

Chapter 5—Safeguarding in practice

Safeguarding in Practice has been specifically designed to assist volunteers and paid staff in their day-to-day work with children and protected adults. The guidance is designed to facilitate the development of safe and caring practice.

Code of Conduct for Volunteers and Paid Workers

The Church of Scotland has a deep concern for the wholeness and wellbeing of each individual and seeks to safeguard the welfare of all individuals who come into contact with the Church and its services.

A Church of Scotland worker has a responsibility to create and maintain a safe environment for children and protected adults at all times.

The code of conduct for volunteers and paid workers will aim to set out appropriate and inappropriate conduct for workers to follow to ensure a safe church for all.

The Church's key Safeguarding message is:

If you suspect or witness harm or abuse, or it is reported to you, you must immediately report it to your Safeguarding Coordinator or line manager.

The role of volunteers and paid workers

The Church of Scotland's Safeguarding system seeks to adopt a preventive approach through safe recruitment practices, policies and procedures, training and awareness raising and ensuring good Safeguarding practices: see the [Safeguarding Act](#) and the Code of Good Safeguarding Practice (Appendix 1).

Appropriate conduct

As a worker you should:

- Follow your role/job description
- Maintain professional boundaries at all times
- Ensure that, whenever possible, there is more than one adult present during church activities
- Ensure your contact with children and protected adults is appropriate to your role and the church activity
- Create relationships with children, protected adults and other workers that are based on honesty, trust and respect
- Understand that children and protected adults are individuals with their own needs and rights
- Respect differences in gender, culture, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and religious beliefs
- Create an environment where children and protected adults feel able to share any concerns
- Complete a risk assessment before activities with children, young people, or protected adults are carried out to ensure that every reasonable step has been taken to protect participants from harm

- When unanticipated risks do occur, note on the risk assessment ensuring that any necessary action is taken to reduce or eliminate potential reoccurrence
- Inform a child or protected adult as soon as possible if you need to break confidentiality in order to follow child/adult protection procedures
- Where possible, involve children and protected adults in decisions
- Immediately report Safeguarding concerns
- Attend the relevant Safeguarding training within the timescale in the Safeguarding training pathway
- Follow the Safeguarding policies and procedures in the Safeguarding Handbook which includes the social media guidelines and photography and video guidelines
- Receive and follow the Safeguarding pocket card
- Have knowledge of and report unacceptable behaviour or poor practice as per the whistleblowing policy

Inappropriate conduct

As a worker you should not:

- Undertake regulated work/regulated activity with a workforce that you do not have PVG/DBS clearance through the Church of Scotland to work with
- Develop inappropriate relationships with children or protected adults
- Accept/give money or gifts of monetary value from/to children or protected adults
- Have any sexual contact with children or protected adults
- Share your personal contact details with children or protected adults
- Contact children or protected adults via your personal phone, email address or social media account
- Use inappropriate language
- Make derogatory or sexually suggestive comments
- Bully or intimidate or permit any form of bullying to take place by other children, protected adults or workers
- Act in a threatening or harmful manner
- Act unlawfully
- Smoke, consume alcohol or use illegal substances when working
- Allow concerns of suspected harm or abuse to go unreported
- Arrange social occasions with children or protected adults or invite them to your home outside of organised group occasions (other than with the consent of parent, carers or guardians and where at least one other adult is present)
- Allow unknown adults access to children

Upholding this code of conduct

As a Church of Scotland worker, you must follow this code of conduct.

If you fail to uphold this code of conduct, you may be subject to investigation, a risk assessment and disciplinary procedures.

This may result in your PVG Scheme membership with the Church of Scotland being terminated and a referral made to Disclosure Scotland.

Depending on the seriousness of the situation, we may also make a report to statutory agencies such as the police and/or Social Work Department.

Whistleblowing - Reporting inappropriate behaviour

Introduction

The Church takes seriously any abuse, misconduct, poor practice and fraud that may take place in the workplace and places importance on maintaining high standards of honesty, openness, integrity and accountability within our Church communities. The Church will, therefore, support all workers and volunteers, temporary staff, agency staff, contractors and students on placement who make a disclosure (blowing the whistle) where the disclosure is a genuine concern made in good faith.

Whistleblowing is when someone raises a concern about wrongdoing involving a dangerous or illegal activity in their organisation. It is an important process for identifying risks to people. Individuals are allowed, by law ([The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#)), to make a 'protected disclosure'. This provides protection against victimisation or dismissal for workers. Currently the law does not apply to volunteers but it is good practice for charities to recognise that volunteers face many of the same challenges as paid staff when seeking to raise concerns.

Volunteers are covered by the policy but should also feel able to raise concerns about poor practice without always invoking the policy. This guidance and the case examples should be read in conjunction with the Church's [Whistleblowing Policy for Congregations](#).

The aim of the policy is to enable and encourage workers and volunteers to raise genuine concerns about possible wrongdoing at work without fear of reprisal and to reassure workers and volunteers that such matters will be dealt with seriously and effectively.

It is important to recognise that whistleblowing is separate from other policies in the Church, e.g. discipline and grievance procedures, safeguarding procedures and complaints procedures.

To help you decide whether your concern should be raised via the Whistleblowing Policy or other policies and procedures of the Church, please see the case studies below. They are real examples, but the names have been changed.

Case Studies

In the case study examples below (courtesy of [Protect](#), a UK whistleblowing charity), you will see that, in most circumstances, workers tried to raise their concern with the organisation internally in the first instance. Their concerns were either dismissed or not dealt with effectively and, in some cases, the worker suffered detriment as a result of raising the concern. In these cases, the individuals took their concerns to an external person or body when internal processes had been exhausted, or, if exceptional circumstances warranted it (e.g. threat of harm to self).

Health and safety

Helen (not their real name) worked as a hardware trainer at various sites across the UK. She would train the staff on how to use the equipment safely. Helen became increasingly alarmed by the dangerous equipment she saw on site and how staff were being subject to unsafe working conditions. This included observing defective, broken and damaged equipment. Helen raised these concerns internally with her line manager. However, these concerns were dismissed.

Financial mismanagement

Jin (not his real name) was the personnel manager for a family-run engineering firm. In the past, the family managers of the company had used company money to pay for private work done on their own homes. Jin had let this pass as it was a family business, but two employees recently told him that the scale of these private works was becoming extensive. Jin was worried about raising this to the Board of non-executive directors because the company managers had a well-earned reputation as hard men in the local community. Jin was advised to raise his concerns with the family managers but decided instead to resign and raised his concerns once he had secured new employment.

