The United Reformed Church

GOOD PRACTICE 6

Safeguarding for everyone

Safeguarding in the URC

The URC is committed to safeguarding in every area of its life and ministry.

WHAT?

Policy Statement (General Assembly 2021)

- Create and maintain a safe environment for everyone
- Respond promptly to any form of abuse or neglect
- Seek to prevent abuse from occurring.

WHY?

- Theology, beliefs and values
  - God's concern for justice and care for the vulnerable
  - The Church's call to live out a 'ministry of caring, forgiving and healing love'
- Legal, regulatory and Charity Commission requirements.

WHO?

- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility
- Local churches, synods and General Assembly working together
- People in specific roles will have additional responsibilities.

HOW?

- Safeguarding Strategic Plan
- Good Practice 6
- Training
- Templates for policies / forms
- Links to additional and specialist resources
- Giving a voice to those who have experienced abuse.

Letter from the General Secretary

As the resurrected Jesus stood before his disciples, his words were: ‘Peace be with you’.

Peace is a foundational Christian practice. Peace is not the absence of violence or oppression. It is about living well with one another; it is about integrity and honesty; it is about seeking the common good; it is about seeking the thriving of all as beloved creatures of God. This is all contained within the sense of the biblical word ‘Shalom’ – peace. This is what Jesus desires for his disciples. This is what Jesus still desires for his disciples – and for all creation.

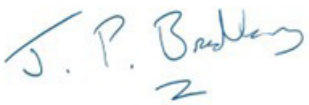
It is easy to think of safeguarding as ‘yet another thing to do’, or as ‘yet more compliance’. It is not. It is foundational to what it is to be followers of Jesus. It is about seeking the flourishing of all. It is about taking an active stand against that which degrades, dehumanises, and leads to the opposite of peace and fullness of life. Safeguarding is an expression of the gospel of Christ’s resurrection.

In the United Reformed Church, no individual congregation is an Island. We are all interconnected and interdependent upon one another as valued parts of the body of Christ. Taking the promotion of resurrection peace through safeguarding seriously can feel demanding. It is vital to remember that this is something we do together, as Christ’s body. There is always someone to turn to for help, guidance, and support. If you are feeling unsure about how best to approach something, please pick up the phone or drop a line to your Synod Safeguarding Officer – they will only be too glad to help.

As something gospel shaped, safeguarding is a labour of love. It has been for those who have worked hard to prepare *Good Practice 6*, and it is for the many of you who through your engagement with safeguarding are promoting peace and flourishing. I want to say thank you to you all for the vital work you do – it is appreciated by many, far more than you will realise.

As the Body of Christ, the promotion of peace and flourishing is part of our fundamental call to discipleship. Safeguarding is therefore something that each one of us is called to take responsibility for. My prayer is that the wisdom *Good Practice 6* contains, and our faithfulness to our call to discipleship, will lead us to becoming an ever safer Church, in which peace and flourishing becomes a reality all experience.

Yours in Christ,



John Bradbury
General Secretary of the United Reformed Church

Finding your way around the guidance

Good Practice 6 is structured around this model:

Safeguarding in the URC

Chapters 1-6

Chapter 1
'Our URC commitments, values and responsibilities' outlines the foundations underpinning all URC safeguarding practice.

Chapter 2-3
Chapter 2 'Safer Culture' and Chapter 3 'Safer activities' outline practices and procedures which can help to reduce the likelihood of harm occurring.

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Chapters 4-5
These chapters provide guidance on responding appropriately when safeguarding concerns and allegations occur.

Chapter 6
Chapter 6 considers the needs of victims and survivors, including creating a supportive culture and responding to the individual experiences of those who have experienced abuse.

Resources

There are links throughout the guidance to further resources. These provide a range of materials including additional guidance on some topics, forms, templates, and links to external resources.

Who the guidance is for

Good Practice 6 (*GP6*) provides information relevant to people with many different roles in the URC. Some material will only apply to certain roles but even if a section does not directly apply to your role it can still be helpful to know what other people are doing. *GP6* is not just there for when things 'go wrong' but is more of a handbook for all to use to help build a safer culture across the URC.

How to use the guidance

Think about how the following questions could apply to your particular setting and role:

- How can we use *GP6* to help embed good practice in the regular routines of our church life / our work to help prevent harm occurring?
- How can we use *GP6* to improve the way we respond to safeguarding concerns, to both comply with our legal responsibilities and provide meaningful pastoral care for those involved?
- How can we use *GP6* to better support those who have experienced harm or abuse?

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