

**Safeguarding Strategic Plan
of the Safeguarding Committee
2026-2028**

Our mission

To embed safeguarding good practice into everyday life across the URC

Our vision

That safeguarding good practice is known, understood and implemented

Our culture

Respectful
Nurturing
Empowering
Accountable
Adaptable

Our goals

Culture and leadership	Engagement	Training	Practice development
We have a healthy safeguarding culture where the safeguarding of children and adults at risk is prioritised and embedded into the mission and operational structures of General Assembly, Synods and local churches.	We engage proactively and constructively with internal and external stakeholders, including victim-survivors and ecumenical partners. We are open in sharing our knowledge and learning from others.	Through the safeguarding training framework, we make training more accessible and improve the quality of training records to monitor and promote training attendance and completion.	Regular review of practice is integrated into all safeguarding activity, there are processes in place to learn from data, and evidence of how this learning is driving positive change.

Our targets

Culture and leadership	Engagement	Training	Practice development
<p>Continue to increase understanding of healthy safeguarding culture</p> <p>Identify and address barriers to reporting safeguarding concerns</p> <p>Help churches establish sustainable safeguarding leadership structures</p> <p>Endorse and promote good safeguarding practice</p>	<p>Expand our networking with other churches and safeguarding services.</p> <p>Continue to develop and strengthen internal networks</p> <p>Develop the URC's engagement with victim-survivors</p> <p>Support Synods in working with 'hard-to-reach' churches</p>	<p>Safeguarding data held on the URC database will be more accurate and applied more efficiently to inform Synods of training needs</p> <p>Make further training available on the Learning Hub</p> <p>Embed safeguarding in all relevant training courses across the denomination</p>	<p>Establish a sustainable programme of Synod safeguarding reviews in which all Synods participate</p> <p>Promote quality assurance processes which collect, analyse and use relevant data effectively</p> <p>Ensure the URC is ready and able to commission an external safeguarding review</p>

Our progress

The Safeguarding Committee will review progress with implementing the strategic plan annually.

We will assess progress through measures including data monitoring, feedback, levels of engagement, self-assessments, audits.

***This plan is intended to guide the work of the Safeguarding Committee
and the Offices of General Assembly Safeguarding Team.***

The plan will be shared with Synod Safeguarding Officers (SSOs) for discussion with their local safeguarding reference groups/committees and it is hoped this will inform Synods’ own action plans. The Synod Safeguarding Practice Group (SSPG) meets 4 times a year and the sections of this plan which involve SSOs will be discussed during these meetings so as not to create additional demands on their time.

Our targets: Culture & Leadership

Goal: We have a healthy safeguarding culture where the safeguarding of children and adults at risk is prioritised and embedded into the mission and operational structures of General Assembly, Synods and local churches.

Related documents: Good Practice 6 (particularly chapter 2 on ‘Safer Culture’)

Targets	When	Key people	How we measure progress	Wider considerations
1. Continue to increase awareness and understanding of healthy safeguarding culture				
1.1 Create new resources and provide information about other existing material on healthy safeguarding cultures in church contexts e.g. a safeguarding culture self-assessment toolkit, resources on the theological basis for healthy cultures.		Offices of General Assembly (OOGA) safeguarding team Worship, Faith and Order Committee External specialist in developing healthy cultures	Resources available and accessed on URC website Updates to guidance and training	
1.2 Provide Synods with the resources to recruit and equip a sample of volunteer ‘Safeguarding Champions’ across different areas of church life to help promote safeguarding culture.	Year 2/3	OOGA safeguarding team SSOs (through SSPG)	Sample of safeguarding champions in role and use feedback from the ‘early adopters’ to further develop the role of champions.	People’s capacity to take on additional roles

Targets	When	Key people	How we measure progress	Wider considerations
1.3 Resources will be provided to support Synods in hosting safeguarding culture workshops for local church leaders and elders.	Year 3	OOGA Training and Development Officer SSOs (through SSPG) Synod Training and Development officers (TDOs) meetings	Resources provided for Synods to use / adapt Attendance records and post-event feedback surveys	Engaging the 'hard-to-reach' churches
2. Identify and address barriers to reporting safeguarding concerns				
2.1 Explore ways of making it easier and quicker for people to report safeguarding concerns to the relevant people	Year 1	Policy Development Officer OOGA Comms & IT teams Synod Safeguarding Practice Group (SSPG)	Completion of review and implementation of at least one new or improved access point e.g. revised/reviewed reporting form/contact form on central or synod websites	
3. Help churches establish sustainable safeguarding leadership structures for their context				
3.1 Identify gaps in CSC roles and the different reasons for this	Year 1	Database Manager OOGA safeguarding team Synods	Data for each synod on gaps in local churches	
3.2 In light of the Church Life Review, explore options for peer-to-peer support or sharing roles and workload in different contexts (e.g. for geographically isolated churches compared with those closer together or for those in a multi-church pastorate compared to those with own minister / no minister)	Year 2	Working group involving SSOs, local churches and OOGA safeguarding team	All churches have access to at least 1 active safeguarding person who is listed on database Guidance on practical and legal issues with role sharing is available on <i>myURC</i>	Need to amend database and safeguarding return to reflect shared roles Trustees of each church retain legal responsibility even if CSC role is shared. Capacity and willingness of larger/active churches to support others

Targets	When	Key people	How we measure progress	Wider considerations
4. Endorse and promote good safeguarding practice				
4.1 Work with Synods to agree guidelines on how showing good safeguarding practice can help churches when applying for grants	Year 2 or 3?	OOGA safeguarding team SSOs through SSPG	Guidelines agreed and disseminated	Possible push-back from churches or synods if seen as interfering in local processes
4.2 Work with Synods on additional ways to share and promote good practice locally	Year 2 or 3?	OOGA safeguarding team SSOs through SSPG	Evidence from newsletters, websites, events, synod meetings	
4.3 Providing resources to help churches and Synods deal with inappropriate 'weaponisation' of safeguarding	Year 2 or 3?	OOGA safeguarding team	Resources available e.g. on other ways to address problems instead of through safeguarding (such as conflict resolution), clarity over criteria for a safeguarding response.	SSOs under pressure to deal with issues that may not be safeguarding if it seems that nobody else is responding.

Our targets: Engagement

Goal: We engage proactively and constructively with internal and external stakeholders, including victim-survivors and ecumenical partners, rooted in our commitment to be open in sharing our knowledge and learning from others.

Related documents:

URC Manual – The structure and Rules of Procedure (6)

Safeguarding Committee Terms of Reference (7.1)

Good Practice 6

Targets	When	Key people	How we measure progress	Wider considerations
5. Promote ecumenical networking and engagement with other safeguarding services				
5.1 Head of safeguarding to attend ecumenical head of safeguarding meetings run termly	Year 1	Head of Safeguarding	Meeting attendance records	Engagement from ecumenical colleagues
5.2 Policy Development Officer and Training Development Officer to meet annually with ecumenical colleagues	Year 2	Policy Development Officer Training Development Officer	Meeting attendance records	Engagement from ecumenical colleagues
5.3 Encourage Synod Safeguarding Officers to attend regional ecumenical meetings (or initiate them if not already set up)	Year 2	SSOs	Through Synod Safeguarding Reviews (see section 13 below)	
5.4 Head of Safeguarding to start conversations with the Director for Safeguarding at the Methodist church about a whole team meeting to build ecumenical working networks	Year 3	Head of Safeguarding	Meeting attendance records and SSO engagement	Agreement with Methodists
5.5 Expertise from other organisations shared with URC through training and events (e.g. Symposium, annual SSOs' residential)	Ongoing	OOGA safeguarding team	Records of events and activities	Costs/resources of engaging other services
6. Continue to develop and strengthen internal networks				
6.1 Head of Safeguarding to attend Leadership Forum meetings to ensure the voice of safeguarding is advocated across the OOGA	Ongoing	Head of Safeguarding Heads of Departments	Attendance records Meeting minutes & agenda	
6.2 OOGA team to arrange an annual meeting with SSOs and Synod Moderators.	Ongoing	OOGA Safeguarding team SSOs Synod Moderators	Attendance records Meeting minutes & agenda	

