

Guidelines for Safeguarding Children and Young people. - Issue 09

In this revision of the document, we have made significant alterations to its content.

Warsash URC Church has a new Safeguarding Policy document covering all persons within the Church and its activities. We have also moved some material that is now to be found in our Policy document described above. This includes our Safeguarding policy Statement which is displayed in the Church.

For those working with Children and Young persons we also have a Code of Conduct which defines the key behaviours expected and includes a signed affirmation of compliance.

This document is still used as part of our more detailed Process for Ensuring the Safety and wellbeing of Children and Young persons within our care here at Warsash United Reformed Church.

All of these documents can be found on our website at www.warsashurc.com/resources

Date: 22nd October 2024

Current Issue 09

Date for next review: 21st October 2027

NB This document is reviewed tri-annually by the serving Elders of Warsash United Reformed Church or sooner if legislation, directives or advice on its content is significantly updated within this period.

* The terms "Children" and "Young Persons" refer to anyone under the age of 18years.

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1.0 Recommended Procedures

- a. Plan work to minimise situations where the possibility of abuse of children may occur.
- b. Have policies and procedures on the management and supervision of all activities, and provide training on the implementation of them.
- c. Appoint the Church Safeguarding Coordinator and two "link" persons to act as deputies to the Safeguarding coordinator.
- d. Provide a safe environment, undertaking all types of safety checks, regular equipment inspections, controlling access and identification of all those using the facilities and keeping adequate records. This is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Coordinator.
- e. Give all workers, staff and volunteers, clear roles.
- f. Carry out a full recruitment procedure as described in the Good Practice 6 pack, for all workers, staff and volunteers.
- g. Use supervision and support as a means of protecting young people and children.
- h. Have a system where young people and children know they may talk to an independent person.
- i. Implement and issue guidelines to all workers with young people and children on how to deal with abuse or suspected abuse. Ensure training is available on the use of these guidelines.
- j. Confirm with groups/organisations, who work with young people and children and wish to hire/use United Reformed Church premises, that they undertake to follow the HM Government Document "Working together to Safeguard Children". (Appendix 1) through a policy of their own or will agree to work under this policy.

2.0 Implementation of Recommended Procedures

a) Plan work to minimise situations where the possibility of abuse of children may occur.

- During normal services when other activities are going on at the same time on the premises, we will arrange to have more than one group in the same room together. Deviations from this may occur if the activities require more privacy. In this instance the groups can be separated using portable screening or one of the groups can use an adjoining room. In the event that only one group is able to meet in a room and if the numbers of children or young people in any group is only one, our policy is for that group not to meet at all. In that event there is a resource table at the back of the main Church meeting room, which can be used with young children. All children are expected to stay with their parents or with friends in the main meeting. The duty group leader should either remain with the child at this resource table, or assign the responsibility back to the parent by bringing the child back to them.
- During times when a group activity is the only activity going on at the premises our policy is to have no fewer than two responsible persons* present during the activity.
* Responsible persons must be adults recognised by the Church as leaders for the group or recognised by the Church as capable to support the group leader.
A list of Responsible persons is maintained by the Church Safeguarding Coordinator
- Workers that need to meet a child or young person off the Church premises on Church business must only do so with a parent or other adult carer present.
- Groups are not to be taken off the premises e.g. on outings etc, with less than two adults present.
- When children and young people have to be transported by car or minibus, we insist that each passenger must wear a seat belt at all times. The no of passengers per car is strictly regulated by the no of available seat belted seats.
- When transporting groups in cars, it is recommended that two responsible persons are present in each car. We permit (at each driver's discretion) one responsible person per car provided that more than one car is in the party and that they travel in convoy. At journey stops there must be 2 responsible persons with the group possible we aim to have more than one passenger in a car at any time.

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b) Have Policies and Procedures on the management and supervision of all activities and provide training on the Implementation of them.