Criminal (theft) and miscarriage of justice

Felix (not his real name) worked in a care home. He and some of his colleagues believed that a manager was stealing from residents by recording money as being given to particular residents when they had received none. Felix raised his concerns with the owners of the home and an investigation quickly found that Felix was right. The manager was dismissed and reported to the police. Unfortunately, working relationships became tense as the manager's close colleagues objected to Felix's actions. Felix was suspended over false allegations that he had mistreated the residents.

Safeguarding concerns

Niamh (not her real name) was a teacher in a special needs school and had safeguarding concerns surrounding the behaviour of one of the other teachers at the school. Niamh witnessed a teacher showing her colleagues a sexually explicit image of one of the students. The same teacher also spoke inappropriately about her own sex life in front of another student.

Niamh raised her concerns internally and the teacher was suspended for several months. Once elapsed, the teacher returned to the school and resumed her position. Furthermore, Niamh was disciplined by her employer for not having raised her concerns sooner.

Shortly thereafter, Niamh resigned because she did not wish to continue working alongside the other teacher. She wrote to the Education Authority, which reassured her that her concerns had been dealt with. Niamh was frustrated with the handling of her concerns and believed that safeguarding issues would remain so long as the teacher remained at the school. Niamh believed that by disciplining her, her employer had subjected her to negative treatment for raising her concerns.

If you are in doubt about which policy or procedure should apply in particular circumstances please contact:

- Human Resources if the matter relates to a CSC employee
- Your Safeguarding Co-ordinator and /or the Safeguarding Service if the matter relates to a disclosure of harm or abuse
- Your Session Clerk if the matter is a complaint which can be dealt with under the Church's complaints procedure

Managing and reducing risk

The Church of Scotland recommends that at least two adults, recruited and PVG checked through the Church, are present when children and/or protected adults are involved in church groups, activities, events etc in person or online.

Lone working

For a worker who is working on their own, procedures should be put in place to enable them to access support from others. A [risk assessment](#) of a group will identify risks. For example, working alone in a service user's home as a pastoral care worker/visitor brings risks and these should be identified by carrying out a risk assessment.

Adult-to-child ratios

One way of reducing risk to both children and adults is to endeavour to make sure that there are sufficient adults working with children.

Age	Ratio
Under 2 years	1:3
2 to under 3 years	1:5
3 to under 8 years	1:8*
Over 8 years	1:10

*The adult to child ratio is 1:10 if children aged 3 years and over attend a church group for fewer than four hours a day

The above ratios have been taken from the [Care Inspectorate's guidance](#). Church groups providing activities for children are not required to be registered with the Care Inspectorate.

When thinking about adult-to-child ratios, Kirk Sessions may wish to consider the following questions:

- In the event of a child becoming ill or having an accident, do we have enough workers to meet the needs of the child and, at the same time, ensure the welfare of the remaining children?
- Do we have sufficient workers to meet the behavioural and emotional needs of all the children in the group? For example: what would we do if a child with serious behavioural difficulties became a member of the group? How would we ensure the welfare and safety of the child, children and workers?

Risk Assessment

Many activities carry with them an element of risk, and it is not possible to reduce all risk when working with children, young people and/or adults at risk. A Kirk Session cannot guarantee that a child, young person or adult at risk will be 100% safe when participating in church activities.

However, parents/carers will expect the Church to undertake a risk assessment when planning and delivering activities.

The Safeguarding Service Risk Assessment Tool

A risk assessment should be carried out as part of good Safeguarding practice before activities with children, young people or adults at risk are carried out in the Church of Scotland. The [SG20 Safeguarding Risk Assessment Guidance](#) is available for download.

The risk assessment should be completed by the most appropriate person. A written record is recommended. This should be signed, dated, a date added for a review to take place, and securely stored.

The steps outlined on the risk assessment tool can be used to risk assess an activity or outing.

Please note that the table of identified risks and what safeguards need to be in place are not all-encompassing; therefore, please add any that are applicable to your activity or outing.

How to safeguard/risk assess an activity or outing

- Identify the risks
- Identify what safeguards need to be in place to address this risk
- Record who is responsible for ensuring that safeguards are in place
- Completion date
- Sign, date, review date and securely store

Insurance

Church of Scotland Insurance Services Ltd arranges Church property and liabilities insurance in its capacity of Insurance Intermediary. It also arranges other classes of business, including household insurance for members and adherents of the Church of Scotland and insurances for charities. It is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

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Support for children, young people and adults at risk

Involving parents and carers

Parents and carers should be fully involved in discussions relating to the child, young person, or adult's needs. They will be able to provide important information and advice and, in many instances, will want to be directly involved in supporting the child, young person, or adult in activities and learning.

Health and medical issues

Some children, young people and adults may require regular and frequent medication.

Where possible, the administration of medication during church activities should be avoided.

If it is required, the parents/carers should attend to this or should nominate another responsible person to do this. It is not appropriate for workers to administer medication.

Workers who are worried about a child, young person, or adult's medical or health issues should speak with their parent or carer.

Where required, the medication needs should be recorded using the [SG16 General Information and Consent Form](#).

Disabilities

Appropriate consideration should be given to persons with disabilities. Issues to consider include how specific disabilities may be catered for during the event or activity. This is also applicable to days out, camps and residential holidays.

- Is the venue suitable for wheelchair access?
- If an external event, are the ground conditions suitable for wheelchair users?
- Are induction loops available for those with hearing impairment?
- How will those with disabilities be alerted to an emergency evacuation?
- Are access routes clear and unobstructed to provide clear routes for the visually impaired?
- Are mentors assigned to assist those with disabilities as required?

Supporting children, young people and adults who have behavioural difficulties

The following pointers may help workers to support and include service users who have behavioural difficulties.

Whenever possible, try to involve the parents or carer in the planning of activities and, where appropriate, in the supervision of the child, young person or adult.

Work together to consider the kind of support a child, young person or adult may need to engage purposefully in activities. Are there sufficient workers to allow this to happen?

Every Kirk Session will want their congregation to be welcoming to everyone. However, Kirk Sessions may sometimes have to decide not to allow a child, young person, or adult to join/continue in an activity if, after every effort and idea has been exhausted by church workers, the well-being of the child, young person, or adult (and that of others) continues to be put at risk.

Individuals using the service as a learning experience

Young people or adults wishing to help in a church group who do not have capacity to provide the service, undertake a PVG check/Basic Disclosure, or attend training can use the service as a learning experience.

