

A Guide to using URC Church Update and Annual Safeguarding Return



Introduction

Completing your Annual Safeguarding Return

Introduction to Church Update

Church Update is a web-based system whereby churches can view the information we hold about them and notify us of any changes Throughout the year.

The system is **also** used to enable churches to complete their Safeguarding Annual Return.

To access URC Church Update please use the link <http://churchupdate.urc.org.uk>

We recommend using Mozilla, Firefox or Google Chrome as your browser, as we have noted people experiencing difficulties with Microsoft Edge.

Your **email address** is used to gain access and is registered with the URC Church Update portal and the URC Database. If you do change your email address at any time or if you are no longer the person completing the Annual Safeguarding Return please contact your synod. Never share your email address and password with anyone. Do not forward the 'Getting Started' email to another person.

If you are a new user click on **Register** and you will receive an email to continue registration and set your password. Your password must contain at least one of the following:

- Lowercase character (a-z)
- Uppercase character (A-Z)
- Number (0-9)
- Symbol (.,!@#£\$?%^&*)

And must be:

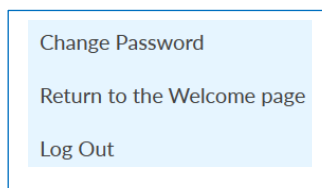
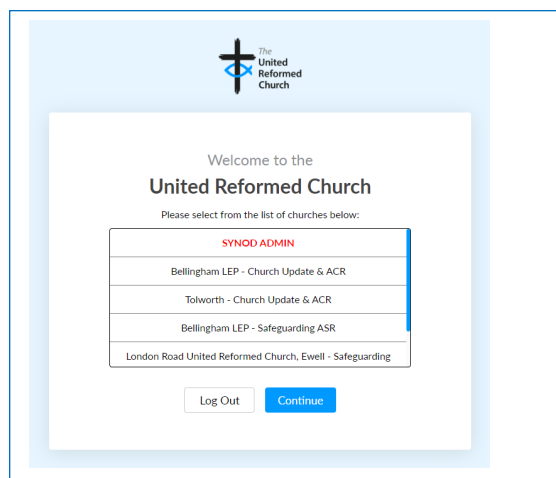
- 8 or more characters long

The screenshot shows the 'Welcome to the United Reformed Church Church Update Portal' page. It features two main sections: 'Register as a: New User' and 'Log in as an: Existing User'. The 'New User' section includes a message 'You will need to create an account before continuing.' and a blue 'Register' button. Below it is a 'Forgotten your password?' link with a 'Reset your password' button. The 'Existing User' section has input fields for 'Email address' and 'Password' (with an eye icon for toggling visibility), and a 'Sign in' button.

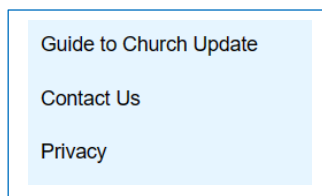
Having registered or as an existing user, to access the system you will need to enter your email address and your password and then click **Sign in**. If you have forgotten your password click on **Reset your password** and follow the on screen prompts

If you still experience problems then please email your Synod Safeguarding team.

Once you have logged in you will see EITHER the list of churches you have access to and the level of access (select the church and click on **Continue**) OR you will be automatically taken to your church. If either the church or level of access is incorrect, please contact your Synod.