- Our policy for governing all activities relating to Children and Young people is entitled – “Safeguarding Policy”. We also have a policy statement which is prominently displayed on the Main Church notice board. We also have a supporting document “Code of Conduct for working with children”. Copies of this document and the ones listed above can be obtained from the Church Website. www.warsashurc.com/resources
- We have appointed a Church Safeguarding Coordinator to oversee all aspects of Church Safeguarding. The name of the Safeguarding Coordinator is on the displayed Policy statement.
- A risk assessment is carried out on each activity addressing child protection and safety issues. Risk assessments are filed with the Church Safeguarding Coordinator.
- We have working links with our local Social Services Department, who have a copy of our policy document on file.
- We have appointed two link persons who work with the Church Safeguarding coordinator to help ensure that child protection issues are reported to the relevant authorities. They can also be approached in confidence by children who wish to report a safeguarding concern. The names of the link persons are given on the displayed policy statement.
- We have appointed First Aiders who are regularly trained. They are identified on the displayed policy statement.
- We have appointed a Church Safety Officer / Fire Marshall. This person is also regularly trained and they are identified on the displayed policy statement.

Digital Media Policy

- We do not have internet access at our Church and do not encourage access as part of the normal activities of the Church. Mobile phones are turned off or put away during normal Church activities.
- We strongly discourage the use of social media or any other Electronic Communication means for communicating directly with Children or Young people. If it becomes necessary to do so any communication will be copied to their parents or to another Church Officer.
- The Church operates a Facebook page on it’s Website. No photographs or personal information is presented on the Facebook page without the permission of each person included in any material.

c) Appoint a Church Safeguarding Coordinator and two “Link” people

A Safeguarding Coordinator should be appointed as the person to take the lead on Safeguarding Matters. A “Link” person(s) should be appointed who support the Safeguarding coordinator in the implementation of the Church safeguarding policy and procedures.

- The appointments of the Safeguarding Coordinator and Link person(s) are made and ratified by the Elders of Warsash United Reformed Church.
- The Link person(s) is/are chosen taking into consideration experience of working with Children and Young people. They are selected also on being sympathetic to young people and children but objective in the pursuance of their task. They are also able to act confidentially, speedily, and decisively and relate well to statutory authorities, parents and carers etc.

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d) Provide a Safe Environment

Appoint Persons to Coordinate First Aid, Fire and Safety Provision. A number of persons should be appointed who can administer First Aid. Others should be appointed to coordinate the Safety of the premises and Equipment used and / or matters relating to Fire Safety.

- The appointments to these positions are made and ratified by the Elders of Warsash United Reformed Church.
- First Aiders are to receive regular Training through the Church and are to be identified on the Policy Statement Document.
- The positions for Safety Coordinator and Fire Safety can be combined. Regular Training on relevant Safety Procedures should be made available.
- Regular Risk Assessments for all activities are carried out and copies filed with the Safeguarding Coordinator

e) Give all workers, staff and volunteers clear roles.

- All workers in Warsash United Reformed Church, working with Children and Young people are issued with a Job Description. A copy of these guidelines governing their responsibilities and recommended behaviours are also provided. We also have a Code of Conduct outlining expected behaviours as they lead their groups. There is a signed agreement to comply with all policies.
- Copies of these guidelines and a list of all those currently working with Children and Young People are available by contacting the Church Safeguarding Coordinator. Alternatively copies of the guideline documents can be found on our website www.warsashurc.com/resources

f) Carry Out the full recruitment procedure for all workers – staff and volunteers.

