

Bramhall United Reformed Church

Safeguarding Policy

This safeguarding policy document has been drawn up in consultation with all the Elders of Bramhall United Reformed Church (BURC), and the North West Synod Safeguarding Officer, using the format and guidance from the URC model safeguarding policy document, and in alignment with the URC's safeguarding policy and guidance (Good Practice 5 [Safeguarding good practice - United Reformed Church](#)).

It is supported by the following six appendices (taken from Good Practice 5):

A1 – Safeguarding policy statement – attached

A2 – The role of a Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator (CSC) - attached

This has been adapted to fit the context of BURC as Elders and Safeguarding Co-ordinators together fulfill the responsibilities of the CSC.

A3 – Code of conduct for working with children or young people [Appendix A3 Code of Conduct \(urc.org.uk\)](#)

A4 – Code of conduct for working with adults at risk [GP5 Appendix A4 Code of Conduct for working with Adults \(urc.org.uk\)](#)

A5 – Safeguarding incident recording form [GP5 Appendix A5 Safeguarding Incident Recording Form \(urc.org.uk\)](#)

A6 – Signs and symptoms of abuse [GP5 Appendix A6 Signs and Symptoms of Abuse \(urc.org.uk\)](#)

Appendix U [Safeguarding organisations - United Reformed Church](#) is also interrelated with this model policy.

It contains useful contacts of organisations and services that can provide information, advice and support.

Details of other organisations and services in our local area are included in the section of key contacts in this policy.

The following Appendices are also referenced within this policy

C – Model Church Online Safety Policy [GP4 Appendix 2015 \(urc.org.uk\)](#)

D - [GP5 Appendix D Model Church Policy on the Recruitment of Ex Offenders](#)

R - [GP5 Appendix R guide to supporting those affected by domestic abuse \(urc.org.uk\)](#)

The **full list of Appendices** can be accessed here: [Safeguarding good practice - United Reformed Church](#)

It is important to note that this is not a 'catch-all' policy. It covers the broad basics of good safeguarding practice in our local church, and it will need to be reviewed and updated annually as the individual circumstances of our church change. It is to be shared with members annually at Church Meetings and will be accessible to all those who use our premises, in keeping with a church-wide commitment to keeping people safe.

Aim and purpose of this policy

The aim of this policy is 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.

Who this policy applies to

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 and groups which 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 accordance with these principles and the most recent URC good practice guidance. Children, parents/carers, adults at risk and those responsible for safeguarding them 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, children or young people. We will always maintain confidentiality, except in circumstances where to do so would

place the individual or another individual at risk of harm or abuse.

Preventing abuse

Bramhall United Reformed Church (BURC) has appointed two Safeguarding Co-ordinators for safeguarding children and adults. A job/role description can be found in **Appendix A2** (attached). This includes the responsibilities of the Elders in relation to Safeguarding.

Activities will be organised in accordance with URC's safeguarding policy and guidance 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 and accessible 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 do 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 or role 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 outlined in **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 the termination of people's service.

If we become aware of someone within our congregation known to have harmed or harm children or adults, we will inform the Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator(s) 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, informal group or individual, those hiring the premises should hold and abide by their own safeguarding policy. All hirers must also agree to abide by the church's safeguarding policy, a copy of which will be made available. Each hiring body 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. There might be domestic abuse that requires a different approach (please see **Appendix R: A Guide to domestic abuse**). 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 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 a Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator (CSC) within 24 hours (if they are implicated in the allegation, inform the other CSC 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 Co-ordinator 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 one of the Church Safeguarding Co-ordinators or the Synod Safeguarding Officer **within 24 hours** and a decision needs to be made as to whether the concern warrants a referral to statutory authorities (**NOTE:** Key Contacts of relevant statutory contacts in Stockport local authority are included in the Key Contacts section of this policy)

- 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 the referrer, them 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 Local Authority's Designated Officer (the DO, also known as LADO) will be contacted. The timing and method of any action to be taken will be discussed and agreed with the DO. 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. DO contact details are included in the Key Contacts section of this policy.

For concerns relating to adults, Adult Social Care will be contacted. Likewise, their contacts details are included in the Key Contacts section of this policy.

In accordance with the law, a referral needs to be made to the DBS / PVG for consideration of barring to share information about any individual in regulated activity where for safeguarding reasons the organisation has either terminated the employment, failed to appoint, or would have terminated the employment had the individual not moved on through resignation, retirement or re-deployment. In such cases, the synod safeguarding officer needs to be advised/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 our 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 immediately inform one of the Church Safeguarding Co-ordinators, the designated Safeguarding Elder and the Synod Safeguarding Officer / Advisor.

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 Co-ordinators and Elders should ensure that trustees/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

Should anyone have any concerns, complaints or compliments please contact:

Name Helen Beattie (Church Secretary & Designated Safeguarding Elder)

Telephone No 0161 440 9227

Email helen.beattie@talktalk.net

If 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.

Key Contacts: Sources of advice and support

- All concerns or allegations relating to children, young people or adults should initially be addressed to one of the Church Safeguarding Co-ordinators:

Name Elaine Noden

Telephone No 0161 355 1459

Email elley2011@hotmail.co.uk

Name Robert Hill

Telephone No 07708 826255

Email robrshill@gmail.com

- **Synod Safeguarding Officer**

Name Julie Rafferty

Telephone No 07376 053044

Email safeguarding@nwsynod.org.uk

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

Telephone No 020 7520 2729

Email safeguarding@urc.org.uk

- **ThirtyOne: Eight**(This should only be used for urgent advice if you are unable to contact URC)

24 hour helpline: 0845 120 4550

- **Designated Officer (DO)**

Name Gillian Moore

Telephone No 0161 474 5657

Email lado@stockport.gcsx.gov.uk

Website safeguardingchildreninstockport.org.uk

- Statutory contact in the case of a child

The **Multi-Agency Safeguarding and Support Hub (MASSH)** is the single point of contact for the public and professionals to report concerns, request advice and share information about a child and or family.

