

This is Ainsdale Village church safeguarding policy document, which can be used in alignment with URC's safeguarding procedures and guidance as set out in Good Practice 6 - which is the URC Safe Guarding Policy Handbook.  
At: <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/GP6-2023.pdf>

### 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/Deacons and applies to:
- All members of our church
  - All those who attend and serve our church/place of worship and its services
  - Our Trustees and Elders
  - Paid staff (both internal and external eg contractors or consultants)
  - Volunteers
  - Organisations and groups which hire our building with written agreement to operate under the church safeguarding policy.

### 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 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 would place the individual or another individual at risk of harm or abuse.

Sections 2-6 below follow the structure of Good Practice 6 and each section lists the 'key responsibilities' for local churches outlined in the corresponding chapter of GP6.

## 1 ● Good Practice 6 – Resource P1 ●

### 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 are given copies of relevant Codes of Conduct
- Follow the requirements of the training framework
- Comply with legal requirements in respect of data protection
- Complete the Annual Church Safeguarding Return<sup>1</sup>
- Ensure safeguarding is a regular agenda item for church and 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
- Carry out risk assessments for relevant activities or events
- Ensure adequate staffing for activities 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

The key principle 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, 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.

## 2 ● Good Practice 6 – Resource P1 ●

### 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: Lucinda Green  
email: [avcsafeguarding@gmail.com](mailto:avcsafeguarding@gmail.com)

#### Deputy Church Safeguarding Coordinator (if applicable)

Name and contact details: Wendy Parry  
[wendyavcsafe@btinternet.com](mailto:wendyavcsafe@btinternet.com)

#### Synod Safeguarding Officer

Name and contact details: Julie Rafferty  
Telephone No: 0151 722 6590 or 07964 981262  
Email: [safeguarding@urcmerseysynod.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto:safeguarding@urc.org.uk)

## 3 ● Good Practice 6 – Resource P1 ●

### Local statutory services: Children

Contact details, including an out of hours number:  
Sefton Children's Social Care Department: 0345 140 0845 between 8.00 and 6.00 pm.  
Emergency Duty Team: 0151 934 3555

### Local statutory services: Adults

Contact details, including an out of hours number:  
Statutory contact in the case of an adult at risk  
[Contact details for your local Adult Social Care Department.]  
Any concerns, or for emergency contact: 0345 140 0845

### 8. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, updated as required and adopted by the church meeting.

Date of most recent review: 12/12/23

Date of next review: 12/12/24

Signed by:

(On behalf of the church Elders / Deacons)

### 9. Details of other organisations and support services

We will always 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, following legislation, statutory guidance and recognised good practice guidance to enable them access to support and protection.

We will support everyone to ensure that as a community of Christians we will all work within the agreed procedures of our safeguarding policy. The persons to whom all concerns or allegations should be addressed for appropriate actions to be taken. In the absence of a Safeguarding Coordinator, the Synod Safeguarding Officer should be contacted. Their contact details will be always available on our posters, websites, or in other communications with the public.

We will 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, volunteers, lay or ordained. We will ensure that trustees, staff and volunteers are suitable and legally able to act in their positions. We will use DBS/ Disclosure Scotland checks as part of a wide range of checks on trustees, staff and volunteers to ensure that we have a broad and informed view to assist us in minimising the risk of abuse, harm or neglect.

We will support, supervise, resource and train all those who undertake work with children and adults in need of protection.

We will 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, and cooperate with ecumenical partners, the Police, the Designated Officer (DO, known as the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in some areas), Local Safeguarding Boards (in Wales), Children's Partnership Boards and Children's and Adult Social Care Services in any investigation, while maintaining the confidentiality of any investigations to those directly involved.

We are committed to working with those who have suffered or suffer any form of abuse, offering appropriate pastoral support where possible as well as challenging any abuse of power, especially where it involves someone in a position of trust.

We will manage risks and those who might pose a risk to the welfare of people and the life of the Church and offer support to those known to pose a risk to children and/or adults, including supervision, referral to the appropriate agencies, and implementation of safeguarding agreements when appropriate.

We are committed to ensuring that any allegations, concerns and complaints about abuse or neglect are recorded accurately, reported promptly and shared safely within and outside of the denomination.

We will review our safeguarding policy, practices and procedures annually, considering lessons learned from safeguarding cases and changes in legislation, statutory guidance and good working practice.

We will ensure processes and practices in all aspects of safeguarding, including discipline, risk management, whistleblowing and bullying/harassment are in alignment with Good Practice 6 – the United Reformed Church's guidance on safeguarding children and adults at risk.

Any local policy changes will be formally approved by the local church trustees.