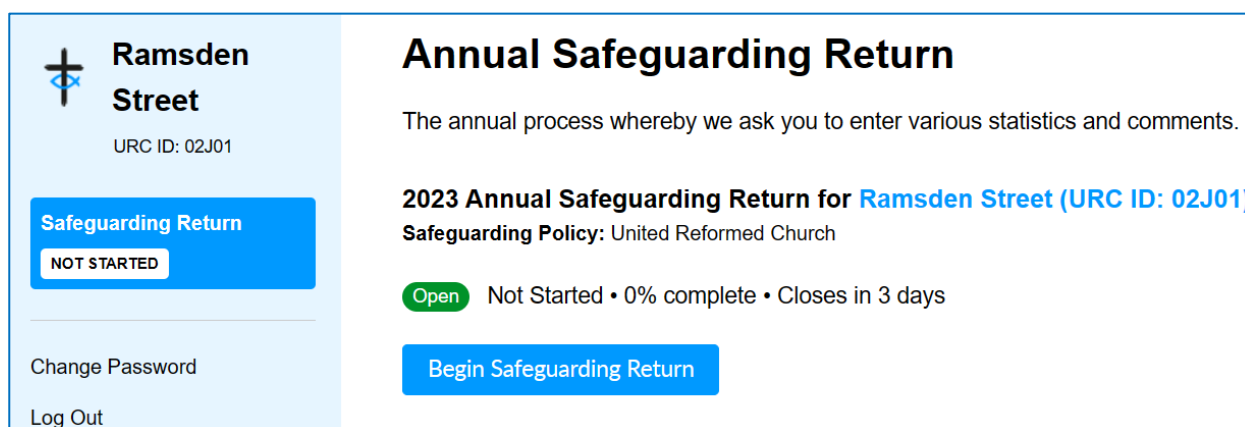
You can also change your password, Return to the Welcome Page or Log out – use the links on the left-hand side.



You can also link to the Guide to Church Update, Contact us and the Privacy policy.

Completing your Annual Safeguarding Return

- Having selected a church and if it is during the “Safeguarding Returns” period (normally January and February) you will be taken to the safeguarding return for your church immediately.



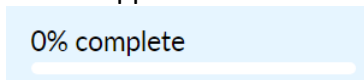
On this page you can see how much you have completed and how long you have before the system closes.

- Click **Begin Safeguarding Return** to get started!

Continue Safeguarding Return

- *If you have started and saved this, the box will say*


On the upper left-hand side on every page you will see how much you have completed.



- **Sections 1-9**

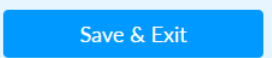
There are 9 sections which you need to work through in any order. There are helpful notes at the top of each section and these have been included at the back of this user manual for reference.

Follow the instructions on the pages and you can enter the information in any order and move

on by clicking 



The minus sign means that the section is incomplete. **The returns cannot be submitted until all fields have been completed. "0" is a valid numerical entry.**

You can  at any time and return to the Safeguarding Return later.

You can print each section by clicking on  or the entire form by clicking on

 in the Section 11 Review/Submit


- **Section 10**


This section asks who is completing the Safeguarding Return.


- **Section 11 Review / Submit**


The final stage is the 'Review' stage which gives you the opportunity to review (and edit if necessary) all the Safeguarding information you have submitted.

Key to symbols


 Further information is required in this section

 Section complete


 Section not started

You are also able to print or save a copy of your entries by clicking  and changing the Destination to your local printer OR Save as PDF in the Print screen e.g. Note that once you have submitted your Safeguarding Return you will not be able to print or save a copy of the completed return.

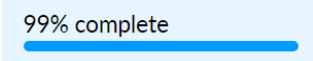
Destination

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Destination

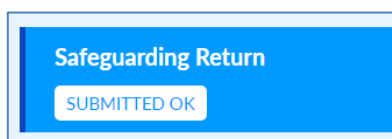
 Save as PDF ▼

OR

The  will not change to 100% until you click the Submit Safeguarding Return button.

Submit Safeguarding Return

At the bottom of the page is the button, please click to submit your return to us. When this has been done the following message will be displayed on the home page and you will receive a confirmation email.



Please do not forget to click the **Submit Safeguarding Return** button.

NOTE:

Once you have submitted your return you cannot make any changes to it via the Church Update portal. Please contact your Synod Safeguarding Officer or Synod Office to make any changes after you have submitted your ASR.

For Churches following the safeguarding policy of another denomination

As a church following another policy parts of the return will not be relevant, but we really hope that you will take the time to complete the return. The information captured in the Annual Safeguarding Return will give the URC valuable insight into safeguarding in all churches regardless of the policy they are following. The data provided is used by your Synod 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 Synod.

