

# United Church Winchester (UCW)

## Safeguarding policy statement, policy, procedure and guidance



UNITED CHURCH  
WINCHESTER

**ADOPTED: Annual Church Meeting – Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2024.**

Based on resources approved by the URC General Assembly and available at:  
[URC Safeguarding Good Practice](#)

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## Policy statement

This policy relates to safeguarding of both children and adults who may be at risk of or experiencing harm, abuse, or neglect. Its purpose is to promote as central to our culture and practice the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of children and of adults.

Safeguarding is action taken to promote and protect people's wellbeing and human rights. It aims to support the right of all to live in safety, free from harm, abuse, and neglect, regardless of age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marriage/civil partnership status, gender reassignment, pregnancy, and maternity. It is everyone's responsibility to prevent abuse and neglect; to act upon concerns and to support the wellbeing of all communities in which the Church is placed.

UCW takes these responsibilities seriously. Our vision\* speaks of inclusivity, justice, mercy, humility. Balancing these principles can support effective safeguarding. (\*See UCW Vision Statement displayed alongside this policy statement).

We will:

- Do all we can to create and maintain a safe and caring environment
- Maintain informed vigilance about the risks of all forms of abuse and neglect within all aspects of work in this church.
- Respond promptly and effectively where there is cause to suspect that a child or adult may be at risk of or experiencing abuse or neglect
- Recognise that this may sometimes necessitate outward reporting to statutory agencies (such as the local authority or the police)
- Do all we can to support confidence in carrying out these responsibilities
- Seek to prevent abuse in any form from occurring
- ensure everyone who engages with the life of the Church recognises they have a part to play. Safeguarding is a collective responsibility.

UCW recognises its duty of care, part of which is to operate within accepted current policy and guidance. Within our safeguarding responsibilities we will follow legislation, guidance and recognised good practice. We will work where appropriate, with local statutory agencies and with other churches and voluntary organisations, being clear about the right approach to sharing information. In this regard, this policy and procedure connects to local multiagency policy, procedure and guidance issued by the Hampshire Safeguarding Adults and Childrens Boards. These set out roles and responsibilities including of faith based organisations.

Children: [7.2 Agency Roles and Responsibilities | Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton \(hipsprocedures.org.uk\)](https://hipsprocedures.org.uk/7.2-Agency-Roles-and-Responsibilities)

Adults: [SAFEGUARDING ADULTS POLICY V3 13 January 2020 \(hampshiresab.org.uk\)](https://hampshiresab.org.uk/safeguarding-adults-policy-v3-13-january-2020)

They set out procedures *and contacts* for referring concerns to the local authority. [Report child abuse | Children and Families | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](https://hants.gov.uk/report-child-abuse)

[Report adult safeguarding concerns Report Concerns | Hampshire Safeguarding Adults Board \(hampshiresab.org.uk\)](https://hampshiresab.org.uk/report-adult-safeguarding-concerns). (Contacts displayed alongside this policy).

## Policy, procedure, and guidelines for carrying out safeguarding responsibilities (based on [Good Practice 6](#))

### Who this policy applies to

This policy is approved and endorsed by the UCW Trustees, the Church Leadership team, and Church Meeting. It applies to:

- All members of our church
- All those who attend and serve our church/place of worship and its services
- Our Trustees and Church Leadership Team
- Paid staff (both internal and external eg contractors or consultants)
- Volunteers
- It signposts the agreement in place with hirers of UCW premises. That agreement is set down by Wessex Trust and issued to hirers. It includes that 'the responsibility for implementing, maintaining and adhering to all legislation and best practice in connection with safeguarding, supervision and safety associated with the Hirer's activities on the church premises lies solely with the Hirer'.

### Principles underpinning the policy

- Our theology, values, and vision
- Our commitment to put first the welfare and wellbeing of children as well as adults at risk by their circumstances
- A willingness to be open and listen
- A commitment to comply with relevant legal and regulatory requirements.

### Definitions

'Children' refers to anyone who has not yet reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

'Adults' for the purposes of this policy are aged 18 or over. However, not all adults are the focus of this policy. Some adults are particularly vulnerable to being abused or neglected, because there is a *need* for care and support. This may perhaps be because they have a disability, illness, or impairment (They do not have to be receiving care and support, the need of it is sufficient for safeguarding duties to come into effect). Being dependent on others can sometimes render adults at risk of abuse, very often from people they know or who provide care. They may be unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect, or the risk of it. It is these adults who may need safeguarding support.

