

::12.25 CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Creating a safe environment for children, young people, leaders and staff

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland reaches out to children and young people throughout Ireland and welcomes those from households where there is no Presbyterian or other denominational connection. We have a legal duty of care to look after all children and provide a safe environment for them as best we can.

Parents/carers expect the church to have and enforce a child protection policy. This policy is aimed at creating an environment where children and young people may enjoy social contact, personal and spiritual development and where they and the leaders and helpers working with them will be kept safe.

Adoption of Presbyterian Church in Ireland Child Protection Guidelines

The Kirk Session of Railway Street Presbyterian Church has adopted the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's child protection guidelines, Taking Care, approved by the General Assembly and revised in 2011. All organisations must adhere to these guidelines as agreed by the General Assembly in 2008. The Kirk Session will review the policy every three years and keep Taking Care on the agenda of the Kirk Session meetings.

1. Leadership

The Kirk Session believes that the recruitment and appointment process outlined in the Taking Care guidelines greatly assist the assessment of a person's suitability to work with children and young people. As a result of implementing such procedures, 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 who are 18 years and over:

- 1)** All leaders will be required to complete an application form for leaders.
- 2)** The application form includes the vetting process according to legislation and good practice.
- 3)** The Kirk Session will appoint up to two interviewers to meet informally with the applicant.
At the interview the child protection policy will be provided and explained, 'We Care 4 U Too!' will also be provided.
- 4)** Applicants will be required to provide two references by persons who are not relatives.
- 5)** A letter of approval will be sent to the Designated Person from the Taking Care Office.

2. Training

Leaders and helpers who work with children and young people should attend Taking Care training on a regular basis (as church policy or legislation demands). Even those who have a good knowledge of child protection issues in another field should attend as Taking Care Training is the only training available that is specifically dealing with church activities within a church environment.

3. Reporting of Concerns

The leaders in each of our organisations will be fully conversant with the reporting procedure where there is a concern about the welfare of a child, as outlined in the Taking Care guidelines. Leaders must not hesitate to report a concern about a child if they are at any time worried about their welfare.

4. The Designated Person

The Kirk Session has appointed the following Designated Person(s):-

Dr Samuel H Mitchell

The Designated Person(s) will give advice and support to organisations and to the Kirk Session on matters concerning the welfare of children and young people. The Kirk Session will keep organisational leaders updated with the name of the Designated Person(s). 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.

5. Parental Consent Forms

Organisational leaders must ensure that they have home contact numbers, parental consent and medical information regarding the children in the organisations which they are working with. Special consent forms will be issued for any 'off the premises' activity and residential programmes.

6. Good Standards of Practice

Each organisation will be expected to comply with good standards of practice as outlined in the Taking Care guidelines. This includes: physical contact, recommended ratios, transport, residential programmes and outings, church sleepovers, photographs and working with children who have special needs.

7. Working Together

It is important that all leaders know the boundaries and rules of an organisation and that these are explained to children and parents. A code of conduct for children and young people will be drawn up at the commencement of the year's activities in each organisation. A code of conduct will help to create a safe, secure environment and an atmosphere where children will feel that they can relate to the leaders and helpers.

All leaders must abide by the discipline guidelines as set out in Taking Care.

8. Technology

Leaders should limit the direct Internet communication they have with individual children and young people in the organisation of which they are leaders. All such communication with children and young people should, as far as possible, be within an open forum; in order to protect both young people and leaders. Leaders should be wise as to how they use this form of communication.

Leaders should not post photographs of young people from the organisation in which they are leaders, on a social networking site or anywhere on the Internet, unless they have written parental consent.

Leaders involved in Youth and Children's work should only have children's mobile numbers if the nature of their involvement requires them to phone or text children and if this is the case, contacting children through the use of mobile phones should be done in line with the Taking Care guidelines.

9. Health and Safety

The Kirk Session expects organisations to adhere to the guidance on health and safety matters outlined in the Taking Care guidelines. A Risk Assessment form should be completed for each organisation as well as for any outings or occasional events. Leaders will be informed of fire and first aid procedures.

10. Implementation and Review

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

Signed Rev Michael Davidson (Minister) Stephen Johnston (Clerk of Session)

Dr Samuel Mitchell (Designated Person/s)