- All workers who are involved with the Children's and Young persons' work in the Church will be subject to a mandatory DBS check. At the time of writing (2024) this check must now be updated every 5 years (was 3). The DBS procedure includes an approved identity verification and the Church secretary together with one other approved Elder is the agreed signatory authority for this purpose. The Church Safeguarding Coordinator is also responsible to see each person involved with Children's and Young person's work has a current DBS check in place.
- All workers who are involved with the Children's and Young persons' work will be approved by the Elders of Warsash United Reformed Church. New candidates proposed for this work should have a character reference prepared by the proposer and presented to the elders. This reference should be in writing and contain at least two referees who can verify the applicant's character and suitability for this type of work.
- All Candidates must complete an Application Form and be interviewed by the Elders of the Church.
- Upon appointment the applicant will be provided with copies of the Church Safeguarding policy, a code of conduct, this guidelines document and a written Job specification. They will be asked to sign the Code of conduct document to signify their agreement to abide by the policies.
- Where necessary, training will be provided to cover all aspects of the work where it is mutually agreed with the Applicant and the Elders that this is in the interest and safety of the Children and Young people or to the Applicant.

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g) Use Supervision and Support as a means of protecting young people and children.

- Regular Team meetings of the Youth and Children's work groups are held with at least one of the Elders. These meetings provide opportunities for workers to meet together and review and plan their work, to share experiences, receive training and to talk about their relationships with the children and young people.
- Safeguarding is a reported topic at monthly Elders Meetings and at Church Annual General Meetings.

h) Establish a system whereby young people and children know they may talk with an independent person.

- Within the Church Children will be able to approach the Link person(s) identified and displayed on the Notice board. Also, the Children or Young persons can talk to any of the serving elders of the Church or the Safeguarding Coordinator. Additionally, the contact numbers for Childline, NSPCC helplines will be prominently displayed on the notice-board if contact outside the Church is the preference. Also displayed are contact numbers for the Police.

i) Implement and issue guidelines to all workers with children and young people on how to deal with abuse. Ensure training is available on the use of these guidelines.

- All staff receive a copy of this policy document as part of their induction. Additionally, training is given on the Church Safeguarding policy and its implementation. From time-to-time training by a third party can be organised by way of refreshing and updating the knowledge to take account of changes in legislation. The Church actively encourages and supports attendance at these training opportunities.
- An incident report is made on the report form shown on Appendix 3. Blank forms are available from the Church Secretary. There is also an accident book kept in the Church kitchen close to the First Aid box.
- The flowchart on Appendix 4 demonstrates the procedure to be followed where abuse is suspected, disclosed or discovered.

j) Confirm with group / organisations who work with Children or Young people and who wish to use United Reformed Church premises, that they undertake to follow the HM Government Document "Working together to Safeguard Children"

- We require all organisations who work with Children and Young people and who use our premises to either read our policy document and agree to implement it, or to demonstrate they already have a similar policy drawn up under the guidelines in the HM Government document "Working together to Safeguard Children"

The leader of the organisation must complete and sign a form for this purpose – see Appendix 5

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3.0 How to Deal with abuse

a) Duty both to prevent abuse and to report abuse

It is the United Reformed Church's duty both to prevent abuse and to report any abuse discovered or suspected. The normal rule of client confidentiality cannot be observed when abuse is discovered or suspected. When workers suspect, discover or are told / learn about abuse occurring in or outside the United Reformed Church setting, they should follow the reporting procedures outlined in the paragraph 5.4 entitled "Reporting Abuse – suspected, disclosed or discovered.

b) Types of abuse

The definitions of child abuse given by the Department of Health, DfEE, the Home Office and Welsh Office 1991 are as follows:

Physical	Actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury (or suffering) to a child, including deliberate poisoning, suffocation and Munchausen's syndrome by proxy. [The term "Munchausen syndrome by proxy" (MSBP) was coined around thirty years ago. In most cases, a mother either claims that her child is sick, or she goes even further to actually make the child sick. This "devoted" parent then continually presents the child for medical treatment, all the while denying any knowledge of the origin of the problem--namely, herself. As a result, MSBP victims may undergo extraordinary numbers of lab tests, medication trials, and even surgical procedures that aren't really needed.]
Sexual.	Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent.
Emotional.	Actual or likely severe adverse affect on the emotional and behavioural development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional treatment or rejection. All abuse involves some emotional ill treatment. This category is used where it is the main or sole form of abuse.
Neglect	The persistent or severe neglect of a child or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold and starvation or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of a child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

The following may be **signs of abuse**

NB: Physical abuse and neglect are difficult to hide. Sexual abuse can be almost impossible to identify and prove. Many symptoms of distress can point to abuse but there may be other explanations. It is important, therefore, that the above signs are not taken as indications that abuse has taken place. They should make us stop and think, but not necessarily jump to conclusions.

Physical	unexplained injuries or those which have received no medical attention, hidden injuries, shrinking away from unexpected arm movements.
Sexual	allegations made by the child or young person, pre-occupation with sexual matters, sexual activity through words, play or drawings, severe sleep disturbances with fears and phobias, being sexually provocative with adults.
Emotional	regression in behaviour, nervousness, sudden under-achievement, inappropriate relationships with peers/adults, attention seeking, running away/ stealing / lying, looking uncared for.
Neglect	scavenging for food, unkempt clothing, listlessness, underweight, poor hygiene.

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c) **Reacting to Abuse – Both within and outside the Church. In an emergency act at once.**

If a child is clearly in distress from a physical injury seek medical attention immediately.

Take the child to A&E or phone for an ambulance. Tell the medical services what the child has told you or of any suspicions you may have.

Remember anything the child says and record this as soon as possible.

You may suspect abuse; you may discover or witness abuse or someone may report abuse to you.

However you become aware of abuse, it is important that you pursue the following guidance.

- Do not delay but at the same time do not panic – **stay calm and listen carefully.**
- Do not confront the person who is alleged to be responsible for the abuse.
- Record any observations and keep an account of what you have been told by staff or the child or young person. These records must be accurate and factual. A sample report form is in Appendix 3
- It is not your role to investigate – concentrate on presenting information clearly.
- Pass on your information to the appropriate person – see flow chart appendix 4a and 4b.
- Do not discuss with anyone other than the person to whom you should report the matter.

If a child or young person wants to talk about abuse

- Accept what the child or young person says, keep calm and look at them directly from time to time
- Let them know that you need to tell someone else, do not promise confidentiality even when a child or young person has broken a rule they are not to blame.
- Be aware that the child or young person may be being threatened
- Never push for information, avoid asking questions, let the child talk
- Reassure the child or young person, they were right to tell you.
- Let the child or young person know what you are going to do next, who you need to tell.
- Make notes as soon as possible, writing down exactly what was said and when he/she said it. Record dates and times of these events and keep the hand written record, even if these are subsequently typed up, for an indefinite period. See Incident Report Form. Appendix 3
- If it is considered that the person making the disclosure is likely to be at risk by returning home, immediate contact should be made with the Social Services or the Police.

Helpful things to say include:

- I take what you're saying very seriously
- It isn't your fault, and you are not to blame at all.
- I am pleased that you have told me.
- I'm sorry that it happened to you.
- We'll help you (implies a wider network of support and reduces dependency)

Unhelpful things to say include:

- Why didn't you say something before?
- I really can't believe it! Are you sure this happened?
- Why? Where? When? Who?
- Make sure you don't tell a soul.
- You can trust me; I won't tell anyone....

Concluding the conversation

- Reassure the child that they were right to tell you.
- Inform them of what you are going to do next, and that you will let them know what happens. (Your next step is to write notes and report everything).

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- Let them know that these concerns and allegations will be taken seriously, and that referrals to relevant agencies and/or the police will be made when/ where appropriate.

d) Reporting abuse – suspected, disclosed or discovered.

All workers should be aware of the appropriate reporting procedure – this process is illustrated by the flowchart in Appendix 4a and 4b

Workers should inform the Church Safeguarding Coordinator or a “link” person appointed within the Warsash United Reformed Church or another appropriate person.

