

The United Reformed Church

Code of conduct for working with children



All those working with children in the church (in either paid or voluntary roles) should agree to the following code of conduct. The word 'child' refers to all those under the age of 18.

Training, policies and procedures

- Attend all necessary training which helps to support you in your role
- Have a good awareness of, and comply with, URC policies, procedures and guidance
- Refresh all necessary safeguarding training at least every three years
- Be aware of different types of abuse and the key signs and symptoms of abuse.

Safer ways of working

- Do not spend time alone with children out of sight of other people
- Be aware that it is illegal for an adult in a position of trust to engage in any sexual activity with a 16 or 17 year-old
- Use of physical contact/touch should be: only 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 and inclusive working

- Respect and promote the rights of children to make their own decisions and choices
- Encourage respect for difference, diversity, beliefs and culture
- Make all reasonable adjustments for children with disabilities and additional needs.

Managing behaviour

- Encourage everyone to follow any ground rules and apply sanctions consistently
- Don't show favouritism or encourage excessive attention from a particular child
- Refer to a more experienced or senior worker if a child does not respond to your instructions despite encouragement and warning.

Photos and videos

- All images should be appropriate and, beyond first names, not reveal any personal information about children if uploaded to the Internet. Images should only be uploaded with permission from the parent/carer, as well as the child (for those old enough/able to give their consent)
- Avoid taking images on personal devices. If this is necessary in exceptional circumstances, it should be agreed in advance or reported promptly to the Church Safeguarding Coordinator
- Images of children should be stored securely on the church computer, never on personal devices, including memory sticks.

Reporting concerns

- Know who the Church Safeguarding Coordinator (CSC) is and how to contact them
- Tell the CSC if you have any concerns about a child's welfare
- Do not promise to keep anything a secret; if a child is being harmed, or is at risk of harm, you will need to share that information but only on a need-to-know basis.

Working with children online

Make sure that any electronic communication is done with parental consent and is transparent, accountable, recorded and adheres to safeguarding policies.

Approval/consent

- Ensure that all types of online communication and activity you engage with have been formally approved by your line manager/team leader/Eldership
- 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
- Ensure that you have parental consent for every type of online communication and activity you engage with – if need be, issue multiple consent forms (as for other activities and events). If signed consent forms are difficult to obtain, confirm emailed consent by phone/video call and keep a register of consent given (when, by whom, for what).

How to engage online

- Ensure that any communication online is done through a work or church account and do not engage with children or young people through your personal social media or mobile account – this may require setting up an extra account for that purpose
- Ensure, where possible, parents or guardians are present in the building or other workers are aware when children 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
- Where possible, ensure that another adult is present in the room with you if communicating 1:1 via social media with a child or young person, or ensure that a second leader is present online and communicate in a group chat environment
- Do not use private messaging
- Tell the CSC of any attempt by children or young people to contact you through your personal accounts and profiles, and block any further contact.

Use of content generated online

- Ensure any images or videos from online engagement are stored in the safe place designated by the church and not on your personal accounts or equipment
- Ensure you have clear parental and participant consent (for older children) before sharing any content from online engagement more widely, and only use it in the ways agreed, in line with URC good practice guidelines.

I agree to abide by the above code of conduct while working with children and young people.

On behalf of [church name]:

Name of worker:

Signed:

Date: