



## Abington Avenue URC Safeguarding Policy

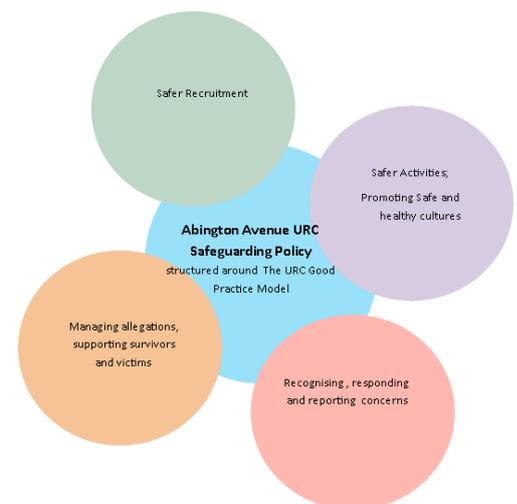
The United Reformed Church (URC) is committed to safeguarding in every area of its life and ministry. Safeguarding is the action taken to promote and protect the wellbeing and human rights of individuals. This means we will:

- Do all we can to create and maintain a safe and caring environment for all people
- Respond promptly and effectively to any form of abuse and neglect, including reporting abuse to statutory agencies as necessary
- Seek to prevent abuse in any form from occurring

## Commitments

The URC will adhere to the policy statement above by committing to:

- Promote safe and healthy cultures in which good practice standards in safeguarding are updated and disseminated
- Ensure everyone in a position of trust is carefully recruited/selected/appointed/trained in safeguarding children and adults at risk
- Respond promptly and appropriately to any safeguarding allegations or concerns (including reporting any allegations to statutory agencies), including those who may pose a risk to children, young people or adults at risk
- Care pastorally for all children and adults at risk, and all those who have experienced abuse in the past
- Ensure that all those who pose a risk to children, young people or adults at risk, and those who are the subject of allegations, receive appropriate pastoral care and supervision
- Exercise informed vigilance about risks in all forms of abuse and neglect
- Work together with other denominations, statutory agencies and volunteer agencies



**If you have any concerns about the safety of a child, young person or adult at risk, please contact:**

**Safeguarding Co-ordinators:**

Julie Coles – 07801818827 [sgcjc.aaurc@gmail.com](mailto:sgcjc.aaurc@gmail.com) or Simon Whipp – [sgcsw.aaurc@gmail.com](mailto:sgcsw.aaurc@gmail.com)

**Children And Families Worker:** Sue Croft – 07747395983 [cwataaurc@hotmail.com](mailto:cwataaurc@hotmail.com)

**Church Minister:** Rev Jane Wade – [minister.aaurc@gmail.com](mailto:minister.aaurc@gmail.com)

**URC Synod Safeguarding officer:** email: [safeguarding@urceastmidlands.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@urceastmidlands.org.uk)

**Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)** Children, Families, and Education, Criminal Justice Centre, 700 Pavilion Drive, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN4 7YL – telephone 0300 126 7000

We are committed to reviewing our policy annually, and with reference to the URC Good Practice Guide 6 and subsequent updates.





### Promoting safe and healthy cultures as good practice in Safeguarding

We will value, listen to, respect, and relate effectively to children, young people and adults at risk, whilst ensuring their protection within church activities

By:

- Providing opportunities for children, young people and adults at risk to express their opinions
- We will choose appropriate language and tone of voice when speaking to children, young people and adults at risk
- Providing opportunities for children, young people and adults at risk to receive support via Junior Church groups or other as appropriate, signposting to specialist counselling where required
- Ensuring children, young people and adults at risk know who to talk to; Junior Church leaders and Elders identified by badges. Safeguarding Team members identified by displayed poster with contact details
- Ensure that Safeguarding Policy reviews are conducted regularly in line with URC recommendations, legislation, and good practice, and that information is disseminated accordingly.