We would advise that the individual is supervised by a recruited/PVG checked worker at all times and they must not take responsibility.

The individual should receive a role description which outlines the boundaries of the role.

The Safeguarding Service can provide further advice and guidance.

Transporting children and young people

When arranging transport, it is recommended and is good safeguarding practice for two adults to be present.

There may be an occasion where it is impossible for two adults to be present when transporting children.

The Church advises that a risk assessment is completed for transport to be managed as safely as possible. The [SG20 Safeguarding Risk Assessment Guidance](#) and the [Health & Safety Toolkit](#) produced by the General Trustees can be used to assist you with this.

When considering the issue of transport, either to a specific outing or activity, or to and from regular meetings, the following questions should be considered:

Is it necessary and possible to provide transport, or might parents be able to make suitable arrangements?

Too often it is expected that transport will be provided by the group or club. However, as groups change, it can often become increasingly difficult to provide transport.

Sometimes careful consideration is necessary to decide whether this service can continue. In many groups, there is usually a minority of children who would be unable to attend if transport was not available.

However, this does not mean that every child needs a lift. In these circumstances it can often be helpful to consult parents and ask that they collect their children wherever possible.

Are parents fully aware of the arrangements for transporting or collecting their children?

Whatever decision is made regarding transport arrangements, it is imperative that parents are informed of these arrangements.

Parents should know when to collect their child from an activity, the time the child is expected to return from an activity and what will happen if their child is not collected.

This information gives parents the option of making alternative arrangements in the event they are unhappy about their child being transported by a lone adult.

Do you have adequate car insurance?

The Church of Scotland Insurance Services recommends that anyone who might use their own transport for church-related business should check the adequacy of their insurance cover with their insurance provider.

Similarly, so should vehicle owners who propose to permit other persons use their vehicles for the same purpose.

When hiring or buying a minibus, it is imperative that drivers are adequately insured.

Please [contact the Church of Scotland Insurance Services](#) if you require any further advice on this matter.

Has the transport been carefully planned?

It is best to transport a group of children who live close to each other, so that an accurate arriving home time can be given to parents.

If there is a single adult driver, the children or child should always sit in the rear of the car.

Do you have a contingency plan?

If a parent fails to collect a child or is not at home when the child returns home, what will happen?

It is imperative that the group working with children has considered this beforehand and asked parents to provide an emergency contact number so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Smoking

UK legislation states that it is an offence for an adult to smoke in a vehicle if there is a child under the age of 18 in the vehicle.

Recruitment of drivers

Those providing transport for children must be fully recruited, which includes joining the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme (PVG Scheme) to do regulated work with children or applying for an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS check) with/without the barred list check for working in regulated activity with children.

Transporting protected adults

Where appropriate the above guidelines also apply to transporting protected adults.

Groups within the Church are required to ensure that workers providing transport for those with “particular needs” are fully recruited, which includes joining the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme (PVG Scheme) to do regulated work with protected adults or applying for an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS check) with/without the barred list check for working in regulated activity with adults at risk.

Please refer to chapter 3 for further information on the PVG Scheme and DBS checks.

Days out, camps and residential holidays

When organising a trip with a group of children or young people, there are many issues to consider.

Questions to consider

It can be helpful to meet with those involved in a planning meeting to discuss the following issues:

Are parents aware of, and have they provided written consent for the trip?

Parents should be fully informed of the arrangements, including details of accommodation, activities and cost.

They should also complete and return the relevant SG Consent Form giving their permission, emergency contact numbers and health information.

The consent forms available from the Safeguarding Service are:

- [SG16 General Information and Consent Form](#)
- [SG17 Activities and Day Visits Consent Form](#)
- [SG18 Camps and Residential Holidays Consent Form](#)
- [SG19 Media Consent Form](#)

Do you have adequate staff to supervise the children at all times?

Many centres have staff or instructors present who should be suitably trained and experienced in supervising children. It is common for these staff only to be available during certain times.

This should be clarified and steps taken so that children and young people are always appropriately supervised and supported.

Consideration should also be given to overnight supervision.

It is important that children and young people are well supervised, whilst also having their privacy.

Achieving the balance between supervision and privacy can be difficult and different groups approach this in various ways.

Good practice

Based on consultation with other organisations and careful consideration of the varying practices in this area, the following guidance is offered as a summary of current recommendations for good practice:

- Consideration to the security of the accommodation
- Ensure that children or young people sleep in single-sex accommodation
- Ensure that at least one responsible adult is within hearing distance, and that the children or young people know where they are, should they require assistance
- An adult must not sleep in the same room as the children. When visiting an organised camp or activity centre, you should ask if the centre has a policy on this issue. Do you have adequate insurance cover for all planned activities? We would advise you to [contact the Church of Scotland Insurance Services](#) for advice.
- Have you taken account of any medical or dietary needs of the children and young people? This can be done using the relevant SG Consent Form.
- When planning meals or booking a centre, it is important to find out if any of the children have food allergies. This can be done using the relevant SG Consent Form.
- A [risk assessment](#) should be undertaken where there are known difficulties or concerns about a children or children
- A first-aider should be present. Most centres will have registered first-aiders; however, this should be discussed with the centre.

Preparation of any Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans

In the event of an emergency evacuation, the level of assistance required to help children/vulnerable adults to evacuate a building is significantly higher than adults. Appropriate planning is essential.

Points to consider include:

- Means to access a room where children/vulnerable adults are sleeping
- Children/vulnerable adults may be more difficult to waken and may require to be roused
- Means to check all children/vulnerable adults have been evacuated safely is essential
- Means to keep children/vulnerable adults warm and dry if evacuated and exposed to the elements
- Means of dealing with the children/vulnerable adults if the evacuation is for a prolonged period of time

Adventure activities

Adventure activities should only be organised by utilising the services of organisations with staff/leaders trained and certificated in the specific activity and carrying suitable indemnity insurance for the activity.

Only by using this strategy can there be assurance that suitable and relevant knowledge is available to lead a particular type of activity.

Detailed risk assessments should be carried out. The [SG20 Safeguarding Risk Assessment Guidance](#) and the [Health & Safety Toolkit](#) produced by the General Trustees can be used to assist you with this.

