

## Safeguarding is taken seriously by

### Geddes Place United Reformed Church

---

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 will appoint a Safeguarding Coordinator and Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator, 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 the absence of the Safeguarding Coordinator, the Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator should be contacted. Their contact details can be found in Key Contacts, P7.

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.

Our *Safeguarding Policy Statement* is attached as Appendix A1.

## **Aim and purpose of this policy**

The aim of this policy is to provide 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 those who attend our church
- our trustees and staff (both paid and voluntary)
- organisations who hire our building with agreement to operate under the church safeguarding policy

The policy and procedures should be interpreted in the light of the most recent URC good practice guidance. Children and parents/carers will be informed of this policy and our procedures.

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

## **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.

## **Preventing abuse**

The church will appoint Safeguarding and Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator(s) for safeguarding children and adults. A job description is attached as Appendix A2.

Activities will be organised in accordance with URC good practice guidelines 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), 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 and will ensure that these 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 wherever legally entitled to do so
- taking up two references (not from family members)
- interviewing candidates

Safeguarding training will be provided and volunteers and paid staff will be given support and supervision in their role.

All trustees, paid staff and volunteers will work within a code of conduct (code for workers attached as Appendix A3) and understand that there may be action taken if this code is not followed, possibly involving suspension or termination of working with us.

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

Organisations wishing to hire our building for activities with children or adults 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.

If they do not have their own safeguarding policy, the church will encourage them to adopt one before agreeing to the hire, or may agree that they can follow the church safeguarding policy and procedures.

## What are we protecting people from?

The definitions of abuse differ between children and adults. A copy of the definitions relating to children is attached to this policy at Appendix A4. The definitions of abuse in relation to adults is attached as Appendix A5.

## How to recognise abuse

It is important to be aware of possible signs and symptoms of abuse. Please see Appendix A6 for those relating to children and Appendix A7 for those relating to adults at risk. Some signs could be indicators of a number of 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. They 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.

## 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 / or an allegation of abuse against someone, it is important that the person being told:

- stays calm and listen 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 as soon as possible (if they are implicated in the allegation, inform the Deputy 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 A8). This should be given to the church Safeguarding Coordinator 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 and a decision made as to whether the concern warrants a referral to statutory authorities (see Key Contacts, P7 for the relevant statutory contacts)
- A confidential record will be made of the conversation and the circumstances surrounding it using the template at Appendix A8. 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 increased risk. If the statutory authorities are involved, they should be consulted beforehand
- The Synod Safeguarding Officer should be kept informed of any serious concerns

If someone in the church is alleged or known to have harmed children or adults we will inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer so that they can offer advice and support, and we will contact the relevant statutory authority.

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

For any concerns relating to children, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or the equivalent in Scotland and Wales 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 LADO

about when to inform the worker and the church will follow this advice. For LADO contact details, see Key Contacts, P7.

For concerns relating to adults, Adult Social Care will be contacted. See Key Contacts, P7 for details.

In accordance with the law, a referral will be made to the DBS / PVG if the church withdraws permission for an individual to engage in work with children / adults at risk OR would have done so had that individual not resigned, retired, been made redundant or been transferred to a position because the employer believes that the individual has engaged in relevant conduct, satisfied the harm test or committed an offence that would lead to automatic inclusion on a barred list.

In such cases, a report will also be made to the Charity Commission, as they deem such a referral to be a 'serious incident' and requires notification.

## Concerns, Complaints and Compliments

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

Name      Rev Rodolphe Blanchard-Kowal  
Telephone No   07484257534

Paul Ayliffe  
0208 304 6392

Email   [minister@bexley-urc.co.uk](mailto:minister@bexley-urc.co.uk)

[paul.ayliffe@btopenworld.com](mailto:paul.ayliffe@btopenworld.com)

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: September 2024

Date of the next review: September 2025

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

(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 should be addressed:

Name Paul Ayliffe

Telephone No 0208 304 6392

Email [paul.ayliffe@btopenworld.com](mailto:paul.ayliffe@btopenworld.com)

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

Name Carole Jones

Telephone No 07808852850

Email [cannjones@btinternet.com](mailto:cannjones@btinternet.com)

- Synod Safeguarding Officer

Names Natalie van Camp

Telephone 07483 994 590

email: [safeguarding@urcsouthern.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@urcsouthern.org.uk)

- **Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS)** (This should only be used for urgent advice if you are unable to contact your Synod Safeguarding Officer)  
24 hour helpline: 0845 120 4550

