

Paper T2

Additions to URC Structure and Rules of Procedure

Safeguarding Advisory Group

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Adrian Bulley adrian.bulley@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Resolution 44</p> <p>1. General Assembly resolves to make the following additions to the Structure:</p> <p>Functions of Church Meeting: [numbering to be determined]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) To appoint a Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator.b) To adopt and promote implementation of safeguarding policy in line with General Assembly recommendations.c) To receive regular safeguarding reports from the church safeguarding co-ordinator. <p>Functions of Elders' Meeting: [numbering to be determined]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) To satisfy themselves that all necessary procedures are in place to achieve the aims of the church's safeguarding policy.b) To adopt best safeguarding practice for all church activities.c) To report to Church Meeting and to synod.d) To report to the building trustees, charity regulators and insurers when advised to do so by the Synod Safeguarding Officer. <p>Functions of synod: [numbering to be determined]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) To appoint a Synod Safeguarding Officer or equivalent.b) To have oversight of, and to support, monitor and report safeguarding related activities and issues within local churches, and amongst ministers, officers and staff of the synod.c) To take all necessary powers and actions positively to promote implementation of good

practice in accordance with the safeguarding policy statement adopted by the General Assembly.

- d) To adopt best safeguarding practice for all its own activities and events.

Functions of General Assembly: [numbering to be determined]

- a) To appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- b) To have oversight of local churches and synods, monitoring practice.
- c) To adopt a safeguarding policy statement and procedures for use throughout the whole United Reformed Church.
- d) To advise on all matters of safeguarding throughout the church.
- e) To adopt best safeguarding practice for all its own activities and events.

Resolution 45

- 2. General Assembly resolves to make the following additions to the Rules of Procedure:

Safeguarding Implementation: [numbering to be determined]

1. Church Meeting:

- a) To appoint a Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator who is cognisant of current safeguarding policy, practice and procedure.
- b) To receive regular – at least annual – safeguarding reports from the Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

2. Elders' Meeting:

- a) To present an annual safeguarding report to Church Meeting and an annual safeguarding return to synod.

3. Synod:

- a) To appoint a Synod Safeguarding Officer with the necessary experience, qualifications and current knowledge.
- b) To arrange for safeguarding training as appropriate.
- c) To collate church safeguarding returns and forward them to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

	<p>4. General Assembly:</p> <p>a) To appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead with the necessary experience, qualifications and current knowledge.</p>
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Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Safeguarding is not currently mentioned in the United Reformed Church Structure. To add new functions will serve to ensure that safeguarding is foundational in our journey towards becoming a safer church, make explicit where various responsibilities lie and give the necessary authority for actions that need to be taken. Likewise, additions are proposed to the Rules of Procedure where they fall outside of the scope of the Structure.
Main points	To embed safeguarding responsibilities in the URC Structure and Rules of Procedure.
Previous relevant documents	N/A
Consultation has taken place with...	URC Safeguarding Adviser Law and Polity Advisory Group Clerk of the General Assembly Synod Moderators Synod Clerks Synod Safeguarding Officers Dr Lisa Oakley (external safeguarding consultant) Members of SAG.

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	N/A

1. Safeguarding is not currently mentioned in the United Reformed Church Structure. To add new functions will serve to ensure that safeguarding is foundational in our journey towards becoming a safer church and give the necessary authority for actions that need to be taken.
2. These proposed changes are the result of an extensive process of consultation with key people, both within and outside the Church.
3. The additional clauses avoid cross referencing other documents because to do so would entail a lengthy constitutional changes process for each subsequent amendment.
4. The primary responsibility for safeguarding in local churches lies with those local churches (through church meetings and elders' meetings).

5. Synod's support local churches with their safeguarding responsibilities. They do so by:
- Assisting with the development of safeguarding policy
 - Assisting with the appointment of, and offering support to, Church Safeguarding Co-ordinators
 - Arranging and delivering safeguarding training in accordance with the Safeguarding Training Framework.
 - Monitoring safeguarding implementation through the annual safeguarding return.
6. Some of those consulted have asked for an explanation as to what is meant by 'all necessary powers and actions' within the proposed additions to the functions of synods. The following is offered by way of a response to that request (references are to existing functions in the Structure, although the proposed new functions will also be relevant):
- a) In terms of the responsibility to 'take all necessary powers and actions positively to promote implementation of good practice in accordance with the safeguarding policy adopted by the General Assembly':
- The best way to promote adoption of good safeguarding practices in local churches is through pastoral relationships: the coming alongside of Synod Officers to encourage and support.
- b) Where such an approach fails to produce an appropriate response:
- A synod may wish to arrange for appropriate people to visit a local church to discuss with elders and members appropriate implementation of safeguarding policy [Structure 2.(4)A(ix)]
 - a synod (and / or a Synod Trust Company) may think it appropriate to bind financial decisions (such as applications for grants or loans from local churches) and decisions about buildings works to evidence of safeguarding policy implementation [Structure 2.(4)A(i) and 2.(4)A(xxiii)]
 - a synod may wish to facilitate the grouping of smaller churches for safeguarding purposes, perhaps with one Safeguarding Coordinator covering several local churches [Structure 2.(4)A(i), 2.(4)A(iii) and 2.(4)A(iv)]
 - a synod might determine it appropriate to appoint additional people for a fixed period to support a local church in implementing safeguarding policy [Structure 2.(4)A(i), 2.(4)A(iv) and Structure 2.(4)A(ix)].
- c) The final options for a synod, which a synod would undoubtedly only want to use as a last resort, include:
- invoking the disciplinary procedure for church officers
 - If all else had failed, a synod could vote to dissolve a local church where safeguarding is consistently being flouted and all support has been rebuffed [Structure 2.(4)A(iii) and 2.(4)A(xxvi)].
- d) It is noted that Directors of Synod Trust Companies as charities, and the Trust Companies themselves, are required by law to ensure that the synod follows good safeguarding practices.