

Hamilton
Road
Presbyterian
Church

SAFEGUARDING POLICY FOR CHILDREN

OF

HAMILTON ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

BANGOR

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland is committed to safeguarding all children and protecting them from harm.

https://presbyterianireland.org/safeguarding

Doing nothing is not an option;

you must always act

Sept 2026

POLICY STATEMENT

This Policy is aimed at providing a safe environment where children and young people may enjoy social contact, personal and spiritual development. All our leaders play a key role in responding effectively and compassionately when someone comes forward to share concerns or to disclose abuse, or when we believe a child may be at harm or risk of harm. Adults selected to work within children and youth ministries should be secure in the knowledge that they have the full support of the Kirk Session.

This Policy will be issued to each member of Session, all staff team members and all Leaders in Charge and Leaders of organisations working with children/young people.

Adoption of Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) Safeguarding Children Guidelines

The Kirk Session of Hamilton Road Presbyterian Church has adopted The Presbyterian Church in Ireland's safeguarding children Guidelines.

https://presbyterianireland.org/safeguarding

Any outside organisation using the church facilities is expected to either have its own Policy or to abide by this Policy. If they have their own Policy, they will need to provide a copy of this to the Church Office at time of booking. The Safeguarding Team will review any outside organisation's policy before it is accepted.

RECOGNISING ABUSE

Child abuse can occur any time, any place and to any child.

Child abuse is not necessarily always through physical contact; children can be abused by omission, failure to act or via non-contact online abuse. Whatever the reason, abuse is always wrong, and it is never the child's fault. There are six main types of child abuse - Physical, Neglect, Emotional, Sexual, Exploitation and witness of abusive behaviour. Any child with whom you come into contact could be experiencing harm or abuse.

Further information can be found in Chapter 2 - recognising abuse

RESPONDING AND REPORTING

Leaders must not hesitate to report a concern about a child to our Designated Person, as outlined in **PCI Safeguarding Guidelines Chapter 3-responding-and-reporting**

If you cannot reach our Designated Person and in the rare case of an emergency, please contact North Down Gateway Team – 0300100 0300; out of hours 08001979995

Designated Person

The Kirk Session has appointed the following Designated Person:

Bella Agnew; tel: 074 6984 2322 who will provide consultation, advice and support to organisations and to the Kirk Session on matters concerning the welfare of children and young people. Bella has extensive experience working with young people. The Kirk Session will keep organisational leaders updated with the name of the Designated Person. 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. It is never the Leader's responsibility to investigate.

The Designated Person will gather information relating to concerns and if deemed necessary will consult with PCI Safeguarding Office. If there is considered to be an immediate risk, the matter will be referred without delay to the appropriate statutory agency.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND SAFEGUARDING

We respect individuals' rights to privacy and are committed to keeping information secure. However, there are limits to this confidentiality. In some situations, we are required to share information either internally or externally to social services and PSNI. This is required by law to protect children and young people.

Never promise a child or young person that you will keep secret any information that they disclose to you.

Further information can be found in **PCI Safeguarding Guidelines** **Chapter 5-confidentiality-and-Safeguarding**

RECRUITMENT

The Kirk Session believes that the recruitment and appointment process outlined in **PCI Safeguarding Children Guidelines** **Chapter 6-recruitment** greatly assists 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.

This recruitment process applies to all leaders aged 16 and over.
Potential leaders must be approved by Session before they are approached. New leaders should normally have attended HRPC for at least one year. Exceptions may be made for those who have attended for less than one year, provided suitable references are received, or for those who attend another church.
PCI will complete an AccessNI check at the beginning of the person's role. This is to be renewed every three years while they remain in the post.

The Church Office will oversee the following procedures, with the authority of the Kirk Session:

All potential leaders must:

1. Complete application forms when approved to work with children and young people. This includes the AccessNI vetting process. Applicants are asked to declare any past criminal convictions or police investigations as part of this form.
2. Provide two referees. The referees should NOT be family members, the Minister, Designated Person or either of the interviewers.
3. Attend a safeguarding interview, which will involve an identity check and opportunity to watch HRPC's online introduction video.
4. Attend PCI Safeguarding Training every 3 years.
5. When the full process of application, interview, references and checks are completed, Kirk Session will make a final decision of appointment and record its agreement of appointment.
6. All potential leaders and volunteers must complete the appointment process fully ***before*** commencing the role.

Any leader with a break in leadership service of more than two years must attend Safeguarding Training and attend an interview before starting back with the organisation.