Targets	When	Key people	How we measure progress	Wider considerations
6.3 OOGA team to arrange quarterly meetings with Synod safeguarding teams (including an annual residential) to build a strong and supportive structure across the denomination.	Ongoing	OOGA Safeguarding team SSOs	Attendance records Meeting minutes & agenda	Budget to cover costs of annual residential
6.4 Denominational safeguarding team to link with Children's, Youth and Intergenerational Discipleship team in their work with older people.	Year 2/3	OOGA Safeguarding team SSOs Synod TDOs	Meeting notes and actions	Varying levels of Synod resources / engagement
7. Develop the URC's engagement with victim-survivors				
7.1 Appoint two representatives with lived experience on to the URC's Safeguarding Committee (in line with the Terms of Reference)	Year 2	Safeguarding Coordinator from OOGA team Safeguarding Committee Convenor and Secretary	Nominations committee updates Committee records Safer recruitment paperwork	
7.2 Ensure voices of victim-survivors are heard in all training packages.	Year 1-2	Training and Development Officer Training Reference Group	Training packages Training reference group minutes	Interest/willingness of victims-survivors to engage with URC
7.3 Develop victim-survivors group within the URC, either through our own group or working ecumenically.	Year 2	Head of Safeguarding Lived experience members of Safeguarding Committee	Meeting agenda/attendance record	Interest/willingness of victims-survivors to engage with URC
8. Supporting Synods to improve safeguarding engagement with 'hard-to-reach' churches				
8.1 Support Synods to identify priority churches where risks of non-engagement are highest and develop plans to work with them	Year 1	OOGA safeguarding team Synods	Increases in completion rates for Annual Safeguarding Returns and in attendance for training	SSO time/resource capacity

Our targets: Training

Goal: Through the safeguarding training framework, we make training more accessible and improve the quality of training records to monitor and promote training attendance and completion.

Related documents:

URC training framework

Good Practice 6

URC Manual – The Rules of Procedure

Targets	When	Key people	How we measure progress	Wider considerations
9. Accuracy of data held on the database will be improved and applied more efficiently to inform Synods of training needs.				
9.1 Time frames will be ascertained and circulated regarding data cleansing and clear responsibilities within this are explained.	Year 1	OOGA Admin & Resources team Training and Development Officer	Monitoring of the circulation of information. Monitoring various mediums for accurate communication.	GDPR advice and support needed from the wider OOGA teams.
9.2 Provide a comprehensive guide (to include GDPR implications) to help Synods ensure they can train relevant staff in appropriate and accurate use of the database.		Training and Development Officer OOGA Admin & Resources team SSOs	Guidance distributed to all database users and easily accessible on <i>myURC</i> for new people coming into roles.	GDPR advice and support needed from the wider OOGA teams
9.3 Associated documents such as ‘So they’ve asked me to be a Church Secretary’ will be updated to include reference to use of the database.		Policy Development Officer	Data audits Monitoring uptake of training	Staffing and training costs for Synods
9.4 There will be a standardised reporting system for Synods to use that generates periodic training data reports for monitoring progress and compliance.	Year 2	Training and Development Officer Head of Safeguarding DGS Ministries	Head of Safeguarding to monitor Discussions with SSOs.	

Targets	When	Key people	How we measure progress	Wider considerations
9.5 Encourage SSOs to pass relevant information to Church Safeguarding Coordinators who are then responsible for ensuring church members undertake URC safeguarding training at the level required for their role(s).	Year 2	Training and Development Officer Safeguarding Coordinator from OOGA team SSOs	Feedback from SSOs, Church Secretaries, Training Review Group and SSPG Report training uptake to the Safeguarding Committee	
10. Make further training available on the Learning Hub				
10.1 All <i>non-mandated</i> courses offered on Zoom will be available as E-learning packages to increase accessibility for those unable to attend webinars. Domestic Abuse; Supporting Survivors; Spiritual Abuse; Elders as Trustees Drug and Alcohol Abuse; Online Safety; Safeguarding Refugees and Asylum Seekers; Modern Slavery	Year 1 Year 2-3	Training and Development Officer OOGA Digital Content Manager	Training will be available online.	Support needed from other OOGA teams Budget costs
10.2 Keep Synods and churches informed of this training as new resources are made available.	Ongoing	Training and Development Officer Safeguarding Coordinator from OOGA team SSOs	Training Records	ICT knowledge and access.
11. Embed safeguarding in all relevant training courses across the denomination				
11.1 Safeguarding slides will feature in all relevant training (i.e. not specific safeguarding training) available across the URC to help integrate safeguarding into all areas of church life.	Year 2	Training and Development Officer Training Review Group Convenor of Ministries Committee Heads of Department	Regular review of all training materials	

