St Paul's United Reformed Church
Harmans Water Square, Bracknell

The United Reformed Church

Safeguarding the Child, Young Person and Vulnerable Adult Policy

1 Introduction

St Paul's United Reformed Church acknowledges that children, young people and vulnerable adults can be the victims of physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect. St Paul's recognises the need to provide a safe and caring environment for children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church environment.

St Paul's have therefore adopted the procedures set out in this safeguarding policy in accordance with statutory guidance. St. Paul's is committed to building constructive links with voluntary and statutory agencies.

The policy has been prepared with reference to the URC Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition, published June 2015).

2 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: 20 June 2019

Date of the next review: June 2020

Signed: Lewin Cox [Church Secretary]

(on behalf of the Church Elders)

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3 Definitions

3.1 Abuse

Abuse is the harming of another individual usually by someone who is in a position of power, trust or authority over that individual. This can include physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

3.2 Children and Young People

In this document children and young people is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

3.3 Vulnerable Adults

A vulnerable adult is a person who has reached their 18th birthday but may be unable to take care of himself/herself or unable to protect himself/herself against significant harm or exploitation.

This may include, but not limited to, people who are elderly and frail, have learning disabilities or mental illness, are homeless or in an abusive relationship.

3.4 Workers

The term 'workers' refers to all those working with children, young people or vulnerable adults regardless of whether paid staff or volunteers. This includes those in leadership roles and all helpers. Anyone involved in an activity once a fortnight or more is a 'worker', as are all those staying overnight at a residential event.

4 Commitment and Responsibilities

4.1 Statement of Intent

The URC expects that local churches will:

- recognise that the welfare of the child is paramount and that the priority is always to act in their best interests
- follow legislation, statutory guidance and recognised good practice
- safely recruit all those with any responsibility within the church
- ensure the relevant people undertake regular safeguarding training
- respond without delay to every complaint which suggests that a child or adult at risk has been harmed or is at risk of harm
- cooperate with the police, Children’s and Adult Services in any investigation
- work with those who have suffered abuse, offering appropriate pastoral support
- challenge any abuse of power, especially where the person is in a position of trust
- offer support and supervision to those known to pose a risk to children and adults
- report to the appropriate Councils of the Church
- review safeguarding policy and procedures annually.

4.2 Elders’ Meeting

The Eldership endeavours, where reasonable and practical, to:

- endorse and follow all national and local safeguarding legislation and procedures

- provide on-going safeguarding training for all workers
- support the Safeguarding Co-ordinator(s) in their role and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church
- file a copy of the policy and practice guidelines, and any amendments subsequently published, with Wessex Synod.

4.3 Church Meeting

St Paul's members and leaders will have open, transparent guidance on EVERYONE's RESPONSIBILITY to protect the child, young person and vulnerable adult within the church with clear lines of accountability for the implementation.

4.4 Safeguarding Co-ordinator

The Safeguarding Co-ordinator is nominated by the Eldership to act on their behalf in dealing with the suspicion or allegation of abuse or neglect, including referring to the statutory authorities.

The church's safeguarding co-ordinator is Jean Steele.

Telephone 01344 444775 Email: jeanesteele@hotmail.co.uk

The church's deputy safeguarding co-ordinator is Lesley Barton.

Telephone 01344 427486 Email: ljb.stpauls@gmail.com

4.5 CYDO

The Wessex Synod's Children & Youth Development Officer responsible for Bracknell is Phil Ray.

Telephone 07787 171678 Email: cydo-n@urcwessex.org.uk

4.6 Due Diligence Checking (DDC)

DDC provide Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for St Paul's. The St Paul's policy is that DBS for church activities should where ever possible be obtained by the church through DDC.

DDC advise that since 2006 Disclosures have not been portable between employers, although the practice is not specifically banned. However, there are associated risks in accepting a document obtained through another employer.

The URC recommend that DBS checks should be renewed every five years.

The following DBS checks are requested:

Role	Type of Check
Elders	Children & Adults worker Enhanced Criminal Record check (without Barred information)
BB & GB staff[1]	Children worker Enhanced Criminal Record check (with Barred List)
Junior Church & Crèche	Children worker Enhanced Criminal Record check (without Barred information).
Small Time	None. Not a 'regulated' activity as parents present and responsible for the children

[1] NOTE: This includes any adult staying overnight at a children's and young person's residential activity.

4.7 NSPCC, Wessex Synod and Church House

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has a 24-hour helpline on 0808 800 500. Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Childline offers help to children and young people on 0800 1111.

