

Appendix I

URC's Safeguarding Strategic Plan 2020-2025

Safeguarding people is a core part of the URC's mission. We safeguard the integrity of creation, and we all walk the way together as one Church and one body to ensure the Church is a sustained community of care where everyone – particularly the most vulnerable – find a place of love, pastoral care and support.



Outline of six strategic objectives: charting the way forward

URC Strategic Objective	Key Tasks	Rationale	Success Indicators	Deadlines	Key People	Possible issues and wider considerations
1. Instil a safeguarding ethos of care and service within all local congregations, synods and bodies of the URC.	1.1. Ensure that each local church and community have designated safeguarding persons committed to protecting children and adults who are or might be at risk of experiencing abuse or neglect	All URC churches have at least a single point of contact to protect places of worship and all those who are working for and affiliated with them.	Each local church has identified and appointed safeguarding coordinators to whom safeguarding incidents and concerns are reported	March 2022	CSC Data/Admin staff Elders Pastoral Committees	Not enough and able volunteers to undertake the role – One CSC can be shared across a pastorate or group of local churches A transparent approach to local safeguarding arrangements is valued in practice Good practice of active safeguarding coordinators, elders and volunteers is acknowledged
	1.2. Contact details of designated safeguarding persons are added and updated in databases and shared through relevant media and communication materials, including church posters and noticeboards, URC Yearbook and Synod Directories and websites (depending on role and part of the church).	Details of designated safeguarding persons (Church Safeguarding Coordinators/ Synod Safeguarding Officers and Advisers) are public and easily accessible to raise safeguarding concerns or other general enquiries throughout the Church	Numbers of churches providing this data on church returns Number of posters displayed	On time of annual returns (normally January)	Church Secretaries CSC Admin staff SSOs S/G Adviser Publications staff	GDPR principles considered and applied when asked persons to add their contact details The risk of low rate in church returns. Using one return form and requesting data only once a year from the churches Correlate data of synod safeguarding returns and church annual returns to inform and regularly update a centralised database

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1. Instil a safeguarding ethos of care and service within all congregations, synods and bodies of the URC.	1.3 Raise awareness for child protection and safeguarding adults at risk within the worship and life of the URC	Keep every minister, children’s and family worker, youth worker, elder, staff member and volunteer updated and well supported to place safeguarding at the heart of church life	Guidance and resources downloaded from websites, distributed and used More requests for training made by churches Training intake from children/youth workers, SSO and CSC	Ongoing	SSOs CSCs S/G Adviser S/G Training/ Development Coordinator Comms team Assembly and Synod staff and leaders Church Ministers and Elders	Constant changes in public policy and legislation The use of the website, new technologies, video clips, social media, newsletters and free resource packs to disseminate up-to-date knowledge and examples of promoting good practice Churches with no electronic systems are recorded and supported accordingly Attention paid to identifying and defining spiritual abuse at the URC. A working group to look at the contested nature and theological implications of this form of abuse for the benefit of the whole denomination
	1.4 Develop shared awareness of safeguarding, and what counts as a safeguarding concern across the denomination in alignment with legislation and internal ethos	Build on common understanding of protection and safeguarding among leaders, ministers, frontline staff, elders and other volunteers and encourage teamwork and collaboration in dealing with safeguarding incidents and concerns	Training material and resources produced & accessed Working groups crossing boundaries between different URC departments and roles	June 2023	S/G Adviser S/G Training/ Development Coordinator SSOs	A culture of deference & inaction to be alarmed of and discouraged A URC-standardised basic safeguarding training that reflects the needs of our Church The opportunity of updating GP4 and recognising GP5 as the only safeguarding policy and guidance document for the whole church The vital role of keeping up with the regular meetings of SSOs