It is the responsibility of the “link” person to ensure that cases of abuse are reported. It is normal procedure to contact the local Social Services team.

If the child or young person is in immediate danger the police should be contacted using 999.

The Social Services Duty team number is 0300 555 1384 (office hours) or 0300 555 1373 (out of hours)

The NSPCC can be contacted for advice – the helpline is open 24 hours a day, the number is 0880 800 500.

Also available for advice is the CCPAS [Churches’ Child Protection Advisory Service] – 01322 660011

Any worker, staff or volunteer, can bypass the procedures and share concerns with an outside agency – Social Services, NSPCC – if they feel that their line manager or management team / committee are not dealing with their concern or are implicated in some way.

In every area Social Services and police have procedures for investigating cases where a child may be at risk. Sometimes a child protection case conference will be convened. It may be appropriate for a United Reformed Church representative to attend. This person may be present to share information or in a support capacity. It is important to be clear which role is being undertaken.

Consideration should be given, on a case-by-case basis, to the support which can be given to an abused child or young person, recognising that the support needs to be non-judgemental, appropriate and long term. External help, available through Social Services or other Counselling agencies, may be advisable

If anything is likely to receive attention from the Media then the URC Press Office should also be informed and in such cases, it is also appropriate to inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer. Your Church Secretary can provide these contact details.

e) Dealing with allegations or suspicions of abuse within the United Reformed Church.

Any allegation made against any volunteer, paid employee, minister or any other officer of the United Reformed Church must be taken seriously. It is recognised that this can be a distressing and stressful situation for all involved but it is vital that the Church acts responsibly with regard to children who have been entrusted into the care of Church workers.

When a report of an allegation or suspicion is received it is important to respond immediately by reporting it to a “link” person, and ensuring a detailed record is kept, dated and signed. Unless directly involved, the Church Safeguarding Coordinator should be alerted too.

When the informant is an adult the “link” person should clarify the following:

- The nature of the allegation or suspicion
- Details of the child/children and family/families involved.
- Any relevant information relating to the person against whom the allegation is made
- Dates and times of the incident as appropriate
- Details of any others involved and / or any witnesses

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This information should be reported immediately to the Local Authority Social Services or Children's Services immediately. They will be able to advise about what will happen next.

When the allegation is made by a child, the process as described at 5.4 should be followed.

Additionally, the following should also be considered when an allegation or suspicion of abuse involves a volunteer, an employee, a minister or any other officer of the United Reformed Church:

- Does the person against whom the allegation is made have ongoing contact with children? In most circumstances where LADO services become involved, they can assist in offering advice about suspending any activity that involves contact with children.
- For a paid employee there will be a need to consider whether a period of suspension from active duties is appropriate while an investigation is ongoing. Depending on the type of post of the employee it should be clear in their contract who has responsibility for this level of decision making and which United Reformed Church bodies need to be consulted and advised.
- For any allegation against a Minister of the United Reformed Church there is clear guidance about suspension / disciplinary matters. Synod Moderators should be informed of any concern immediately. They will be able to advise which other URC Officers should be informed and how to proceed.
- Who can offer appropriate care and pastoral support to the person under suspicion? This should not be the same person offering support to any alleged victim or informant.

It should be noted that in these circumstances the practice of a short-term suspension pending the outcome of any investigation is a measure used to protect the volunteer, staff member, minister as well as the child. It is not a method of apportioning blame but should be regarded as a neutral way of protecting all involved until an investigation can be concluded.

There may be situations where an alleged offender and a victim and/or their family are in the same Church. If this is the case, support will need to be given to all parties. This should be offered by different people as it is only in this way that support can be offered impartially and effectively.

At the conclusion of an investigation opportunities should be created for all those who have been involved in any supporting capacity to debrief and obtain any support they may need themselves.