Issues to consider include:

- Obtaining accurate weather forecasts
- Leaving itinerary details and numbers of participants
- Wearing appropriate clothing
- Using appropriate equipment
- Being aware of any special needs of participants
- Being aware of capability of participants to take part (or otherwise)
- Provision of first aid
- Tidal information
- Carrying mobile telephone or two-way radios

Please always refer to the specialist information available from organisations such as:

- The [Scottish Mountain Rescue](#) organisation
- The [Coast Guard](#)

Equipment

Equipment should always be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Consideration of how to position equipment is also essential.

Sports equipment is also subject to inspection. The inspection tags should be checked and verified prior to use.

Bouncy Castles and similar activity equipment are subject to an inspection process. This is carried out through [PIPA Inflatable Play Inspection](#). Only equipment inspected and tagged by this organisation should be used.

See the following websites for further information:

- [HSE Entertainment advice](#)
- [HSE School Trips advice](#)
- [Council for Learning Outside the Classroom](#)
- [Adventure Activities Licensing Authority](#)

Sleepovers in Church Halls etc

Should event organisers be planning to hold sleepovers in Church halls etc, they must [contact the General Trustees](#) and the [Church of Scotland Insurance Services](#) who will be able to advise on risk assessment and control measures.

Working or volunteering overseas

Overseas mission

OSCR's (independent regulator and registrar for Scotland's charities) statement on working with partners overseas, in Scotland or elsewhere in the UK is clear:

Charities working overseas often work with the poorest and most vulnerable people. Charities can be working with people who are simply trying to survive following devastating man-made or natural disasters. Charity

trustees should be aware of the fact that some individuals may exploit weaknesses in a charity's safeguarding practices, particularly in the face of immense pressure to deliver aid and save lives.

Charities that work with partner organisations in Scotland, elsewhere in the UK or overseas should ensure that:

- Those organisations have appropriate safeguarding policies in place for the nature of the work and the area they operate in
- These policies are properly implemented in practice and regularly reviewed
- When giving grants to overseas organisations appropriate due diligence checks are made on the recipient body.

Charity trustees also need to be aware that vulnerable beneficiaries overseas can face different or additional risks of abuse or exploitation and safeguarding policies and procedures should take account of any additional factors that are necessary in the circumstances.

Remember, the PVG scheme applies where charities send individuals to other countries to do regulated work.

In terms of international safeguarding issues, OSCR has no direct regulatory remit over charities' overseas partners or not-for-profit organisations. OSCR states that:

Where a charity registered in Scotland supports, or works closely with overseas partners, we will hold the charity to account over the suitability and management of that relationship, including its supervision of safeguarding risks.

Accountability

Any mission trip in which church members are involved should have clear lines of accountability.

Mission trips may be organised by local churches themselves or by churches in partnership with other churches, organisations such as international mission agencies, or NGOs.

If another agency is involved then there should be a partnership agreement, in writing, between the two organisations. This partnership agreement should, among other things, spell out which organisation's safeguarding policy is operational for the mission trip.

There should be a named person to contact in the event of any safeguarding concerns arising and an agreed process for reporting concerns to the statutory authorities.

Participants should be recruited by the organisation responsible in line with its safeguarding policy and good practice in safer recruitment.

Church of Scotland workers should familiarise themselves with the Safeguarding Handbook in its entirety.

Planning and preparation

Planning and preparation are vital for any mission trip and thinking about safeguarding should be an integral part of this planning process.

Mission workers/volunteers should be recruited through a [safe recruitment process](#) and PVG or DBS checks and/or self-disclosures should be sought where appropriate (PVG and DBS when someone is undertaking regulated work - the Safeguarding Service can help determine what is regulated work).

It is advisable to ensure that participating individuals have been known to the Church for at least six months and references should be taken up.

There should be a written [Code of Conduct](#), to which workers/volunteers give their signed consent during the induction process and preparation/induction should include [safeguarding training](#).

Every presbytery has a Presbytery Safeguarding Contact who is responsible for organising safeguarding training for volunteers and paid workers in the congregation.

If staff from the National Office requires safeguarding training, please [contact the Safeguarding Service](#) for further information.

Prior to the trip, a provisional itinerary should be drawn up. The itinerary may be subject to change due to local circumstances and conditions, but it will give everyone an idea of what to expect.

A risk assessment should then be undertaken looking at the risks involved in the trip, including [safeguarding risks](#), and how they will be managed.

Checklist

Has there been preparation for the visit including application forms, waivers, references, insurance, criminal record checks and other paperwork as and where appropriate?

Churches and teams need to remember where legal responsibilities lie if anything goes wrong: with the sending organisation and with the receiving organisation or individual.

Discuss and agree expectations. What are the expectations of the various parties? Share information regarding the giftings/abilities of visitors. Pass on any important information that the visitors or hosts may need to know.

Set an itinerary. Perhaps one month before the arrival of the visitor/team, agree and distribute an itinerary for the visit.

Have a [risk assessment](#) for the activities. The visiting person/organisation should undertake the risk assessment which should be shared with all parties.

Risks could include:

- Travel methods (tickets booked, licences in place etc)
- Travel requirements (medical matters, appropriate documentation to hand)
- Climate/weather (appropriate clothing/supplies)
- Crime/security (precautions against theft/harm)
- Residential (suitability of venue, checks to ensure personal safety of all parties)
- Loss of information (what to do if documents etc go missing)
- Emergencies (procedures in place how to deal with any emergency)

Local context

It's important that mission workers and volunteers are respectful towards local people and agencies, acknowledging cultural differences and deferring to local leaders' knowledge of, and relationships with, the local community.

Although there may be differences in cultural practice, the abuse of vulnerable people is never acceptable. Practices such as female genital mutilation, domestic violence or abuse of children in the context of beliefs about witchcraft and spirit possession can never be justified.

Church members on a mission trip are ultimately accountable to the organisation that has sent them and are expected to conform to the same standards of child safety and good practice as in the UK.

From a safeguarding point of view, overseas mission is high risk and unsupervised contact between mission volunteers and children or adults at risk would not usually be safe or appropriate.

Issues around contact with children or vulnerable adults need to be thought through in advance of the mission trip and, where the context involves close contact, such as helping at an orphanage or school, mission team members and local leaders need to work closely together.

In this context, roles, responsibilities and boundaries between local leaders and team members need to be agreed in advance and written into the [Code of Conduct](#) signed by team members.

Responding to concerns

Each mission trip needs to have a designated safeguarding contact who is the point of contact between the mission team and the home base. There also needs to be a contact point at the home base for emergencies.

Whilst safeguarding concerns are usually reported directly to the statutory safeguarding authorities here in the UK, this may not always be a viable or safe option when on a mission trip.