Targets	When	Key people	How we measure progress	Wider considerations
11.2 Strengthen links with TDOs and ensure effective communication with other departments to increase awareness of safeguarding training.	Ongoing	Training and Development Officer Synod TDOs	Regular meetings	
11.3 Explore with Place for Hope any potentially beneficial ways to strengthen how safeguarding issues are addressed in the mediation training.	Year 2	Training and Development Officer		Willingness of Place for Hope to potentially adapt training courses

Our targets: Practice development

Goal: Regular review of practice is integrated into safeguarding activity across the URC, there are processes in place to learn from data, and evidence of how this learning is driving positive change.

Related documents:

URC final response to IICSA

URC Past Cases Review

Good Practice 6

Targets	When	Key people	How we measure progress	Wider considerations
12. Establish a sustainable programme of Synod safeguarding reviews in which all Synods participate				
12.1 Submit a paper to General Assembly 2026 for a resolution to amend the Rules of Procedure to state that Synods will participate in a triennial safeguarding review.	Year 1	Policy Development Officer, Head of Safeguarding	Adopted by GA	

Targets	When	Key people	How we measure progress	Wider considerations
12.2 Refine the process based on the two pilot reviews and set up a plan for a 3-year review cycle across all Synods	Year 1	Policy Development Officer, Casework Supervisor, SSOs	Audit dates and full details of the process given to Synods	Need information sharing agreement with each synod
12.3 Review after 1 year and amend the process if needed	Year 2	Policy Development Officer	Any updates notified to Synods	
12.4 Complete the first 3-year review cycle across all Synods	Year 3	Policy Development Officer, Casework Supervisor, SSOs, Moderators, Synod safeguarding committees	Reviews completed and full reports provided to each Synod. Summaries of reports available on Synod websites.	Time and resource implications for all involved. Travel costs for OOGA team
12.5 Publish a summary of findings	Year 3	Policy Development Officer	Report available across URC and on website	
13. Promote quality assurance processes which collect, analyse and use relevant data effectively to inform practice				
13.1 Review content of annual church and synod safeguarding returns to ensure all data collected is necessary, useable and in line with strategic goals	Year 1	Policy Development Officer	Report to Safeguarding Committee Amendments to forms	Need to keep reporting requirements manageable
13.2 Identify other sources of safeguarding data (e.g. upcoming Past Case Review, Section O cases, complaints) and consider how these could be used	Year 1	Policy Development Officer	Report to Safeguarding Committee	How to learn lessons whilst respecting data confidentiality
13.3 Findings from Synod reviews feed into denominational training, policy, procedures and casework oversight	Ongoing	OOGA safeguarding team	Action plan in place and updated as audit cycle progresses	Resource implications of updating guidance and training

Targets	When	Key people	How we measure progress	Wider considerations
14. Ensure the URC is ready and able to commission an external safeguarding review				
14.1 Consult with relevant URC stakeholders on key objectives, issues and priorities for an external review	Year 2	OOGA safeguarding team, SSOs, Senior Leadership Team, Moderators	Summary available of issues discussed and agreed	Time required for consultation
14.2 Identify any particular areas of URC practice or data collection that need attention prior to external review	Year 2	OOGA safeguarding team, SSOs	Records of discussions and action points agreed	Resources needed to address any gaps identified
14.3 Discuss with external providers on scope and costs for independent review	Year 3	Policy Development Officer Head of Safeguarding	Record of discussions and estimated costs	Providers will need to understand specific URC context and structure
14.4 Prepare a costed plan and secure approval from relevant Committees	Year 3	Head of Safeguarding Policy Development Officer	Plan agreed by Safeguarding and Resources Committees	Budgeting for cost of paying external organisation

Glossary

CSC: Church Safeguarding Coordinator

DGS: Deputy General Secretary

IICSA: Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

OOGA: Offices of General Assembly

Section O: Disciplinary Process (as set out in The Manual)

SSO: Synod Safeguarding Officer

SSPG: Synod Safeguarding Practice Group

TDO: Training and Development Officer (Synod)

TRG: Training Review Group