The Synod Safeguarding Officer is Sharon Barr. Contact phone number: 07776178246. Email: safeguarding@urcwessex.org.uk

The URC Children's Work department can be contacted at Church House on 020 7916 2020.

4.8 Statutory Authorities

4.8.1 Thames Valley Police (TVP)

If a child is in immediate danger or left alone, you should contact the police (Call 999). The police operator will need to take your name, address and details of what has happened. This will take time, but it is important to get all of the information from you so that they can send the appropriate resources to you if necessary.

The Protecting Vulnerable People Unit can be contacted on the TVP non-emergency number: 101.

4.8.2 Bracknell Forest Local Safeguarding Children Board

If there is no immediate danger or you need advice or information, you should call: Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Tel: 01344 352005

Website: https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/keeping-adults-and-children-safe/protecting-children/multi-agency-safeguarding-hub-mash

4.9 Appointments

St Paul's URC (Bracknell) will require all workers to have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check prior to having regular, frequent or unsupervised access to children, young people or vulnerable adults in the church.

Any adult having contact once a fortnight or more should have a DBS check.

All adults taking part in camps, holidays and sleepovers must have a DBS registered with the church prior to the event.

The DBS check will be regularly rechecked. A DBS register will be kept by the Church Secretary.

Where a prospective helper or leader is not well known to the Elders then as part of the appointment process, references should be requested and followed up.

On appointment the duties and responsibilities expected of the workers will be made clear, and there will be a probationary period. A job specification will be produced and the applicant will be interviewed. After approval by the Elders the appointment will be taken to church meeting for ratification.

4.10 Pastoral Care and Support

The Church is committed to offering pastoral care, working with statutory agencies as appropriate, to all those within the church who have been affected by abuse.

An atmosphere of mutual support and care is encouraged that allows all workers to be comfortable to discuss inappropriate attitudes or behaviour amongst themselves. The Elders and leaders of organisations should be available to discuss concerns as required.

5 Recognising and Responding Appropriately to an Allegation or Suspicion of Abuse

Further information can be found in the URC's Good Practice Guide "Safeguarding Children and Young People in the Church".

5.1 Understanding Abuse and Neglect

Defining child abuse or abuse against a vulnerable adult is a difficult and complex issue. A person may abuse by inflicting harm or failing to prevent harm. Child and adults in need of protection may be abused within the family, an institution, community setting or even a church. Very often the abuser is known or in a trusted relationship with the child or vulnerable adult.

5.2 Vigilance

St Paul's must be vigilant in all interactions, as many people found to have abused children, young people and/or vulnerable adults in a church setting have been church members for a number of years, enjoying all the privileges of Christian love and fellowship while abusing those entrusted to the church's care.

5.3 Safeguarding Awareness

The Eldership is committed to ongoing safeguarding training and development opportunities for all Elders and workers, and developing a culture of awareness of safeguarding issues to help to protect everyone.

The Eldership will ensure that children, young people and vulnerable adults have access to information on where to get help and advice in relation to abuse, discrimination, bullying or any other matter where they may have concerns.

5.4 Responding to Allegations of Abuse

- The person receiving allegations or suspicions of abuse should report concerns as soon as possible to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator. In the absence of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, or if the suspicions in any way involve the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, the report should be made to the Deputy Safeguarding Co-ordinator.
- The role of the Safeguarding Co-ordinator is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion of abuse and pass this information onto the statutory authorities who have a legal duty to investigate.
- While allegations or suspicions of abuse should normally be reported to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, the absence of the co-ordinator and deputy should not delay reporting to the CYDO and to referral to Children's Social Services, Child Protection Team and/or police Special Investigations Unit.
- Under no circumstances should a worker/volunteer carry out their own investigation into allegation or suspicion of abuse. Suspicion must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above. A written record using enclosed template (Appendix Two) should be made in accordance with these procedures and kept in a secure place. Appendix Three contains a flow chart of the process for responding to allegations.
- The Eldership will support the Safeguarding Co-ordinator / Deputy in their role, and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared on a strictly limited, need to know, basis.
- If allegations or suspicions implicate both the Co-ordinator and the Deputy, then the report should be made to the CYDO and to Children's Social Services and / or Police.
- If the allegations or suspicions implicate the minister, the co-ordinator or deputy should immediately inform the Synod Moderator.
- Similarly, if the individual with the concern feels that the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or Deputy has not responded appropriately, or where they have a disagreement with the Co-ordinator as to the appropriateness of a referral, any church member is free to contact Police or Children's Social Services direct on the numbers above. Any individual is also free to discuss concerns the CYDO.

