**Newsletter issue: 3 Date: April 2021**

**Introduction**

We hope that the April newsletter reaches you in good health and coincides with a period of sunshine, longer days, and warmer weather. The last few months have been hard across in so many ways and for so many people, you may not even really know how you feel at the moment. So much at this time seems to be hinged on hope, hope for the future and for the sense of “normality” that we used to take for granted. Please remember that there is help and support available to you, whether it’s through family, a friend, an organisation or through your local church. Take the first step and reach out if you need help, you might be surprised how many other people are feeling the same as you.

We want to dedicate this newsletter and send our most sincere thanks to local church safeguarding coordinators and Synod Safeguarding Officers who have been completing their sections of the Annual Church Returns. We appreciate the amount of work that goes into this and we know that you do this in addition to many other competing tasks. You are doing the vital safeguarding work in the denomination and we want you to know that your efforts and time do not go unnoticed. You are so valued for everything that you do.

We hope that you will find some of the resources and news articles useful and that you will take part in any consultations available. The festival of Easter symbolizes new life and regeneration, we wish this for you and all the people that you love and hold dear.

With kindest wishes from the Safeguarding Team at Church House

NSPCC helpline staff have recorded a 53% rise in the number of contacts from adults worried about children living with domestic abuse since the start of the pandemic.

**New CSC7 Form**

If you change your Church Safeguarding Coordinator, then there is a new form for you complete on the URC Website. Completing this form informs your Synod Safeguarding Officer and the team at Church House of the change and this helps us to know where churches do not have a safeguarding coordinator and to offer support accordingly. The CSC7 form can now be found on the URC’s safeguarding page in the new ‘resources’ section [here.](https://urc.org.uk/safeguarding-resources)

**NSPCC Coronavirus Guidance**

The NSPCC have written a series of guidance for parents and carers who need advice and support during the pandemic. There are guides about taking to children who are worried about the coronavirus, guides to managing online safety and suggestions as to how to support children who are returning to school. The NSPCC has excellent resources available as well as a wealth of different information which could benefit anyone. More information is available [here](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/coronavirus-advice-suppport-children-families-parents/).

**Safeguarding for Trustees**

On Monday 30th November, the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) delivered a 90-minute safeguarding training session for faith-based charity trustees which explored some of the steps needed to ensure good governance and create safe cultures and practices. The training was delivered by Simon Bayliss (Senior Practice Development Manager, SCIE) and intended to equip participants with an understanding of the responsibilities of trustees and the chance to reflect on the effectiveness of the structures already in place in their church. A recording of the session can be found [here](https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/faith-groups/trustees/training). well as a PDF of the slides used.

**Survivor engagement in faith-based organisations**

On Friday 11th December, the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) held a webinar about the importance of working collaboratively with those who have experienced abuse. The webinar was an opportunity to learn more about what makes good survivor engagement and how this works in practice. Ioannis Athanasiou, our URC Safeguarding Adviser, was a panel speaker at this event and shared some of his experiences of working with survivors of abuse. The webinar and a link to slides used can be found [here.](https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/faith-groups/survivor-engagement)

**Mental Health Webinar**

On March 19th and 26th the URC’s first online mental health webinar was held. Many thanks to all those who attended, to the Thames North and Southern Safeguarding Officer Belinda Nielsen for organising the event, and to Dr. Brett Grellier for delivering an excellent and educational talk. With over ten years’ experience working as a Senior Psychologist in NHS, Private and Third Sector settings assessing and treating people for a wide range of difficulties, Brett covered a wide breadth of information on common mental health disorders and practical applications for spotting and supporting people in mental health crises. The strong interest received in this webinar reflects the growing need of mental health awareness and wellbeing solutions within our homes, communities, and congregations.

**Thrive LDN - Youth Mental Health First Aid**

Tom Hackett the CYDO in Southern Synod has connected with Thrive LDN, an organisation that are offering funded Youth Mental Health First Aid Training across London. They can arrange a private course if you have a group of participants who want to be trained, or you can access available spaces on upcoming courses using the below link.

<https://thriveldn.co.uk/core-activities/youth-mental-health-first-aid/>

Thrive LDN have funded spaces available until July 2021 and courses run for a maximum group size of 16 participants.

**URC Guidance - deciding whether or not to offer face-to-face activities**

Now government restrictions permit face-to-face activities, it is for local children’s and youth group leaders (in consultation with Church Elders) to consider whether online / support at home engagement should start to transition to this within the current restrictions in their area.

