



January 2026

2026 greetings to you all.

The first few months of each year are always busy for us all with the Annual Safeguarding Returns. Our Synod Safeguarding Officers (SSOs) will shortly start forensically looking at the data collected. We also welcome a new Synod Safeguarding Officer for Wales, Lee Whyman.



'God is our strength and refuge, our very present help in time of trouble' Psalm 46

Annual Safeguarding Returns

The online portal is now open for you to complete your Annual Safeguarding Returns (ASR) online. It will close on Saturday 28 February.

We understand that some people feel more comfortable completing a printed version of the ASR and Synod offices

have sent portal users a PDF version that can be printed off, completed and then sent back to their Synod. Alternatively, you can log into the portal and download a blank copy there.

Further guidance for the ASR is available on the URC Website <https://urc.org.uk/your-church/urc-church-update/> . There you will find a downloadable blank copy of the ASR and Synod contact details for further assistance.

Please do remember the ASRs are **not** a test but rather an annual opportunity for us to see where we are at as a denomination and how we can better support Synods, churches and safeguarding coordinators. This helps the safeguarding team to help keep our communities safe through support where needed, including individual church support, training and policy development.

We want to take this opportunity to thank you for all you do.

Training Update

Training Matrix - General Assembly 2025 adopted an updated training framework which has been shared widely across the denomination and, so far, is working well as it provides a simple training pathway for each role and includes ideas for supplementary bite-sized training on specialist topics.



It is broken down into [England](#) and [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#) for ease of reference. We would encourage you to take time to look at the framework to ensure that you have the correct level of training. Mandatory courses are bookable via your Synod.

Bespoke bite-sized courses - these are short supplementary courses (2 hours delivered on Zoom) available to anyone regardless of role or which synod they are in. Places should be booked through [Emma Pearce](#) stating your name/church/role and courses you wish to attend. Please look at the current offering of [sessions](#) and we're sure you will find something of interest to your role or church community.

Advanced training for Ministers – a key change from the new training matrix is that active (including active retired) Ministers are now mandated to complete advanced safeguarding training.

Training is usually delivered by synods but to facilitate ministers in England and Wales who do not currently have advanced training (or last did training over 3 years ago) we are running a number of Zoom delivered courses for these ministers in England and Wales. Ministers are welcome to elect to attend one of the online Zoom sessions below OR attend a session delivered by their Synod.

The online sessions are bookable as follows:

- Tuesday 3rd March 10am-12noon and Tuesday 10th March 10am-12.30pm – [March booking form](#)
- Wednesday 6 May 1-3pm and Wednesday 13th May 1-3.30pm – [May booking form](#)
- Monday 5th October 1-3pm and Monday 12th October 1-3.30pm – [October booking form](#)



Further information is available from our Training Officer, [Carrie Kaunda](#)

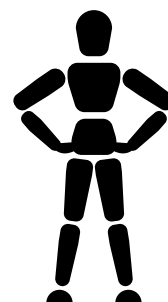
Can you help us?

There have been instances where our SSOs have attempted to contact a church safeguarding coordinator or church secretary listed for a church on the URC database but find the person has temporarily ceased performing their church role.

If a church safeguarding coordinator is temporarily unavailable (this could be due to sickness or an extended trip), we would be grateful if you could either let the Synod Safeguarding Officer know or update the database via the church portal so we can ensure they are not disturbed.

Safeguarding Convenor – an opportunity

We are seeking applications for the role Convenor of the United Reformed Church Safeguarding Committee.



You will have a current or recent working knowledge of safeguarding with children and/or adults at risk and have an understanding of contextualised safeguarding within the faith setting. You must be a member of the URC.

As the convenor of the committee, you will be instrumental in overseeing the implementation of the URC's safeguarding policies and the strategic management of safeguarding across the denomination. You will support the Head of Safeguarding in their role as Secretary to the committee and you will chair the committee.

Terms of Reference are downloadable [here](#) and please see the [job description and person specification](#). More information on the role of a General Assembly Committee convenor can be found [here](#).

Interested?

If you want to find out more, please contact:

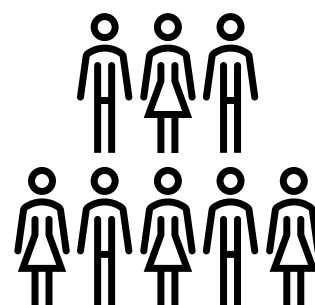
Sharon Barr – URC Head of Safeguarding and Safeguarding Committee Secretary

sharon.barr@urc.org.uk / 07776 178 246

Safeguarding Symposium

We were delighted to host the biannual Safeguarding Symposium in October 2025.

We presented the new training matrix and DBS/PVG disclosure updates from the safeguarding team, and were joined by Carolina Kuzaks-Cardenas of [Restored UK](#) who gave an overview of domestic abuse in churches and how our responses to cases can affect the outcomes for victims of this type of abuse. We will shortly make available the recording of the event on our website – please do check back in in the next week or so.



<https://urc.org.uk/safeguarding/training-and-webinars/>

To find more about domestic abuse in churches please visit Restored UK [website](#).

We will also be running a short 2 hour Zoom session later in the year. Once a date has been finalized we will circulate it widely.

Staff Changes

National Synod of Wales



We welcome Lee Whyman to the United Reformed Church Safeguarding Team. He joined us in December and has settled within the team super swiftly.

Lee says

‘Hello, I’m Lee Whyman, Safeguarding Officer for the Welsh Synod. With over 30 years in policing, I bring a wealth of

experience to safeguarding. Most of my career was spent as a Detective, including more than 15 years dedicated to child and adult protection within the Public Protection Unit. In the final five years of service, I led investigations as a Detective Sergeant in the Major Crime Team.

I’m passionate about creating safe environments and supporting those who need it most. If you’d like to get in touch, you can reach me at

<mailto:lee.whyman.urcwaless@urc.org.uk> or on my work mobile 07883 361093.

I work part-time on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday (9:30 AM – 5:00 PM), and I’m always happy to help with safeguarding concerns or advice.’