



Promoting Safeguarding
Preventing Abuse
Protecting The Vulnerable

Safeguarding Policy Children & Adults

St Paul's United Reformed Church

Southern Synod

March 2023

Introduction

St Paul's Church agrees that children, young people and adults have a right to live in a way that does not cause them harm or impede their human rights. We therefore acknowledge their right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs.

We consider that, in accordance with legislation, the welfare of children is paramount. We will follow legislation, statutory guidance and recognised good practice. We believe that domestic abuse in all its forms is unacceptable and inconsistent with a Christian way of living.

Safeguarding is taken seriously by all at St Paul's Church.

We will seek to establish a caring environment in which there is an informed vigilance about the dangers of abuse. We will organise activities in such a way as to promote a safe environment and minimise the risk of harm to children and adults.

We will follow a safer selection process for the appointment of people to work with children or adults.

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

All concerns and allegations of abuse will be responded to appropriately, including referring to the Police and Social Care if necessary, either Adult or Children's.

We will co-operate with the Police, Children's and Adult's Services in any investigation, will follow multi agency decisions and will maintain confidentiality of any investigations to those directly involved.

The Safeguarding Co-ordinator is the person to whom all concerns or allegations should be addressed. They can be contacted as detailed below

Name **Sue Eardley**
 07971 068887 Mobile

Email **Secretary@Stpaulsurc.org.uk**

Aim and purpose of this Policy

The aim of this model policy is to ensure that protecting people from abuse, harm or neglect is central to our culture. It provides procedures for promoting safeguarding, mitigating abuse and protecting children, adults at risk and staff. This includes clear procedures for taking appropriate action when safeguarding concerns are raised involving children and adults within our church, or those who attend our activities and events.

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 trustees and elders
- paid staff (both internal and external, such as consultants)
- volunteers
- organisations and groups which hire our building with written agreement to operate under the church safeguarding policy.

The values and safeguarding principles within the United Reformed Church are described in our policy statement in Appendix A1. The policy and procedures should be interpreted in accordance with these principles and the most recent [URC good practice guidance](#). Children, parents/carers, adults at risk and those responsible for safeguarding them will be informed of this policy and our procedures.

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 adults, children or young people. 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.

Preventing / mitigating abuse

The church has appointed a Safeguarding and Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator for safeguarding children and adults. Their role description is attached as Appendix A2.

Activities will be organised in accordance with URC's safeguarding policy and guidance to promote a safe environment and healthy relationships, whilst minimising

opportunities for harm, misunderstanding or false accusation. For each event, risk assessments will be carried out, appropriate and accessible consent forms will be used (for children's activities or activities for people with special needs), appropriate records will be kept, and adequate insurance will be in place.

We are committed to safer recruitment and selection of all paid staff and volunteers with emphasis on those in regulated activities. We will treat applicants who have a criminal record fairly and do not discriminate because of a conviction or other information revealed and ensure that all safer recruitment-related procedures are followed, which include:

- asking applicants to complete an application form
- providing workers with job or role descriptions and person specifications
- completion of self-declaration forms
- obtaining Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) / Protecting Vulnerable Groups scheme (PVG) checks for eligible roles and positions
- taking up two references (not from family members)
- interviewing candidates
- providing workers/volunteers with written contracts/agreements.

All trustees, paid staff and volunteers will work within a code of conduct and understand that there may be action taken if this code is not followed, possibly involving suspension or the termination of people's service.

If we become aware of someone within our congregation known to have harmed or harm children or adults, we will inform the Church Safeguarding Coordinator or Synod Safeguarding Officer within 24 hours and co-operate with them and the relevant statutory authorities to put in place a plan to minimise the risk of harm to children, young people and adults.

When any church premises are let to an external, informal group or individual, those hiring the premises should hold and abide by their own safeguarding policy. If a hirer does not have a policy, they must abide by the church's own safeguarding policy, a copy of which should be made available. Each hiring body is required to ensure that children and adults at risk are always protected by taking all reasonable steps to prevent injury, illness, loss or damage occurring.

How to recognise abuse

It is important to be aware of possible signs and symptoms of abuse. [Appendix A6: Signs and Symptoms of Abuse](#) on the URC Website provides definitions of different forms of abuse and further help and guidance. Some signs could be indicators of several different categories of abuse.

We note that these are only indicators of possible abuse. There may be other, innocent, reasons for these signs and/or behaviour. There might be domestic abuse that requires a different approach ([See URC website Appendix R: A Guide to domestic abuse](#)). The

indicators 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.

Church workers and members will also pay attention to online safety and their electronic communications with children and adults. Grooming and abuse of any form can occur offline (both physically and verbally) and online. [Appendix C: Model church online safety policy](#) includes an acceptable use policy in relation to the use of church computers by both workers and children and provides sample forms which children and workers could be asked to sign. At present St Paul's does not have church computers for use but any communication with CYP will usually be through their parents.

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

If a child, young person or adult makes a disclosure that they are being abused and have been abused, it is important that the person being told:

- stays calm and listen 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 Coordinator within 24 hours (if they are implicated in the allegation, inform the Deputy or the Synod Safeguarding Officer)
- makes a written record of the allegation, disclosure or incident and signs and dates this record (using the template in Appendix A4). This should be given to the church Safeguarding Coordinator or the Synod Safeguarding Officer and stored securely in a locked filing cabinet.

Procedure in the event of a concern of abuse

If there is an immediate threat of harm, the Police should be contacted without delay.

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

- The concern should be discussed with the Church Safeguarding Coordinator or the Synod Safeguarding Officer **within 24 hours**. A decision must be made whether the concern warrants a referral to statutory authorities (contact details below)
- A confidential record will be made of the conversation and the circumstances surrounding it using the template at Appendix 4. This record will be kept securely, and a copy passed to 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 that to do so could place a child or adult at further risk. If the statutory authorities are involved, they should be consulted beforehand
- The Synod Safeguarding Officer should be kept informed of any serious concerns and referrals to police and statutory authorities.

Prior to any referral to children's services, the child's wishes and rights should be considered when determining what action to take. There should also be a verbal consultation with local authority's children's services to ensure that making a referral is an appropriate action. The parent/carer will normally be contacted to obtain their consent before a referral is made. However, if the concern involves, for example alleged or suspected child sexual abuse, domestic abuse, Honour Based Violence, fabricated or induced illness, or the Synod Safeguarding Officer has reason to believe that informing the parent at this stage might compromise the safety of the child or a staff member, nothing should be said to the parent/carer ahead of the referral, but a rationale for the decision to progress without consent should be provided with the referral.

In the case of referrals to adult social care or other services for adults at risk, information should be shared with consent if the adult has capacity within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act and if this does not place the referrer, them or others at an increased risk. A person's right to confidentiality is not absolute and may be overridden where there is evidence that sharing information is necessary to support an investigation or where there is a risk to others. See section 14 of [Good Practice 5](#) for further advice and guidance.

If the allegation is regarding a church staff member or church volunteer

If someone in the church is alleged or known to harm/have harmed children or adults, the Synod Safeguarding Officer must be informed so that they can offer advice and support.

Please see contact details below.

For any concerns relating to adults working with children, the Designated Officer (previously known as LADO) will be contacted by the safeguarding co-ordinator. 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 DO about when to inform the worker and the church will follow this advice. For Croydon the LADO contact details are 020 8726 6000 Ext 24817 or lado@croydon.gov.uk.

For concerns relating to adults, Adult Social Care will be contacted, contact details above.

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 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.

Managing those who may pose a risk to the welfare of people

The use of rigorous and careful supervision is paramount to protect people from the risks associated with known offenders within the congregation, including implementing safeguarding contracts with known or alleged offenders and those who have been assessed as posing a risk. Where it is known that someone has a caution or conviction for committing a sexual offence, the church can play an important role in the prevention of further abuse by helping the offender to live an offence-free life.

If anyone is made aware that a person attending their church has been convicted of an offence against a child or has had an allegation of this nature made against them at any time, please immediately inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer and Minister or Interim Moderator.

It is important to provide known or alleged offenders with a group of people who will offer support, friendship and supervision. Following advice from the Synod Safeguarding Officer, when appropriate, a formal safeguarding contract will be drawn up between the church, the person who is considered to pose a risk to the welfare of people in the church, and any statutory agencies which are involved.

Training

Safeguarding training will be provided and volunteers and paid staff will be given support and supervision in their role. All relevant staff members and volunteers will receive appropriate safeguarding training delivered by the synod. The Safeguarding Coordinator(s) should ensure that trustees/elders and people involved in regulated activities with children or adults (including Ministers, staff and volunteers) have undergone safeguarding training, as recommended by the URC.

Complaints

Should anyone have any concerns or complaints please contact the Minister or

Sue Eardley, Joint Church Secretary 07971 068887 secretary@stpaulsurc.org.uk

It is helpful to have complaints in writing to avoid 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.

Key Contacts: Sources of advice and support

Church Safeguarding Coordinator - to whom all concerns or allegations relating to children, young people or adults should be addressed:

- Sue Eardley: Tel. 07971 068887 Email. Secretary@Stpaulsurc.org.uk

In their absence the Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator can be contacted:

- Bea Pollard: Tel. 020 8657 0162 Email: ronandbea@btinternet.com

Synod Safeguarding Officer

- Belinda Herbert: Tel. 07716 640 596, Email: safeguarding@urcsouthern.org.uk

Whom to contact in the case of a Child

If a child is at immediate risk of harm call 999

For urgent action call Croydon's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 020 8726 6464 / 0208 255 2888 for same-day social worker intervention

Or 020 8726 6400 for urgent action out of hours.

Website: <http://croydonlcsb.org.uk/what-to-do-if-youre-worried-about-a-child/>

Who to contact in the case of a Vulnerable Adult at risk

If the person is in immediate danger call 999

Adult abuse reporting line: 020 8726 6500 (24 hours)

For next-day or less urgent alerts to the Council use the online [safeguarding adults referral form](#)

Useful contacts for all forms of abuse of children and adults is on the [URC Website](#).

Review

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

Date of the most recent review: March 2023

Date of the next review: March 2024

Signed:

(on behalf of the church Elders)

Appendix A1

St Paul's United Reformed Church Safeguarding Policy Statement



The following statement was agreed by the leadership of St Paul's URC South Croydon

Safeguarding is taken seriously by St Paul's URC. 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, gender reassignment, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marriage/civil partnership, 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
- ensuring everyone who engages with the life of the Church is responsible for keeping people safe
- working together with voluntary/statutory agencies and other denominations and faith-based organisations.

We recognise that we all have a responsibility to help prevent any form of abuse and neglect of children and adults, and ensure the well-being and pastoral care of those who are or may be at risk.

We will endeavor to prevent abuse for extremist or other purposes and put all suitable health and safety arrangements in place as well as safeguarding, first aid, fire safety and online safety policies that everyone understands.

We will 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.

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

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 place of worship all will work within the agreed procedures of our safeguarding policy. The Safeguarding Coordinator or the Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator (when available) are 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 in our posters, websites, or 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 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, DO (the Designated Officer, formerly known as LADO), Children's Partnership Boards (formally Local Safeguarding Children's Boards) and Children's and Adult Social Care Services in any investigation, while maintaining 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 to 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 contracts, when appropriate.

We are committed to ensuring that any allegations, concerns and complaints about abuse or neglect that we discover or suspect are recorded accurately, reported promptly and shared safely within and outside 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 in alignment with Good Practice 5 – United Reformed Church's Policy and Guidance in Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk.

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

Signed:

Date: March 2023

Minister, Rev Martin Knight

Appendix A2

Role of the Church Safeguarding Coordinator

Context

We believe that children and adults at risk deserve the best possible care that the church can provide and that the church should be a safe place for everyone involved. We recognise and give thanks for the time and devotion given by anyone carrying out this role.

Purpose of the role

- To coordinate safeguarding policy and procedures in the church.
- To be the first point of contact for safeguarding issues.
- To be an advocate for good safeguarding practice in the church.

Responsibilities

To coordinate safeguarding policy and procedures in the church

- To familiarise themselves with church policies and procedures and URC good practice guidelines in safeguarding and to keep abreast of any changes and developments.
- To ensure that church policies and procedures are reviewed annually, kept up to date, and are fit for purpose.
- To make sure that elders and others in the church aware of the church safeguarding policies and procedures, including URC guidelines and Charity Commission responsibilities.
- To collaborate with the Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator (when there is one), the minister, the DBS/PVG signatory people and the Synod Safeguarding Officer on all matters around safeguarding.
- To ensure safer recruitment practices are operated in the recruitment of all workers (both volunteers and paid) including, but not exclusively, ensuring that the relevant workers have up to date Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) / Protecting Vulnerable Groups scheme (PVG) checks.
- To review and ensure others' safeguarding policies and arrangements are in place when any church premises are let to an external organisation, informal group or individual.

To be the first point of contact for safeguarding issues

- To be a named person that children / adults at risk, church members and outside agencies can talk to regarding any issue to do with safeguarding.
- To be aware of the names and telephone numbers of appropriate departments and teams within Social Care and the Police in the event of a referral needing to be made.
- To be aware of when to seek advice, and when it is necessary to inform Social Care, the Police or the Designated Officer (previously known as LADO) or the equivalent in Scotland and Wales of a concern or incident.

- To take appropriate action in relation to any safeguarding concerns which arise within the church.
- To ensure safe practice is in place for supporting people who pose a risk to children and adults at risk at church.
- To cooperate with Social Care or the Police in safeguarding investigations relating to people within the church.
- To ensure that appropriate records are kept by the church, and that information in relation to safeguarding issues is handled confidentially and stored securely.
- To inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer about any referrals made to the statutory authorities, or of any information received from the statutory authorities.
- To report safeguarding information annually to the Eldership/Church Meeting and the Synod Safeguarding Officer, using the Appendix H1 as part of the annual returns process, to enable them to monitor safeguarding in the Synod.

