

**ST ANDREW'S UNITED REFORMED CHURCH SHEFFIELD
SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

Policy for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

The purpose of this policy is to ensure procedures are in place and all adults working in or on behalf of St Andrew's are clear about roles and responsibilities for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. It is supported by the detailed overarching Safeguarding Policy of the Yorkshire Synod, and the national URC Safeguarding Guidelines.

Everyone working in or for our church shares an objective to help keep children, young people and vulnerable adults safe by contributing to providing a safe environment for all.

Church commitment – children and young people (under 18years)

St Andrew's is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all of its children and young people. It is recognised that some children may be especially vulnerable to abuse. We recognise that children who are abused or neglected may find it difficult to develop a sense of self worth and to view the world in a positive way. Whilst at church based activities, their behaviour may be challenging or withdrawn. We recognise that some children who have experienced abuse may harm others. We will always take a considered and sensitive approach in order that we can support all of our children and young people

We ensure that all appropriate measures are applied in relation to everyone who is involved in working with children in church. All adults must be perceived by the children as safe and trustworthy. DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks are made for all adults working with children and young people in church, and all adults are expected to complete training within a year of taking up a paid or voluntary role.

All leaders who work with children at church-based activities have undertaken safeguarding training. The church runs only the Children's Church and crèche, led by a (retired) school teacher. Buzz playgroup have undertaken and also deliver safeguarding training. Other organizations who use the building regularly, with children and vulnerable adults also have Safeguarding training and up-to-date DBS records have been recorded for all of these and include the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of St Michael, The Jesus For All Nations (JFAN) Congolese Mission and the Latvian Pentecostal Church. Safeguarding training and DBS records are in progress for all of these.

Safe practice ensures that children and young people are safe, and that all adults:

- Are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions
- Work in an open and transparent way
- Discuss and/or take advice from the named Safeguarding Link Person (SLP) over any incident which may give rise to concern. Where the SLP is unavailable the Synod Safeguarding Adviser should be contacted

We are committed to working with parents and carers positively, openly and honestly. We ensure that all parents/carers are treated with respect, dignity and courtesy. We respect parents/carers' rights to privacy and confidentiality and will not share sensitive information unless we have permission or it is necessary to do so in order to protect a child.

Church commitment – vulnerable adults

St Andrew's recognises that all its members and congregation may be vulnerable at times in their lives and there needs to be particular care taken for those whose vulnerability is increased by certain situations, by disabilities or by reduction in capacities. It is recognised that this increased vulnerability may be temporary or permanent and may be visible or invisible.

Procedures

It is not the responsibility of the church to investigate welfare concerns or determine the truth of any disclosure or allegation. However, all adults have a duty to recognise concerns and maintain an open mind. Accordingly all concerns regarding the welfare of children will be reported and discussed with the designated person(s) responsible for child protection and the protection of vulnerable adults i.e. the Safeguarding Link Person.

The serious issue of the abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults may take the form of physical, emotional, sexual, financial, psychological, online, spiritual or institutional abuse or neglect. We acknowledge the effects these may have on people and their growth and development, including spiritual and religious development. The church accepts its responsibility for ensuring that all people are safe in its care and that their dignity and right to be heard is maintained. There is a responsibility to support, listen to and work for healing with survivors, offenders, communities and those who care about them. The church takes seriously the issues of promoting an individual's welfare so that each of us can aim to reach our full potential in God's grace.

The Safeguarding Link Person, working with the Yorkshire synod, is committed to respond without delay to any allegation or cause for concern that a child or vulnerable adult may have been harmed during any church based activity of whatever type. Our church commits itself to challenge the abuse of power of anyone in a position of trust.

Allegations regarding person(s) working in or on behalf of church

Where an allegation is made against any person working in or on behalf of the church that he or she has:

- a. Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child or vulnerable adult
- b. Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or vulnerable adult
- c. Has behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children
- d. Has behaved in an unsuitable manner towards a vulnerable adult

the allegation will be investigated.

