



Parkstone United Reformed Church
Safeguarding Policy
Children & Adults

Wessex Synod

(This policy last updated in May 2025)

1. 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.

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 eg contractors or consultants)
- Volunteers.

Principles underpinning the policy

- 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.

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 the 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 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

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 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

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 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.

4. 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 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

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 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

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).

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 contact

Joint Church Safeguarding Coordinator

Name and contact details: Mark Phillips
Phone number: 07980 002676
Email address: mark.phillips@poolecommunityexchange.org.uk

Joint Church Safeguarding Coordinator

Name and contact details: Barbara Carter
Phone number: 01202 749247
Email address: barbarac710@hotmail.com

Synod Safeguarding Officer

Name and contact details: Sharon Barr
Phone number: 07776 178246
Email address: safeguarding@urcwessex.org.uk

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

Email: safeguarding@urc.org.uk

Local statutory services: Children

Contact details: Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
Phone number: 01202 123 334
Email: childrensfirstresponse@bcpcouncil.gov.uk
Out of hours: 01202 738 25

Local statutory services: Adults

Contact details: Adult Social Care Team
Phone number: 01202 123 654
Email address: asc.contactcentre@bcpcouncil.gov.uk
Out of hours team: 300 123 9895

Local Authority Designated Officer

Phone number: 01202 817600
Email address: LADO@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

Dorset Police: 01202 222 222

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, updated as required and adopted by the church meeting. Date of most recent review: May 2025

Date of next review: May 2026

Signed by: B. Carter

(On behalf of the Church Elders)

Appendices

Appendix 1	Safeguarding Policy Statement
Appendix 2	The role of the Church Safeguarding Coordinator
Appendix 3	Code of Conduct for working with children
Appendix 4	Code of Conduct for working with adults
Appendix 5	Volunteer application form
Appendix 6	Self-declaration form

Appendix 1

Safeguarding Policy Statement

Safeguarding is taken seriously by Parkstone 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, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marriage/civil partnership status, gender reassignment, 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
- working with statutory agencies, voluntary organisations and other churches.

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.

Appendix 2

The role of a Church Safeguarding Coordinator (CSC)

Context

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

Responsibilities

- To coordinate safeguarding policy and procedures in the church
- To familiarise themselves with church policies and procedures and URC good practice guidance in safeguarding and to keep abreast of any changes and developments
- To ensure that church policies and procedures are reviewed annually, kept up to date, and are fit for purpose
- To ensure that Elders and others in the church understand church safeguarding policies and procedures, including URC guidance and Charity Commission responsibilities
- To collaborate with the Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator (when there is one), the minister, and the Synod Safeguarding Officer on all matters around safeguarding
- To act as the DBS / Disclosure Scotland verifier and / or liaise closely with other designated verifiers in the church
- To ensure safer recruitment practices are operated in the recruitment of all workers (both volunteers and paid) including, but not exclusively, ensuring that the relevant workers have up to date DBS / Disclosure Scotland checks.
- To follow the measures set out in the Hirer's agreement 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 the Police or statutory services of a concern or incident
- To take appropriate action in relation to any safeguarding concerns which arise within the church
- To ensure safe practice is in place for supporting people who may pose a risk to children and adults at risk at church
- To cooperate with statutory services and 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, 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 promote sensitivity within the church towards all those affected by abuse
- To promote positive safeguarding practice and ensure procedures are adhered to
- To arrange and / or promote opportunities for training in safeguarding to any relevant members of the leadership team and all people involved in regulated activities with children or adults (including Ministers, staff and volunteers), as recommended by the Synod, and ensure that their training is renewed every three years
- To seek appropriate support and advice in carrying out this role (e.g. from the SSO)
- To make arrangements for the Deputy CSC (or other suitable person if there is no deputy) 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 and keep updated on matters related to safeguarding
- Be willing to be easily contactable – and prepared to make contact details public to enable direct contact when needed.

Appendix 3

Code of conduct for working with children

All those working with children in the church (in either paid or voluntary roles) should agree to the following code of conduct. The word 'child' refers to all those under the age of 18.

Training, policies and procedures

- Attend all necessary training which helps to support you in your role
- Have a good awareness of, and comply with, URC policies, procedures and guidance
- Refresh all necessary safeguarding training at least every three years
- Be aware of different types of abuse and the key signs and symptoms of abuse.

Safer ways of working

- Do not spend time alone with children out of sight of other people
- Be aware that it is illegal for an adult in a position of trust to engage in any sexual activity with a 16 or 17 year-old
- Use of physical contact/touch should be: only in public; appropriate to the situation and to the age, gender and culture of the child; in response to the needs of the child, not the adult.

Respectful and inclusive working

- Respect and promote the rights of children to make their own decisions and choices
- Encourage respect for difference, diversity, beliefs and culture
- Make all reasonable adjustments for children with disabilities and additional needs.

Managing behaviour

- Encourage everyone to follow any ground rules and apply sanctions consistently
- Don't show favouritism or encourage excessive attention from a particular child
- Refer to a more experienced or senior worker if a child does not respond to your instructions despite encouragement and warning.

Photos and videos

- All images should be appropriate and, beyond first names, not reveal any personal information about children if uploaded to the Internet. Images should only be uploaded with permission from the parent/carer, as well as the child (for those old enough/able to give their consent)
- Avoid taking images on personal devices. If this is necessary in exceptional circumstances, it should be agreed in advance or reported promptly to the Church Safeguarding Coordinator
- Images of children should be stored securely on the church computer, never on personal devices, including memory sticks.

Reporting concerns

- Know who the Church Safeguarding Coordinator (CSC) is and how to contact them
- Tell the CSC if you have any concerns about a child's welfare
- Do not promise to keep anything a secret; if a child is being harmed, or is at risk of harm, you will need to share that information but only on a need-to-know basis.

Working with children online

Make sure that any electronic communication is done with parental consent and is transparent, accountable, recorded and adheres to safeguarding policies.

Approval/consent

- Ensure that all types of online communication and activity you engage with have been formally approved by your line manager/team leader/Eldership
- Inform your line manager or point of contact of your intention to communicate online with families or young people and keep a record of times and dates when you do this
- Ensure that you have parental consent for every type of online communication and activity you engage with – if need be, issue multiple consent forms (as for other activities and events). If signed consent forms are difficult to obtain, confirm emailed consent by phone/video call and keep a register of consent given (when, by whom, for what).

How to engage online

- Ensure that any communication online is done through a work or church account and do not engage with children or young people through your personal social media or mobile account – this may require setting up an extra account for that purpose
- Ensure, where possible, parents or guardians are present in the building or other workers are aware when children are communicating with you via social media. Communication with a child via social media should only ever take place when their parent or guardian and other adult workers are aware of these online interactions
- Where possible, ensure that another adult is present in the room with you if communicating 1:1 via social media with a child or young person, or ensure that a second leader is present online and communicate in a group chat environment
- Do not use private messaging
- Tell the CSC of any attempt by children or young people to contact you through your personal accounts and profiles, and block any further contact.

Use of content generated online

- Ensure any images or videos from online engagement are stored in the safe place designated by the church and not on your personal accounts or equipment
- Ensure you have clear parental and participant consent (for older children) before sharing any content from online engagement more widely, and only use it in the ways agreed, in line with URC good practice guidelines.

I agree to abide by the above code of conduct while working with children and young

people. On behalf of Parkstone United Reformed Church:

Name of worker:

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 4

Code of conduct for working with adults

This code describes the standards of conduct expected of all those working with adults, including adults at risk (p3 provides definitions of 'adults at risk'). It sets out general principles for good practice but cannot cover every type of activity or situation. Further details on specific issues can be found in Good Practice 6 and the accompanying resources.

Training, policies and procedures

- Attend all necessary training which helps to support you in your role
- Have a good awareness of, and comply with, URC policies, procedures and guidance
- Refresh all necessary safeguarding training at least every three years
- Be aware of different types of abuse and the key signs and symptoms of abuse
- Be familiar with your church safeguarding policy and know who to raise concerns with.

Promote the privacy, dignity, rights and wellbeing of people

- Always protect the rights of people and treat them with dignity, respect and compassion
- Ensure that an adult at risk is not treated, without justification, any less favourably than other people would be treated in a comparable situation
- Put people's needs, views and wishes first and ensure they participate as fully as possible in decisions being made, helping them control and choose the help they receive
- Always gain consent before providing help and support. You must respect a person's right to refuse if they can do so, but also report any concerns if you feel that someone does not have the capacity to consent
- Promote people's independence, while helping them maintain existing family and social contacts
- For home visits, follow the guidance in Good Practice 6.

Uphold and promote equality, diversity and inclusion

Treat all adults equally and inclusively and do not discriminate on grounds of age, gender reassignment, ethnicity, race, religion/belief, cultural background, sexual orientation or disability.

Effective communication

- Make efforts to assist and facilitate communication, using whatever method is appropriate to the needs of the individual
- Always explain and discuss any help and support you are offering with the person
- Communicate respectfully with people in an open, accurate, effective and straightforward way
- Maintain clear and accurate records of any help and support the church provides.

Respect people's right to confidentiality

- Treat all information about people you are working with, and their family or carers where applicable, as confidential
- Only discuss or disclose information in accordance with legislation and URC policy, and seek advice from your Church Safeguarding Officer about information sharing.

Online engagement

- Ensure you are familiar with your church online safety policy
- Apply the principles of respect, inclusion, clear communication and confidentiality to online work as you would with in-person interaction
- When engaging online with adults at risk, additional care should be taken, for example:
 - Ensure another adult is present, either with you or the other person
 - Use a work or church account rather than a personal one.

Physical contact/touch

- Physical contact should be appropriate to the situation and the age, gender, culture of the other person
- Physical contact should be in response to the needs of the other person, not the wishes of the worker.

Financial matters

- Do not accept offers of loans, gifts or benefits from anyone you are supporting or anyone close to them (unless to do so would cause serious offence, in which case it should be declared to someone at church, e.g. treasurer or elder)
- Report any concerns about adults who might be subject to financial abuse to the Church Safeguarding Coordinator.

Challenging inappropriate behaviour

- Challenge and report dangerous, abusive, discriminatory or exploitative behaviour
- Tell your leader/supervisor or person in charge of safeguarding if you are concerned that another worker is acting outside of this code of conduct.

Feedback and complaints

- Share any feedback received with your leader/supervisor/colleagues to promote learning and continued development of good practice
- Refer any complaints to your leaders/supervisor/elders as appropriate.

I agree to abide by the above code of conduct while working with adults, including adults at risk.

On behalf of Parkstone URC:

Name of worker:

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 5

Volunteer application form

Name of church/group:

Role/area of work:

Name:

Date of birth:

Address:

Email:

Phone number:

Previous experience of working with children or adults at risk and/or any relevant qualifications or training (continue on a separate sheet if necessary).

Have you ever lived or worked abroad? If yes, please give details of dates and locations.

Please give details of two individuals who can provide references for you. This can include, for example, employers, tutors, staff in other voluntary organisations, leaders from a previous church. It cannot include people related to you, partners, people who reside at your home address or current members of your local church.

Name of referee:

How are they known to you?

Email:

Phone number:

Name of referee:

How are they known to you?

Email:

Phone number:

By signing this form, I confirm I understand that I will also need to:

- complete the confidential self-declaration form
- apply for a DBS check if required

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 6

Confidential Self-Declaration Form

This Self Declaration Form must be completed by all those wishing to work or volunteer in roles where they will be in substantial contact with children and / or adults at risk of abuse or neglect. These roles are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (as amended in 2013 and 2020 for DBS disclosures and by the Management of Offenders Act 2019 in Scotland) and you will be required to declare convictions which for other purposes you might not need to disclose.

This form is being completed for the purpose of:

Information disclosed on this form will not automatically disqualify you from a given role. Each situation will be considered individually in light of whether or not the matters revealed could be considered to place children or adults at risk in danger of being harmed. The failure to disclose information may, however, lead to an appointment offer being rescinded.

The information on this form will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be seen by those who need to know as part of the candidating for ministry / recruitment process and, where necessary when content is disclosed, with the Synod Safeguarding Officer or the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Secretary for Ministries. An assessment of transferable risk will be carried out at that point, and you will be included as part of the assessment.