#### Online Safety

We will protect children, young people and vulnerable adults who make use of social media and information technology as part of their involvement with us

By:

- Obtaining parental agreement before communicating with young people
- Ensuring language is clear and unambiguous
- Ensuring all conversations are made available for viewing by a line manager/supervisor<sup>1</sup>
- Providing staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to e-safety and provide effective management for IT issues, through supervision, support and training;
- Ensuring that, as an organisation, we operate in line with our values and within the law in terms of how we use information technology (IT)
- Wherever possible we will support and encourage the children, young people and adults at risk using our services, to use social media and the internet in a way that is appropriate, keeps them safe and shows respect for others;
- Seek opportunities to provide training courses for parents and carers to do what they can to keep their children, young people and adults at risk, safe online, and when using their mobile phones and game consoles;
- Dealing firmly, fairly and decisively with any examples of inappropriate IT use, complaints or allegations, whether by an adult or a child/young person (these may include breaches of filtering, illegal use, cyberbullying, or use of IT to groom a child or to perpetrate abuse);

<sup>1</sup> A volunteer will be supported by, and work closely with a named line manager, and as such any conversations between a volunteer and a young person, child or Adult at risk, should be available for scrutiny.

- Informing parents and carers of incidents of concern as appropriate;
- Reviewing and updating the security of our information systems regularly;
- Ensuring that images of children, young people, adults at risk and families are used only after their written permission has been obtained, and only for the purpose for which consent has been given.

## **Safer Working with children**

In order to promote a safe and healthy culture we practise the following:

Recommended ratios for ordinary church-based activities are two adults (including one woman).

Recommended (NSPCC) ratios are as follows:

Creche – children up to age 3 Ratio 1:4

Ages 4-6 Ratio 1:6

Ages 9-12 Ratio 1:8

Ages 13-18 Ratio 1:10

These ratios may need to be increased for under 3s, for “special needs” and for day trips and residential holidays.

It is best for no worker/volunteer to be alone with a child, young person or vulnerable adult, but in exceptional circumstances where confidentiality is important (e.g. counselling), ensure that others know that the interview is taking place and that someone else is in sight. It is normally advisable to leave doors open.

Keep a log of each activity, recording who was on duty for a particular session and any unusual happenings or concerns.

Incidents and accidents should be reported using the “Accident and Incident Form” (available from the Church foyer or Office)

## **Boundaries**

The level of personal care, e.g. toileting, must be appropriate and related to the age/needs of the child/needs of the vulnerable adult. Parents must give their written permission and instructions for personal care.

Physical contact between adults and children can be quite healthy and to be encouraged in public places, but discouraged in circumstances where an adult/child is on his own.

Guidelines on touch for those who work with children

- Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be related to the child's needs, not the adult's.
- Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the adult.
- Avoid any physical activity which is, or may be thought to be, sexually stimulating to the adult or the child.

- Children have the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others, except in exceptional circumstances when they need medical attention.
- Team members should monitor one another in the area of physical contact. They should be free to help each other by pointing out anything which could be misunderstood. Concerns about possible abuse should always be reported.

Workers/volunteers should treat all children/young people/vulnerable adults with dignity and respect in attitude, language used and actions.

Respect the privacy of children, avoid questionable activity, e.g. rough/sexually provocative games or comments.

If you invite a child/vulnerable adult to your home, ensure this is with the knowledge of the team/leadership and that a parent/carer is aware.

**Driving** If arrangements for transporting children are made by a parent or carer, they are responsible for ensuring their safety. If the church makes arrangements, safety becomes the responsibility of the church. Arrangements should be made with the knowledge of the team/leadership and have approval from parents/carers. Ideally there should be two adults in a vehicle but if an adult is alone, it is recommended that they do not carry front seat passengers. Drivers should have received the appropriate level of Safeguarding training and have completed a Self-declaration or a DBS check.

### **Safety matters**

The outside doors at the Abington Avenue premises must be closed at all times or watched by a responsible adult.

Safety requirements should be advertised on posters and regularly reinforced.

At all regular activities there should be someone with some training in first-aid.

Events and activities are Risk Assessed using the template available from the Church Office.

These should be completed and returned to the office.

### **Crèche Guidance**

Children up to the age of 3 may be left in the Nursery during Sunday Morning Services. There should always be a minimum of two helpers in the crèche and recommended ratios as above. Crèche helpers should ensure that they are made aware of any known medical conditions (e.g. asthma) via a simple health form.

Toileting arrangements must be agreed and written permission given by the parent

The child's name must be entered on the register.

The child should only be released from the crèche to the parent or responsible adult who signed them in.

Except in exceptional circumstances, children of 5+ are not permitted to play in the Nursery.

Helpers should be aware of and apply the Church's Safeguarding Policy.

Parents should be made aware of the Safeguarding Policy and provided with a copy on request. A Safeguarding Policy Statement should be displayed in the Nursery.

## **Safer Working with Adults at Risk**

### **Visiting adults at home**

This refers to 'formal' pastoral visiting done on behalf of the church, rather than informal neighbourly contact and it is important to make the distinction. Care must be taken to protect both the visitor and the person being visited. We will practise the following;

#### **Arranging Visits:**

- Let visitors know in advance
- Consider taking a 2<sup>nd</sup> person if there are known concerns
- Carry ID as appropriate
- Carry a mobile phone and let someone know where you are and when you expect to return
- Ask the person if they would like repeat visits and whether they wish to be contacted
- After the visit, complete the visitors log, notifying any safeguarding concerns to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, and store in accordance with data protection

#### **Providing care and support:**

- Be clear about the level of support and the limitations of any care that is available. If appropriate, a written support plan could be considered
- Do not make any referrals without the adult's permission, and encourage them to do it if further help is required
- Do not offer or administer any medicines, whether prescribed or over the counter
- If you are asked to make any purchases, retain receipts and return to adult with any change immediately. Keep a record of transactions
- Take care when accepting gifts, other than small token items. If courtesy demands you accept a gift, declare it to someone (Elder/Treasurer) at church in order to be transparent. Where donations are given, seal it in an envelope, preferably with a note from the giver and obtain a receipt from the Treasurer.

#### **Financial:**

Careful consideration needs to be exercised where an adult wishes to name a church volunteer as the executor of their will, a beneficiary, or requests that they take on power of attorney. These matters should be notified to the Elders and referred to Synod Safeguarding Officer for advice.

**Driving:** If arrangements for transporting adults at risk are made by a parent or carer, they are responsible for ensuring their safety. If the church makes arrangements, safety becomes the responsibility of the church. Arrangements should be made with the knowledge of the team/leadership and have approval from parents/carers. Ideally there should be two adults in a vehicle but if an adult is alone, it is recommended that they do not carry front seat passengers. Drivers should have received the appropriate level of Safeguarding training and have completed a Self-declaration or a DBS check.



## **Safer Recruitment of volunteers, employees and everyone in a position of trust**

We will appoint staff, volunteers and church members (especially those working with children, and young people and adults at risk) safely and ensure all necessary checks are made.

We will provide effective management for staff, volunteers and church members through supervision, support and training by ensuring everyone in a position of trust is carefully recruited/selected/appointed/trained in safeguarding children and adults at risk, by completing a recruitment pack, or in the case of existing volunteers, a self-declaration.

This pack will demonstrate our commitment to safer recruiting and will include the following;

- Application form with references
- Self-declaration
- Legal information regarding disclosures, and rehabilitation of offenders
- Volunteer interview and induction guide (including training requirements)
- Volunteer agreement
- Code of Conduct
- Volunteer Policy



### Recognising and Responding/Reacting to concerns/allegations of abuse

Abington Avenue URC seek to develop a Safer Culture and Safer activities to protect all those in contact with the church but some concerns may arise because of information disclosed or observed by others. We seek to respond by listening and recording appropriately before responding. We have appointed Safeguarding Officers to co-ordinate and advise on concerns and further guidance, support and advice is available from our Synod Safeguarding Officers. As part of our response to concerns we will:

- Recognise that abuse may take many forms
- Seek to develop a 'listening culture' to respond appropriately
- Share information with statutory services where appropriate
- Notify any serious safeguarding incidents to the relevant authorities

#### Common types of abuse

**Physical Abuse** occurs when someone deliberately inflicts injuries, or knowingly does not prevent them from happening.

This includes hitting, biting, burning, suffocating and deliberate poisoning (e.g. inappropriate use of drugs or alcohol).

Common signs and symptoms:

- Bruises in places not normally harmed during play, e.g. the back of the legs, abdomen, groin area, and bite marks.
- Frequent bruises or burn marks.
- All other injuries which do not have an explanation consistent with the injury.
- An undue fear of others or watchfulness

**Emotional Abuse** occurs when a child/vulnerable adult is constantly threatened, taunted or shouted at, or when they are continuously not shown love or affection by their parents or carers.

This can result in the child/vulnerable adult losing its feelings of self-worth and self-confidence and it could become very nervous and withdrawn.

Common signs and symptoms:

- Very poor language development (in children)
- Persistent self-comforting behaviour, e.g. rocking.
- Inability to develop their relationships with their peers and/or with adults.
- Overly aggressive behaviour, particularly with their peers.
- Lack of attachment or lack of trust towards parents/carers and other family members.
- Lack of praise or stimulation from parents and other family members.

**Sexual Abuse** occurs when there is actual, or likely, exploitation of a child, a young person or vulnerable adult. This includes sexual or anal intercourse, oral sex, masturbation, inappropriate fondling and exposure to pornographic materials.

Common signs and symptoms:

- Age inappropriate knowledge or interest in sexual matters.
- Soreness or itching in the genital area.
- Pain on urination.
- Difficulty in walking.
- Bruising or injury to inner thighs or buttocks.
- Inappropriate fondling.
- Habitual mouth sores.
- Frequent masturbation. It is not uncommon for young children to masturbate occasionally for comfort or experimentation.

**Neglect** occurs when a child's or vulnerable adult's essential needs are not being met. These include adequate clothing, food, warmth, medical care and not being exposed to danger.

Some common signs and symptoms:

- A child/vulnerable adult may display its unhappiness by being withdrawn or unusually aggressive.
- Inadequate or inappropriate clothing.
- Malnourishment or always being hungry.
- Unhygienic home conditions.
- Untreated illnesses.
- Running away from home.
- Lack of protection, including lack of supervision appropriate to a child's age/vulnerable adult's needs
- Exposure to danger, including moral danger.
- Failure to thrive (to grow or develop) due to non-medical reasons.

### **Other types of abuse**

**Grooming** – when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection, with a child, young person or adult at risk, with the intention of manipulating, exploiting or abusing them. This can also occur when a 'groomer' builds up a relationship with the vulnerable person's family.

**Financial** – theft, fraud and coercion, in relation to an adult's financial affairs.

**Domestic**- this includes the main types of abuse and occurs within families or relationships where both parties are aged over 16.

**Self neglect/Self harm** - failure to care for one's own hygiene or surroundings, or deliberately harming or putting themselves in danger

**Modern Slavery** – includes forced labour, human trafficking

**Discriminatory** – difference or perceived difference, particularly with respect to race, gender, disability or any of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010

**Spiritual** – inappropriate use of religious beliefs, practice coercion and control of one individual by another in a spiritual context. Also the abuse of trust or power by someone in a position of spiritual authority.

## Responding

### How to react when a child, young person or adult at risk wants to talk about abuse

It is not easy to give precise guidance, but the following may help:

#### General Points

- Accept what the child/adult says (however unlikely the story may sound)
- Keep calm
- Look at the child/adult directly
- Be honest
- Let them know that you will need to tell someone else – don't promise confidentially
- Even when a child/vulnerable adult has broken a rule, they are not to blame for the abuse
- Be aware that the child/adult may have been threatened
- Never push for information

#### Helpful Things to Say or Show

- "I believe you" (or showing acceptance of what is said)
- "I am glad you have told me"
- "It's not your fault"
- "I will help you"

#### Avoid Saying

- "Why didn't you tell anyone before?"
- "I can't believe it"
- "Are you sure this is true?"
- "Why? How? When? Who? Where?"
- Never make false promises
- Never make statements such as "I am shocked, don't tell anyone else"

#### Concluding

- Again, reassure the child/adult that they were right to tell you and that you believe them
- Let the child/adult know what you are going to do next and will let them know what happens (you might have to consider referring to Northamptonshire County Council Children and Young people Services / Police to prevent a child / young person/adult at risk returning home, if you consider them to be seriously at risk of further abuse).
- Immediately refer to someone appropriately qualified.



