



The United Reformed Church



Safeguarding Policy

Palmers Green United Reformed Church

Thames North Synod

Introduction

Palmers Green United Reformed Church takes Safeguarding seriously

We acknowledge children's and adults' right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs. We consider that the welfare of children is paramount.

We will follow legislation, statutory guidance and recognised good practice in order to protect vulnerable people in our church.

We will seek to establish a caring environment in which there is an informed vigilance about the dangers of abuse.

We will implement, maintain and regularly review the procedures outlined in this policy, which are designed to prevent and to be alert to such abuse.

We have appointed a Safeguarding Coordinator and two Deputy Safeguarding Coordinators, who will have specific responsibilities for safeguarding, although we recognise that safeguarding is a whole church responsibility. The Safeguarding Coordinator is the person to whom all concerns or allegations should be addressed. In her absence, one of the Deputy Safeguarding Coordinators should be contacted. Their contact details can be found in Key Contacts, P9/10.

We will organise activities in such a way as to promote a safe environment and minimise the risk of harm to children and adults.

We will follow a safer recruitment process for the selection and appointment of people to work with children or adults at risk, whether voluntary or paid, lay or ordained.

We are committed to providing support, supervision, resources and training to those who work with children and adults.

We will use rigorous and careful supervision to protect people from the risks associated with known offenders within the congregation, including implementing contracts with known offenders and those who have been assessed as posing a risk.

We believe that domestic abuse in all its forms is unacceptable and inconsistent with a Christian way of living and recognised that it can affect both adults and children.

All concerns and allegations of abuse will be responded to appropriately, including referring to the statutory authorities if necessary.

We will co-operate with the statutory authorities in any investigation, will follow multi-agency decisions and will maintain confidentiality of any investigations to those directly involved.

We will refer concerns about staff – volunteers and paid, lay and ordained – that meet the relevant criteria to the Local Authority Designated Officer.

Aim and purpose of this policy

The aim of this policy to ensure that protecting people from abuse, harm or neglect is central to our culture. It provides procedures for promoting safeguarding, preventing abuse and protecting children, adults at risk and staff. This includes clear procedures for taking appropriate action when safeguarding concerns are raised involving children and adults within our church, or those who attend our activities and events.

This document is supported by the following seven appendices, also available online at <https://urc.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding-good-practice>

- A1 – Safeguarding policy statement
- A2 – The role of a Safeguarding Co-ordinator
- A3 – Code of conduct for working with children or young people
- A4 – Code of conduct for working with adults at risk
- A5 – Safeguarding incident recording form
- A6 – Signs and symptoms of abuse
- A7 – Short summary for display

Who is covered by this policy

This policy is approved and endorsed by the Elders and applies to:

- all members of our church
- all those who attend and serve our church/place of worship and its services
- our trustees and elders
- paid staff (both internal and external, such as consultants)
- volunteers
- organisations who hire our building with written agreement to operate under the church safeguarding policy

The values and safeguarding principles within the United Reformed Church are described in **Appendix A1**. The policy and procedures should be interpreted in the light of these principles and the most recent URC good practice guidance on which they are based. If the URC guidance is updated this document will be updated accordingly. All those responsible for safeguarding children, and adults at risk will be informed of this policy and our procedures.

Definitions

The term 'children' refers to those under the age of 18 years.

The term 'adult at risk' refers to any adult aged 18 or over who, by reason of mental or other disability, age, illness or other situation, are permanently, or for time being, unable to take care of themselves, or to protect themselves against significant harm, abuse or exploitation.

Duty of care and confidentiality

We have a duty of care to all beneficiaries of the church, whether adults or children. We will maintain confidentiality at all times, except in circumstances where to do so would place the individual or another individual at risk of harm or abuse.

Preventing abuse

The church will appoint Safeguarding and Deputy Safeguarding Coordinators for safeguarding children and adults. A description of the role is attached as **Appendix A2**.

Activities will be organised in accordance with the URC's safeguarding policy and guidance so as to promote a safe environment and healthy relationships, whilst minimising opportunities for harm, misunderstanding or false accusation. For each event, risk assessments will be carried out, appropriate consent forms will be used (for children's activities or activities for people with special needs), appropriate records will be kept, and adequate insurance will be in place.

