



Annual Safeguarding Return 2025

Scotland

for the period 1 January to 31 December 2025

Church ID Number

Church Name

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your expertise in and commitment to working with others to enable our churches to be safer for all concerned and, in particular, for the child and adult at risk. Your efforts are very much appreciated.

The responses you give in the return provide valuable data which will help General Assembly, its committees and staff to support you in your safeguarding work.

Thank you

John Bradbury, Nicola Furley-Smith, Victoria James and Jenny Mills
(Senior Leadership Team)

Introduction

Completing the URC Annual Safeguarding Return is your opportunity to highlight the hard work that has gone into safeguarding your church in the past year, as well as an opportunity to identify areas where you may need advice and assistance.

The submitted form is sent to and reviewed by your Synod Safeguarding Officer and entered onto the URC database. The information is assessed and used to standardise our collective ability to identify safeguarding issues within our churches and protect those most at risk, both children and adults.

Church Safeguarding Coordinator and PVG Verifier details are also collated and entered onto the URC database to ensure that the information on those who oversee safeguarding in each church is accurate. The Church Secretary will be making sure that these details are correct and up to date, and that the individual/s is/are aware of the Data Privacy Notice at <https://urc.org.uk/privacy-policy/> and that of your Synod.

If you are following the safeguarding policy of another denomination, the information captured in the URC Annual Safeguarding Return will give us valuable insight into safeguarding in all local churches regardless of the policy they are following. The data provided is used by the URC to develop training and support, to gain an understanding of what safeguarding is like in the local church, and to gain a holistic view of safeguarding across the country.

As a church following another policy, parts of the return may not feel relevant but we would really hope that you could take the time to complete the return. Thank you for all you do to safeguard those that access your church, it really is appreciated and valued.

If you have any difficulties or questions in relation to this form, please contact your Synod Safeguarding Officer who will be more than pleased to help and advise you with this.

If parts of the form are not applicable to your church in the past year, please indicate so. If you leave sections blank, this could mean information has been missed out so please enter N/A if anything doesn't have relevance to your church.

Guidance Notes

There is a brief Guidance Note to each section at the beginning of the section. We hope these help with the completion of the returns and everyone throughout the URC, including the Synod Safeguarding Officers and the Offices of General Assembly Safeguarding Team, thanks you for the hard work you put in to make our churches safer.

1 Safeguarding Procedures

- Every field must be completed

It is essential that each church has a Safeguarding Policy for children, young people and adults at risk, which they should ensure is updated annually. Therefore, please indicate when your church policy was last reviewed and when the next annual review of your policy is due. Template P1 of Good Practice 6 is a model safeguarding policy for local churches and can be used to ensure your church policy is up to date. The link can be found here:

<https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/P1.pdf>

Members of your congregation and those visiting the building should be able to locate your policy easily and identify your Church Safeguarding Coordinator and Deputy. It is important that your safeguarding policy contains up to date contact information for the Church of Scotland Safeguarding Service and the Police.

1.1 When was your church's safeguarding policy last reviewed (day/month/year)?

1.2 When is the next annual review of your safeguarding policy (day/month/year)?

1.3 Does your church have a website?

Yes

☐

No

☐

1.3a If yes, does your church have a Safeguarding section on its website?

Yes

☐

No

☐

1.4 Does your safeguarding policy cover...

- Please indicate one

Adults

☐

Children

☐

Both

☐

1.5 Does your safeguarding policy contain contact details for the Church of Scotland Safeguarding Service?

Yes

☐

No

☐

1.6 Does your safeguarding policy contain contact details for the Police?

Yes

☐

No

☐

1.7 Has 'safeguarding' been a standing agenda item/report at your Elders meetings at least once in the period 1 January to 31 December 2025?

Yes

☐

No

☐

1.8 Has ‘safeguarding’ been a standing agenda item/report at your Church meetings at least once in the period 1 January to 31 December 2025?