6 Prevention

The Eldership will ensure that all workers will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with government and URC guidance on safe recruitment.

7 Good Practice Guidelines

As a church, working with children, young people and vulnerable adults St Paul's wish to operate and promote good working practices. This will enable workers to run activities safely, develop good relationships and minimise the risk of false accusations. These working practices are summarised here:

- Ensure that only DBS checked individuals are entrusted to a leadership or regular worker roles.
- Ensure that appropriate consent forms are completed for children's activities, other than Junior Church & Crèche when run during the normal morning service, and that consideration/consent has been given to the taking, or not, of photographs.

- With the exception of worship services, a register or sign in sheet will be kept, detailing the names and age of children, young people and vulnerable adults together with names of workers on duty, with a section to record any comment or event.
- Always have a minimum two adults present with a group when it is the only activity taking place on URC premises. The recommended worker/child ratio for group and activity types listed in appendix four should be observed.
- Ensure that individual adult / child interaction is observable by another adult and does not take place in secluded areas.
- Ensure a parent or other adult is present when workers meet a child off site.
- Ensure when transporting children, young people or vulnerable adults that at least two passengers are present, preferably including an adult. See appendix five for more details.

Leaders should be advised against one to one communications outside organised activities - e.g. text messaging, social networking websites.

8 Lettings

St Paul's will include the following conditions to outside organisations wishing to use the church premises:

> 'Where a hire will include children or vulnerable adults, the hirer must have and abide by their own safeguarding policy.'

9 Working with Sexual Offenders (Male or Female)

When someone attending St Paul's is known to have abused or to be a risk to children, young people or vulnerable adults, a risk assessment has to be carried out by the Safeguarding Co-ordinator and a team of appropriate Elders in liaison with the CYDO.

An offender needs pastoral care and clear boundaries set within a contract of behaviour to help him or her deal with the emotional and spiritual aspects of their life. Meanwhile, children, young people and vulnerable adults need to be protected.

10 Allegations against Church Workers/ Leaders/ Minister

The Elders will be aware that any allegations of harm to a child made against a church helper or leader must be reported to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator and then to the Bracknell Forest Local Safeguarding Children Board.

The Synod Moderator will be informed immediately if the allegation is against the Minister.

The CYDO will be informed as (s)he has a role in communication with URC regarding press releases should the allegations attract media concerns.

The helper/leader will be suspended from duties until either social care, police or an appropriate person appointed by the Eldership to investigate the situation has undertaken a review and reported back to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

11 Conclusion

This policy is in addition to the Good Practice guidelines published by URC. Church Meeting has agreed to adhere to the contents of this publication and will follow its guidance in relation to other issues in our ministry with youth, children and vulnerable adults.

The Elders will review this policy annually to ensure that it is in keeping with current legislation, and they should report this to Church Meeting.

12 References

a) Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk

URL: https://urc.org.uk/good-practice-policy-and-procedures.html

b) URC Disclosure and Barring Service Checks (England & Wales)

URL: https://urc.org.uk/disclosure-and-barring-service-checks-england-wales.html

c) Promoting Safeguarding, Preventing Abuse, Protecting the Vulnerable. Wessex Synod's Safeguarding Policy: Children and Adults

URL: http://wessexsynodurc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Wessex-Synod-Safeguarding-Policy-Final-March-2019.pdf

d) "Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children", March 2015 edition. Department for Children, Schools and Families

URL: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/592101/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children_20170213.pdf

13 Appendix One: Responding to Allegations of Physical Injury, Neglect or Abuse

13.1 Children and Young People

13.1.1 Injury or Symptoms of Neglect

If the child has a physical injury, a symptom of neglect or where there are concerns about emotional abuse, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator will:

- Contact Children's Social Services in cases of deliberate injury, if there are concerns about a child's safety or if the child is afraid to return home
- Not tell the parents or carers unless advised by Children's Services to do so
- Seek medical advice if needed, informing the paramedic / doctor of any suspicions
- Encourage the parent(s) / carer to seek help for lesser concerns, but not if this places a child at risk of significant harm
- Offer to accompany the parent(s), where they are unwilling or reluctant to seek help. In cases of real concern or if they fail to act, contact Children's Social Services direct.