#### **Risk assessments**

Risk of infection is impacted by proximity (how close people are together), duration (how long people are together), environment (how well ventilated) and contact with infected surfaces (furniture, washrooms, materials, door handles etc). **There should be no sharing of food or drink, crockery or cutlery, equipment or materials.** Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach, and cleaning frequently touched surfaces more often than usual. Increase frequency of cleaning of toilets and washrooms and encourage everyone to clean their hands more often than usual. All organised activities need to follow the government guidance for out of schools settings and must have the following in place to prevent the spread of infection (in addition to all normal safeguarding measures, see our safeguarding policy [Good Practice 5](https://urc.org.uk/good-practice-policy-and-procedures)):

* Risk assessment of the premises or outdoor location – this must be Covid19 ready (for URC premises use [Covid-19 Risk Assessment](https://urc.org.uk/images/images/URC_Risk_Assessment_Template_Updated.pdf) (PDF) or the editable version [Covid-19 Risk Assessment](https://urc.org.uk/images/Churches/URC_Risk_Assessment_Template_Updatedv2.xlsx) - Excel spreadsheet).
* Risk assessment of the activity – how social distancing will be maintained, how group size will be managed, how materials will be used and cleaned etc (see national government guidance for out of schools settings and URC GP5 [Appendix I A guide to risk assessment](https://urc.org.uk/images/safeguarding/GP5/Appendix_I__A_Guide_to_Risk_Assessment.pdf) - PDF).
* Risk assessment of the participants and leaders – awareness of personal levels of vulnerability to infection, willingness to self-isolate following [NHS guidance](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/) in case of a reported case within the group (use [Personal Risk Assessment](https://urc.org.uk/images/Communications/docs/Personal_Risk_Assessment.pdf) - PDF).
* Revised emergency procedures to include fire evacuation with social distancing and first aid with PPE.
* System for collecting details of all those present for the appropriate national track and trace system (operating the church’s GDPR policy) and displaying information/QR codes.
* Training of all leaders and volunteer helpers in all measures to be taken to reduce the risk of transmission.
* Good communication with parents/carers and all participants about what to expect, measures in place and codes of conduct.
* Plan for arrivals and departures to maintain social distancing among parents/carers; and good hand hygiene among group members and leaders.
* Plan for dealing with a group member or leader who becomes ill with potential Covid-19 symptoms during a session.
* System for enabling group members to remain in existing ‘bubbles’ (eg from school / household / extended household) in consistent groups with the same leaders each time to reduce mixing as far as possible. Your Synod Pilots Officer, CYDO or equivalent lead worker will be able to give some support.

**Impact on typical session activities:**

* Singing and shouting is to be avoided or limited
* Recommend NO consumption of food or drink in the venue during the session
* No soft toys or removeable soft furnishings
* Where possible any physical activities and games should take place outside
* Leaders must socially distance from each other and groups
* Group members must keep to social distance rules for their locality during activities
* No shared craft materials or equipment
* No shared sports equipment
* Face coverings may be appropriate in some indoor spaces (eg. corridors, entrance ways) for over 11s
* Increased cleaning regime as required by risk assessment

**National Youth Agency Current situation extracts – for England**

Roadmap Step 2 (from 12th April 2021) From Step 2 the Readiness Level is AMBER.

**Headlines:**

* **Children under 11 do NOT have to wear face masks.**
* **All over 11s have to wear masks whilst inside a building, unless they have an exemption.**
* **Youth provision for under 18’s may meet indoors or outdoors without limitations on group size.**
* **You must clean all surfaces and equipment after a meeting.**
* **You must have an allocated area, should a child display symptoms, that you can separate them to until a parent can be contacted and they are collected.**
* **All emergency contact details MUST be up to date.**
* **Try and maintain as much social distancing as possible at all times.**
* **Get children to wash their hand on entry to eliminate and potential spread from outside sources.**

**DDC Training for DBS Verifiers**

The DDC are hosting a Free training to address all of these DBS questions like what the role of a verifier is, blemished disclosures and more!

Dates available:

**10th June 10am, 5th July 7pm, 10th September 4pm and 2nd October 9.30am**

This session will be held online for 1 hour and has limited capacity.

To book your place, please email Matt Baxter, Safeguarding Administrator at [safeguarding@urc.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@urc.org.uk)

**URC Online BASIC Safeguarding Training**

To adapt with the changing government guidance and to facilitate learning whilst transitioning into reopening and meeting physically, the safeguarding team have adapted the physical training modules into a virtual format held via Zoom, which has been condensed to suit this platform.

The following dates are available for the **FOUNDATION** module:

* **15th June 2021 7pm**
* **16th June 2021 10.30am**
* **12th July 2021 7pm**
* **24th July 2021 10am**
* **3rd August 2021 12pm**
* **3rd August 2021 7pm**
* **16th September 2020 10am**

(This training will last for approximately 2 hours long).

The following dates are available for the **INTERMEDIATE** module:

* **17th June 2021 10am**
* **17th June 2021 6.30pm**
* **13th July 2021 12pm**
* **24th July 2021 1pm**
* **12th August 2021 12pm**
* **12th August 2021 6pm**
* **16th September 2021 6.30pm**

(This training will last for approximately 2.5 hours long).

Please note that you will be required to enrol and attend the BASIC training before being enrolled on to the Intermediate training, despite any previous workplace training or expertise.