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1. Instil a safeguarding ethos of care and service within all congregations, synods and bodies of the URC.	1.5. Improve safeguarding communications between Church House, synods, local churches and URC designated safeguarding persons	Enable better information cascade, sharing of expertise and good practice in handling safeguarding incidents and concerns internally and externally	<p>Agreed flow chart for sharing information within the URC</p> <p>Number of synods using the main database</p> <p>Use of URC recording form is standardised and increased</p>	January 2023	S/G Adviser SSOs CSCs	<p>Recording and Sharing Information principles are clear and standardised in all parts of the Church</p> <p>Three national meetings with all SSOs annually</p> <p>Periodic 1-2-1 conversations of SSO with SA</p> <p>Synod-run meetings and events with local churches</p> <p>Relevant events, training courses and conferences are shared within the Church</p>
2. Ensure initial and appropriate pastoral care and support to those who are impacted by safeguarding incidents and concerns	2.1 Establish ways of support that contribute to a lasting healing process for survivors and those affected by abuse, harm or neglect from the time of disclosure	This allows individuals who disclose abuse or neglect to feel they are listened to and that the Church is ready to meet their pastoral care and support needs and/or signpost them to appropriate specialist services or other sources of support	<p>Positive feedback and evaluation by survivors</p> <p>Reduced number of complaints and reports</p> <p>Increased number of referrals to external specialist support</p>	January 2021	S/G Adviser SSOs CSCs Active Ministers Elders Synod/CH Pastoral Care Committees	<p>Limited resources impacting funding and provision of support</p> <p>Access to local help and/or relevant local services to be identified and offered</p> <p>The ongoing impact of abuse on survivors. Avoid re-traumatisation of processes, which compounds the original abuse.</p> <p>Standardised training established for those with pastoral care responsibilities within URC</p>

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2. Ensure initial and appropriate pastoral care and support to those who are impacted by safeguarding incidents and concerns	2.2. Co-produce with synods an appropriate case management system that provides prompt and proportionate support to those children, young people and adults in greatest need	This helps assess and prevent safeguarding risks with pastoral care needs established as early as possible and followed up	<p>Number of individual cases</p> <p>Number of occasions that pastoral support was offered</p> <p>Number of cases that pastoral care and support has taken</p> <p>Number of referrals to internal or external support</p>	July 2021	<p>S/G Adviser</p> <p>SSOs</p> <p>CSCs</p> <p>Synod/CH Pastoral Care Committees</p> <p>Synod and CH admin staff</p>	<p>Not sharing the same understanding of what counts as a case – Definitions be provided in GP5 and internal protocols</p> <p>Access for all synods and Church House’s relevant staff to a centralised recording system of allegations and cases of abuse, harm and neglect</p> <p>Expectations and challenges of managing workload</p> <p>Need for extra specialist support and supervision for those who handle serious cases</p>
	2.3. Consult and engage with survivors and relevant groups and organisations in all safeguarding developments	This ensures that the URC co-produces with survivors, develops and adopts appropriate approaches to supporting survivors and preventing abuse	<p>Number of consultations and reviews with survivors and relevant groups</p> <p>New services of care and support</p>	Ongoing	<p>S/G Adviser</p> <p>SSOs</p> <p>SAG</p>	<p>Budget implications</p> <p>Ethical considerations - Principles of confidentiality and integrity are paramount</p> <p>Voices are heard in meaningful and non-tokenistic ways in all future developments</p> <p>Learn from/work with other denominations, organisations and specialist agencies (e.g. NAPAC)</p>