Yes

☐

No

☐

1.9 Does your church display the name(s) and contact details of the Church Safeguarding Coordinator?

Yes

☐

No

☐

2 Safer Recruitment

- Every field must be completed

Safer recruitment is an all-encompassing term for the process of ensuring that an applicant or volunteer is safe to work with children and adults at risk. The Annual Safeguarding Return asks you to provide details of the methods used to recruit volunteers and paid workers in the period 1 January to 31 December 2025. This includes the number of PVG checks done – please liaise with your PVG verifier and/or Safeguarding Coordinator (Primary) who is responsible for recording and processing PVG checks.

2.1 How many people, who have access to children and/or adults at risk, were recruited in the period 1 January to 31 December 2025? If the answer is 0, please go to question 2.8.

Of those people recruited with access to children and/or adults at risk, how many had:

2.2 Role/Job Description

2.3 Application Form

2.4 PVG Check

2.5 Interview

2.6 References taken up

2.7 Self-declaration (when invited for interview)

2.8 Are your eldership aware of the paper passed by Assembly Commission in November 2021 on the safe election of Elders – <https://urc.org.uk/2021-h4-safer-election-of-elders-2/>

Yes

☐

No

☐

If no, please share the document with your eldership or, if you are in an LEP, with your equivalent leadership team (for example, Stewards/Church Stewards (Methodist), Diaconate (Baptist), Wardens/Churchwardens (Scottish Episcopal Church)).

3 Safeguarding Concerns/Allegations: Children and Adults at risk

- Every field must be completed

If you have had a safeguarding concern within your church in the period 1 January to 31 December 2025, it is recommended that you use the Safeguarding Incident/Concern Form GP6 Form F1 (<https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/F1.pdf>) to record the information. The Annual Safeguarding Return requires you to state the number of safeguarding concerns/allegations relating to children and adults at risk.

Please identify the categories of abuse relating to the safeguarding concerns/allegations for children and adults separately.

Please also detail how much information you have shared with the Synod Safeguarding Officer and other agencies.

3.1 Has your church had any safeguarding concerns/allegations in the period 1 January to 31 December 2025?

Yes

No

If no, go to section 4.

If yes, state the number of concerns/allegations in each category:

	Adults at Risk	Children
3.2 Sexual Exploitation		
3.3 Discriminatory Abuse		
3.4 Domestic Abuse		
3.5 Emotional Abuse		
3.6 Financial Abuse		

3.7 Institutional Abuse

☐☐

3.8 Modern Slavery

☐☐

3.9 Neglect

☐☐

3.10 Online Abuse

☐☐

3.11 Physical Abuse

☐☐

3.12 Radicalisation

☐☐

3.13 Self-Harm

☐☐

3.14 Self-Neglect

☐☐

3.15 Sexual Abuse

☐☐

3.16 Spiritual Abuse

☐☐

3.17 Other Abuse

☐☐

Please specify:

Adults at Risk

Children

Adults at Risk

Children

3.18 How many cases have been referred out to other agencies?

3.19 How many serious safeguarding incidents did you refer to Disclosure Scotland?

3.20 How many concerns did you refer to the Church of Scotland Safeguarding Service?

State the number of safeguarding concerns/allegations which were made in the period 1 January to 31 December 2025 about the behaviour of:

3.21 Ministers

3.22 Elders

3.23 Children's/Youth Workers (paid or voluntary)

3.24 Church members/other volunteers

3.25 Other paid employees (for example, Caretaker etc)

3.26 How many of these concerns/allegations (relating to Ministers, Elders etc) were referred to the Designated Officer (DO) for the Local Authority?

4 Risk Management

- Every field must be completed

It is important that churches, with the assistance of the Synod Safeguarding Officer, ensure that we adequately protect those within our congregation who may be at risk from certain people being involved in the church, whilst ensuring that those who may pose a risk to others are supported to access church life safely if safe to do so within a signed Safeguarding contract. This question asks you to record how you manage these issues within your church.

Risk management is an important part of safeguarding within your church, and your Synod Safeguarding Officer should be aware of all issues in these cases. If they are not, please contact them so they can support you in this area. This section is not related to blemished Disclosures, which is covered in a separate section, unless the individual is then deemed to pose a risk.

	Yes	No
4.1 Does your church have any known offenders, and/or those deemed as posing a risk to children or adults at risk, involved with any aspect of the church?	☐	☐

4.2 If yes, please state how many	
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4.3 How many safeguarding agreements/contracts with offenders, and/or those deemed as posing a risk to children or adults at risk, are currently in place as of 31 December 2025?	
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4.4 How many safeguarding agreements/contracts were started in the period 1 January to 31 December 2025?	
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4.5 How many safeguarding agreements/contracts were terminated in the period 1 January to 31 December 2025?	
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5 Safeguarding Support to alleged victim, survivor of abuse, and/or congregation

- Every field must be completed

If you have a person within your congregation in need, has support been offered to them? It is helpful to capture the details of support offered, so any lessons learned or any advice you can offer can then be shared with the wider church.

	Yes	No
5.1 Has any support/help/guidance been given to any alleged victim, survivor of abuse and/or the congregation in the period 1 December to 31 December 2025?	☐	☐

If no, go to section 6.

5.2 If yes, please outline the situation:

6 Local Church Best Practice

- Please complete this section. If you have no comments to make, enter N/A.

This is your opportunity to show how well your church has safeguarded others within the period 1 January to 31 December 2025. Please provide examples, which can then be shared for others to learn from your knowledge and experience.

6.1 Please provide details of any examples of best practice in Safeguarding you have initiated or observed in your role in the period 1 December to 31 December 2025 (including partnerships with other denominations or agencies):

7 Safeguarding Challenges

Please complete this section. If you have no comments to make, enter N/A.

It is important that Synods and the Offices of General Assembly recognise the challenges and obstacles you experience at a local church level, so please provide details of challenges you have experienced to Safeguarding in your role in the period 1 January to 31 December 2025 so your Synod and Synod Safeguarding Officer can assist you with them.

7.1 Please provide details of any challenges you have experienced in fulfilling your Safeguarding role in the period 1 December to 31 December 2025:

8 Support from the URC Safeguarding Team

Please complete this section. If you have no comments to make, enter N/A.

This question is asking what additional support, help and guidance you may need. Please record this as it is important that we have this information so resources can be directed to churches where it is required. If you haven't needed any, or haven't had any, please let us know.

8.1 Please indicate how your Synod Safeguarding Officer can help you further in fulfilling your Safeguarding role:

9 Training

- Every field must be completed

Please give the total numbers of people who are **required** to do Safeguarding training at the relevant level as outlined by General Assembly and the **actual** number of people who are trained to the level required. The information on specific roles that need this training are in the matrix, please use the link [Paper T5 - SAG - Safeguarding Training Framework \(urc.org.uk\)](https://www.urc.org.uk/Paper-T5-SAG-Safeguarding-Training-Framework). The matrix gives information on who needs to do Foundation, Intermediate or Advanced Training.

In Scotland, when looking at the matrix, the Church of Scotland Introductory Training is equivalent to URC Foundation Training and the Church of Scotland Advanced Training is equivalent to URC Intermediate Training. This training is carried out by the Church of Scotland on behalf of the Synod of Scotland.

9.1 How many people in total in your church are REQUIRED to do INTRODUCTORY training (equivalent to URC Foundation Training level) based on the matrix set by General Assembly?

9.2 How many people in total in your church are REQUIRED to do ADVANCED training (equivalent to URC Intermediate Training level) based on the matrix set by General Assembly?

9.3 Of the total number of people in your church required to do INTRODUCTORY training (equivalent to URC Foundation Training level), how many have COMPLETED their training within the last 3 years?

9.4 Of the total number of people in your church required to do ADVANCED training (equivalent to URC Intermediate Training level, how many have COMPLETED their training within the last 3 years)?

10 Submission Declaration

Name of person completing this return:

Role of person completing this return:

Date: