

Paper R2

Synod Safeguarding Practice Group: Terms of Reference

Safeguarding Advisory Group

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Ioannis Athanasiou safeguarding@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	On behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council approves the Terms of Reference for the Synod Safeguarding Practice Group as a sub-group of the Safeguarding Advisory Group.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	The Synod Safeguarding Practice Group (SSPC) continues and formalises the existing group of synod safeguarding officers and advisers who meet three times a year.
Main points	The Terms of Reference are a further step to value the expertise of synod safeguarding officers and advisers and their role in supporting local churches and ensuring consistency of safeguarding practice in alignment with Good Practice 5.
Previous relevant documents	Paper R2 at Mission Council, November 2019.
Consultation has taken place with...	Members of SAG Synod Safeguarding Officers.

Summary of Impact

Financial	No further resources will be needed to continue the meetings of this group. The budget of the Safeguarding team at Church House already covers the costs.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	

1. The last Mission Council meeting, acting on behalf of General Assembly, endorsed the URC's Safeguarding Strategic Plan. Under the strategic objective 4, the Church recognised the commitment of synod safeguarding officers and advisers as an essential element of this plan. The regular meetings of all synod safeguarding officers have played a significant role in the last four years to increase safeguarding awareness and establish structures within the Church for

the benefit of vulnerable groups. The Terms of Reference formalise this valuable work, to provide a peer-to-peer supportive context that equips synod designated persons with the right skills to lead on all aspects of safeguarding practice in their synods and local churches and align their work with the requirements of Good Practice 5 and the expectations of the safeguarding strategic plan.

2. The Terms of Reference were already approved by the Safeguarding Advisory Group [5/2/2020] and are attached below for Mission Council's approval:

Synods' safeguarding practice (SSP) group terms of reference

This group is a sub-group of the Safeguarding Advisory Group and comprises all synod safeguarding designated persons and professionals of the United Reformed Church, including synod safeguarding officers and synod safeguarding advisers. The group reports to the secretary of SAG and denominational safeguarding adviser of the Church.

Purpose

- To act as a confidential reference body for safeguarding practice with children, young people and adults at risk throughout the denomination.
- To ensure that safeguarding procedures are reviewed and implemented consistently in practice.
- To provide an opportunity for peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange between and across the synods.
- To contribute to the development of good practice guidance and training resources.
- To offer training and professional development opportunities for synod safeguarding designated persons.

Membership

The Safeguarding Advisory Group shall determine the group's membership (seeking, if it wishes, advice from the group about this). Membership will include ex officio all synod safeguarding leads of the URC and the denominational safeguarding adviser, who will chair the meetings. Members should have suitable skills and experience in safeguarding matters, relating to children and adults. A meeting quorum will be representation from at least 7 synods regardless of the number of attendees in each meeting. For reasons of confidentiality, the group should be restricted to those who lead and oversee safeguarding policy and practice in all URC Synods on a paid or voluntary role. There will always be remote access and reasonable adjustments for participants as well as a minute taker external to the group who should not be a member of the SSP group.

Meetings

The group will normally meet at least three times per year, although it may determine to meet more frequently. Meetings will be planned, supported by an agenda and recorded.

Confidentiality

Because of the nature of its remit, it is essential that the discussions of the Safeguarding Practice Group shall be treated as confidential. Individuals and churches may be named in the course of the group's discussions. The minutes of the Synod Safeguarding Practice Group will be kept securely. If they need to be released beyond the group, they will be reviewed and redacted as needed by the chair. All members of the group will be asked to

sign a confidentiality agreement on an annual basis and any other attendees will be asked to sign one at the meeting.

Conflict of Interest

At each meeting members will be asked to declare any conflicts of interest.

Remit

- Promote consistency and quality of safeguarding practice across URC Synods
- Contribute to the development and implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures across the Synods
- Support the provision of training and professional development to synod safeguarding leads
- Maintain an overview of cases and safeguarding incidents
- Work with URC's safeguarding adviser to monitor issues
- Review the role of the group biannually.

Approval

These Terms of Reference were approved by the Safeguarding Advisory Group (5 February 2020).

Review

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed biannually by the Safeguarding Advisory Group, after taking advice, if it wishes, from the group.