Appendix 1

Working together for Safeguarding Children 2023

A child-centred approach is fundamental to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child. All practitioners should follow the principles of the Children Acts 1989 and 2004. These Acts make clear that the welfare of children is paramount and that they are best looked after within their families, with their parents playing a full part in their lives, unless compulsory intervention in family life is necessary.

Children have said that they need:

- vigilance:**
 - to have adults notice when things are troubling them**
- understanding and action: to understand what is happening;**
 - to be heard and understood; and to have that understanding acted upon**
- stability:**
 - to be able to develop an ongoing stable relationship of trust with those helping them**
- respect:**
 - to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not**
- information and engagement:**
 - to be informed about, and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans**
- explanation:**
 - to be informed of the outcome of assessments, and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response**
- support:**
 - to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family**
- advocacy:**
 - to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views**
- protection:**
 - to be protected against all forms of abuse, exploitation, and discrimination, and the right to special protection and help if a refugee**

Appendix 2

Guidelines for Staff Working on their Own with Children / Young People

1. Always let your Line Manager know the time and place of meeting with child/young person.
2. Always meet at a “neutral place”, never in a home.
3. Let other people know that you are there and / or remain visible in a public place.
4. Establish mutually understood behaviour of both parties at the outset.
5. Keep a detailed record of the appointment.

Appendix 3

Incident Report Form

Name of Child.....

Name of Worker.....

Position of Worker.....

Date & Time of Report.....

Nature of Concern

.....

.....

.....

.....

[If you've not already done so, make a factual written record of your observations & any conversations. Sign & date it. Pass it to the Safeguarding Coordinator or to the Link person]

Who have You Spoken to about Your Concerns?

Child	Yes/No	
Carer	Yes/No	
Senior Staff/ "link person "	Yes/No	Name.....
Social Services	Yes/No	Name.....

Feedback.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Signature of Worker:.....

Date and Time.....

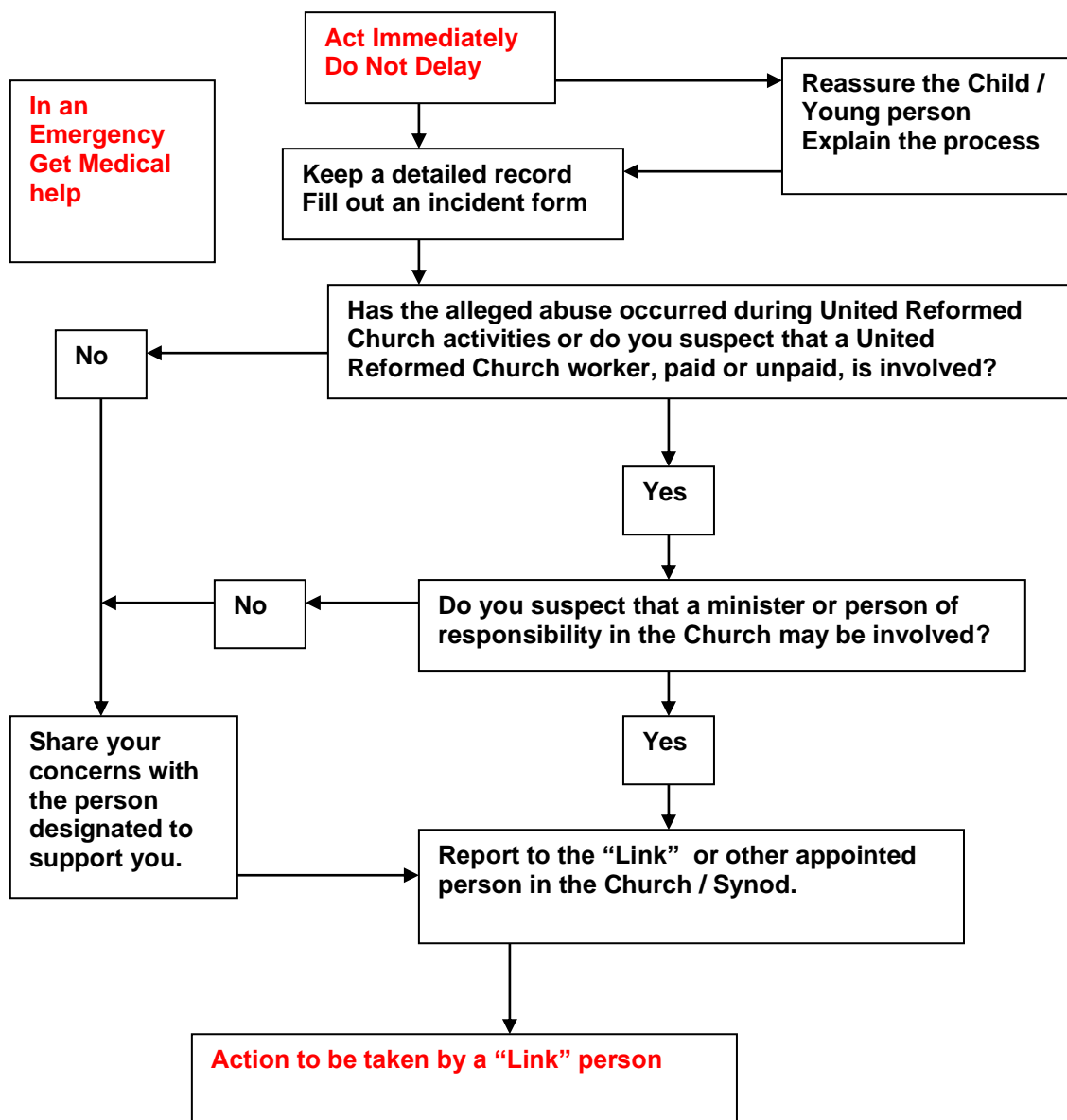
Signature of "Link Person" / Line Manager:.....