13.1.2 Allegations of Sexual Abuse

In the event of allegations of sexual abuse, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator will contact Children's Social Services or Police Child Protection Team direct. The Co-ordinator will not speak to the parent/ carer or anyone else.

13.2 Vulnerable Adults: Suspicions or Allegations of Abuse

If a vulnerable adult has a physical injury or symptom of sexual abuse, the Co-ordinator / Deputy will:

- Discuss any concerns with the individual themselves giving due regard to their autonomy, privacy and rights to lead an independent life.
- If the vulnerable adult is in immediate danger or has sustained serious injury, contact the Emergency Services, informing them of any suspicions
- Contact the Adult Social Care Vulnerable Adults Team who have responsibility under Section 47 of the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 and government guidance, "No Secrets" to investigate allegations of abuse.

14 Appendix Two: Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form

The form is set out on the following two pages.

Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form

St Paul's United Reformed Church
Harmans Water, Bracknell, Berkshire.

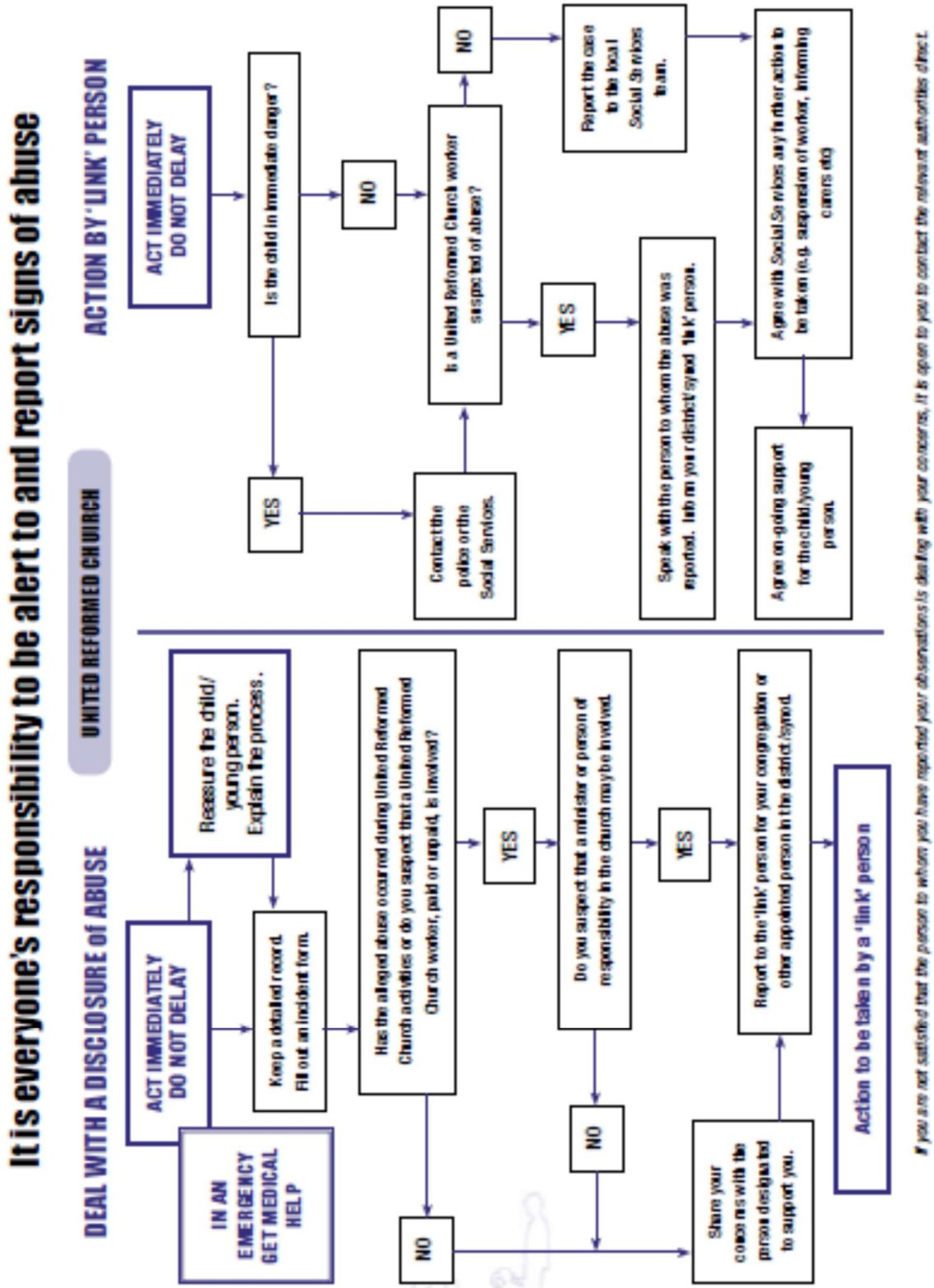
Basic information	
Full name of child, young person or adult concerned	
Address (including postcode)	
Email address	
Telephone number	
Date of birth	
Date and time of incident	
Location of incident	
Other people present (witnesses)	
Record of incident	
Please ensure you are as accurate and detailed as possible. Use quotes wherever possible – do not interpret what was said using your own words. Include details such as tone of voice, facial expression and body language. Record what you said as well as what the child, young person or adult said. If you have formed an opinion please state it, making it clear that it is your opinion and give reasons for forming that opinion.	

