



OVER UNITED REFORMED CHURCH WINSFORD

CHURCH SAFEGUARDING POLICY

This policy document has been produced in alignment with the URC's safeguarding procedures and guidance as set out in Good Practice 6. (Copies of Good Practice 6 are available on request.)

This policy was presented to the Elders' meeting on 3rd March 2026 when it was agreed that the policy be presented to the Church meeting with a recommendation to be approved for a further 12 months. The policy was agreed by the church meeting as recommended.

1. Aim and purpose of this policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure that protecting people from abuse, harm or neglect is central to our culture. It provides procedures for promoting safeguarding, preventing abuse and protecting children, adults at risk and staff. This includes clear procedures for taking appropriate action when safeguarding concerns are raised.

Who this policy applies to

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

- All members of our church
- All those who attend and serve our church/place of worship and its services
- Our Elders
- Paid staff (both internal and external eg contractors or consultants)
- Volunteers
- Organisations and groups which hire our building operating under the church safeguarding policy as stated in the Terms and Conditions of hire.

Principles underpinning the policy

- Our theology and values
- Our commitment to put the welfare of children and adults at risk first
- A willingness to be open and listen
- A commitment to comply with relevant legal and regulatory requirements.

Definitions

The term 'children' refers to those under the age of 18 years.

The term 'adult at risk' refers to any adult aged 18 or over who, by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation, are permanently, or for the time being, unable to take care of themselves, or to protect themselves against significant harm, abuse or exploitation.

Duty of care and confidentiality

We have a duty of care to all beneficiaries of the church, whether children or adults. We will always maintain confidentiality, except in circumstances where to do so could place the individual or another individual at risk of harm or abuse.

2. Creating a safer culture

We are committed to creating a safer culture in our church which will help us to prevent harm from occurring and provide an environment in which all can flourish.

In line with Chapter two of Good Practice 6, we will:

- Appoint a Church Safeguarding Coordinator and ensure contact details are available for anyone to report a concern
- Have a safeguarding policy which is reviewed annually and updated when necessary
- Practice safer recruitment procedures for paid and volunteer roles
- Ensure all those working with children and/or adults at risk for church based activities are given copies of relevant Codes of Conduct
- Follow the requirements of the URC Safeguarding Training Framework
- Comply with legal requirements in respect of data protection
- Complete the Annual Church Safeguarding Return
- Ensure safeguarding is a regular agenda item for Elders' meetings.

3. Ensuring safer activities

Whilst it is not possible to guard against every eventuality, we are committed to providing as safe an environment as possible for activities both on and off church premises.

In line with Chapter three of Good Practice 6, we will:

- Ensure appropriate insurance is in place for buildings and activities
- Consider the implications of data protection and health and safety requirements for specific activities
- Where Over URC has direct responsibility, carry out risk assessments for relevant activities or event
- Hirers are advised to carry out their own risk assessment before using the premises
- Where Over URC has direct responsibility, ensure adequate staffing and that leaders have suitable training, are aware of relevant guidance and agree to follow relevant Codes of Conduct
- Ensure the hirer's agreement is in place for other organisations using church premises
- Seek advice from the Synod Safeguarding Officer for complex or sensitive risks.

4. Recognising and responding to concerns

We acknowledge that, although promoting Safer Culture and Safer Activities will help to protect all those in contact with the church, some concerns will inevitably arise and we are committed to responding well in such circumstances.

In line with Chapter four of Good Practice 6, and relying on advice from Synod, we will:

- Promote awareness of different kinds of abuse, other vulnerabilities and types of safeguarding concern
- Seek to create a 'listening culture' and help people develop listening skills

to respond appropriately in situations where sensitive information is disclosed

- Inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer as a minimum of any situations where involvement from statutory services is/may be required
- Share information with statutory services as appropriate and co-operate with them during any investigations
- Report any serious safeguarding incident to the Charity Commission and notify the Synod Safeguarding Officer.

5. Managing allegations and people who may pose a risk to others

Where allegations are made against individuals within the Church, we are committed to following all required investigative and regulatory procedures. We will work in collaboration with the Synod, wider Church staff, statutory agencies and other relevant organisations.

In line with Chapter five of Good Practice 6, we will:

- Co-operate fully with any investigative or disciplinary procedures
- Inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer immediately on becoming aware of anyone in the church who may present a risk to others
- Work with the Synod Safeguarding Officer and contribute relevant information for risk assessments
- Alert the Synod Safeguarding Officer or statutory agencies to known breaches of a safeguarding agreement.

6. Supporting victims and survivors

The key principle underpinning our policy and practice in this area is that all those who have experienced abuse, whether recently or in the past 'will be listened to and offered the pastoral care and support they deem appropriate and relevant, irrespective of type of abuse, context, or when this occurred' (General Assembly policy statement 2021).

In line with Chapter six of Good Practice 6, we will:

- Recognise that the Elders' meeting has responsibility for provision of pastoral care
- Be aware of local support services that people can be referred or directed to
- Ensure those in relevant roles attend appropriate training
- Seek advice from the Synod Safeguarding Officer about provision of appropriate support when necessary.

7. Key contacts

Church Safeguarding Coordinator

Name and contact details:

Diane Parkey tel: 01606 551188. Email: dianeparkey@yahoo.co.uk

Deputy Church Safeguarding Coordinator

Name and contact details:

Rosamund Ellison tel:01606 543983. Email: ros-ellison@tiscali.co.uk

Synod Safeguarding Officer

Name and contact details: Yvette Hansbury- Robinson Tel: 0151- 722- 6590 mob: 07376 053044. Email: safeguarding@urcmerseysynod.org.uk

URC Safeguarding Office (This should only be used if you are unable to contact your Synod Safeguarding Office)

Email: safeguarding@urc.org.uk.

Local statutory services: Children

Contact details,

Office hours: 8.30am to 5pm from Monday to Thursday and
8.30am - 4.30pm on Friday

Tel: i-ART - 0300 123 7047

Out of Hours: 01244 977277 (Emergency Duty Team)

Alternatively call Cheshire Police: 101 for non-emergencies or 999 in an emergency.

Local statutory services: Adults

Contact details,

Phone: 0300 1237034 Office hours 8.30-.5.00pm Monday – Friday and *.30-4.30 Fridays.

Out of hours phone: 01244 977277 (Emergency Duty Team)

Alternatively call Cheshire Police: 101 for non-emergencies or 999 in an emergency.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, updated as required and adopted by the church meeting. Date of most recent review: 15th April 2026

Date of next review: March/April 2027

Signed by: R E Ellison

(On behalf of the Church Elders)