Detailed records will be made to include decisions, actions taken, and reasons for these. All records will be securely retained. Whilst we acknowledge such allegations (as all others), may be false, malicious or misplaced, we also acknowledge they may be founded. It is therefore essential that all allegations are investigated properly and in line with agreed procedures.

Initial Action

- The person who has received an allegation or witnessed an event will immediately inform the SLP and make a record. Where the SLP is unavailable the Synod Safeguarding Adviser should be contacted
- In the event that an allegation is made against the SLP, the Yorkshire Synod Safeguarding Adviser will be informed
- The SLP may need to clarify any information regarding the allegation, however no person will be interviewed at this stage
- Consideration will be given throughout to the support children and their parents/carers and to the families of vulnerable adults
- The SLP will inform the Synod Safeguarding Adviser at the Yorkshire Synod and ask for support if necessary

The safeguarding link persons for children, young people and vulnerable adults at St Andrew's are **Dr Jean Dickson and Mrs Sheila Dunstan.**

This Policy is reviewed and approved annually.

APPENDIX

PROTECTING CHILDREN

A Child is anyone under the age of 18 and Child Protection seeks to support the child's development in ways which will foster security, confidence and independence. It is regarded as central to the well-being of the individual and is therefore an intrinsic part of all aspects of the church.

PROTECTING VULNERABLE ADULTS

A Vulnerable Adult is any adult aged 18 or over who, by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation is permanently or temporarily unable to take care of him or herself, or to protect him or herself from significant harm or exploitation. It is regarded as central to the well-being of the individual and is therefore is an intrinsic part of all aspects of the church.

Further **UPDATED** from Good Practice 5 and approved 16 September, 2021

[details are available from: <https://urcyorkshire.org.uk/safeguarding/> from which 'Good Practice 5' can be downloaded]

STATEMENT OF SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLES

The URC is committed to:

- the care and nurture of all children and adults
- the safeguarding and protection of all children and adults at risk
- the establishment of a loving church environment which is safe and caring for all people and where the dignity of each person is respected
- an informed vigilance about the dangers of all forms of abuse, harm and neglect within all aspects of the Church, and how to respond appropriately
- ensuring everyone who engages with the life of a church is responsible for keeping people safe
- working together with voluntary/statutory agencies and other denominations and faith-based organisations.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

The United Reformed Church will:

- recognise that we all have a responsibility to help prevent the abuse and neglect of children and adults, and ensure the well-being and pastoral care of those who are or may be at risk
- create and maintain a safe and inclusive environment for all, especially children and adults at risk, in which the dignity and rights of each person are respected
- acknowledge that the welfare of the child and adult at risk is paramount, and that the priority is always to act in their best interests
- follow legislation, statutory guidance and recognised good practice
- exercise proper care in the appointment and selection of trustees and those who will work with children or adults at risk within the Church, whether paid or volunteers
- provide suitable safeguarding training for relevant staff and volunteers
- respond without delay to every concern, incident or complaint which suggests that a child or adult has been harmed, or is at risk of harm
- cooperate with ecumenical partners, the Police, DO (the Designated Officer, formerly known as LADO), Local Safeguarding Boards (in Wales), Children's Partnership Boards (formally Local Safeguarding Children's Boards) and Children's and Adult Social Care Services in any investigation
- work with those who have suffered or suffer abuse, offering appropriate pastoral support where possible
- challenge any abuse of power, especially where it involves someone in a position of trust
- manage risks and those who might pose a risk to the people and the life of the Church
- offer support to those known to pose a risk to children and adults, including supervision and referral to the appropriate agencies
- ensure that any allegations, concerns and complaints about abuse or neglect that we discover or suspect are recorded, reported and shared safely within and beyond the denomination
- review safeguarding policy and procedures annually, considering lessons learned from safeguarding cases and changes in legislation, statutory guidance and good working practice. Any

policy changes should be formally approved by the URC's Safeguarding Adviser, Safeguarding Advisory Group, URC trustees, Synod trustees or local church trustees, as appropriate.