Anyone might harm an adult who is not able to protect themselves – for example, a partner, relative, friend, neighbour, or care worker – and the abuse may take place anywhere, in a public or private place, including in a care facility or hospital.

## Recognising and responding to concerns

We acknowledge that, although promoting *Safer Culture* and *Safer Activities* will help to protect all those in contact with the church, some concerns will inevitably arise, and we are committed to responding well in such circumstances.

In line with Chapter four of URC Good Practice 6 we will:

- Support recognising safeguarding concerns by maintaining information
  - about different kinds of abuse, neglect and harm (including domestic abuse) and signs and symptoms to look out for
  - about specific aspects of our safeguarding responsibilities, including on how to work with people who pose a risk to children or adults; responding to bullying/harassment; addressing situations where staff face allegations.

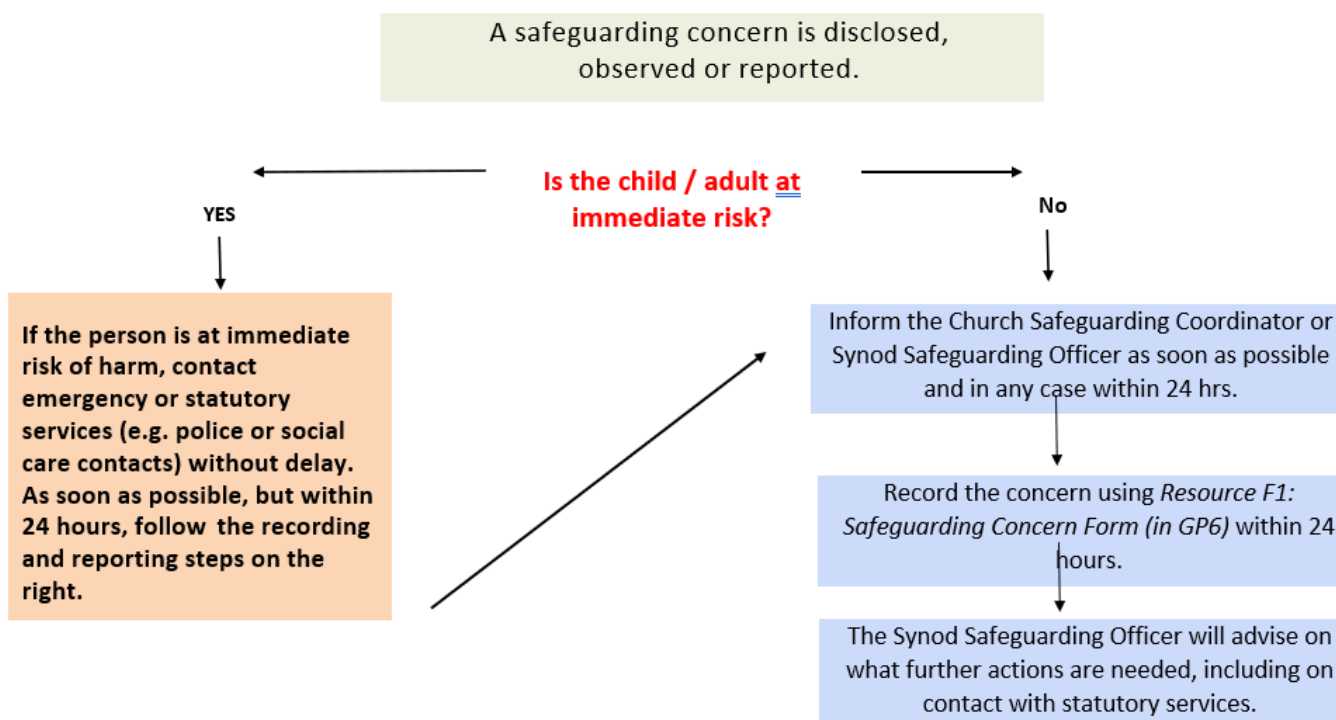
Such advice will be available electronically with one hard copy kept for reference in the Church office.

We will:

- Seek to create a 'listening culture', helping people to develop listening skills and to respond appropriately in situations where sensitive information is disclosed.
- Inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer (SSO) as a minimum of any situations where involvement from statutory services is/may be required or to seek advice on any aspect of safeguarding.
- Support sharing information with statutory services and co-operate with them during any investigations where there is cause to suspect that a child or adult may be at risk of or experiencing abuse or neglect and guidance indicates that this is necessary. Use form F1 to do so – weblink: [Form F1](#) and available in hard copy in UCW office.
- Report any serious safeguarding incident to the Charity Commission, notifying the Synod Safeguarding Officer.

Reporting a concern to external agencies can be difficult, particularly when an individual or family is known and respected within the church community. If you are in any doubt about whether to report a situation, contact your Synod Safeguarding Officer or the local Children's Services / Adult Social Care for advice. You can explain the circumstances without providing the name of the person involved. *It is preferable for any external referral to be made by the Church Safeguarding Coordinator or Synod Safeguarding Officer, but if it is an emergency or they are not available, anyone can do it. A record should be kept and given to the Church Safeguarding Coordinator or the Synod Safeguarding Officer without delay, and within 24 hours of a referral or report being made*

## What to do if you think a child or adult is being abused or neglected



### Key contacts

#### United Church safeguarding coordinator

Tim James 07925 691260

#### United Church assistant safeguarding coordinator

Christine Cook 0777 1810536

#### Synod Safeguarding Officer

Sharon Barr 07776 178246

### Emergency Services 999

#### Local authority (for safeguarding children):

If you have any concerns because you think that a child is being abused or has been abused in the past, and you want someone to find out what is going on, contact the Hampshire Children's Services Department.

Mon to Thurs 8.30am to 5pm; Fri 8.30am to 4.30pm, phone 0300 555 1384

At all other times, contact the out-of-hours service, phone 0300 555 1373

#### Local authority (for safeguarding adults):

[Report Concerns | Hampshire Safeguarding Adults Board \(hampshiresab.org.uk\)](https://www.hampshiresab.org.uk)

If you have concerns or want to report abuse, phone Hampshire Adult Services on 0300 555 1386 (out of hours 0300 555 1373) or the police on 101. In an emergency, or if you suspect you or someone else is in immediate danger, phone 999.

**What to tell statutory services:** Use form F1 URC GP6 (weblink: [Form F1](#) and available in hard copy in UCW office).

## Details of other organisations and helplines

- NSPCC: 0808 800 5000
- Samaritans: 116 123
- National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247
- Stop It Now: 0808 1000 900
- Hourglass (Safer Ageing): 0808 808 8141
- National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC): 0808 801 0331

### Key practice points and issues on which to act and seek advice

- The safety and wellbeing of the child or adult who is experiencing or is at risk of abuse, harm or neglect is paramount. Always act in their best interests, in line with legislation, relevant statutory and guidance
- This is everyone's responsibility. If you are concerned about something and you think it might be a safeguarding concern you have a responsibility to do something. If in doubt about what to do/ whether to raise a concern / make a referral about a situation, contact the UCW Safeguarding coordinator or the Synod Safeguarding officer (SSO)
- Respond sensitively. Listen well with reference to URC training / guidance
- Write down facts and what you hear and the rationale for decisions made
- Are you concerned that an adult or child is at risk of or is experiencing abuse or neglect? What types of abuse or neglect or risks to welfare or wellbeing are you concerned about? Are there any immediate risks to the adult, child, or to others?
- Always discuss with the safeguarding coordinator and / or the SSO issues about gaining consent or taking views into account either with adults or with children/ their parents. Consent is not an absolute condition of raising a concern with statutory services. Raising a concern may, even without consent, be justified e.g. where there is a vital risk to the person or others, where there is a public interest consideration or issue, or where a best interest decision needs to be made (where an adult lacks capacity to make the decision).

(for more detail see pages 62-69 of [Good Practice 6](#))

## Sharing information and confidentiality

Decisions about sharing information are challenging. Worries about sharing information can be a barrier to effective safeguarding.

Ultimately the most important consideration is whether the sharing of information is likely to support safeguarding an individual.

Some key points:

- It is better not to make these decisions on your own. Seek advice from the UCW safeguarding lead and/or the URC Synod safeguarding officer.
- You may be able to share information to help you decide what to do, at least initially without identifying an individual either within the church or with statutory services.
- Never promise confidentiality.
- It is best where possible to be open and honest with the individual (and or their family) about why, what, how and with whom information will (or might) be shared. If possible, securing their agreement *unless this would place the individual or another individual at risk of harm or abuse*. Always discuss how to approach this with the UCW safeguarding coordinator and/or the SSO (See above key points and issues on which to seek advice).
- ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those individuals who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely.