If a child is at immediate risk of harm call the police on **999**.

If a member of the public has a concern about a child's welfare, call **0161 217 6028**. Select option **1**.

[Contacting the MASSH - Stockport Council](#)

- Statutory contact in the case of an adult at risk

If anyone has concerns that someone in a position of power or trust may be causing harm to an adult, please report your concerns immediately.

Call **0161 217 6029**, Monday to Thursday from 8:30am to 5pm and Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm. For Minicom call **0161 217 6024**.

For out of normal office hours, call **0161 718 2118**.

[Safeguarding adults - Stockport Council](#)

Police 0161 872 5050

NSPCC Child Protection helpline 0808 800 5000

NOTE: A list of useful contacts for all forms of abuse of children and adults can be found on **Appendix U [Safeguarding organisations - United Reformed Church](#)**.

Review

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

Date of the most recent review: 05 June 2023



Appendix A1

Safeguarding Policy Statement

Date of the next review: 03 June 2024

Signed: *Jacqueline Hill*

(on behalf of the church Elders)

The following statement has been agreed by the Church Meeting of Bramhall United Reformed Church.

Safeguarding is taken seriously by Bramhall 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 maintenance 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-ordinators (when available) 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, 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 trustees and those who will work with children or adults at risk within the Church, whether paid, volunteers, lay or ordained. We will ensure that trustees, staff and volunteers are suitable and legally able to act in their positions. We will use DBS/PVG 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, formerly known as LADO), Local Safeguarding Boards (in Wales), Children's Partnership Boards (formally Local Safeguarding Children's 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.



Appendix A2 (BURC)

The role of a Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator (CSC)

at Bramhall United Reformed Church

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 local church trustees.

Context

At Bramhall URC, the responsibilities for Church Safeguarding Co-ordination are undertaken by the Elders with certain key elements being undertaken by two designated Church Safeguarding Co-ordinators (CSCs). We believe that children and adults at risk deserve the best possible care that the church can provide and that the church should be a safe place for everyone involved. We recognise and give thanks for the time and devotion given by anyone carrying out this role.

Purpose of the role

- To be the first point of contact for safeguarding issues.
- To be an advocate for good safeguarding practice in the church.
- To support the Elders to coordinate and review safeguarding policy and procedures in the church.

Responsibilities

- To familiarise themselves with church policies and procedures and URC good practice guidelines in safeguarding and to keep abreast of any changes and developments.
- To support the Elders to ensure that church policies and procedures are reviewed annually, kept up to date, and are fit for purpose.

- To work with the Elders to make sure that everyone in the church is aware of the church safeguarding policies and procedures, including URC guidelines and Charity Commission responsibilities.
- To collaborate with the other Safeguarding Coordinator, the Elders, and the Synod Safeguarding Officer on all matters around safeguarding.
- To be a designated DBS Verifier on behalf of the church.
- To support Elders to ensure that safer recruitment practices are applied in the recruitment of all workers (both volunteers and paid) including, but not exclusively, ensuring that the relevant workers have up to date Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) / Protecting Vulnerable Groups scheme (PVG) checks.
- To support Elders to review and ensure others' safeguarding policies and arrangements are in place when any church premises are let to an external organisation, informal group or individual.

To be the first point of contact for safeguarding issues

- To be a named person that children / adults at risk, church members and outside agencies can talk to regarding any issue to do with safeguarding.
- To be aware of the names and telephone numbers of appropriate departments and teams within Social Care and the Police in the event of a referral needing to be made.
- To be aware of when to seek advice, and when it is necessary to inform Social Care, the Police or the Designated Officer (previously known as LADO) of a concern or incident.
- To take appropriate action in relation to any safeguarding concerns which arise within the church.
- To support the Elders when required to ensure that appropriate safeguarding is in place when supporting people who pose a risk to children and adults at risk at church.
- To cooperate with Social Care or the Police in safeguarding investigations relating to people within the church.
- To ensure that appropriate records are kept by the church, and that information in relation to safeguarding issues is handled confidentially and stored securely.
- To inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer about any referrals made to the statutory authorities, or of any information received from the statutory authorities.
- To report safeguarding information annually to the Eldership/Church Meeting and the Synod Safeguarding Officer, using the Appendix H1 as part of the annual returns process, to enable them to monitor safeguarding in the Synod.

To be an advocate for good safeguarding practice in the church

- To work with the Elders to promote sensitivity within the church towards all those affected by the impact of abuse.
- To work with the Elders to promote positive safeguarding procedures and practice and ensure procedures are adhered to.
- To support the Elders in promoting the completion of mandatory safeguarding training for members of the leadership team and all people involved in regulated activities with children or adults (including Ministers, staff and volunteers), as outlined in the URC Training Framework, and ensure that their training is renewed every three years.
- To attend appropriate training for the role, including refresher training every three years, and keep updated on matters related to safeguarding.
- To seek appropriate support and advice in carrying out this role.
- To make arrangements for a suitable person to carry out this role when on leave, and to publicise who the substitute is and the dates of the alternative arrangements.

Requirements for the role

- To have knowledge of policy and practice for safeguarding children and/or adults at risk.
- Good communication (written and oral) skills
- Be willing to attend appropriate safeguarding training/refresher training organised by the synod.
- Be willing to be easily contactable – and prepared to make contact details public to enable direct contact when needed.