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2. Ensure initial and appropriate pastoral care and support to those who are impacted by safeguarding incidents and concerns	2.4 Use internal or external specialists to support local congregations affected by serious incidents of abuse	A whole-congregation approach will enable local church communities to recover from trauma and crisis in a supportive environment for all	Lessons drawn and impacted on local safeguarding practice Sharing good stories of church community work in the area of safeguarding	Ongoing	Elders Active Minsters SSOs Synod moderators	Capacity problems – The vital role of leadership and collaboration (including GA appointed officers and interim moderators) High risk of stigma and conflicts to inflict more trauma on the lives of those affected by serious safeguarding situations Principles of informed consent, confidentiality and transparency to be applied. The interrelated work of pastoral committees and LEPs.
3. Set up secure and appropriate systems and processes of data and information handling and reporting safeguarding	3.1 Develop and implement a centralised, standardised electronic system to record and follow up safeguarding cases and concerns from the beginning of the process to resolution	This protects the rights of individuals and relationships across the URC and ensures individual cases, ministerial and case files are integrated, monitored and securely stored in one unified system	All synods access the system Adoption of <i>Appendix A8: Reporting concerns form</i> across the URC Number of resolved cases Positive reviews from those who access the system	June 2023	S/G Adviser SSOs Ministries office IT and admin staff	No clear lines of accountability and duties to record and report. Guidelines to align with Sharing Information Policies & Legislation Not all synods accessing the main database. Added costs for new systems/training to be considered at early stages of delivery. Access and permissions to appropriate staff are granted Disintegration of data in different parts of the church. Protocols are developed, applied and reviewed Different context in Scotland

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3. Set up secure and appropriate systems and processes of data and information handling and reporting Safeguarding	3.2 Ensure there are clear lines of accountability by use of standard reporting forms and procedures on a regular and annual basis	This helps those with safeguarding leadership responsibilities keep an oversight of practice and share information with councils, committees and groups of the Church	<p>Protocols established, used and reviewed</p> <p>Number of reports produced and shared</p>	June 2022	<p>S/G Adviser</p> <p>SSOs</p> <p>CSCs</p> <p>Members of relevant committees and groups</p>	<p>People not aware of lines of accountability</p> <p>Roles and Job Descriptions with clear reference to responsibilities and duties to report and share information</p> <p>Standardising GP5 as the main safeguarding policy and practice guidance across the URC</p> <p>New policies (whistleblowing, bullying/harassment, lone working) are developed and applied across the URC (by SAG, HRAG or CHMG)</p> <p>Cross-over with HR and Comms / Reputation management</p>
	3.3. Each URC synod provides safeguarding data and information annually in a consistent format	Consistency of what information is required as well as regular reports and reviews of internal safeguarding policy and practice will help monitor and review changes	<p>Evidence of review and changes on policy and practice</p> <p>Use of standardised forms across synods and churches</p>	Each May in all years	<p>Church Secretaries</p> <p>CSCs</p> <p>SSOs</p>	<p>Heavy workloads</p> <p>Risk of not meeting deadlines</p> <p>Provide adequate planning time for those who collate information and produce the annual S/G report for SAG and the whole church</p> <p>Access to appropriate systems</p>

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3. Set up secure and appropriate systems and processes of data and information handling and reporting Safeguarding	3.4 Co-produce with synods minimum standards of compliance with legislation and internal procedures and obtain benchmark progress for each synod	This will embed a culture of co-design on the journey of improving URC's safeguarding practices in open and transparent ways	Synods' positive feedback of co-production Number of consultation meetings with synods	Every May	S/G Adviser SSOs Chairs of relevant committees and groups	Avoid a hierarchical model Provide clear guidance on what is compulsory in the review of GP4 and production of GP5 Working closely with synods
	3.5. Establish tools to measure change and review adequacy and robustness of procedures and policies	Support a culture of continuous learning and improvement in the local church and identify systemic barriers across the denomination	Standardised and consistent use of audit tools Periodic independent reviews and audits	April 2024	S/G Adviser SSOs CSCs Elders	Fear of an independent oversight at the denomination, synods and local churches Building trust and collaboration Co-produce and co-deliver audits with survivors of abuse Avoid long-lasting reviews and excessive paperwork
4. Ensure the safeguarding policies and procedures are updated, reviewed and implemented in practice throughout the URC	4.1 Update URC's safeguarding policy every two years following the publication of Good Practice 5 (annually for each local church)	This ensures good practice guidance is regularly reviewed and updated in line with new legislation and policy changes	Up-to-date publications and e-resources intake	January 2020 January 2022 January 2024	S/G Adviser SSOs	Meeting the needs for the whole denomination Consultation with all parts of the church to identify policy areas that require improvements Resources (writing group, publications, etc) Update and brief people to use GP5 – GP6