## 4 ● Good Practice 6 – Resource P2 ●

### Option (b): One page/display format summary of safeguarding principles

#### Statement of Safeguarding Principles

Safeguarding is taken seriously by Ainsdale Village Church 17th Dec 2023

We define safeguarding as the promotion of the safety and welfare of children and adults who are at risk of, or experiencing, harm, abuse or neglect in all forms. We acknowledge children's and adults' right to protection from any form of abuse or neglect regardless of age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marriage/civil partnership status, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity.

Therefore, as members and workers of the church, we are 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 work in the Church, and how to respond appropriately
- working with statutory agencies, voluntary organisations and other churches.

This means that we will:

- Carefully select and train all those with any responsibility within the Church, in line with Safer Recruitment principles, including the use of Disclosure and Barring checks.

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, cooperating with the police and local authority in any investigation.

Seek to work with anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry of informed pastoral care.

Seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust.

Seek to offer pastoral care and support, including supervision and referral to the proper authorities, to any member of our church community known to have offended against a child or adult.

Review our safeguarding policy, practices and procedures annually.

Follow legislation, guidance and recognised good practice.

## 3 ● Good Practice 6 – Resource P2 ●

### Paper T4

### Ensuring everyone in a position of trust is carefully recruited / selected / appointed / elected and trained in safeguarding children and adults at risk:

- We will appoint officers with care, carefully recruit and select those in safeguarding roles and follow safer recruitment processes for all those who engage and work with children or adults.
- The safeguarding training framework will ensure regular accessible and consistent safeguarding training for all engaged in working with children, young people and adults at risk. It will ensure that everyone is well versed in the 4R's (Recognise, Respond, Report, Refer).

### Responding promptly and appropriately to any safeguarding allegation or concern, including those who may pose a risk to children, young people or adults at risk:

- All safeguarding concerns, disclosures, allegations and suspicions will be responded to promptly and in accordance with URC guidelines.
- All safeguarding records will be made in accordance with good practice guidance, kept and stored correctly and be shared in line with Data Protection legislation and statutory requirements.
- We will report to relevant statutory authorities and agencies when safeguarding concerns or allegations meet their thresholds. We are committed to working co-operatively in partnership with statutory authorities.
- Any actions taken will respect the rights and dignity of all those involved.

<sup>1</sup> Definitions of 'child' and 'adult at risk' in Wales, Scotland and England in Appendix One  
United Reformed Church – General Assembly, July 2021

### Paper T4

### Caring pastorally for all children and adults at risk, and all those who have experienced abuse in the past:

- Survivors and those who have experienced abuse 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.
- Training and supervision for those with pastoral care responsibilities will be available so that they are equipped to recognise and respond to disclosures of abuse, and act in preventative and proactive ways.
- As part of embedding safe and healthy cultures, we commit to raising awareness of abuse and its impact in order that moving forward the whole church operates with an understanding and compassionate response to survivors.

### Ensuring that all those who pose a risk to children and adults and those who are the subject of allegations receive appropriate care and supervision:

- Where an allegation is raised against a Church officer or anyone else within the Church, this will be responded to promptly in accordance with Church policies and procedures, as contained within its Good Practice documentation. We recognise that those who pose a risk may themselves be vulnerable. We will therefore consider support for them, with possible referrals to appropriate agencies.
- The Church will put all necessary safeguards in place to manage any risk to children and adults. Following a risk assessment, safeguarding contracts will be used to establish appropriate and clear boundaries and to mitigate identified risk.
- The Church is aware of the need for care and support to be available for family members or members of Church communities who are impacted by the allegation or subsequent outcome of investigation

### Exercising informed vigilance about risks in all forms of abuse and neglect:

- The Church will take care to identify risks in circumstances where a person experiences abuse or an individual may present a risk to others.
- Safeguarding risks will be assessed diligently and locally, managed in accordance with civil and criminal law, and the church's good practice guidance.
- Trained safeguarding professionals will undertake risk assessments.
- The Church will take steps to mitigate risks and prevent abuse from happening.

### Working together with other denominations, statutory agencies and voluntary organisations:

- We will form ecumenical partnerships and work closely with other denominations to have clear and mutually agreed arrangements that keep people safe in our local communities, and to create environments in which people can safely disclose safeguarding concerns.
- The Church will act in an open and accountable way in working in partnership with relevant agencies to safeguard children and adults at risk.
- Arrangements to work effectively with partners will be in place, and regularly reviewed to promote the wellbeing of children and adults at risk.

### Also refer to 'Good Practice 6' - which is the URC Safe Guarding Policy Handbook.

At: <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/GP6-2023.pdf>

United Reformed Church – General Assembly, July 2021