Who has been spoken to about the incident?			
Position/Organisation	**Name**	**Email**	**Telephone number**
Church Safeguarding Coordinator			
Synod Safeguarding Officer			
Children's Services			
Adult Services			
Police			
NSPCC			
Parent/Carer			
Other (please state role and organisation)			
Feedback and follow up actions (continue on a separate sheet if necessary)			

Report completed by:
Name:
Position held in the church:
Signed:
Dated:

15 Appendix Three: Flow Chart – Dealing with Disclosures of Abuse

(From 3rd Edition URC Good Practice Guidelines, p. 102)



In this chart, the 'link' person is the church Safeguarding Officer or, in their absence, the Deputy Safeguarding Officer

16 Appendix Four: Adult: Child Ratios

(From 4th Edition URC Good Practice Handbook for Churches, pp. 33-34)

16.1 Supervision of activities for children

There must be a sufficient number of adults for the numbers of children to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone in the group.

16.2 Adult: Child minimum ratios

The minimum number of adults leading a group should be two. The recommended ratios are:

0 to 2 years ⇨ 1 member of staff to 3 children

2 to 3 years ⇨ 1 member of staff to 4 children

4 to 7 years ⇨ 1 member of staff to 6 children

8 to 11 years ⇨ 1 member of staff to 8 children

12 to 18 years ⇨ 1 member of staff to 10 children

For mixed-gender groups, at least one female and one male leader should be present, if at all possible. This is essential if there is a need to supervise toileting or other personal care of younger children or in the context of overnight stays.

Remember that the above ratios are a minimum and may need to be increased in certain circumstances taking into account the nature of the group or activity; the purpose of the group; the abilities and experiences of leaders or any unforeseen contingency.

16.3 Insufficient workers

If there are insufficient workers present for the planned activity, the leaders will need to carry out a risk assessment to decide if it is safe to continue. This might be achieved by leading the activities in ways which reduce risks or by changing the planned activities to reduce risks. Decisions and reasons for any such alterations should be recorded in an incident report. If it is decided that the risks to children's safety are unacceptable, then the activity should be cancelled.

17 Appendix Five: Transport

Transport arrangements to or from church activities are the responsibility of parents if they make informal arrangements amongst themselves.

However, if someone organises travel arrangements for children on behalf of the church, then they assume responsibility for following good practice as outlined below. A risk assessment should be carried out for travel arrangements as well as the rest of the event. Details of travel arrangements should be included with the consent form for the activity/event and it should be clearly understood by all concerned at which point responsibility for the child is passed from parents/carers to the church and at which point responsibility is returned to parents/carers.

There are many factors to consider when planning transport for trips and outings such as:

- Type of journey, including journey time and distance
- Passenger safety
- Traffic conditions
- Weather
- Arrangements for emergencies and breakdowns
- Appropriate insurance cover
- Stopping places
- Supervision

The choices are almost unlimited from public transport to private car. Note that there is legislation covering the use of minibuses.

Note that:

1. The event organiser is responsible for all travel arrangements including:
   - The suitability of hired vehicles and their drivers
   - That a risk assessment is undertaken
   - That children/young people know their responsibilities
   - Checking the credentials of any driver, including health and driving licence
   - Emergency procedures.

2. The driver is responsible for:
   - Health and safety of their passengers
   - Ensuring that their vehicle is:
     - mechanically sound,
     - has all the proper documentation,
     - is taxed, insured and has a current MOT certificate.

3. Supervisors should have check lists including:
   - Rules and regulations governing the trip
   - Accurate list of participants and relevant personal details
   - Passengers must have their own seat and seat belt.