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4. Ensure the safeguarding policies and procedures are updated, reviewed and implemented in practice throughout the URC	4.2 Review current safer recruitment practice of the URC and develop a Good Practice Guidance for all parts of the Church	Provide specific and clear advice that ensures appropriate recruitment, induction and retention of trustees, and of paid and voluntary workers (ii) arranges lawful criminal record checks (DBS/PVG) for all who need this.	<p>New guidance's intake</p> <p>Updated lists of eligible roles for DBS/PVG checks</p> <p>Reduced number of inquiries to CH, Synods & DDC</p> <p>Positive feedback in undertaking checks through DDC Satisfaction survey</p>	October 2021 & ongoing	<p>S/G Adviser</p> <p>SSOs</p> <p>Ministries Office</p> <p>DBS Verifiers</p> <p>DDC staff</p>	<p>Over-checking criminal records of people affiliated with the URC</p> <p>Create guidance that helps people clarify when it is not appropriate to check, and which roles are eligible for criminal record checks</p> <p>Understanding checks as part of a wider recruitment process</p> <p>Scotland's different policy requires separate guidance</p>
	4.3 Develop the capacity of designated safeguarding persons to conduct thorough safeguarding risk assessments and support offenders, alleged offenders and perpetrators of abuse across the URC	Protect against abuse and better support those who are accountable to manage risk and monitor anyone who may pose a risk	<p>Tools and resources produced and used</p> <p>Number of safeguarding contracts/agreements</p> <p>Number of DBS/PVG referrals</p>	March 2021	<p>S/G Adviser</p> <p>SSOs</p> <p>CSCs</p> <p>Elders</p>	<p>Interpersonal relationships can minimise the importance of risk assessment in the life of the church</p> <p>Equip people with the right skills and specific guidance</p> <p>Regular reviews of existing risk assessment tools and relevant sections of GP4/GP5 (Risk assessment and covenants of care forms and templates)</p>

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4. Ensure the safeguarding policies and procedures are updated, reviewed and implemented in practice throughout the URC			Publications and resources intake			Information sharing protocols with other denominations
	4.4 Connect safeguarding policy and procedures with URC's disciplinary processes, especially those related to ministers/CRCWs	This helps establish good practice and expertise among all members of mandated groups and those involved in safeguarding cases that lead to instigation of disciplinary procedures	<p>Evidence of joint thinking and consultation in the review process of Section O</p> <p>Setting up disciplinary processes for other relevant roles within the Church</p> <p>Number of safeguarding cases recorded in the disciplinary processes</p>	June 2020	<p>S/G Adviser</p> <p>MIND</p> <p>Ministries Office</p> <p>SSOs</p>	<p>Disconnection between safeguarding and disciplinary processes</p> <p>A clear and transparent process is jointly agreed and reviewed</p> <p>Mandatory safeguarding training for members of mandated group involved in the Section O process</p> <p>Defined role for safeguarding officers and advisers in the new disciplinary process</p> <p>Adherence to GP5/GP6 requirements and legislation (e.g. Employment Law)</p>
	4.5 Ensure people in positions of leadership and accountability are aware of any changes to safeguarding policy and practice	New policy changes are discussed within supervision and training development of employed staff and shared within teams or working groups	<p>Communication material shared</p> <p>Policy updates added on agendas</p> <p>S/G advanced training uptake is increased</p>	<p>January 2020</p> <p>&</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>S/G Adviser</p> <p>SSOs</p> <p>Synod Moderators</p>	<p>Challenges in information sharing (language, terminologies, technical issues).</p> <p>Use of newsletters, briefs and reports to MC/GA to inform the right people</p> <p>The central role of elders, ministers, synod moderators and General secretaries in understanding</p>