To be an advocate for good safeguarding practice in the church

- To promote sensitivity within the church towards all those affected by the impact of abuse.
- To promote positive safeguarding procedures and practice and ensure procedures are adhered to.
- To arrange and/or promote opportunities for training in safeguarding to any relevant members of the leadership team and all people involved in regulated activities with children or adults (including Ministers, staff and volunteers), as recommended by the synod, and ensure that their training is renewed every three years.
- To attend appropriate training for the role, including refresher training every three years, and keep updated on matters related to safeguarding.
- To seek appropriate support and advice in carrying out this role.
- To make arrangements for a suitable person to carry out this role when on leave, and to publicise who the substitute is and the dates of the alternative arrangements.

Requirements for the role

- To have knowledge of policy and practice for safeguarding children and/or adults at risk.
- Good communication (written and oral) skills
- Be willing to attend appropriate safeguarding training/refresher training organised by the synod.
- Be willing to be easily contactable – and prepared to make contact details public to enable direct contact when needed.

Appendix A3 – Code of Conduct for Working with Children and Young People

All workers of the church should agree to the following code of conduct when working with children and young people. The word 'child' refers to all those under the age of 18 throughout this document

DO

- Do treat all people with dignity and respect
- Respect and promote the rights of children to make their own decisions and choices
- Encourage respect for difference, diversity, beliefs and culture
- Act inclusively, seeking to make everyone feel welcome and valued
- Use appropriate language
- Be a good role model
- Treat people with equal care and concern
- Take all reasonable adjustments for young people with disabilities and special education needs
- Listen to children and tell the Church Safeguarding Coordinator if you have any concerns about a child's welfare
- Refer to a more senior worker if a child does not respond to your instructions despite encouragement and warning
- Encourage everyone to follow any behaviour agreement or ground rules and apply sanctions consistently
- Seek to diffuse aggressive or threatening behaviour without the use of physical contact
- Interact with children in a public place. If a child wants to talk one-to-one about an issue, tell another worker and find somewhere quieter, but still public, to talk
- Make sure that any electronic communication is done with parental consent and is transparent, accountable, recorded and adheres to safeguarding policies. Using church platforms and not private accounts
- Have a designated photographer to take, store and share photos of your group's activities, in line with URC good practice guidelines
- Use physical contact wisely; it should be:
 - in public
 - appropriate to the situation and to the age, gender and culture of the child
 - in response to the needs of the child, not the adult
 - respectful of the child's wishes, feelings and dignity
 - Respect children's and young people's privacy
- Ensure that any communication online is done through a work or church account – this may require setting up an account specific for that purpose
- Ensure, where possible, parents or guardians are present in the building or other workers are aware when young people are communicating with you via social media. Communication with a child via social media should only ever take place when their parent or guardian and other adult workers are aware of these online interactions.
- Inform your line manager or point of contact of your intention to communicate online with families or young people and keep a record of times and dates when you do this.
- Keep up to date on policies, procedures and training, including safeguarding and health and safety

- Understand that your conduct outside of work including on line can impact on your work with children and young people

DO NOT

- Do not abuse the power and responsibility of your role for example do not belittle, scapegoat, put down, or ridicule a child or young person (even in 'fun') and don't use language or behaviour with sexual connotations (e.g. flirting or innuendo)
- Exclude children or workers from conversations and activities unless there is a good reason
- Overshare about your own situations
- Show favouritism (e.g. in selection for activities, in giving rewards, etc) or encourage excessive attention from a particular child (e.g. gifts)
- Threaten or use sanctions which have not been agreed
- Feel you have to deal with every problem on your own
- Use physical restraint unless they are causing harm to themselves or others
- Spend time alone with children out of sight of other people
- Contact them through private messaging
- Keep communication with children secret, while still respecting appropriate confidences
- Use child/young person's personal data for other purposes than activities consented
- Take photos or videos without consent
- Engage with children or young people through your personal social media or mobile account
- Assume that children should tell you anything you ask just because you are a worker
- Promise to keep anything a secret, it may be that if a child or young person is being harmed or at risk of harm, that you will need to share that information but only on a need to know basis
- Work in ways that puts your needs and interests before those of the children you work with
- Discriminate or leave discrimination or bullying unchallenged
- Interact with children you are working with from personal social media accounts

I agree to abide by the above code of conduct while working with children and young people on behalf of St Paul's URC South Croydon

Name of worker:

Signed:

Date:

Appendix A4



INCIDENT RECORDING 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				