

ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING REPORT 2026

This report is created from data captured from the Annual Church Safeguarding Returns for 2025 but does not include analysis from Synod Safeguarding Officers (SSOs). Further in-depth analysis will be reported to the September 2026 Safeguarding Committee for analysis.

INTRODUCTION

87.7% of churches completed safeguarding annual returns

2.4.% of churches have no safeguarding coordinator

Comments: The number of churches completing their annual return has remained consistent with last year. Encouragingly, the proportion of churches without a safeguarding coordinator has decreased from 4.5%, representing a positive step toward strengthened safeguarding practice. Synod Safeguarding Officers continue to engage proactively with churches that have not submitted returns or do not currently have a safeguarding coordinator in place, offering support and encouragement to help them meet their responsibilities.



SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS



Number of concerns related to children: 52, the main categories of abuse are sexual abuse and then emotional abuse/physical/neglect

Number of concerns related to adults: 157, the main two categories of abuse are emotional abuse and physical neglect

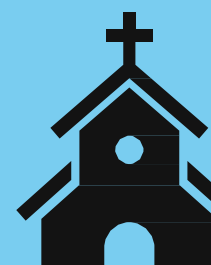
(These figures are likely to be higher when final data is collected by SSO's and do not include high numbers of low-level concerns supported by SSO's)

Comments: The number of safeguarding concerns reported and supported by safeguarding personnel has remained consistent with last year's figures.

Safeguarding training continues to be reviewed, updated, and developed to ensure that all safeguarding personnel across the denomination are equipped with both core safeguarding knowledge and an understanding of emerging and topical issues. This ongoing development supports the denomination's commitment to maintaining high standards of safeguarding practice.

PASTORAL CARE & SUPPORT

Comments: Local churches and synods continue to arrange appropriate pastoral care and support for individuals and groups who require it, drawing on Place for Hope services where additional specialist support is needed.



MANAGING RISK



60 known people who pose a risk to children or adults are attending URC churches

Comments: Individuals subject to safeguarding agreements within local churches continue to be supported by Church Safeguarding Coordinators and Synod Safeguarding Officers. This collaborative approach ensures that appropriate oversight and monitoring remain in place.

The guidance documents relating to the management of individuals who may pose a risk have undergone revision during this period and template resources are now available. These updated resources aim to provide greater clarity and consistency in how such situations are managed, strengthening the denomination's ability to maintain safe environments for all.

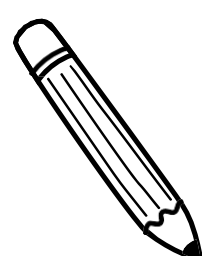
SAFER RECRUITMENT

Comments: With the continued cultural shift in safeguarding, there is an increasing recognition of the importance of safer recruitment, and this is being reflected in practice across the denomination. As a result, the number of DBS/PVG checks completed has risen, with 2,299 processed in 2025 as part of the Safer Recruitment and Safer Election of Elders procedures.

Of the 2,299 DBS/PVG checks completed, 1% resulted in a blemished certificate requiring a risk assessment to determine the individual's suitability for the role. These assessments were undertaken by the Synod Safeguarding Officer in collaboration with the applicant, local church, ensuring that decisions were made carefully, consistently, and in line with safeguarding best practice.



ADDITIONAL COMMENTS



The Safeguarding Committee extends its sincere thanks to all local churches and Church Safeguarding Coordinators for taking the time to complete the Annual Return. This information is vital in supporting the work of Synod Safeguarding Officers and the General Assembly Safeguarding Team, enabling us to maintain Strong safeguarding practice across the denomination. If you have any feedback on the Annual Safeguarding Return, please contact safeguarding@urc.org.uk.