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						safeguarding and being aware of URC's policy and practice
5. Provide appropriate and accessible safeguarding training for all those who are accountable for and working with children, young people and adults	5.1. Benchmark and co-produce with synods URC's standardised safeguarding training programme for all roles and positions within the URC expected to undertake regular and mandatory safeguarding training	Align with current synod practices and public policy requirements to equip all those working with children and adults at risk as well as those responsible for their care with the right skills	<p>Training used consistently in each synod</p> <p>A system to monitor attendance and renewals is established and standardised</p>	June 2021	<p>S/G Adviser</p> <p>S/G Training/ Development Coordinator</p> <p>Education and Learning staff</p> <p>SSOs</p> <p>Synod Training officers</p> <p>CSCs</p>	<p>Lack of consistency across synods</p> <p>Recording attendance and renewal of URC or other denominations' training</p> <p>Resistance to travel to attend training. On-line access can help but limits interaction and collaboration. Accessibility needs.</p> <p>Accrediting URC safeguarding training</p> <p>Defining training packages tailored to specific roles and positions (e.g. Elders<>SSO)</p> <p>Adaptation to national contexts of Scotland and Wales</p>
	5.2. Ensure robust guidance on delivering mandatory training in both areas of safeguarding (children and adults at risk) for all identified groups involved in regulated activities	Mandatory training will ensure monitoring the delivery of standardised and refreshing safeguarding training for identified roles of accountability and leadership	<p>Numerical evidence of training attendance</p> <p>Evidence of positive action taken as a result of training</p> <p>Number of certificates per role</p>	December 2021	<p>S/G Adviser</p> <p>S/G Training/ Development Coordinator</p> <p>SAG</p> <p>SSOs</p> <p>Ministries</p>	<p>Non-attendance for those who are involved in direct work with children and adults at risk</p> <p>A framework of sanctions for non-attendance</p> <p>Mandatory safeguarding training for active ministers</p> <p>GA Certificates</p>

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5. Provide appropriate and accessible safeguarding training for all those who are accountable for and working with children, young people and adults	5.3. Develop and maintain quality standards of regular safeguarding training and professional development across the URC	Consistency and quality at different levels of development and delivery of safeguarding training are reviewed regularly	Positive evaluations and reviews of training provision	June 2021	SAG S/G Training/ Development Coordinator SSOs Ministries	Connection with accreditation Working with Learning Resource Centres
	5.4 Develop and update a comprehensive guidance and package of support resources to make serving elders and trustees (URC and synod) aware of their legal responsibilities	The aim is that elders/trustees feel confident in preventing abuse for all people in the church as well as protecting the assets and reputation of churches	Number of interactions/meetings of designated safeguarding persons with elders Feedback from elders meeting Numbers of elders attending basic safeguarding training Evaluation of training provision Referrals to CC	June 2023 & ongoing	S/G Adviser S/G Training/ Development Coordinator SSOs Education and Learning Committee	Data of elders are not recorded at CH or synods High number of elders – Cost and GDPR implications Enabling regular interactions and briefings in Elders or Trustees Meetings to minimise concerns and build trust Working closely with other departments/teams within the URC Keep elders up to date regarding changes to regulations and policies using traditional and visual methodologies (induction material, Reform, video, etc
	5.5 Value the expertise of and contribute to continuous	Ensure synod designated persons are equipped and	Numbers of co-working groups	Ongoing	SSOs S/G Adviser	Heavy workloads and increased commitments