- **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)** or the equivalent in Scotland and Wales

Name Edward Snegar

Telephone No 020 304 53436

Email [jamesmcLADO@bexley.gov.uk](mailto:jamesmcLADO@bexley.gov.uk)

Email [childrens.triageteam@bexley.cjsm.net](mailto:childrens.triageteam@bexley.cjsm.net)



## Appendix A1

### Safeguarding Policy Statement

- Statutory contact in the case of a child or adult at risk

London Borough of Bexley Children and Adults' Social care Dept. 020 8303 7777

The following statement has been agreed by the leadership of Geddes Place United Reformed Church

**This church is committed to the safeguarding of children and adults at risk, and to ensuring their well-being.**

- We believe that all children and adults at risk should know that they are valued within the church and safely enjoy and have access to every aspect of the life of our church
- We respect the personal dignity and rights of children and adults at risk (for example, as set out in the Human Rights Act 1989 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) and will ensure that our policies and procedures reflect this
- We recognise that we all have a responsibility to help prevent the physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect of children under 18 years of age
- We recognise that we all have a responsibility to help prevent the physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, financial, discriminatory abuse and neglect of adults at risk
- We recognise that domestic abuse affects both adults and children and believe that domestic abuse in all its forms is unacceptable and inconsistent with a Christian way of living
- We will report any abuse of children or adults at risk that we discover or suspect
- Where an allegation suggests that a criminal offence may have been committed, the police will be contacted as a matter of urgency
- We recognise that Children's Services has responsibility for investigating all allegations or suspicions of abuse where there are concerns about a child, and that Adult Services do so for adults at risk
- We acknowledge that Local Authority Designated Officers (LADOs) or the equivalent in Scotland and Wales have responsibility for dealing with all allegations and concerns about people working with children, whether paid or voluntary workers, lay or ordained
- We recognise that safeguarding is a whole church responsibility

We are committed to:



- The establishment of a loving environment, which is safe and caring, and where there is an informed vigilance about the dangers of abuse
  - Following the relevant legislation, statutory, denominational and specialist guidelines in relation to safeguarding children and adults at risk
  - Ensuring that we keep up to date with national and local developments relating to safeguarding
- 
- Building constructive links with the relevant Voluntary and Statutory Authorities
  - Taking all reasonable steps to ensure that as a church, everyone works within the agreed procedures of our safeguarding policies
  - Supporting the Safeguarding Coordinator and Deputy in their work and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children and adults at risk
  - Following safer recruitment principles in the appointment and selection of all those who work with children and adults at risk, be they volunteer or paid staff, lay or ordained
  - Supporting, supervising, resourcing and training all those who undertake work with children and adults at risk
  - Ensuring that the children and adults we have contact with know that they are valued and feel empowered to tell us if they are suffering harm
  - Reporting any abuse of children or adults at risk that we discover or suspect
  - Supporting all those in our church who are affected by abuse
  - Supporting and supervising those who pose a risk to children or adults at risk, implementing contracts of behaviour, whilst bearing in mind the overarching principle that the welfare of the child is paramount
  - If an assessment is made that someone poses an unmanageable risk to those in need of protection and could not safely attend our church, we will ensure that they continue to be offered pastoral care and will signpost them to appropriate agencies for support

Name: Paul Ayliffe

(on behalf of the church leadership)

Signed:

Date: 11 March 2025



## Appendix A2

### The Role of a Church Safeguarding Coordinator

## 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 procedure 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 procedure in the church**

- 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 ensure that church policies and procedures are reviewed annually, kept up to date, and are fit for purpose.
- To make others in the church aware of the church safeguarding policies and procedures, as well as URC guidelines.
- 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 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) / Protecting Vulnerable Groups scheme (PVG) checks.

### **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 contacts 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 Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or the equivalent in Scotland and Wales of a concern or incident.
- To take appropriate action in relation to any safeguarding concerns which arise within the 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 at the time of any referrals made to the statutory authorities, or of any information received from the statutory authorities.
- To report summary safeguarding information annually to the Synod Safeguarding Officer 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 the impact of abuse.
- To promote positive safeguarding procedures and 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 congregation, including both paid staff and volunteers.
- To update their own safeguarding training every three years.
- To seek appropriate support and advice in carrying out this role.
- To make arrangements for a suitable person to carry out this role when they are on leave, and to publicise who this is and the dates of the alternative arrangements.