These churches can decline to complete the URC Annual Safeguarding Return by clicking on the “[here](#)” text following the statement on the screen. They will be asked to confirm “that accountability for safeguarding is via another denomination, confirm a safeguarding policy is in place and their wish to decline completing the URC Safeguarding Return.”

Annual Safeguarding Return

The annual process whereby we ask you to enter various statistics and comments.

2022 Annual Safeguarding Return for [St Andrew's Benton LEP \(URC ID: 01B04\)](#)

Safeguarding Policy: Methodist

Reason for not using URC Policy:

Although 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 within the United Reformed Church regardless of the policy they are following. The data provided is used by the United Reformed Church 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 United Reformed Church.

As a church following another policy then parts of the return may not feel relevant but we would really hope that you could take the time to complete the return. If you feel you are unable to help us at this time please click [here](#).

[Open](#) Not Started • Closes in 25 days

[Begin Safeguarding Return](#)

Completing the URC Annual Church 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 highlight areas where you may need some advice and assistance. The completed form is sent to and reviewed by your Synod Safeguarding Officer and the information is used to support our churches in the forthcoming year. The form is also reviewed by Church House and used to standardise our collective ability to identify safeguarding issues within our churches and protect those most at risk, both children and adults. Details of the church safeguarding coordinator(s) and verifiers are also collated and submitted to Church House to ensure that contacts are accurate and up to date. The Church Secretary will ensure these details are correct and current and 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 have any issue 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 this. If you leave a field blank this could mean information has been missed out so, please put N/A if a question does not refer to your church.

We hope this guidance helps with the completion of the returns and everyone throughout the URC, including the Synod Safeguarding Officers and the Church House Safeguarding Team thank you for the hard work you are putting in to make our churches safer.

1. Safeguarding Procedures

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/2021/11/Good-Practice-5-Appendix-A-model-safeguarding-policy-for-local-churches.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.

England and Wales: It is important that your safeguarding policy contains up to date contact information for Children's and Adult's services and the Designated Officer (DO) for the Local Authority. Please note the Designated Officer is formally known as the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Scotland: It is important that your safeguarding policy contains up to date contact information for the Church of Scotland safeguarding service and the Police.

2. Safer Recruitment

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 Church Safeguarding Return asks you to provide details outlining the methods used to recruit volunteers and paid workers in the last calendar year, this includes the number of DBS checks done – please liaise with your DBS verifier and/or Safeguarding Coordinator (Primary) who is responsible for recording and processing DBS/PVG checks.

3. Safeguarding Concerns/allegations: Children and Adults at risk

If you have had a safeguarding concern within your church in the last calendar year, it is recommended that you use the Safeguarding Incident/ Concern Form (GP6 Appendix A5) to record the information. The Annual Church 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. If the category of abuse is not specified, please tick “other” and outline the relevant type of abuse.

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

4. Risk Management

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.

5. Safeguarding Support to alleged victim, survivor of abuse and/or congregation

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.

6. Local Church Best Practice

This is your opportunity to show how well your church has safeguarded others within the last calendar year. Please provide examples, which can then be shared for others to learn from your knowledge and experience.

7. Safeguarding Challenges

It is important that Synods and Church House recognise the challenges and obstacles you experience at a local church level so please provide details of challenges you have experienced with Safeguarding in your role **in the last calendar year**, so your Synod and Synod Safeguarding Officer can assist you with them.

8. Safeguarding support to the Church Safeguarding Team

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.

9. Training

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 \(urc.org.uk\)](http://urc.org.uk/Paper%20T5%20-%20SAG%20-%20Safeguarding%20Training%20Framework).

England: The matrix gives information on who needs to do Foundation, Intermediate or Advanced Training.

Wales: The matrix gives information on who needs to do Foundation, Intermediate or Advanced Training prior to September 2024. Additional questions have been added for Group A and Group B training which was introduced from September 2024.

Scotland: The matrix gives information on who needs to do Introductory or Advanced Training this training is carried out by the Church of Scotland on behalf of the Synod of 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.

10. Safeguarding Declaration

Please indicate whether the person completing the return is the Safeguarding Coordinator and, if not, you can enter the name and role of the person who completed it.