Please include all relevant activity within the UK **and in any other country.**

Convictions and cautions		
1.	If you have never been convicted or cautioned for a criminal offence, please mark this box: <input type="checkbox"/> and go on to question 5. Otherwise go to question 2.	
2.	Do you have any unspent convictions or conditional cautions? ¹	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
3.	If you live in England, Wales the Channel Islands or Isle of Man: Do you have any spent convictions or adult cautions that have not been filtered in line with DBS filtering rules? ²	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
4.	If you live in Scotland: Do you have any spent convictions or cautions which must be disclosed? ^{3a} Do you have any spent convictions or cautions which are disclosed according to rules? ^{3b}	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N

Barring from regulated activity or regulated work		
5.	Are you: barred from 'regulated activity' (England, Wales, Channel Islands, Isle of Man) or 'regulated work' (Scotland) with children or adults at risk; under consideration for barring or listing; or have ever been prohibited from working with these groups at any time? ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N

Other investigations or concerns		
6.	Are you at present, or have you ever been, under investigation by an employer or other organisation for which you worked or volunteered for any offence / misconduct relating to children or adults at risk?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
7.	Have any concerns about you ever been referred to and investigated by the Police / Children's Services / Adult Social Care Services?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N
8.	If you are working from a manse / home with children ⁵ , is there anyone aged 16 or over living or employed in your household who has ever been charged with, cautioned or convicted in relation to any criminal offence not subject to DBS filtering / Disclosure Scotland rules, or who is at present the subject of a criminal investigation / pending prosecution?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N

If you have answered yes to any of questions 2-8, please provide details in the 'additional information section' below and continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

By signing this form I confirm that:

I understand I will be required to complete a DBS / Disclosure Scotland check and consent to the URC clarifying any information provided on the disclosure with the relevant agencies.

I understand that if I do not disclose relevant information and it subsequently comes to light, my application or role may be withdrawn.

I will inform my place of worship / line manager / Synod Moderator as soon as possible if any of the following circumstances occur:

- I am charged, cautioned or convicted of any offence
- I become subject to a Police / Social Services / Social Work Department investigation
- I am investigated by my employer or any other organisation in relation to concerns about my behaviour with children or adults at risk.

Signature:

Date:

Full name:

Date of birth:

If you have ever been known by any other names, please give details:

Phone number:

Name of Church where URC membership held (if applicable):

Additional information

If an investigation led to no further action being taken, please give details and reasons.

For all other cases / situations:

Give dates and details of charges / court findings / cautions / convictions / barring or listing / other concerns.

Give details of circumstances leading to these outcomes / sanctions: what happened, when, where and who else was involved?

Give details of how these events affected you, lessons learned and changes in your life / conduct since then.

Notes

1. There are different time periods over which offences become spent in England and Wales and in Scotland. For further details see www.bit.ly/4a1oJfu.

For an online calculator that will show if your convictions or cautions are spent (England and Wales only), see www.unlock.org.uk/disclosure-calculator/.

For offences committed in other countries, you should be treated in line with the disclosure rules of the country in which you are now living.

2. Select **No** for convictions where all of the following apply:
 - a) 11 years (or 5.5 years if under 18 at the time of the conviction) have passed since the date of conviction; and
 - b) it did not result in a prison sentence or suspended prison sentence (or detention order) and
 - c) it does not appear on the DBS list of specified offences (e.g. violence, drug related and / or sexual offences) which can be found here: www.bit.ly/47WCIkS

Select **No** for adult cautions where both of the following apply:

- a) six years have passed since the date of the caution etc. and
- b) it does not appear on the DBS's list of specified

offences. For any other convictions or cautions, select

Yes.

- 3a. Convictions which must be disclosed in Scotland:

Select **Yes** for offences on this list: www.mygov.scot/offences-always-disclosed.

Select **No** if none of your offences are on this list.

- 3b. Convictions which have to be disclosed according to rules in Scotland:

Select **Yes** for offences on this list www.mygov.scot/offences-disclosed-rules and where less than 15 years have passed since the date of conviction (or seven years and six months if you were under 18 at the time). Select **No** for any other convictions or cautions.

4. It is a criminal offence to apply for roles involving 'regulated activity' or 'regulated work' with children or adults at risk if you are barred from working with them.
5. The DBS define home based working as where the applicant for the DBS check carries out some or all of his or her work with children or adults from the place where the applicant lives (this will include all Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers).