaged in relevant conduct, satisfied the harm test, or committed an offence this would lead to automatic inclusion on a barred list.

In such cases, a report will also be made to the Charity Commission, as they deem such a referral to be a 'serious incident' and therefore require notification.

The minister and elders will support the Safeguarding Officers in their role and accept that any information they have in their possession will only be shared on a need to know basis.

12. Safeguarding Adults

Churches and places of worship reflect society as a whole, with children and adults coming together to share in the services and activities taking place. Until recently, society has paid more attention to protecting children. However, understanding of safeguarding has developed and awareness has grown of how some adults may experience abuse and neglect, whether it is in institutions, in their own homes or in the community. The Care Act 2014 has established a clear statutory basis for local Safeguarding Adults Boards, helping to protect adults at risk. This Act defines people who may need protecting from abuse or neglect as being

- Adults who have care and support needs
- Are at risk of, or experiencing abuse, or neglect and
- Because of their care and support needs cannot protect themselves against actual, or potential harm or neglect.

Safeguarding Adults and the Law

Some forms of adult abuse are criminal offences which apply to all adults. Examples include physical assault, theft and rape.

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 and the Mental Health Act 1983 include provisions for the protection of adults who may be at risk of abuse and in 2014 the Care Act made safeguarding adults a legal responsibility for public agencies. NB the Mental Capacity Act applies to adults and young people aged 16 and above.

Mental Capacity and the Right to choose

The fundamental difference between safeguarding adults and children is that adults are presumed to have capacity for making their decisions and the freedom and right to make choices about their life (unless the law restricts them from doing so, or they have been assessed as lacking capacity). This can mean that people at risk may wish to make choices that others deem unwise, and which perhaps exposes them to future harms. This can include situations when a person is harmed and chooses not to press charges.

An important aspect to understanding whether an adult can protect themselves from abuse and harm, is to consider the extent to which they can understand information and make decisions. This is what is known as mental capacity. One of the difficulties associated with mental capacity, is that it can fluctuate, or some adults may have the capacity to make some decisions but not all. For this reason, when health or social care professionals test a person's mental capacity it will only ever relate to the decision that is being considered.

Principles for working with adults at risk

The 2013 Statement of Government Policy on Safeguarding Adults explains how Safeguarding practice should embody the following principles

- **Empowerment:** People being supported to make their own decisions.
- **Prevention:** It is better to take action before harm occurs.
- **Proportionality:** The least intrusive response to the risk presented.
- **Protection:** Support and representation for those in greatest need.
- **Partnership:** Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.
- **Accountability:** Transparency in delivering safeguarding.

13. Responding to adult safeguarding concerns

If an adult discloses abuse, it is essential that their information is taken seriously, and that the person being told:

- Stays calm
- Let the person talk and listen attentively
- Accepts what is being said without judgement
- Reassures the person that they are right to share the information with you
- Seeks medical attention if necessary
- Reassures the person that they will help to support them or arrange for appropriate support to be put in place
- Tells the person they are not to blame for the abuse that has happened
- Explains what they will do next
- Tells the church Safeguarding Officer or, in her absence, one of the Deputy Safeguarding Officers. The church Safeguarding Officer will inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer.
- If they are unavailable contacts the Synod Safeguarding Officer or Adult Service.
- Doesn't discuss with anyone else
- Doesn't try to investigate or confront
- Makes handwritten notes ASAP

Note: If there is concern that an adult is in immediate danger, or requires medical attention, the emergency services should be contacted immediately, and without delay.

Abuse which occurred when the adult was under 18 years of age

Previous experience of abuse as a child, or young person, can increase the likelihood of being abused as an adult, and/or the risks of mental or physical illness, later in life.

It is important to establish

- What the person would like to happen next?
- What would be helpful to them now?
- Are they safe from harm now?
- Do they know what happened to the person who abused them?

Even though the alleged abuse may have occurred many years ago, it is still important that it is reported. Ideally this will be with the consent of the person/people who experienced the abuse.

Where an incident of alleged abuse occurred in the past, it may be necessary to report the concern if:

- You are aware that more than one person may have been subject to the potential abuse.
- A criminal offence may have been committed.
- The person asks for the situation to be reported.
- No action appears to have been taken, of which you are aware, and someone could be at risk.
- The perpetrator may still be in a position to inflict harm upon others.

Concerns about domestic abuse

If someone discloses domestic abuse **and there are NO children or adults with support needs in the home**, advice from Women's Aid suggests help can be offered in the following ways:

- Take the person seriously and believe what they say
- Be calm and positive
- Respect their wishes
- Ask what they would like to happen
- Give them time to tell you what is happening at their own pace. This may be the first time they have opened up and may be an immense and brave step for them to take.
- Emphasise they are not responsible for the abuse, and they are not alone.
- Find out if they need medical help.
- Do not encourage them to do anything they are not ready to do.
- Help them to access specialist services and sources of professional help & support.
- Help them to keep safe, by making a safety plan.
- Check whether it is safe to contact them and agree how to keep in touch.

Concerns about domestic abuse, if children are in the home

Where domestic abuse is taking place in a household with children, or young people under 18 then this will be a children's safeguarding matter and should be reported to the church Safeguarding Officer.

Concerns about domestic abuse, when there are adults with care or support needs in the home

Adults with care and support needs who are experiencing abuse in their home are also experiencing domestic abuse. A safeguarding response may therefore be appropriate for people in these circumstances.

Information about carers

Caring for family members with care and support needs can create stress and difficulties, which can lead to tensions between a person who is being cared for and their family carer. Although the abuse is most usually from the carer, there are circumstances when the abuse can be inflicted upon the carer or other family member by the person being cared for.

Carers can be entitled to support in some situations. Encouraging carers to access help can be an important step to preventing harm in the home.

Young people and children caring for an adult with care and support needs are also entitled to support. They can also be subject to abuse from their cared for parent or family member. In these circumstances this will be a children's safeguarding matter.

Consent and information sharing

Ideally in all situations, the person experiencing the abuse will either, contact the statutory authorities directly, or give you their consent, to make the contact on their behalf.

Sometimes this may not happen, if no consent is given because the person is confused or appears not to understand. By taking action and reporting the concern, it is likely that you will be acting in the person's best interests, to keep them safe from harm.

Where the person appears to understand that inaction creates further dangers for them, and continues to choose not to take action, you can still share the information with the church Safeguarding Officer if you believe a crime may have been committed or that failure to do so would place a child or adult with care needs at risk of abuse. Examples include

- The alleged perpetrator is employed in a position of trust (including professionals) which means that others may be endangered
- The alleged perpetrator works with children or adults at risk.
- Others are in danger or at risk.
- A criminal offence may have been committed.
- There is a serious and high risk to the safety or life of the person.
- The alleged perpetrator works for the church, paid or unpaid.

If someone is in immediate danger of harm or a criminal offence has been committed, then the police should be informed immediately.

14. Bullying and Harassment

Every person is made in the image of God and reverence and respect should undergird all our relationships.

Conflict is a reality in every human organization. It can be positive when it presses us to confront difficult issues and disagreements that we might prefer to avoid. It can be creative. However, abuse against individuals or groups within the church is unacceptable whether face to face or remotely by the use of digital communication.

A definition of bullying:

“Any behaviour, always involving a misuse of power, which an individual or group knows, or ought reasonably to know, could have the potential effect of offending, humiliating, intimidating or isolating an individual or group should be regarded as unacceptable ... ‘Unacceptable behaviour’ changes its label to ‘bullying’ or ‘harassing behaviour’ when it causes actual harm or distress to the target(s), normally, but not exclusively, after a series of incidents over a prolonged period of time. Lack of intent does not diminish, excuse or negate the impact on the target, or the distress caused. The degree of intent is only relevant in terms of how the behaviour should be challenged and the issues subsequently resolved.” [Fergus Roseburgh, Unite].

Bullying can have a profound effect on people's self-esteem and is a common cause of suicide. It is vital that bullying is challenged.

Cornerstone (Hythe United Reformed Church) has the following documents in place to assist in the prevention of bullying or harassment. They are:

- Current United Reformed Church ‘Guidelines for responding to allegations of bullying or harassment’ (See Appendix X)
- Our Grievance procedures (See appendices CH6 & CH14)

- Our disclosure flowchart, where emotional abuse is disclosed (See appendix CH5)
- Our codes of conduct for working with children or young people (Appendix CH7) and for working with adults (Appendix CH8)
- Sections on bullying and cyberstalking and bullying in the current United Reformed Church Good Practice document (Available via our website or the United Reformed Church website)
- This section on Bullying and Harassment is also reproduced as a statement (See Appendix CH16)

15. Keeping people safe

Supporting survivors of abuse

It is important to be sensitive and alive to the fact, that at all times, there may be adults in the congregation who are facing issues in relation to current or past abuse.