Date and Time.....

Appendix 4A

Flow Chart 1 of 2

Deal with a Disclosure of Abuse

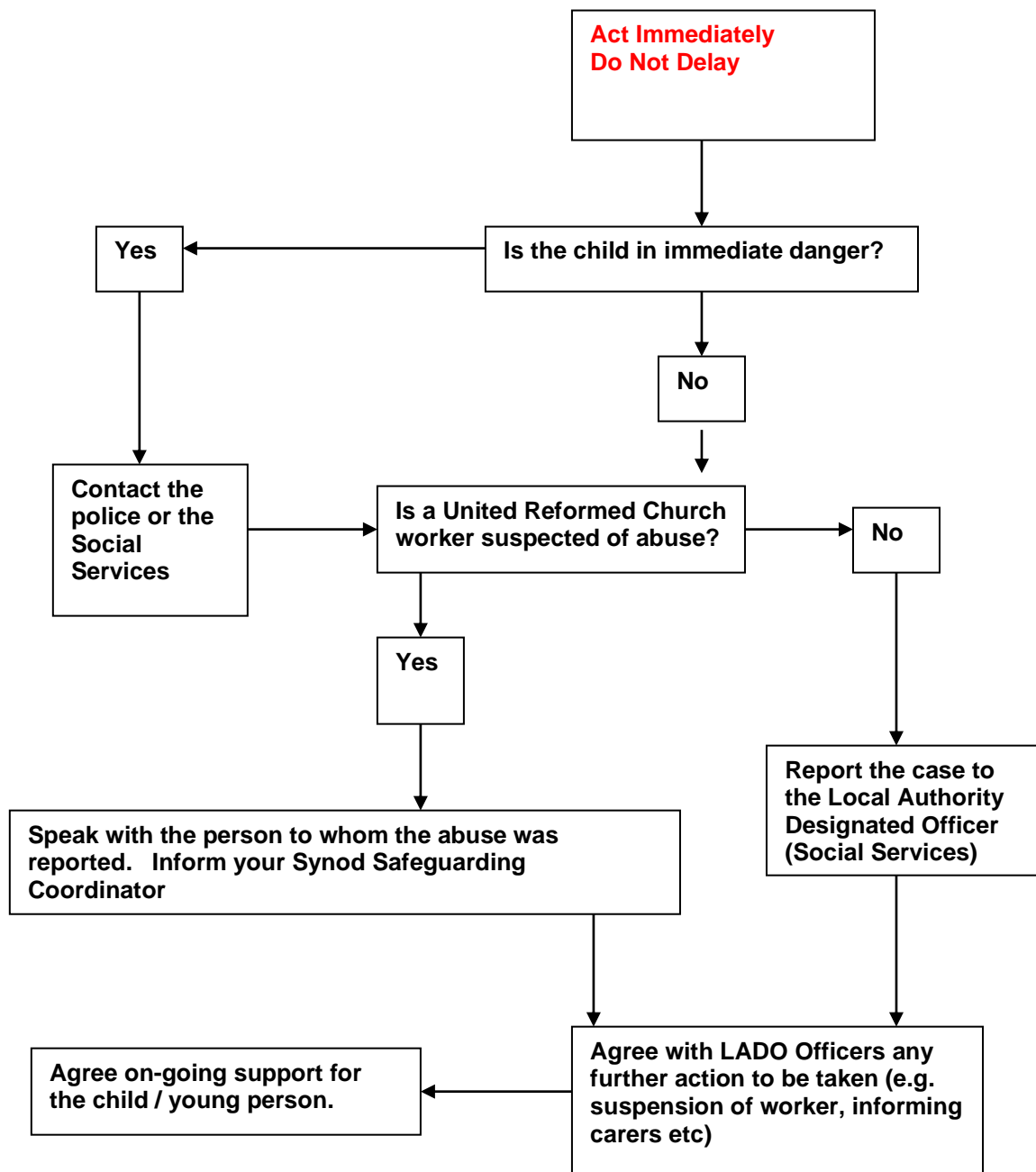


If you are not satisfied that the person to whom you have reported your observations is dealing with your concerns, it is open to you to contact the relevant authorities direct.

Appendix 4B

Flow Chart 2 of 2

Action By “Link” Person



If you are not satisfied that the person to whom you have reported your observations is dealing with your concerns, it is open to you to contact the relevant authorities direct.

Appendix 5 Letting Agreement – Third Parties

All groups working with children and young people under the age of 18 years and using these premises are required to agree to uphold the principles of Safeguarding Children and Young people.

Therefore, all such groups are required: -

Either

To comply with the principles outlined in the Warsash URC Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct for working with Children. (a copy of these are available and must be examined before signing this agreement)

Or

To implement a similar policy which has been drawn up under the guidelines in the Home Office Document "SAFE FROM HARM" or the HM Government Document "Working together to Safeguard Children".

The form below is extracted from the Current Warsash URC Lettings Booking form as it applies to this topic.

1. Details of Booking Dates and times. If a regular activity please state frequency of event.
.....
2. Details of Your Organisation. Give objectives / aims/ Approx No's of participants.
.....
3. The Std Booking gives Access to the Lower Church Hall and public areas. If you need the use of additional facilities please advise. EG. Cooking Facilities / Upper Room / Church equipment.
.....
4. Principle Activity of your event.
.....
5. If your activity involves work with groups of Children – you may need a Safeguarding plan. You need to select below how you are meeting the Home Office requirements for safeguarding and sign next to it.
a) Own policy..... b) Comply with Church policy.....
c) Not needed for my activity.....d) Meet this another way.....
6. Your Contact Details.
Name.....
Address.....
Telephone / Mobile No.....
E-mail Contact details.....
7. Application Date
.....