If the concern relates to someone in the local community, good practice would be for the mission team's safeguarding contact to discuss this with the local responsible person or agency (unless they are implicated or the report will create a greater risk to the child or vulnerable adult).

Depending on what local services are available it may be possible to involve local welfare services or police.

If there are concerns about local leaders or agencies then the safeguarding contact should discuss this with the home base (their own line manager and the safeguarding service) with a view to escalating the concerns to the appropriate person. This may include initiating whistleblowing procedures.

If allegations or concerns are made about a team member, these need to be immediately reported to the home base.

Dependant on the seriousness of the concerns and other factors to do with context and location, the team member may be relocated for the duration of the trip or, in some instances, immediately repatriated.

Consideration will need to be given about how best to follow up the concerns after this.

Hosting teams from abroad

When churches are hosting teams from abroad the same principles apply.

The receiving church needs to have a partnership agreement with the sending church/agency and there should be clear lines of accountability and communication between the two.

The hosting agency needs to be involved in the planning and preparation for the visit and can help in creating an itinerary that is practical and meets the local needs.

The congregational Safeguarding Coordinator can help the mission team leader decide what needs to go in the code of conduct for team members and in drawing up the risk assessment for the trip.

The host church can be involved in orientation training for the team on their arrival as well as helping with practicalities around transport and accommodation.

Please discuss appropriate [criminal records checks](#) with the safeguarding service prior to entering into a hosting arrangement and in sufficient time for checks to be undertaken.

Child sponsorship

Many organisations run child sponsorship programmes, some of which have been operating successfully for many years.

The benefit for the sponsor is that they can see very practically how they are helping to make a difference in the life of the child or children they support.

Very often the sponsored child will send letters and photographs, and friendships develop.

Although sponsorship programmes are focused on child welfare and poverty reduction, the underlying priority must always be to safeguard the children involved, particularly as the children can be a target for people wanting to abuse children.

In order to ensure harmful relationships aren't allowed to develop, the following safeguards should be put in place by the organisation and they must be prepared to decline sponsorship for any reason, including safeguarding concerns.

It is good practice for child sponsorship programmes to:

- Ensure organisations have a sound safeguarding policy as a basis for safeguarding the children involved in any child sponsorship programmes and have a formal procedure for all direct contact with the sponsored child
- Consult with external bodies, including the police, if there are serious doubts about an individual sponsor - for example, if they are in prison
- Any correspondence between the sponsor and the person sponsored should be sent via the organisation to ensure it does not contain the sponsor's contact details and to check for inappropriate written or visual material that might raise safeguarding concerns or contain political/religious comment that may cause offence or be illegal
- Ensure sponsors agree not to share any information about the person they have sponsored over the internet. Enabling sponsors to remain in contact after the sponsorship has ended should be facilitated by the organisation and only if the sponsored person and/or their parents/carers agree.

Refugees

We do not require overseas police checks for asylum seekers and refugees wishing to volunteer in a congregation.

The applicant should be recruited, and we would advise that the recruitment process is bolstered with robust references.

If the applicant's role will include regulated work with children and/or protected adults, they should join the PVG Scheme through the Church of Scotland and complete the [SG03 Self-Disclosure Form](#).

A [Basic Disclosure](#) can also be applied for.

Health and safety issues

Kirk Sessions are responsible for ensuring a safe church for all members, visitors and the general public.

All workers should be issued with a copy of the Health and Safety policy and fire safety and evacuation procedures. These should also be provided for church building lets and leases.

If the activity is to be run through a person or group registered with Ofsted ([Registration requirements - Childminders and childcare providers](#)) or if any congregational employees/volunteers are involved with the activity, then there is a legal requirement to have first aiders present as per [The Health and Safety \(First-Aid\) Regulations 1981](#).

If the activity is undertaken by a third-party organisation letting or leasing the church building, the legal requirement for a first aider remains their responsibility and this should be reflected in the letting or leasing agreement.

However, charity trustees must consider the potential risks of a first aider not being available for church-led activities in the risk assessment undertaken for the activity.

Kirk Sessions may find the following checklist helpful when they review their health and safety policy:

- Who is responsible for ensuring that the physical environment is safe and secure?
- Where are the fire exits and fire appliances and how are they reached?
- Is there easy access to a telephone that works?
- Who is trained in first aid and where is the first-aid box?
- How and when should an incident be recorded in an accident book?
- Who has responsibility for informing the parents of a child who has been injured?
- Do any of the children have medical or intimate care needs?
- Are any areas of the church out of bounds to children or are there places which require a higher level of supervision?

Health and Safety Guidance for Congregations and the Health and Safety Policy Statement is available in the [Law Circulars](#) section of the Church of Scotland Law Department's website.

The General Trustees' [Health & Safety Toolkit](#) is in the resources section of the Church of Scotland website.

The [Law Department](#) and the [General Trustees' Department](#) can provide further guidance on any aspect of health and safety.

Please also refer to the [SG20 Safeguarding Risk Assessment Guidance](#).

Food preparation

Food prepared for participants should be done only through those persons or organisations trained and holding a relevant certificate in Food Hygiene. Specialist advice should be sought from the [Food Standards Agency](#) and/or local Environmental Health Department.

Letting of church premises to non-church groups

Churches letting their premises to non-church groups should ensure that a copy of the [Agreement for Use of Church Hall or Church](#) has been signed.

Within the Terms and Conditions section of the [Agreement for Use of Church Hall or Church](#), the User is asked to confirm that they are aware of the requirement to safeguard the welfare of children, young people and protected adults and keep them safe from harm and abuse.

The User must have adopted a recruitment procedure for working with children, young people and/or protected adults which, where appropriate, includes requiring employees and volunteers to be members of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme as laid down by the [Protection of Vulnerable Groups \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#) ("the Act") and will comply with the Act in all respects.

If the User is found to be in breach of these undertakings, the Congregation shall have the right to terminate this Agreement with immediate effect.

The Agreement for Use of Church Hall or Church states that the Church should not involve itself in the supervision of the User's activities. It stresses that any involvement of Church personnel may give outsiders the impression that the Users were operating in some way under the umbrella of the congregation. This could have its own dangers vis-à-vis questions of legal liability.

If child or adult protection issues are suspected or reported to the church, the information received should be passed to the Social Work Service, Police Scotland and the Safeguarding Service as soon as possible.

Use of Church buildings and insurance

Please [refer to the Church of Scotland Insurance Services](#) for further details on this matter.