If someone in the congregation has alleged abuse and the authorities have decided not to investigate further, it is important to continue to offer appropriate pastoral support to that individual. This can potentially create complex concerns and it is important not to breach boundaries.

Managing allegations made against people in the church

An allegation of abuse against someone in the church can be a difficult time for all involved. The first priority is to ensure that everyone is safe, and the right steps have been followed. In doing so it is essential that compassion, care and support are given to the person who makes the allegation, their family and friends. Similarly, the alleged perpetrator might also require pastoral support and care from the church. Close attention to the needs of all parties can help the church community to find ways to handle the situation sensitively. It can often be helpful for the person making the allegation, and the alleged perpetrator, to be found people to support them, who are not within the same church congregation.

How to respond to the Church congregation

When an alleged abuse has occurred within the church setting the pastoral concerns are complex; individuals who allege abuse, those accused, concerned families and members of the congregation all require support. Balancing these, sometimes conflicting needs, is not an easy task. Confidentiality of the names and details of the situation is essential, and therefore needs to be shared in a structured way that allows the congregation to process what has happened.

Managing and supporting those who may endanger an adult at risk

The church believes in the reality of God's forgiveness. A welcoming environment to all requires a wise, loving and careful attitude.

Where it is known that someone has been convicted of abuse to an adult at risk or alleged to have committed an offence of that nature, a contract between the church and the individual is required. In such a situation the Synod Safeguarding Officer must be contacted. (If the person convicted or alleged to have committed the abuse is under the age of 18 a different process is required, and Children's Services would need to provide the Necessary advice.) Please see Good Practice 4 Part 3 for further guidance regarding the process for drawing up a contract.

16. Comment and Review

Concerns, Complaints and Compliments

Should anyone have any concerns, complaints or compliments in relation to Safeguarding please contact:

Cornerstone (Hythe URC) Safeguarding Officer as listed in the key contacts section of this policy.

It would be helpful to have complaints in writing, as this avoids any possible misunderstanding about what the issue is. However, whether verbal or in writing, complaints will be acted upon. Any written complaint will be responded to within 10 days.

Review

The Safeguarding Officer is required to report regularly to the church eldership and also report any serious safeguarding concerns to the Synod Safeguarding Officer.

An annual safeguarding form is required to be completed and returned to the Synod as part of the annual returns process.

The Elders will review this policy annually, amending and updating it as required, and informing the Church Meeting that this has been done.

Date of the most recent review: July 2019. Date of the next review: July 2020



Signed:

(on behalf of the church Elders)

Appendices

Appendix CH1	Checklist for appointment of youth and children's workers
Appendix CH2	Checklist for appointment of workers with adults at risk
Appendix CH3	Volunteer application form
Appendix CH4	Reference request form
Appendix CH5	Disclosure procedure
Appendix CH6	Grievance Procedure (Youth and Children's workers)
Appendix CH7	Code of Conduct for working with children or young people
Appendix CH8	Code of Conduct for working with adults
Appendix CH9	Electronic Communication Consent Form (Young People)
Appendix CH10	Declaration for volunteer drivers
Appendix CH11	General Information and Consent form (Under 18)
Appendix CH12	General Information and Consent form (18 and over)
Appendix CH13	Request to administer medication form
Appendix CH14	Grievance procedure (General)
Appendix CH15	Index of Safeguarding policy and appendices
Appendix CH16	Cornerstone Bullying and Harassment Statement
Appendix A2	The role of the church Safeguarding Officer
Appendix A4	What is abuse and neglect of children?
Appendix A5	What is abuse of adults at risk?
Appendix A6	Signs of possible abuse in children.
Appendix A7	Signs of possible abuse in adults
Appendix C	Online Safety Policy
Appendix E	A Guide to working with people with disabilities
Appendix I	A guide to Risk Assessment
Appendix J	Sample Risk Assessment Form
Appendix Q	A guide to staff facing allegations
Appendix W	Social Media Guidelines for the United Reformed Church
Appendix X	Current United Reformed Church 'Guidelines for responding to allegations of bullying or harassment'

Copies available from Safeguarding Officer or via church website