### **Data Protection and Information sharing**

Under the Data Protection Act 2018 and in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) we aim to process personal information fairly and lawfully, and to keep the information we hold safe and secure, recognising the individuals rights in relation to their data.

The Data Protection Act 2018 allows us to share safeguarding information, as long as it is appropriate.

Sharing of information is on a 'need to know basis'

All paper records are stored securely in the Church Office. Electronic records are received by dedicated emails and stored appropriately.

**Retention and disposal of disclosure information.** All DBS checks are completed on-line by the applicants and Disclosure certificates are issued direct to the applicant. This is done by our umbrella organisation Due Diligence Checking (DDC). Abington Avenue URC only have access to a register of checks which show name, date of check and date of issue of the disclosure, this is via a secure password protected site. DDC have strict data retention and deletion policies when dealing with personal data. All criminal record check form data is deleted 30 days after the Disclosure has been issued, the successful resolution of a dispute process or recruitment decision. DDC retain a record of the checks being carried out and this period is aligned to the DBS retention policies. DDC retain evidence of a compliant check being carried out which includes name, address, contact details and Disclosure Number and issue date



## Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

In responding to an allegation or a Safeguarding concern, accurate records should be kept to aid the reporting process, an **Incident Recording Pack** should be used for this purpose. This contains forms to record the following;

- Who was involved – key people including witnesses
- What happened – facts not opinions, using the person's own words if possible
- Where it happened – specific location and address
- When it happened – date and time
- Who was it referred to and, if known, what the outcomes were – what happened next, including names, roles and contact details
- The name of the person completing the form, signature and date

### Reporting

**What to do if you suspect that abuse may have occurred, or you have a concern.**

#### **Complete an Incident Recording Pack:**

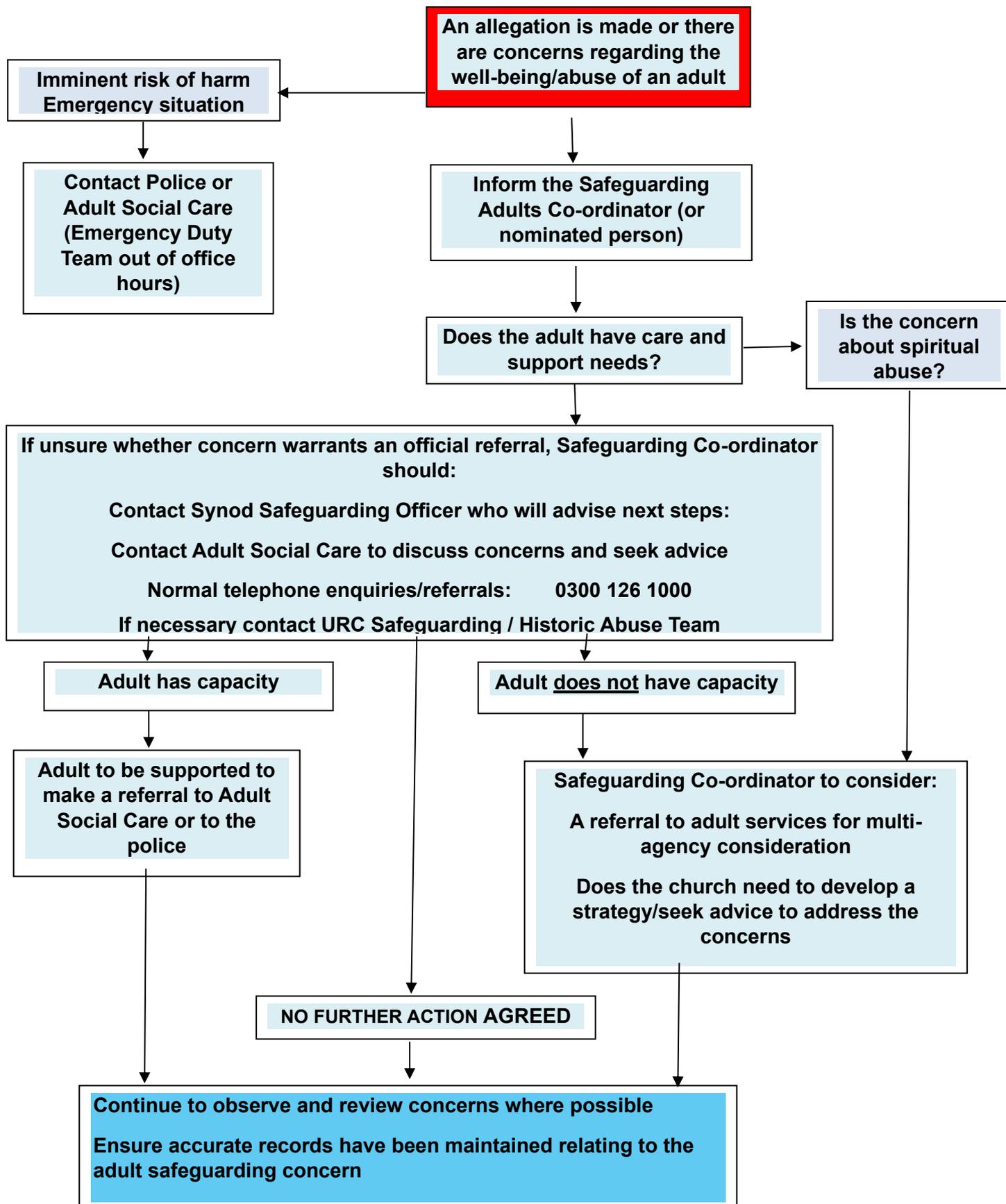
1. Make notes as soon as possible (preferably within an hour of the interview), writing down exactly what the child said and when he/she said it and what was happening immediately beforehand (e.g. description of activity). Record dates and times of these events and when you made the record. Keep all handwritten notes, even if these have been typed subsequently. ("The Incident Recording Form" 8, (see Appendix), may be used for this purpose). Use body maps if appropriate to show marks and injuries.
2. You must report concerns on the same day to the Safeguarding Co-ordinators- (hereafter the "Coordinators") who are nominated by the Elders to act on their behalf in referring all allegations or suspicions of neglect or abuse to the statutory authorities. The Co-ordinators will work with the person reporting the concern to submit any referrals.  
If the suspicions in any way involve the Coordinators then the report should be made to Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and Child Protection Team, 700 Pavilion Drive, Brackmills, Northampton, NN4 7YL., tel 0300 126 1000, (after hours 01604 236828) or to the **Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service** (hereafter "The CCPAS", PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ, tel 0303 003 11 11).
3. Suspicions will not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above.
4. In the event of an allegation being made by a child or young person, we will not inform the parents if we feel that in doing so, the child would be more at risk.

It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make direct referrals to the Safeguarding agencies or seek advice, although we hope that members of the church will use our procedure. If, however, you feel that the Coordinator(s) have not responded appropriately to your concerns, then it is open to you to contact the relevant organisation directly. We hope by making this statement that we demonstrate the relevant commitment of the church to effective Safeguarding.

**The following flow charts may be helpful:**

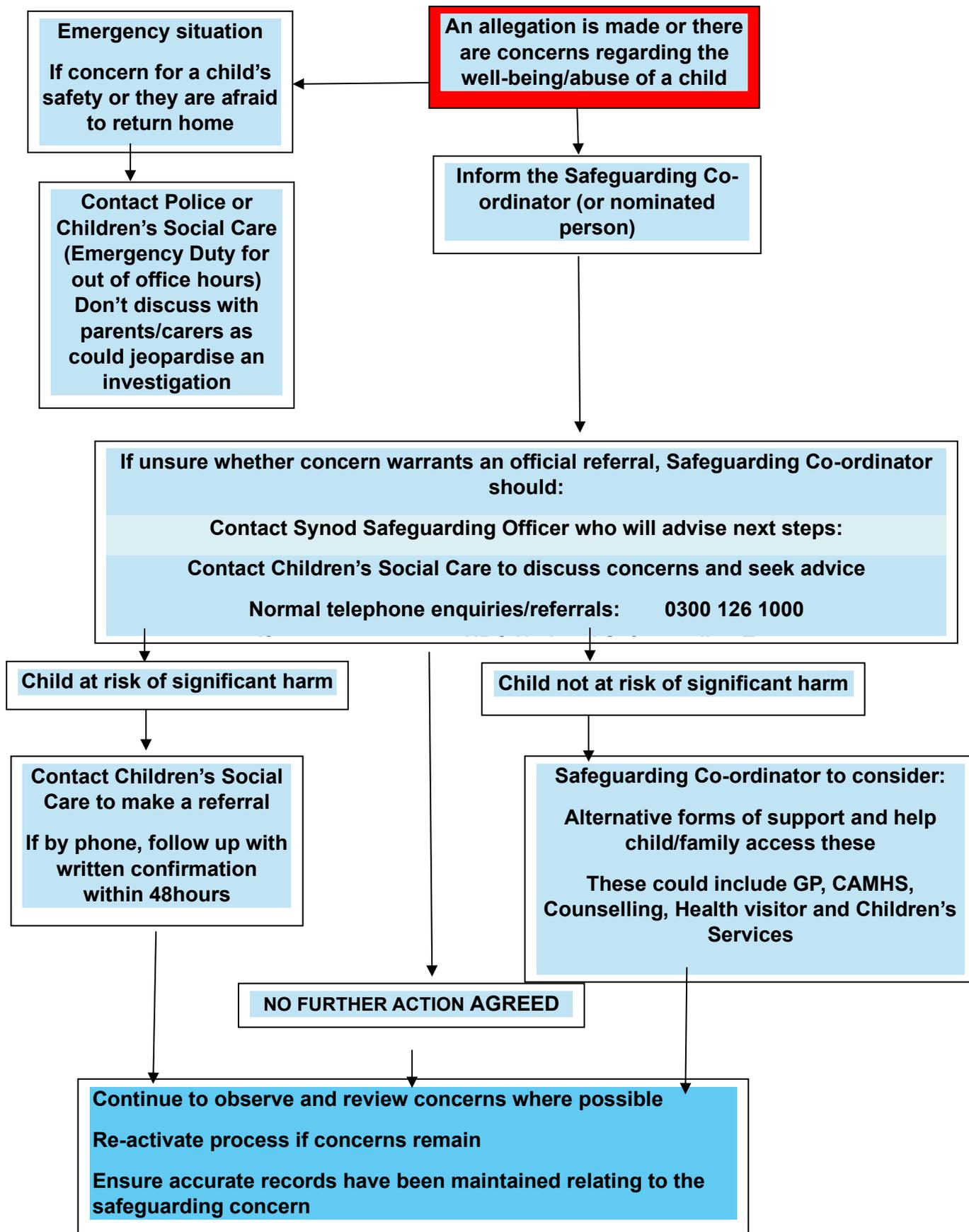
## Flowchart for Action (Adults at risk) next

This flowchart provides an overview of action to be taken when concerned about the welfare of an adult at risk. It is to be used in conjunction with written procedures.



# Flowchart for Action (Children & young people)

This flowchart provides an overview of action to be taken when concerned about the welfare of a child. It is to be used in conjunction with written procedures.





## Procedures for Safeguarding concerns

### Allegations of Physical Injury or Neglect

If a child/adult at risk has a physical injury or sign of neglect, the Coordinator(s) will:

1. Contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and Child Protection team (previously Northamptonshire County Council Children and Young people Services), or the Adult Social Services Care.
2. Where emergency medical attention is necessary it will be sought immediately. The Coordinator(s) will inform the doctor of any suspicions of abuse.
3. In other circumstances, speak with the parent/guardian/carer and suggest that medical help/attention is sought for the child/vulnerable adult.
4. The doctor will then initiate further action, if necessary. If appropriate the parent/guardian/carer will be encouraged to seek help from the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Child Protection team, (previously Northamptonshire County Council Children and Young people Services),
5. Where the parent/guardian/carer is unwilling to seek help, if appropriate, the Coordinator will offer to go with them. If they still fail to act, the Coordinator(s) should, in cases of real concern, contact Northamptonshire County Council Children and Young people Services or the NSPCC for advice.
6. Where the Coordinator(s) is unsure whether or not to refer a case to MASH, or the NSPCC, advice from the CCPAS will be sought and followed. The CCPAS will confirm its advice in writing in case this is needed for reference purposes in future.

### Allegations of Sexual Abuse

In the event of allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse, the Coordinator(s) will:

1. Contact the CCPAS for advice/support, and MASH and Child Protection Team, (previously Northamptonshire County Council Children and Young people Services), The Coordinator(s) will not speak to the parent (or anyone else).
2. If, for any reason, the Coordinator(s) are unsure whether or not to follow the above, then advice from the CCPAS will be sought and followed. The CCPAS will confirm its advice in writing in case this is needed for reference purposes in the future.
3. Under no circumstances will the Coordinator(s) attempt to carry out any investigation into the allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse. The role of the Coordinator(s) is to collect and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and to provide this information to the MASH and Child Protection Team, (previously Northamptonshire County Council Children and Young people Services), whose task it is to investigate the matter under

Section 47 of the Children's Act of 1989.

4. Whilst allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse will normally be reported to the Coordinator(s), the absence of the Coordinator(s) should not delay referral to MASH and Child Protection Team, (previously Northamptonshire County Council Children and Young people Services).
5. Exceptionally, should there be any disagreement between the person in receipt of the allegation or suspicion and the Coordinator(s) as to the appropriateness of referral to, the MASH and Child Protection Team, (previously Northamptonshire County Council Children and Young people Services), that person must report the matter and should do so without hesitation.
6. The Elders will support the Coordinators in their role, and accept that any information they may have in their possession will be shared in a strictly limited way on a need to know basis.



## Useful addresses and numbers

### **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and Child Protection Team (previously Northamptonshire County Council (Children and young people))**

Children, Families and Education,  
700 Pavilion Drive,  
Brackmills,  
Northampton,  
NN4 7YL  
Urgent out of hours - Tel 01604 626938

Tel 0300 126 1000 (Contact number if a child has a social worker)

or

Email - [MASH@northamptonshire.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:MASH@northamptonshire.gcsx.gov.uk)

<http://www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk/social-care/how-to-make-an-online-referral/>

### **Northamptonshire Adult Social Services**

Tel-**0300 126 1000** (Monday to Friday 8am-6pm)

Fax-**01604 236828**

Email-[adultcarenc@northamptonshire.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:adultcarenc@northamptonshire.gcsx.gov.uk)

Out of Hours Team-**01604 626938**

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/adult-social-care-and-wellbeing/reporting-concern-about-adult>

URC East Midlands Synod Safeguarding Co-ordinator:  
Ben Twelves, Tel 07935991545

URC Safeguarding team – for any other safeguarding queries:  
Email address: [safeguarding@urc.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@urc.org.uk) Direct Line: 0207 520 2729

### **The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service**

PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ

Tel 0303 003 11 11

or

Email to [info@ccpas.co.uk](mailto:info@ccpas.co.uk)

### **Due Dilligence Checking Ltd (DDC)**

Meltongate House,  
1282a Melton Road,  
Syston,  
Leicester,  
LE7 2HD

Tel: 0116 2603055  
**www.ddc.uk.net/URC**

**NSPCC**

Tel 0808 8005000 – 24 hour helpline

or

Email to [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)



## Managing allegations, supporting victims and survivors

We are committed to following all the required investigative and regulatory procedures as outlined in the URC Good Practice 6 and will work with statutory agencies to ensure cases are resolved as quickly as possible, with a consistent, fair and thorough investigation.

We will notify the relevant bodies/agencies of incidents as appropriate and will support all those affected.

We will adopt the Good Practice 6 guidance, Chapters 5 and 6