We are committed to safer recruitment and selection of all paid staff and volunteers with emphasis on those in regulated activities. We will treat applicants who have a criminal record fairly and will not discriminate because of a conviction or other information revealed (see **Appendix D** for the church policy statement on the recruitment of ex-offenders) and ensure that all safer recruitment-related procedures are followed, which include:

- asking applicants to complete an application form
- providing workers with job descriptions and person specifications
- completion of self declaration forms
- obtaining Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) / Protecting Vulnerable Groups scheme (PVG) checks for eligible roles and positions
- taking up two references (not from family members)
- interviewing candidates
- providing workers/volunteers with written contracts/agreements.

All trustees, paid staff and volunteers will work within a code of conduct (code for workers attached as **Appendices A3 and A4** depending on the vulnerable group) and understand that there may be action taken if this code is not followed, possibly involving suspension or termination of people's service.

If we become aware of someone within our congregation known to harm or to have harmed children or adults, we will inform the Church Safeguarding Coordinator or Synod Safeguarding Officer within 24 hours and co-operate with them and the relevant statutory authorities to put in place a plan to minimise the risk of harm to children, young people and adults.

When any church premises are let to an external organisation, informal group or individual, those hiring the premises should hold and abide by their own safeguarding policy. If a hirer does not have a policy, they must abide by the church's own safeguarding policy, a copy of which should be made available. They must confirm in writing that they will follow the principles of this safeguarding policy as a condition of the letting agreement. If they have their own safeguarding policy, they will be asked to provide a copy. Each hiring body or individual hirer is required to ensure that children and adults at risk are always protected by taking all reasonable steps to prevent injury, illness, loss or damage occurring.

How to recognise abuse

It is important to be aware of possible signs and symptoms of abuse. **Appendix A6: Signs and Symptoms of Abuse** provides definitions of different forms of abuse and further help and guidance. Some signs could be indicators of several different categories of abuse.

It is essential to note that these **are only indicators of possible abuse**. There may be other, innocent, reasons for these signs and/or behaviour. The indicators will, however, be a guide to assist in assessing whether abuse of one form or another is a possible explanation for a child or adult's behaviour.

Church workers and members will also pay attention to online safety and their electronic communications with children and adults. Grooming and abuse of any form can occur offline (both physically and verbally) and online. **Appendix C: Model church online safety policy** includes an acceptable use policy in relation to the use of church computers by both workers and children and provides sample forms which children and workers could be asked to sign.

What to do if there is a disclosure or allegation of abuse

If a child, young person or adult makes a disclosure that they are being abused or and have been abused, it is important that the person being told:

- stays calm and listens carefully
- reassures them that they have done the right thing in telling
- does not investigate or ask leading questions
- explains that they will need to tell someone else if anyone is at risk of harm, in order to help them
- does not promise to keep secret what they have been told
- informs the church Safeguarding Coordinator within 24 hours (or, if the Safeguarding Coordinator is implicated in the allegation, informs either of the Deputy Safeguarding Coordinators or the Synod Safeguarding Officer)
- makes a written record of the allegation, disclosure or incident and signs and dates this record (using the template in **Appendix A5**). This should be given to the church Safeguarding Coordinator or the Synod Safeguarding Officer and stored securely in a locked filing cabinet

Procedure in the event of a concern of abuse

If there is an immediate threat of harm, the Police should be contacted without delay.

Where it is judged that there is no immediate threat of harm the following will occur:

- The concern should be discussed with the Church Safeguarding Coordinator or the Synod Safeguarding Officer **within 24 hours** and a decision made as to whether the concern warrants a referral to statutory authorities (see Key Contacts, P9/10 for the relevant statutory contacts)
- A confidential record will be made of the conversation and the circumstances surrounding it using the template at Appendix A5. This record will be kept securely and a copy passed to statutory authorities if a referral is made
- The person about whom the allegation is made must not be informed by anyone in the church if it is judged that to do so could place a child or adult at further risk. If the statutory authorities are involved, they should be consulted beforehand
- The Synod Safeguarding Officer should be kept informed of any serious concerns and referrals to police and statutory authorities.

Prior to any referral to children's services, the child's wishes and rights should be considered when determining what action to take. There should also be a verbal consultation with local authority's children's services to ensure that making a referral is an appropriate action. The parent/carer will normally be contacted to obtain their consent before a referral is made. However, if the concern involves, for example, alleged or suspected child sexual abuse, domestic abuse, Honour Based Violence, fabricated or induced illness, or the Synod Safeguarding Officer has reason to believe that informing the parent at this stage might compromise the safety of the child or a staff member, nothing should be said to the parent/carer ahead of the referral, but a rationale for the decision to progress without consent should be provided with the referral.

