

1. Introduction, Aim and Purpose of Policy

- 1.1 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, staff and volunteers. This includes clear procedures for taking appropriate action when safeguarding concerns are raised.
- 1.2 The policy is based on the model policy provided by the United Reformed Church (URC) and reflects the guidelines and regulations outlined in the latest edition of the URC safeguarding document “Good Practice 6”.
- 1.3 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 eg contractors or consultants).
 - Volunteers.
- 1.4 The principles which underpin the policy include:
- Our theology and values.
 - Our commitment to put the welfare of children and adults at risk first.
 - A willingness to be open and listen.
 - A commitment to comply with relevant legal and regulatory requirements.
- 1.5 Throughout the policy and in related documents, 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.
- 1.6 We have a duty of care to all beneficiaries of the church, whether children or adults. 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.

2. Creating a Safer Culture

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 In line with Chapter 2 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 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;
 - Comply with legal requirements in respect of data protection;
 - Complete the Annual Church Safeguarding Return;
 - Ensure safeguarding is a regular agenda item for church and Elders' meetings.

3. Ensuring Safer Activities

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 In line with Chapter three of Good Practice 6, we will:
- Ensure appropriate insurance is in place for buildings and activities;
 - Consider the implications of data protection and health and safety requirements for specific activities;
 - Carry out risk assessments for relevant activities or events;
 - 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 for other organisations using church premises;
 - Seek advice from the Synod Safeguarding Officer for complex or sensitive risks.
 - Ensure that registration and consent forms (as specific in GP 6 Chapter 3 (3.6) are in place, and that attendance registers are maintained and retained, securely, for the period of 25 years following the activity.

4. Recognising and Responding to Concerns

- 4.1 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.

- 4.2 In line with Chapter four of Good Practice 6, we will:
- Promote awareness of different kinds of abuse, other vulnerabilities and types of safeguarding concern;
 - Seek to create a 'listening culture' and help people develop listening skills to respond appropriately in situations where sensitive information is disclosed;
 - Inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer, as a minimum, of any situations where involvement from statutory services is/may be required;
 - Share information with statutory services as appropriate and co-operate with them during any investigations;
 - Report any serious safeguarding incident to the Charity Commission and notify the Synod Safeguarding Officer.

5. Managing Allegations and People Who May Pose a Risk to Others

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 In line with Chapter five of Good Practice 6, we will:
- Co-operate fully 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.

6. Supporting Victims and Survivors

- 6.1 The 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).
- 6.2 In line with Chapter six of Good Practice 6, we will:
- Recognise that the Elders' meeting has responsibility for provision of pastoral care;
 - Be aware of local support services that people can be referred or directed to;
 - Ensure those in relevant roles attend appropriate training;
 - Seek advice from the Synod Safeguarding Officer about provision of appropriate support when necessary.

7. Key Roles and Contacts

7.1 Church Safeguarding Coordinator

Mike Hollingsworth
Email: hollies1@btinternet.com
Telephone: 01473 257132

7.3 Synod Safeguarding Officer

Candice Hart
Email: safeguarding@urceastern.org.uk
Telephone: 07849 276 750

7.4 URC Safeguarding Office (National)

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

Email: safeguarding@urc.org.uk

7.5 Local statutory services: Children

Suffolk County Council
Customer First Telephone: (Freephone) 0808 800 4005

Out of hours the number will divert to the emergency duty service who can deal with any matters that cannot wait until the next working day.

7.6 Local statutory services: Adults

Suffolk County Council
Customer First Telephone: (Freephone) 0800 917 1109

Out of hours the number will divert to the emergency duty service who can deal with any matters that cannot wait until the next working day.

8. Associated Documents

- 8.1 A copy of the full **Good Practice 6** (GP6) document will be held in the vestry at the church. This is for reference purposes, including more detailed guidance and procedures. It should not be removed from the vestry. A pdf copy may be accessed here: <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Good-Practice-6-2023.pdf>
- 8.2 The summary statement of **Safeguarding Principles**, for presentation on church display boards and website is included as **Appendix A**.
- 8.3 The **Safeguarding Contacts Notice** for presentation on church display boards and website is included as **Appendix B**.
- 8.4 Additional guidelines, forms and procedures, associated with GP6 will be accessed and deployed where necessary in support of the safeguarding work of the church. These are available here: <https://urc.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding-good-practice/>

9. Review

- 9.1 This policy will be reviewed annually, updated as required and adopted by the church meeting.
- 9.2 Date of most recent review: June 2025
- 9.3 Date of next review: June 2026
- 9.4 Signed by:

1. Safeguarding is taken seriously by Castle Hill United Reformed Church. This statement has been agreed by the church leadership (as trustees) and summarises the key principles for safeguarding as outlined in our policy. A copy of the full policy is available on request from the church's Safeguarding Coordinator or Church Secretary.
2. 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, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marriage/civil partnership status, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity.
3. 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;
 - working with statutory agencies, voluntary organisations and other churches.
4. This means that we will:
 - carefully select and train all those with any responsibility within the Church, in line with Safer Recruitment principles, including the use of Disclosure and Barring checks;
 - 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, cooperating with the police and local authority in any investigation;
 - seek to work with anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry of informed pastoral care;
 - seek to challenge any abuse of power, especially by anyone in a position of trust;
 - seek to offer pastoral care and support, including supervision and referral to the proper authorities, to any member of our church community known to have offended against a child or adult;
 - review our safeguarding policy, practices and procedures annually. Follow legislation, guidance and recognised good practice.

The Ministers and Elders January 2025

- If you believe that someone is at **Immediate risk of harm** you should **call 999** and report the matter to the police.
- If you believe that a possible safeguarding issue has arisen, but there is no immediate risk of harm, you should **Immediately** contact the church's **Safeguarding Co-ordinator** and make them aware, giving them as much information as possible.
- **Do not** make any promises to the person sharing the information with you regarding not telling anyone else. If asked to keep it a secret, you should say that you **Cannot** do that.
- If the Safeguarding Co-ordinator is not available, please contact the **URC Eastern Synod Safeguarding Officer**, If neither are available **you have a duty to** contact Social Care (Customer First), using the details below, they will guide you through the next steps.
- Please make the **Safeguarding Co-ordinator** aware of your actions as soon as possible thereafter.

Contact Numbers

Castle Hill URC Safeguarding Co-ordinator

Mike Hollingsworth 01473 257132

URC Eastern Synod Safeguarding Officer

Candice Hart 07849 276 750

Suffolk County Council Social Care

Customer First (Children) Freephone 0808 800 4005

Customer First (Adults) Freephone 0800 917 1109