Joint working events

With regards to a joint working event, we advise that prior to any event the appropriate representatives from each church/organisation should meet to hold a planning meeting.

At that meeting, decisions and minutes can be made about how/where the event is held and who is taking responsibility for what.

A joint working agreement between the churches/organisations should be in place where each of the churches/organisations are responsible for their own workers and the recruitment/PVG checks of their own workers.

'We the undersigned, agree to safely recruit (including completing the relevant PVG application form if required) the volunteers from our church/organisation who will be taking part in this (insert name of event). Also, we trust and are happy to accept that all volunteers involved in the (insert name of event) and who are not from our church or organisation will be recruited (including completing the relevant PVG application form if required) by the church/organisation they are coming from. We also take full responsibility for all workers and volunteers supplied by our church or organisation.'

All workers undertaking regulated work with children and/or protected adults will require PVG Scheme Membership through their own church/organisation.

Each church/organisation should have their own safeguarding policies and procedures which they adhere to and be able to advise the other churches/organisations where they can access these.

Consent forms and media consent forms should be completed.

The consent forms available from the Safeguarding Service are:

- [SG16 General Information and Consent Form](#)

- [SG17 Activities and Day Visits Consent Form](#)
- [SG18 Camps and Residential Holidays Consent Form](#)
- [SG19 Media Consent Form](#)
- [SG20 Risk Assessment Guidance](#)

A risk assessment of the event should be completed as this will identify any risks. This should be signed by the appropriate representatives from the churches/organisations and a review date set.

The table in the risk assessment of identified risks and what safeguards need to be in place is not all-encompassing; therefore, the representatives can add any that are applicable to the event.

The representatives from the churches/organisations should also meet regularly to discuss the joint working event and a minute should be made of the meeting.

There should also be a discussion with the church's/organisation's insurance companies about insurance cover for the joint working event.

The [Church of Scotland Insurance Services](#) should be advised that the joint working event is taking place in a Church of Scotland church.

The Kirk Session must approve the joint working event.

Complaints procedures

The Church has three different complaints procedures in place to deal with inappropriate or unethical behaviour and to ensure that the Church is a safe and caring environment for all. The role of the person being complained about will dictate which complaints procedure is followed.

More information can be found on the [Complaints Procedures page](#) of the Church of Scotland website.

A [Safeguarding Complaints Procedure](#) document for Kirk Sessions, drawn up by the Safeguarding Committee, also contains useful guidance.

Social media information and guidelines

What is social media?

The phrase "social media" refers to the developing range of web-based and mobile telephone technologies and internet-based applications that allow for communication and the creation and exchange of user-generated content.

Enabled by widely available and accessible mobile electronic devices, social media has substantially changed the way organisations, communities and individuals communicate.

Whilst it can be both an essential and valuable communications tool for those providing services for people in the Church, it also presents challenges if the user is to avoid what can be quite significant pitfalls in practice.

Most of these challenges revolve around maintaining professional boundaries between work and private life with a view to protecting both the providers of services and those who use or receive them.

In being aware of this, it is vital to remember that some of the challenges relate to how the conduct of paid staff and volunteers in formal roles in the Church might be perceived as potentially harmful or inappropriate.

The perceptions of an individual or an organisation are governed by beliefs, values, attitudes, life and professional experience etc. Consequently, what may look or sound OK to one person may be misunderstood or misconstrued by another and might well be considered harmful and inappropriate.

The following information is written from a safeguarding perspective and seeks to identify good practice with a view to preventing harm or abuse to children and adults at risk or minimising the likelihood of it happening.

This supplements more detailed information about keeping children, young people, adults at risk and paid staff and volunteers in churches safe.

The Safeguarding Service can only offer advice on the safeguarding implications of your activity and not the detail of how to set up a particular service, e.g., online teaching, online games and telephone support services.

We have identified a number of underpinning principles (things that are important or right to do) and have used these to generate a set of questions that workers and volunteers should ask themselves before using social media. The questions are designed to be used as a checklist before any type of social media is used or to review its ongoing use. This checklist should be considered as a generic safeguard for using mobile phones, social networking sites, blogs, text messaging, the taking of digital photographs or recording videos etc. It should be a spur to staff and volunteers to make a judgement about keeping themselves (as workers) and those they are working with (children and adults at risk) safe.

Ideally the checklist should be employed in safeguarding training with a variety of different scenarios involving the use of different types of social media.

The use of social media is open to different interpretations and perceptions of what is appropriate and what is not. It can involve the transmission of words, sounds, and moving and still images, all of which have the potential to be harmful in a safeguarding sense, hence the importance of making joint decisions and seeking advice.

Examples of types of social media

(Note this is not an exhaustive list)

- Email and messenger services
- Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter
- Video-sharing sites such as YouTube and TikTok
- Text messaging via mobile phones or apps such as Snapchat and WhatsApp
- Blogs
- Digital photography (cameras, video, camera phones)
- Online message and discussion boards (i.e., Reddit)
- Photo sharing sites (i.e., Instagram)

Social media policy

Congregations should only use workers or volunteers who have been safely recruited (including PVG Scheme or DBS membership where appropriate) and are deemed to have the appropriate skills for the task they are being asked to undertake.

Transparency/openness: Tell others what it is you want to communicate and why.

Keeping people safe: The worker (paid and volunteers) and the child/adults at risk or service users.

Line management arrangements must be clear and understood by all. Line managers have an important role to play in ensuring that Safeguarding advice is implemented.

Text and any other media posted should be subject to an acceptable use policy.

Strive to maintain good and open relationships with parents and carers regarding communication with them, their children and/or protected adult relative.

Consent: Seek child and parental/carer consent for the use of internet technology. Receive informed consent from all involved (or their parents/carers) if their words or images are to be transmitted and made public or shared with a selected group of people. Refer to the Photography and Video Guidelines and the [SG19 Media Consent Form](#).

Privacy: Respect for individuals' personal information. Do not share personal information or seek personal information other than that which is appropriate to your role.

Separate the private (home) from the professional (paid or voluntary work). Explicitly maintain boundaries.

Be circumspect in your communications with children and/or protected adults to avoid any possible misinterpretation of your motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming.

If children want you to have their mobile phone numbers, email addresses or similar and to communicate with them this way, make sure that their parents know and have agreed and that everyone is clear about GDPR requirements. Please refer to the [data protection](#) advice on the Law Circulars section of the Church of Scotland website

All social media interaction between workers, paid or voluntary, and children under 18 should be limited to monitored/administrated groups. Only contact children for reasons related to the work of the Church.

