Railway Street Presbyterian Church Safeguarding Policy

Aligned with Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) Safeguarding Procedures and Northern Ireland Legislation

Railway Street Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Safeguarding Policy

1. Policy Statement

This congregation adopts the safeguarding procedures of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) as set out in:

https://presbyterianireland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-for-northern-ireland/northern-ireland-safeguarding-procedures/pci-safeguarding-children-ni-procedures

This policy is aligned with Northern Ireland legislation and guidance including:

- Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) policies
- Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership (2015)
- PCI child and adult safeguarding policy and requirements

We are committed to safeguarding children, young people, and adults at risk. The welfare of the individual is paramount.

2. Key Principles

In line with PCI procedures our congregation will ensure:

1. There is an aligned Designated Person and Adult Safeguarding Champion (ASC)

2. We have robust procedures for the recruitment, checking and monitoring of staff and volunteers working with children

3. Anyone engaging with children and young people through the denomination will be trained at least once every 3 years in how to recognise, respond to and report abuse as well as to understand their role in the prevention of abuse

4. The denomination has clear processes for the reporting of abuse and the risk of harm, both externally to statutory services and internally through a clearly identified chain of responsibility

5. Identified risks to children and young people are assessed and managed

6. Any person of risk engaged in our ministries (for example those with a history of serious offending behaviour) is safely managed, monitored and supported

7. We have a timely, effective and sensitive approach to managing non-recent abuse disclosures

8. Children and young people from other countries are protected and cared for while engaging in our ministries and missions

9. We have appropriate ways for children and young people to voice their opinions and concerns, and be listened and responded to

10.The congregation has safe and confidential methods for managing information

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Designated Person (DP) and Adult Safeguarding Champion, in line with Chapter 2 of the PCI procedures:

- Receive concerns
- Makes referrals to Gateway Teams (HSC Trusts) or Adult Safeguarding
- Liaises with PSNI where necessary
- Maintains secure records

Our Kirk Session:

- Holds overall safeguarding responsibility
- Ensures compliance with PCI and NI guidance including risk assessments as set out in Chapter 13

Leaders:

- Follow safeguarding procedures
- Report concerns immediately
- Attend training

4. Safe Recruitment

Our congregation will follow best recruitment practices as set out in Chapter 6 and 7 of the PCI procedures and we will ensure that all leaders must:

- Complete application and references
- Be interviewed by our Kirk Session
- Undergo AccessNI checks for roles that require these
- Complete safeguarding training

No regulated activity is permitted until checks are complete and approved. The church will recheck through AccessNI those in regulated activity every 3 years

5. Responding to Concerns

If a disclosure is made our safeguarding staff will, in line with Chapter 2 of the PCI procedures:

- Listen carefully
- Not promise confidentiality

- Reassure
- Record accurately
- Report immediately to DP
- Not investigate or delay.

6. Reporting Procedure (NI)

All concerns will be reported to the DP or ASC in line with chapter 3 of the procedures who will where necessary:

- Refer to Gateway Services (Children's Social Services)
- Refer adult concerns to Adult Safeguarding Teams
- Contact PSNI if a crime is suspected
- Follow PCI safeguarding procedures
- Emergency: Call 999

7. Confidentiality

- Information is shared on a need-to-know basis only.
- Confidentiality cannot override safeguarding responsibilities.
- Speak to the PCI safeguarding team

8. Record Keeping

As a congregation we will keep

- Accurate, signed and dated records
- That are stored securely
- Retained in line with PCI and NI GDPR requirements

9. Safeguarding in Practice

The congregation will ensure compliance with guidance around

- Appropriate supervision ratios
- Risk assessments
- Safe premises
- Consent procedures
- Safe transportation of children
- Application of the church's procedures to 3 party organisations and missions

10. Digital Communication

- No private messaging with children

- Use group communication
- Maintain transparency and accountability

11. Allegations Against Leaders

- Report immediately to DP
- Referral to statutory agencies
- PCI Safeguarding Office informed
- Comply with PCI requirements on Emergency Safeguarding Panels

12. The management of Safeguarding Agreements (offenders and serious allegations)

Our congregations will in line with Chapter 14 of the Procedures

- Comply with requirements on development of safeguarding agreements

13. Training

All our leaders must complete PCI safeguarding training and refresher training in line with NI expectations.

14. Code of conduct

Our church complies with the PCI standards of behaviours expected of all our leaders and those in responsibility

Our own code of conduct can be viewed in the Resources Section of our website.

15. Review

Policy reviewed annually by Kirk Session and updated in line with PCI and NI legislation.

16. Key Contacts

Our key contacts are:

DP: Dr Samuel Mitchell

Deputy DP: Mrs Pamela McElhinney

Local HSC Trust Gateway: South Eastern Trust Gateway Service 0300 100 0300

PSNI: 101 (non-emergency) / 999 (emergency)

PCI Safeguarding Office: 028 9041 7234

15. Adoption

Adopted by Kirk Session: Railway Street Presbyterian Church

Date: 14 September 2026

Signed: *Stephen Johnston*, Session Clerk

Next date of Review: On or before 14 September 2027