To book on to this training, **please email your name, church and preferred date** to [safeguarding@urcsouthern.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@urcsouthern.org.uk) or [safeguarding@urcthamesnorth.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@urcthamesnorth.org.uk)

**Phising and Spam emails**

**Andy Jackson, Head of Communications for the United Reformed Church, recently shared news about a phishing attempt from someone claiming to be John Bradbury, the General Secretary of the URC. These emails had been seen before at Church House but this attempt had been sent to others in the wider Church.**

**Now that these emails seem to be using the names of Synod staff too, Andy shares some tips about how to tell that’s an attempt at fraud and what’s genuine.**

A phishing email is an attempt by criminals to use someone else’s details or website design to trick people into parting with money. For example, you might get an email from a person known to you, but from a different email account, an email from a supplier such as Amazon, or one from a payment platform, e.g. PayPal. I’ve had all of these in one form or another.

These emails will try and get you to part with money or personal information that will be sold to those trying to get money.

And it’s not just emails - text messages, social media and phones can also be used. Recently, I had an automated voice message at the office saying that our internet service was being stopped. It wasn’t because the message came from the wrong provider. But they sound and look genuine.

Emails will be sent to millions of people asking for information such as bank details or containing links to websites intent on getting information from you.

Some phishing emails may contain viruses disguised as attachments which activate if opened. A few years ago, a colleague at Christian Aid forwarded me such an email without realising the attachment contained a virus, and because it came from her, I opened it. I had to spend the rest of my day restoring my computer and files.

**What steps can I take?**

Information from your social media accounts - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram - leave a digital footprint that can be exploited by criminals. Publicly available information about you makes their phishing emails appear convincing. Check your privacy settings and think about what you post, and who can see them (Facebook posts could potentially be seen by everyone on Facebook unless you tell them to only share your posts with Friends).

Also, be aware is said about you online as this can also reveal information that can be used to target you. If you have received an email which you’re not quite sure about, forward it to the government’s National Cyber Security Centre's suspicious Email Reporting Service - [report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk)

**What to do I do if I've already clicked a link?**

Don’t panic and don’t worry. Open your antivirus software and run a full scan, and follow any instructions given (for example, deleting files that contain a virus). If you've been tricked into providing your password, you should change your passwords on all your other accounts, as soon as possible. And if you have lost money, you need to report it as a crime to Action Fraud. [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk).

**What are the signs?**

Spotting a phishing email can be very difficult. Is the email addressed to you by name or does it use a generic title such as 'valued customer', or 'friend' or 'colleague'? This can be a sign that the sender does not know you.

Is it an official-looking email with logos and graphics, and is the design and quality what you'd expect or have received from that company before?

Does the email contain an urgent action? Is it asking you to do something in the next day, or contains a link that you must click on immediately?

Look at the sender's name and email address. Sometimes there are words inserted to make it look like an email from a company or supplier – instead of [john.smith@anytowncouncil.co.uk](mailto:john.smith@anytowncouncil.co.uk) it could be [john.smith@helpdeskanytowncouncil.co.uk](mailto:john.smith@helpdeskanytowncouncil.co.uk) which is a totally different website. Just because it has the name of a company or organisation in the email address doesn’t mean it’s genuine.

Or in the case of the phishing scam involving John Bradbury, the email was not the @urc.org.uk email address, but a gmail.com address. Is it likely that a known person in an organisation would use a free email account for official business? You can always check on the URC website for the email addresses of staff.

Does it sound legitimate? Is the email offer too good be true – e.g. designer trainers for £10, free films when you use this code or click on this link, or a free subscription to Reform?

Banks and other official senders of emails don’t ask for personal information and haven’t done for years so is the email is asking for that, it is probably a scam. Call the bank to check if you’re unsure.

If you have received an email which you’re not quite sure about, forward it to the NCSC's suspicious Email Reporting Service: [report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk)

**General COVID-19 resources**

[Find out what support people can get](https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-support) if you’re affected by COVID-19, for example, if they’re out of work, need to get food, or want to take care of their mental health.

[COVID-19 resources in your language](https://www.london.gov.uk/coronavirus/covid-19-resources-and-services-your-language-0?utm_source=email&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_campaign=LT2021&utm_content=Janlockdownemail): guidance and advice in various languages on topics such as health and wellbeing, employment and welfare, domestic abuse, housing and homelessness

Doctors of the World have provided [translated resources into 60 languages](https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/) aimed at migrants and asylum seekers which are informed by government and NHS advice.

**People with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)**

This [tool](https://migrantfamilies.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/) gives information about where migrant families can get help with housing and financial support when they have no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

**Migrant Health**

This [resource](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-migrant-health-guide?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=426d278a-0433-453e-a2ae-06a72f683a07&utm_content=daily) provides advice and guidance for healthcare practitioners on the health needs of migrant patients and has been updated to include a summary of changes after the Brexit transition period and information on COVID-19 vaccination.