

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY – Reviewed 27 February 2024

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This policy statement is aimed at providing a safe environment where children and young people may enjoy social contact, personal and spiritual development. The Kirk Session will implement such procedures it deems necessary to ensure the safety of children and young people at all times while present in and around the Church premises. Adults selected to work within youth ministries should be secure in the knowledge that they have the full support of the Kirk Session.

## **1. Adoption of Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) Taking Care Guidelines**

The Kirk Session of **First Portadown Presbyterian Church** has adopted the PCI's Taking Care Guidelines, approved by the General Assembly and revised in 2004. All organisations are expected to adhere to these guidelines. The Kirk Session will review the implementation of the Guidelines every year.

## **2. Leadership**

The Kirk Session will ensure that all leaders are appropriately vetted, in line with PCI recommendations. As a result of implementing such recommendations, leaders and helpers within this congregation will be more assured of their position and of the confidence placed in them by the Kirk Session.

The following procedures must be followed for the appointment of leaders/helpers who will be 18 years or over:

- i) All new leaders (since Feb. 2005) will be required to complete an application form, through Access NI.
- ii) Applicants will be required to provide 2 referees, these must be persons who are not relatives. (All confidential records will be stored safely by the Minister).
- iii) The Kirk Session will appoint an interviewer to meet informally with the candidate. Interviewers may be the designated person, the Minister or an Elder.
- iv) At the interview, the Safeguarding Children Policy will be provided and explained.

## **3. Reporting of Concerns**

The Kirk Session will encourage all leaders to undergo Taking Care training, to ensure that they are fully conversant with the referral procedures, where there is concern about the welfare of a child. These procedures are outlined in the Taking Care Manual.

## **4. Code of Practice**

Each organisation will be expected to comply with the good practice guidelines contained in the Good Team Procedures outlined in the Taking Care Manual (obtainable from the church office).

## **5. Parental Consent Forms**

Leaders in Charge of individual organisations must ensure that parental consent forms are completed at the start of each session for each child attending their organisation. Special consent forms must be issued for any 'off the premises' activity and residentials. Leaders in Charge will store these forms in a safe place. Sample forms are available in the Taking Care Manual.

## **6. Designated person**

The Kirk Session has appointed TWO designated persons (**Roy Trimble and Doreen McDowell**) who will provide consultation, advice and support to organisations and the Kirk Session on matters concerning the welfare of children and young people. Any matter brought to the attention of the designated person will be treated in strict confidence. Information will be divulged only where there is a legitimate need to know.

## **7. Health and Safety**

The Kirk Session expects organisations to adhere to the guidance on safety matters as outlined by the Presbyterian Church's Policy on Health and Safety. The Church has appointed **John Murdoch** as Health and Safety person.

## **8. Transport**

Organisations are expected to adhere to the guidance of the Taking Care Manual, relating to the use of private cars and minibuses for transporting children to and from youth activities.

## **9. Residentials**

Guidance on residential trips is provided in the Taking Care Manual. These guidelines will be followed on all residential trips organised by all organisations of the Presbyterian Church.

## **10. Discipline**

The Kirk Session will encourage all leaders to follow guidelines for the use of sanctions as set out in the Taking Care Manual

## **11. Implementation and review**

The Kirk Session is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy and will review it every three years with the designated persons.

## **Safeguarding Children – General Safety Guidelines**

Safety is of prime importance during any activity. That is not only the responsibility of the leader in charge but of every leader/helper. They should be aware of and comply with the following guidelines.

**A.** There should always be adequate supervision by leaders/helpers for all activities. Recommended ratios of leaders/children are set out in the Taking Care Manual.

**B.** A risk assessment should be carried out and recorded by the leader in charge, at the start of each season. These should include actions for minimising the risk. Individual risk assessments should be completed for 'one off' activities and residentials. All risk assessments should be shared with all leaders/helpers.

**C.** When using special equipment for your programme e.g. 'One off' activities, such as bouncy castles, trampoline etc, ensure there is adequate supervision by trained leaders/helpers. You may also require special insurance to cover these higher risk activities. Be aware of the physical environment and remove/avoid items which may cause injury. If the organisation is undertaking what is deemed to be high risk activities, the leaders/helpers must seek written permission from parents/guardians in advance.

**D.** If at all possible, aim to have a trained first aider present. Where possible, leaders/helpers should be aware of any medication children are currently taking, but this should not be given without written consent from parents or doctors. Leaders/helpers should also seek to obtain information concerning allergies and reaction to foods e.g. peanuts. Medication should be clearly marked, out of reach of children and securely locked away.

**E.** Be aware of the location of fire exits and ensure that they are 'unblocked'. Know where the nearest fire extinguishers are located. These must be checked regularly by a qualified person. Occasionally, fire drills should be conducted to ensure that all young people know what evacuation procedure to follow in the event of a real fire. It is helpful to have a record of these.

**F.** Young people must be supervised at all times by a leader/helper while in the kitchen area. Individual organisations should develop protocols for the use of the kitchen.

**G.** Areas where maintenance work is being carried out should never be used and where possible should be screened off. Committees and Kirk Sessions should keep organisation leaders informed about maintenance work.

**H.** A telephone should be available at all times for emergency purposes.

**J.** Each organisation should have an Accident/Incident Report Book in which to record details of accidents/injuries/witnesses/date. Sample forms are available in the Taking Care Manual.

**K.** Any individuals who are seen lingering inexplicably on church premises while children/young people are engaged in their activities should be reported, by the leader in charge, to the Minister or designated person.

This document had been adapted from the General Safety Guidelines contained in the Taking Care Manual.