Information can be shared legally without consent if a person cannot or cannot reasonably be expected to gain consent from the individual concerned, or if to gain consent would place somebody at risk.

There are seven 'golden rules' of information sharing available [here](#) to support decision making:

## Creating a safer culture

We are committed to creating a safer culture in our church which will help us to prevent harm from occurring and provide an environment in which all can flourish.

In line with Chapter two of Good Practice 6, we will:

- Appoint a Church Safeguarding Coordinator and ensure contact details are available for anyone to report a concern.
- Have a safeguarding policy, procedure and guidelines which is reviewed annually and updated when necessary
- Practice safer recruitment procedures for paid and volunteer roles
- Ensure all those working with children and/or adults at risk are given copies of relevant Codes of Conduct
- Follow the requirements of the training framework and keep a record of training needs and completed training
- Comply with legal requirements in respect of data protection and support understanding about good practice in sharing information in safeguarding situations
- Complete the Annual Church Safeguarding Return
- Ensure safeguarding is a regular agenda item for church / leaders' meetings.

## Ensuring safer activities

Whilst it is not possible to guard against every eventuality, we are committed to providing as safe an environment as possible for activities both on and off church premises.

In line with Chapter three of Good Practice 6, we will:

- Ensure appropriate insurance is in place for our own buildings and activities. Hirers are expected to have their own appropriate insurance policy in place. We will seek assurance that this is in place for hirers of UCW premises. In line with clauses in the URC *standard hirers agreement* that has been issued by the Wessex Trust, the responsibility for implementing, maintaining, and adhering to all legislation and best practice in connection with safeguarding, supervision and safety associated with the Hirer's activities on the church premises lies solely with the Hirer. This includes insurance.
- Consider the implications of data protection and health and safety requirements for specific activities
- Carry out risk assessments for relevant activities or events and adopt a standard risk assessment template
- Ensure adequate staffing for activities and that leaders have suitable training, are aware of relevant guidance and agree to follow relevant Codes of Conduct
- Ensure the hirer's agreement is in place (in line with the URC standard hirers agreement, issued by the Wessex Trust) for all other organisations using church premises.
- Seek advice from the Synod Safeguarding Officer for complex or sensitive risks.

## Managing allegations and people who may pose a risk to others

Where allegations are made against individuals within the Church, we are committed to following all required investigative and regulatory procedures. We will work in collaboration with the Synod, wider Church staff, statutory agencies and other relevant organisations in line with local multiagency procedures.

In line with Chapter five of Good Practice 6, we will:

- Co-operate fully in and actively engage with any investigative or disciplinary procedures
- Inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer immediately on becoming aware of anyone in the Church who may present a risk to others
- Work with the Synod Safeguarding Officer and contribute relevant information for risk assessments
- Alert the Synod Safeguarding Officer or statutory agencies to known breaches of a safeguarding agreement.

## Supporting victims and survivors

A key principle underpinning our policy and practice in this area is that all those who have experienced abuse, whether recently or in the past 'will be listened to and offered the pastoral care and support they deem appropriate and relevant, irrespective of type of abuse, context, or when this occurred' (General Assembly policy statement 2021). Irrespective of timescales involved there will sometimes need to be assertive action to address wider public safety as well as individual wellbeing and safety issues.



In line with Chapter six of Good Practice 6, we will:

- Recognise that the Church leadership team has responsibility for provision of pastoral care
- Be aware of local support services that people can be referred or directed to
- Understand when to take concerns to someone outside of the UCW
- Ensure those in relevant roles attend appropriate training
- Seek advice from the Synod Safeguarding Officer about provision of appropriate support and advice when necessary.

## Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually, updated as required and adopted by the Church Meeting.

Date of most recent review: **March 2024**



Revd Tim Searle

Signed by .....  
On behalf of Church Leadership Team

Date of next review: **March 2025**

***The policy statement will be displayed prominently, alongside a poster with contact numbers included as on page 5/6 of this document.***

Alongside this will be the UCW vision statement as follows:

*We proclaim the all-embracing love of Jesus Christ. We are an inclusive church where all are welcome, whether joyful, hurting, confident or doubting. We journey alongside all faiths and none, as we seek to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God, guided by the Holy Spirit.*