Email should only be used to communicate specific information, e.g., events etc.

Email/internet communication with children or protected adults should take place during working hours. Any communication made outside working hours should be agreed with your line manager.

Maintain a log and dated history of all electronic contact with individuals or groups, including email, messaging and texting. Any private messages should be recorded for safeguarding purposes.

Where possible, only use equipment provided by the Church to communicate with children and protected adults.

Be clear and explicit about information that you need to share with others. Be explicit about the limits of confidentiality and that disclosure of harm and abuse must be passed on to the Safeguarding Service and perhaps others to keep them safe. Otherwise, respect a child and protected adult's right to confidentiality.

Any safeguarding concerns or allegations arising from social media should be referred on to the congregation's Safeguarding Coordinator and/or the Safeguarding Service.

Ensure your church's domain name and logo appears with every Internet post made by a church computer user. Any user may thus be viewed as a representative of your church while conducting business on the Internet.

All users of social media must be above the minimum age limit, e.g., 13 years for Facebook. Please ensure that if you are using other interactive methods, e.g., Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams etc. that you abide by the Terms and Conditions for end users and that children, young people and/or parents/carers also know what these are, agree with them, and abide by the acceptable user policy. They should be explicitly aware of how these applications will make use of their personal data and how you will also secure their personal data in line with GDPR requirements.

Workers should ensure that privacy settings are of the highest levels of security and that recording is disabled in all cases.

Workers should ensure that video conference notification emails are checked to verify the sender in all cases.

It is also recommended that web versions are used as far as possible. Only existing installed apps should be used. For example, Zoom wants to install software onto the user device and there is a concern this may cause problems. If the user is new to Zoom, they should use the web/online option and not install software to their own device unless absolutely confident that it is genuine.

Use of Skype and any other web camera or visual communication via the internet is generally not advised. However, if this is the only or best means of communication, workers should refrain from using such methods on a one-to-one basis. In addition, please refer to the recommended adult to child ratio as set out in Managing and Reducing Risk.

Skype or other web cameras can be used for conference calls and are considered appropriate for a project or group to use in a group environment for project purposes where there are clear aims and objectives for its use

All social media groups should provide links to statutory authorities such as the [Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command \(CEOP\)](#) to enable children to report online abuse

Questions before using social media

WHAT information do you want to capture, store, transmit, communicate or use?

WHY did you choose this particular type of media?

WHAT is the purpose of using this social media?

WHAT privacy settings and controls have you set for the media?

WHO is the target audience? (A defined group of people or everyone?)

WHO can see the information posted? Anyone, or have safeguards or tools been used to set limits, e.g., Facebook group rather than Facebook page?

WHO is identified (images/words/sounds) in the communication?

WHOSE consent is required?

HOW will you establish their consent?

HOW may others interpret the information? Can the information you want to share be easily misunderstood or misinterpreted? If in doubt check with your line manager and get a second opinion. Re-read before sending/ posting.

Checks

Is the information you are about to share personal or confidential? Can the person be identified (by words or images)? Refer to the Photography and Video Guidelines for more information.

Informed consent must be provided.

Do the people you work with have access to personal information about you? e.g., via Facebook?

What type of personal information is available and how may that affect perceptions about you in your professional (work) role? Could this be perceived to be damaging to you personally or in your work role?

As a worker, make sure your line manager is fully aware of what media you use in work. If in doubt discuss it with them.

Whatever social media you are using in work: Is it clear that you are representing the Church?

Generally, you should not use your personal mobile phone, email address or Facebook account or similar to communicate with children, young people or adults at risk.

Any photographs/videos taken while carrying out your professional role should not be posted on your personal Facebook account or any other social media site.

What is your gut feeling about the communication? If you feel even slightly uneasy about something you are about to publish, then you probably shouldn't publish it. If in doubt, discuss it with your line manager first.

Facebook

Having a Facebook page that advertises the work being done by your Congregation is a good initiative. The page could provide details such as: what the youth group does, when it meets and who it is for.

The following advice is offered, not to discourage the use of social media, but to ensure that children are kept safe.

Facebook privacy controls should be set up so that only children and their families have access to any videos and photographs. Facebook privacy controls enable information to be shared with a defined group: friends, friends of friends or everyone.

Has informed consent been provided by parents/carers? e.g., do all parents know that images/videos appear on the page and are they content with this? Most are likely to be, but not all. Those who are not must be able to have their children opt out of appearing on the page. Refer to the Photography and Video Guidelines.

Explore setting up a Facebook Group rather than a Facebook Page, which would enable more control over who sees and can download information and images.

Reassess what the purpose of the Facebook page/group is. It is useful to consider the following when setting up a web page or a Facebook page/group: What personal or group information do you want to share and with whom and why? Is it everyone, just the children, just the Church or just the children and their families or friends?

As a general rule, do not allow children to give out personal information such as school, home address, phone number, photos, etc. in chat rooms, on message boards and especially not to strangers.

Rules for using social media

Workers, Volunteers, Children and Young People or Adults (protected or otherwise) should not:

- Search for or download pornographic, racist or hate-motivated content
- Illegally copy or play copyrighted content where permission has not been given
- Send, request or display offensive messages or pictures
- Harass, insult or bully others
- Access the internet using another person's login details
- Access, download, send or receive any data (including images) which the Church of Scotland may consider to be offensive in any way, including sexually explicit, discriminatory, defamatory or libellous material

Violations of the acceptable user policy may result in:

- A temporary or permanent ban on internet use
- Disciplinary action
- Where applicable, reporting to police or local authorities

Remote learning

Many of the areas have already been covered above. However, your congregation might also want to consider:

- The location children or protected adults may join from and what can be seen and heard on screen
- How will they be supervised and what are the expectations of participation and attendance?
- How will parents/carers be contacted and involved?
- Do workers/volunteers have the necessary skills and access to technology?
- Who will provide technical support?

Useful Resources

Below are links to websites designed to help keep young people safe while using the internet and social media.

- [Internet Matters](#): Practical advice to help parents and carers keep children safe online
- [Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command \(CEOP\)](#): How to make a report of online abuse or concerning communication with an underage person
- [thinkUknow](#): the education programme from NCA-CEOP, a UK organisation which protects children both online and offline
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#): The latest tips, advice and resources to help children and young people have a safe and positive time online.
- [respectme](#): Scotland's anti-bullying service

- [Police Scotland – Keep Secure Online](#)

Telephone support

A telephone support service open to all is not regarded as regulated work as per the [Protection of Vulnerable Groups \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#).