In the case of referrals to adult social care or other services for adults at risk, information should be shared with consent if the adult has capacity within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act and if this does not place them, the referrer, or others at an increased risk. A person's right to confidentiality is not absolute and may be overridden where there is evidence that sharing information is necessary to support an investigation or where there is a risk to others. See section 14 of Good Practice 5 for further advice and guidance.

If the allegation is regarding a church staff member or church volunteer

If someone in the church is alleged or known to harm/have harmed children or adults, it is essential to inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer so that they can offer advice and support.

For any concerns relating to children, the Designated Officer (previously known as LADO) will be contacted. The timing and method of any action to be taken will be discussed and agreed with the LADO. This will cover communication with the worker, suspension, investigation and possible strategy meetings. A decision will be taken by the DO about when to inform the worker and the church will follow this advice. For DO contact details, see **Key Contacts**, P9/10.

For concerns relating to adults, Adult Social Care will be contacted. See **Key Contacts**, P9/10 for details.

In the case of an individual in regulated activity about whom there is a concern, if for safeguarding reasons the church (or organisation hiring the premises) has either terminated that person's employment or failed to appoint, or would have terminated the employment had the person not moved on through resignation, retirement or re-deployment, **the church still has a legal obligation** to make a referral to the DBS for consideration of barring. The Synod Safeguarding Officer also needs to be informed.

Depending on the seriousness of incidents or allegations, a report to the Charity Commission will also need to be considered at the elders/trustees' meeting, as they deem such a referral to be a 'serious incident' and require notification.

Managing those who may pose a risk to the welfare of people

The use of rigorous and careful supervision is paramount to protect people from the risks associated with known offenders within the congregation, including implementing safeguarding contracts with known or alleged offenders and those who have been assessed as posing a risk. Where it is known that someone has a caution or conviction for committing a sexual offence,

the church can play an important role in the prevention of further abuse by helping the offender to live an offence-free life.

If anyone is made aware that a person attending their church has been convicted of an offence against a child or has had an allegation of this nature made against them at any time, we will immediately inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer and Minister or Interim Moderator.

It is important to provide known or alleged offenders with a group of people who will offer support, friendship and supervision. Following advice from the Synod Safeguarding Officer, when appropriate, a formal safeguarding contract will be drawn up between the church, the person who is considered to pose a risk to the welfare of people in the church, and any statutory agencies when involved.

Training

Safeguarding training will be provided and volunteers and paid staff will be given support and supervision in their role. All relevant staff members and volunteers will receive appropriate safeguarding training delivered by the synod. The Safeguarding Coordinator should ensure that elders and people involved in regulated activities with children or adults (including ministers, staff and volunteers) have undergone safeguarding training, as recommended by the URC.

Concerns, Complaints and Compliments regarding this policy

Should anyone have any concerns, complaints or compliments **regarding the content of this document** (as distinct from safeguarding concerns) please contact:

Name: John Strange

Telephone No: 07941 344692

Email: secretary@palmersgreenurc.org.uk

It would be helpful to have complaints in writing, as this avoids any possible misunderstanding about what the issue is. However, whether verbal or in writing, complaints will be acted upon. Any written complaint will be responded to within 10 days.

Review

The elders will review this policy annually, amending and updating it as required, and informing Church Meeting that this has been done.

Date of the most recent review: Mar 2022

Date of the next review: Mar 2023

Signed:

Margaret Jenkins on behalf of the church elders

Key Contacts: Sources of advice and support

- The church **Safeguarding Coordinator** is the person to whom all concerns or allegations relating to children, young people or adults should be addressed:

Name: Margaret Jenkins

Telephone No: 07981 706181

Email: margaret@smlojks.myzen.co.uk

- In the absence of the Safeguarding Coordinator, the **Deputy Safeguarding Coordinators** can be contacted:

Name: Fredwyn Hosier

Telephone No: 07534 530978

Email: fredwyn.hosier@urcthamesnorth.org.uk

Name: John Strange

Telephone No: 07941 344692

Email: secretary@palmersgreenurc.org.uk

- **Synod Safeguarding Officer**

Name: Belinda Nielsen

Telephone No: 07716 640 596

Email: safeguarding@urcthamesnorth.org.uk

- **URC Safeguarding Office** (This should only be used for urgent advice if you are unable to contact your Synod Safeguarding Officer)

Telephone No 020 7520 2729

- **ThirtyOne: Eight** available until 10 pm, 7 days a week. (This should only be used for urgent advice if you are unable to contact the URC)

Telephone No: 030 3003 1111

- **Local Authority Designated Officer (DO)**

Name: Maria Anastasi

Telephone No: 0208 379 2850

Email: safeguardingservice@enfield.gov.uk

- **Statutory contact** in the case of a child
Enfield Council Children's Single Point of Entry: 020 8379 5555

- **Statutory contact** in the case of an adult at risk:
Enfield Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub: 020 8379 3196
Out of hours: Enfield Adult Abuse Line: 020 8379 5212

NOTE: A list of useful contacts for all forms of abuse of children and adults can be found in **Appendix U** online at <https://urc.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding-organisations/>

Appendix A1 Safeguarding Policy Statement

The following statement was agreed by the Elders of Palmers Green United Reformed Church

Safeguarding is taken seriously by Palmers Green United Reformed Church. We define safeguarding as the promotion of the safety and welfare of children and adults who are at risk of, or experiencing, harm, abuse or neglect in all forms. We acknowledge children's and adults' right to protection from any form of abuse or neglect regardless of age, gender reassignment, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity. Therefore, as members and workers of the church, we are committed to:

- the care and nurture of all children and adults,
- the safeguarding and protection of all children and adults at risk,
- the establishment of a loving church environment which is safe and caring for all people and where the dignity of each person is respected,
- an informed vigilance about the dangers of all forms of abuse, harm and neglect within all aspects of work in the Church, and how to respond appropriately,
- ensuring everyone who engages with the life of the Church is responsible for keeping people safe,
- working together with voluntary/statutory agencies and other denominations and faith-based organisations.

We recognise that we all have a responsibility to help prevent any form of abuse and neglect of children and adults and to ensure the wellbeing and pastoral care of those who are, or may be, at risk.

We will prevent abuse related to extremism or radicalisation and put all suitable health and safety arrangements in place as well as safeguarding, first aid, fire safety and online safety policies that everyone understands.

We will create and maintain a safe and inclusive environment for all, especially children and adults at risk, in which the dignity and rights of each person are respected.

We believe that domestic abuse in all its forms is unacceptable, inconsistent with a Christian way of living and it can affect both adults and children.

We will always acknowledge that the welfare of the child and adult at risk is paramount, and that the priority is always to act in their best interests, following legislation, statutory guidance and recognised good practice guidance to enable them access to support and protection.

We will support everyone to ensure that as a community of Christians we will all work within the agreed procedures of our safeguarding policy. The Safeguarding Co-ordinator or the Deputy

Safeguarding Co-ordinators are the persons to whom all concerns or allegations should be addressed for appropriate actions to be taken. In the absence of a Safeguarding Co-ordinator or Deputy Co-ordinator, the Synod Safeguarding Officer should be contacted. Their contact details will be always available on our posters, websites, or in other communications with the public.

We will exercise proper care in the appointment and selection of elders and those who will work with children or adults at risk within the Church, whether paid, volunteers, lay or ordained. We will ensure that elders, staff and volunteers are suitable and legally able to act in their positions. We will use DBS checks as part of a wide range of checks on trustees, staff and volunteers to ensure that we have a broad and informed view to assist us in minimising the risk of abuse, harm or neglect.

We will support, supervise, resource and train all those who undertake work with children and adults in need of protection.

We will respond without delay to every concern, incident or complaint which suggests that a child or adult has been harmed, or is at risk of harm, and cooperate with ecumenical partners, the Police, the Designated Officer (DO), Children's Partnership Boards and Children's and Adult Social Care Services in any investigation, while maintaining the confidentiality of any investigations to those directly involved.

We are committed to working with those who have suffered or suffer any form of abuse, offering appropriate pastoral support where possible as well as challenging any abuse of power, especially where it involves someone in a position of trust.

We will manage risks and those who might pose a risk to the welfare of people and the life of the Church and offer support to those known to pose a risk to children and/or adults, including supervision, referral to the appropriate agencies, and implementation of safeguarding contracts, when appropriate.

We are committed to ensuring that any allegations, concerns and complaints about abuse or neglect are recorded accurately, reported promptly and shared safely within and outside of the denomination.

We will review our safeguarding policy, practices and procedures annually, considering lessons learned from safeguarding cases and changes in legislation, statutory guidance and good working practice.

We will ensure processes and practices in all aspects of safeguarding, including discipline, risk management, whistleblowing and bullying/harassment are in alignment with *Good Practice 5* – the United Reformed Church's policy and guidance in safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk.

Any local policy changes will be formally approved by the elders.