



The  
United  
Reformed  
Church

# Help and Advice Group

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## Bulletin 32: DATA PROTECTION

The Help & Advice Group was set up by Synod in 2009, to support local churches in being informed and effective in their life and mission. The Group is made up of four members of local churches, together with administrative support from the Trust Officer. We are willing to try to provide specific advice or organise training days on particular topics. Please get in touch if you have questions or wish to suggest a training or discussion event.

This article is part of a series giving an overview of particular subjects of interest for local churches. We also circulate general updates from time to time. Bulletins will also be posted on the members' area of the website with direct links to other websites.

Where readers are directed to web-based resources, the Synod Office is willing to respond to reasonable requests for printed out information for readers without web access, although they may find it more satisfactory to follow up their interest through their local library's web access.

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### Data Protection

All churches gather, hold and use information about people as part of their everyday operations, and should take a proportionate and considered approach in doing so lawfully. The Data Protection Act 1998 does apply to churches, although there are exemptions from some of its requirements, such as sending notifications to the Information Commissioner.

Church support charity Stewardship has produced a short online guide for churches:

[www.stewardship.org.uk/documents/briefing-papers/Guidetodataprotectionlawforchurches05.09.pdf](http://www.stewardship.org.uk/documents/briefing-papers/Guidetodataprotectionlawforchurches05.09.pdf)

The Association of Church Accountants & Treasurers (ACAT) Handbook also has a short chapter, giving an overview of the subject. Every Church Treasurer should have a copy.

The Information Commissioner's Office has rather more detailed guidance, not all of which will be applicable in every case:

[www.ico.org.uk/for\\_organisations/data\\_protection/~/\\_media/documents/library/Data\\_Protection/Practical\\_application/the\\_guide\\_to\\_data\\_protection.pdf](http://www.ico.org.uk/for_organisations/data_protection/~/_media/documents/library/Data_Protection/Practical_application/the_guide_to_data_protection.pdf)

A data protection policy can help a church to know how to process personal data lawfully. One can be adapted from the model provided by Voluntary Action LeicesterShire:

[www.valonline.org.uk/publication/policies-and-procedures#.UrBzzzaYbZw](http://www.valonline.org.uk/publication/policies-and-procedures#.UrBzzzaYbZw)

Churches may find it useful to have a form for collecting member's contact details etc, ensuring they are correct, and informing them of the purposes for which the church would use them. A sample data collection/consent form used by the Quakers could be adapted:

[www.quaker.org.uk/data-safety](http://www.quaker.org.uk/data-safety)

The United Reformed Church's Good Practice guide to safeguarding children and young people in the church has a template photographic consent form for the parents (page 76):

[www.urc.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/children/children\\_s\\_ministry/images/good\\_practice.pdf](http://www.urc.org.uk/what_we_do/children/children_s_ministry/images/good_practice.pdf)

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