However, congregations offering a telephone support service must ensure that the person undertaking the task has the necessary skills, training and equipment to carry out their role.

The person should know what to do should a person make a disclosure of harm or abuse to them. This includes where a person may indicate that they might self-harm.

If you suspect harm or abuse, or it is reported to you, it is important to share this immediately with your line manager and/or your Safeguarding Coordinator who will contact the Safeguarding Service for advice.

If you think the person is in immediate danger, contact the police in the first instance and the Safeguarding Service afterward.

Photography and video guidelines

Congregations should ensure that good practice is adhered to when photographing or videoing children and adults at risk of harm during church activities and may find the good practice guidelines produced by the Safeguarding Service helpful.

‘Photography’, ‘video’, and ‘recordings’ include those media recorded on mobile phones and other such devices.

As an agency committed to caring for and protecting all vulnerable groups, we must ensure our actions and those of our congregation are appropriate.

With regards to photographs and recordings, we would advise that written informed consent must be received by all before any photographs or recordings are made publicly available, e.g., on the church website, online even to a closed group etc.

We would advise that names, personal information or any personal data should not appear online or otherwise go into the public domain at all, unless informed consent has been obtained.

Photographs that include children should be selected carefully and endeavour to prevent children from being easily identified.

The names of children and protected adults should not be included alongside photographs or recordings that are made publicly available.

Informed consent will be required for use of the photographs or recordings.

The [SG20 Safeguarding Risk Assessment Guidance](#) and a consent form for the proposed event should be shared with parents.

The [SG19 Media Consent Form](#) should explain the purpose of using the data and explain fully that the congregation can only stop processing information that it has direct control over.

Once information is shared online the congregation will not be able to guarantee that they can stop its use even if consent is withdrawn. This is to avoid situations where a child’s personal data (including just their

image) is posted to an open platform such as an open Facebook page or group or otherwise put into the wider public domain.

Mobile phones can be used to take photographs and videos which can be immediately uploaded onto the internet or social networking sites without permission. Therefore, group leaders should discourage the use of mobile phones during church activities.

Group leaders must also not post photographs or videos taken while carrying their professional role on their personal social media site etc.

The group may wish to produce a mobile phone code of conduct to ensure safe usage.

The Social Media Information and Guidelines section of the Safeguarding Service Handbook should also be referred to.

During large events, arrangements can be made by the host to provide video or photographic stills of the participants in action. This allows the performance to go ahead with limited interruption and allows the participants who are not to be photographed to take part.

An open photo shoot can be held at the end of the performance (sensitively distracting any children not to be photographed) to allow families to take their own private shots.

Use of images should reflect diversity of age, ethnicity and gender within the activity.

Special consideration should be given where taking photographs or video footage might be misinterpreted, or the images could be seen as provocative (e.g., beach trip or gymnastics display etc.). It is not to say, however, that with the right planning, these events cannot be recorded and enjoyed.

Responsibility of storage and destruction of photographic material should be taken at sessional level and written agreement should be made for this purpose.

Photography and video recording are important methods of recording social activity, providing an historic record and illustrating and validating important moments in people's lives. This process is a powerful and personal one and therefore we must respect the rights of everyone to make the choice whether or not to be photographed.

The Safeguarding Service has produced the [SG19 Media Consent Form](#) which should be used.

Please refer to the [Live Streaming Guidance section](#) on the Church of Scotland website.

Bullying

What is bullying?

In Scotland, bullying is defined as:

Bullying is both behaviour and impact; the impact is on a person's capacity to feel in control of themselves. This is what we term as their sense of 'agency'. Bullying takes place in the context of relationships; it is behaviour that can make people feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out. This behaviour happens face to face and online ([respectme](#), 2015)

Bullying can include verbal, physical and online abuse. Children or adults could experience the following:

- Physical assault such as hitting or kicking
- Name calling

- Abusive messages online
- Being left out

Bullying is not acceptable and the Church of Scotland is committed to listening, providing support and taking appropriate action.

Reporting

If you suspect or witness bullying, or it is reported to you, you must immediately report it to your Safeguarding Coordinator or line manager.

If you are a Safeguarding Coordinator, and bullying has been reported to you, contact the Safeguarding Service for advice.

If serious harm or abuse has happened, a crime has occurred or the person is in immediate danger, police or social work can be contacted first, and the Safeguarding Service after.

Further guidance

- respectme.org.uk
- nspcc.org.uk
- children1st.org.uk

Gender identity

Gender identity is a matter for the individual.

If a young person or adult advises you of their gender identity (including, but not limited to, transgender, non-binary, gender-neutral) and their pronouns (including, but not limited to, he/him, she/her, they/them, he/they, xe/xir) and asks you to refer to them accordingly, it is appropriate to do so.

You should be mindful of the fact that the person may not have shared this information with others, and you must respect their right to choose when and who they share this with. It is not always safe for an individual to share their gender identity with certain people in their lives and doing so can result in the individual being put at risk of harassment and/or abuse.

If any forms used by the church ask people to specify their gender, there should be a reason why knowing their gender is required.

Any information collected must be obtained (and used) for a legitimate purpose.

There may be no requirement for forms to ask for gender information or, if there is a legitimate reason for asking for gender-specific information, there should be an option for people to decline to provide that information.

The Church of Scotland adheres to and supports equality and diversity legislation.

The [Equality Act 2010](#) protects people from discrimination (both direct and indirect) and harassment in various fields on the ground of certain protected characteristics.

The eight protected characteristics under the Act are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

To be protected under the act, a person must be transitioning, proposing to transition to live in the opposite gender or have undergone transition. They do not have to be undergoing a medical procedure to change their gender.

The Church of Scotland has produced a guidance document on [Diverse Gender Identities and Pastoral Care](#) featuring interviews with a number of Church members about their personal experiences.

The Scottish Government has produced [guidance for supporting transgender young people in schools](#).

There are [useful resources](#) on the LGBT Youth Scotland website.

Toilets

There is no law in Scotland, or in the UK, which states that only people registered male at birth can use men's toilets and changing rooms, or that only people registered female can use women's toilets and changing rooms.

The guidance supporting transgender young people in schools includes information about toilets and changing rooms.

It is important to ensure that all young people feel safe using all facilities. If there are particular reasons for concern, an organisation may want to do a [risk assessment](#).