

Unitarian Code of Ethics Survey 2022

An Invitation to Contribute – Survey

At the 2021 General Assembly Annual meeting, a resolution was passed which requested the GA Executive Committee to consult widely and to prepare a Unitarian Code of Ethics.

The initial step in the process is for the GA Executive Committee to 'call for submissions from member congregations, affiliated societies, districts, Ministers, Lay Leaders and others employed or engaged in the Unitarian movement'. To this end a survey has been prepared which also includes a request for any documents in use to be made available. It is hoped that this work will be a resource for all Unitarians in the UK, and is a way to articulate our core principles. It is therefore vital to incorporate the perspectives and experience of as many of you as is possible.

Responses are invited from both individuals and from committees representing Unitarian congregations, Districts, and Societies as well as from those employed in a Unitarian post.

Please respond to the survey from the perspective of your Unitarian experience. The GA Executive Committee has delegated the collation of responses to a working party. Responses will be held in confidence.

Responses received by 30th May 2022 will be collated and reported to the Executive Committee and a summary report will be distributed to all chapels, districts and societies for comment. The results of this survey, together with the feedback on the report of the consultation, will inform the process of drafting a Unitarian Code of Ethics, and a supporting Code of Practice. The expectation is that if a code is agreed it will be recommended to congregations and Unitarian groups to discuss, amend and adopt to meet their needs.

The survey mentions the 'Guidelines for Ministers and Congregations' which can be found at:

<https://www.unitarian.org.uk/library/guidelines-for-partnership-between-congregations-and-ministers/>

Thank you in anticipation of your assistance.

PTO

Questions

1. **Responding as / for:** Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians.
2. **Name (optional if completed as an individual):** Louise Reeve, Chairperson.
3. **Date:** 29 May 2022.
4. **Are you responding as an individual? (If yes, please tick 'Yes' and skip question 5.)**

No

5. **Has your committee or other authorised group approved this submission? If so, please indicate how this response was developed and agreed.**

Yes. We discussed it at our committee meeting on 8 May 2022, and sent round information to the congregation about it to ask if there was anything they wanted to contribute.

6. **List any policies you are aware of that refer to ethics, values, conduct or safety and indicate the setting they refer to. Examples might be safeguarding, disruptive behaviour, or complaints procedures.**

Here are our policies as a congregation:

Covid-19 Safety: <https://newcastleunitarians.org.uk/covid-19-update/>

Privacy Policy: <http://newcastleunitarians.org.uk/privacy-policy-3/>

Racial Equality Statement: <https://newcastleunitarians.org.uk/racial-equality-statement/>

Recording Services: <https://newcastleunitarians.org.uk/recording-services-and-privacy/>

Safeguarding Statement: <https://newcastleunitarians.org.uk/safeguarding-statement/>

7. **Is there a behavioural code for the members?**

If this is asking whether Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians have a behavioural code, our closest equivalent is our 'Guiding Principles for Discussions' – please see below.

8. **If you have a behavioural code, and can provide an electronic copy, please upload it here. If the Behavioural Code appears on a website, please provide the link in the space below. If not, please go to the next question.**

Our guiding principles for discussion are online here:

<https://newcastleunitarians.org.uk/discussions-guiding-principles/>

9. **Are you aware of the current 'Guidelines for Partnership Between Ministers and Congregations'?**

We have been made aware of them through participating in this survey.

10. **Have you utilised the 'Guidelines' and to what extent were the Guidelines useful?**

As we do not have a Minister, we have not really used the Guidelines, but may use them in future if we are able to employ a part-time Minister or have a similar arrangement.

11. **Have you experience of the application of a code of ethics (or equivalent) in your work or other life experiences? If Yes, please respond to question 12.**

Answering in a personal capacity as Louise Reeve (Chairperson, Newcastle upon Tyne Unitarians): As a researcher for a local authority, I am bound by the Public Sector Equality Act, GDPR laws, and standards for good social research. An example is

Newcastle City Council's Research Governance Framework:

<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/care-and-support/information-and-support-adults/contact-care-and-support-adults/research>

12. What do you feel are the strengths and limitations of this code of conduct / ethics?

This is what is required of me as a social researcher, and the strengths of this approach are that it protects my interests, my employer's interests, and most importantly my research participants' interests. The limitations are that it is extremely detailed and complex, although as this is my profession this is less of an issue that it would be were I a volunteer.

13. Copy of the report and further comments

We would like to receive a copy of the draft report on this consultation, please send it to: info@newcastleunitarians.org.uk.

Final thoughts are that this is long overdue, and necessary in an era of greater diversity among congregations. It will need to strike a balance between being comprehensive, and not being so complex it is unwieldy and unworkable. It will be impossible to please everyone and cover every single possible situation, so we must be careful not to make the perfect the enemy of the good!