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5. Provide appropriate and accessible safeguarding training for all those who are accountable for and working with children, young people and adults	development of Synod Safeguarding Officers	remain resourceful to lead all aspects of safeguarding practice in their local churches with continuous support and supervision	and surveys with SSOs Records of attending relevant training and professional development opportunities Positive appraisals and feedback from SSOs		Line managers of SSOs Synod Moderators Relevant synod committees and groups	Common understanding of safeguarding between SSOs to be fostered Joint posts with CYDO roles to be reviewed Adaptations to national contexts (Wales/Scotland)
	5.6 Ensure safeguarding is part of the induction of any newly appointed persons to URC roles (particularly trustees, children’s and youth workers and those in regulated activities with adults) alongside the specific role induction	This enables each new role holder to understand the personal and corporate liability should a safeguarding incident happen, while building a culture of prevention at every church setting, committee, venue.	Number of job and role descriptions where safeguarding is listed as duty	June 2022	HR CSCs Active Ministers Pastoral Committees Training Officers	Oversee essential requirements set up by Government guidance or CC HR teams to update existing recruitment and induction policies Update safer recruitment guidance for those who recruit, induct and line-manage workers and volunteers
	6.1 Provide clear guidance about referring and reporting serious incidents and cases to statutory authorities	This will allow more confidence to designated safeguarding persons in setting up of information sharing protocols	Download of on-line resource Number of referrals to Police, Social	March 2022	S/G Adviser SSOs CSCs	Safe and secure systems of information sharing between different parts of the church Meet legislative requirements when updating our policy (GP5 - GP6 in three years’ time)

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6. Encourage and build constructive partnerships with statutory, non-statutory bodies, other denomination and faith-based communities		and sending referrals for cases crossing statutory thresholds to statutory agencies without delay	Services, CC and LADO Increased representation & attendance in statutory services-run meetings			Learn from other denominations, e.g. CoE's recent guidance on reporting and sharing information
	6.2 Improve public awareness of URC's good practice in safeguarding across denominational, cross-denominational and ecumenical settings	Encourage personal drive and actions of URC people (particularly volunteers) to improve the safeguarding ethos at the local church and public acknowledgement of personal and collective efforts	Increased number of local initiatives and campaigns Opportunities to share expertise externally	March 2023	Synods S/G Adviser SSOs CSCs SAG	Initiatives and events Links with other developments 'Walking the way safely' Links with Methodists, Baptists and Anglicans
6. Encourage and build constructive partnerships with statutory, non-statutory bodies, other	6.3 Develop and share guidance on safeguarding when churches hire out their premises or providing space to groups/ organisations whose work involves children	Promote good practice in allowing our premises to be used by external organisations working with children and adults at risk	Increased use of the guidance	June 2023	S/G Adviser SSOs	Serious incidents not reported to CC Clear safeguarding arrangements and agreements
	6.4 Endorse close partnership and knowledge exchange of best practice with other	Promote ecumenical dialogue and co-produce partnerships for the	Publication of material & resources	Ongoing	S/G Adviser SSOs	Shared resources and common events Ecumenical and international settings

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denomination and faith-based communities	denominations to support LEP's and church communities	benefit of public worship, protection of the vulnerable and pastoral care of communities	Number of joint events and seminars		CSCs CFS Local ecumenical groups	

GLOSSARY

CC Charity Commission

CFS Churches Forum for Safeguarding

CH Church House

CRCW Church-related Community Workers

CSC Church Safeguarding Coordinator

CYDO Children's and Youth Development Officer

DBS Disclosure and Barring Service

DDC Due Diligence Check Ltd

GP4 Good Practice 4

GP5 Good Practice 5

LEP Local Ecumenical Partnership

LADO Local Authority Designated Officer

MC Mission Council

MIND Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group

PVG Protecting Vulnerable Groups (Scotland Scheme)

SAG Safeguarding Advisory Group

S/G Safeguarding

SSO Synod Safeguarding Officer

GA General Assembly

GP Good Practice

URC The United Reformed Church