WORKING SAFELY WITH CHILDREN

Registers

It is the responsibility of the Leader in Charge to have contact numbers, medical information and parental consent for every child/young person in their organisation. This must be done annually to keep records up to date. Special consent forms should be used for any "off the premises" activity and residentials.

Anti-Bullying Policy

Children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind.

Bullying is a form of abuse.

HRPC takes bullying seriously, children and parents should be assured that they would be supported when bullying is reported.

Please refer to HRPC's Anti-Bullying policy available on Safeguarding notice boards or from the Church Office.

Under 18s working with children and young people

16- and 17-year-olds can assist in providing children's activities. However, it is never appropriate to require someone aged less than 18 years to take on the role of leader or be in sole charge of children. This would mean, unacceptably, leaving a child in charge of children.

At least two adult leaders should be in charge of any group of children at any time.

16- and 17-year-olds can be counted, in addition to the two adult leaders, in your ratios of children to adults if they have been through the full recruitment process, as above.

Please note that 16- and 17 year-olds who go through the AccessNI vetting process must have parental/guardian consent for a criminal records check and should receive the same levels of training as all other leaders.

Anyone aged 15 and below who is helping with children does not count as part of leadership ratios.

One-to-One Mentoring

Overall, the preferred manner for any leader to engage with any young person is in group settings with at least two leaders present.

One-to-one mentoring can **only occur with the permission of the Designated Person.**

For further information see PCI Safeguarding Guidelines Chapter 9-working-safely-with-children

Photographs

Permission for any images (moving or still) will be sought from Parents /Guardians on ChurchSuite's online registration form for each child and updated annually.
It is preferable to use group pictures. Do not identify children by name or other personal details. Be especially mindful of this in relation to livestreaming.
Carefully consider the location of the images and the pose of the children.
Do not insist that a child or young person participates in any images.
For further information can be found in **PCI Safeguarding Guidelines** **Chapter 11: Online safety**.

Accident Forms

All accidents, incidents, near misses and safeguarding matters must be responded to immediately. They must be recorded and held confidentially for future reference.
For each organisation/activity that is occurring at least one of the leaders should be trained in First Aid.
Parents/guardians should be contacted as soon as practicably possible.
Accident report forms should be fully completed and detail the accident/incident including outlining any injuries or treatment, any witnesses, and including all dates on forms and signatures of those involved and the Leader in Charge.
If in any doubt about a medical issue, contact emergency services.
First Aid boxes and Accident Report forms are located in the Church Sanctuary at the toilets, in the David Burke room kitchen, the kitchen & main crèche room in the Welcome Centre, and the Halls' kitchen & on the wall outside the Millar Craig Hall.
HRPC's Facilities & Maintenance Officer will be responsible for maintaining the First Aid boxes.
Further information can be found in Chapter 9-working-safely-with-children

Diversity

Children and young people may experience diversity in culture, disabilities, ethnicity, gender, religion and sexual orientation in early years.
We can only safeguard children and young people holistically if we remain mindful of the importance of diversity and inclusion.
Meaningful safeguarding will seek to understand and include all children who engage with our ministries. Child abuse can affect children and young people from any background.

Additional Needs (Special Educational Needs)

It is critical that our ministries are inclusive for all children and young people as far as possible. This is recognised to be complex in our voluntary situation, when finding and keeping appropriate leaders for activities is under pressure. It may be at times that additional personnel are required to ensure that a ministry can run safely seeing to the needs of all the children present. HRPC understands that there are extra barriers for safeguarding some children and young people with additional needs, which we must overcome.

The strongest way to safeguard children and young people with additional needs is to get to know them and their families and learn what it is like for them to engage in ministries and activities**.**

Transport

Organisations are expected to adhere to HRPC's Health and safety policy relating to use of private cars and minibuses for transporting children/young people to and from youth activities. R-drivers must not be used to transport children/young people to any weekends away or outings held by the organisation.

Health and Safety

The Kirk Session expects organisations to adhere to the guidance on safety matters outlined in HRPC's health and safety Policy.

THE VOICE OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Actively listening to children and young people engaged in our ministries is critical to safeguarding in HRPC. They will only really talk when they know they are being listened to and taken seriously, regardless of the subject matter.

Further information can be found in **Chapter 10- The voice of children and young people in our church: Safeguarding guidance**

ONLINE SAFETY

PCI recognises that technology is a positive tool, when well used, especially in youth ministry. Our aim is to promote the use of technology as a tool in ministry and these guidelines are to support the use of technology. We aim to promote best practices when using technology to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Congregational presence on social media and websites

No Organisation should create their own social media account without prior consultation with Kirk Session. Further information can be found in **PCI Safeguarding Guidelines** **Chapter 11 online safety**

WhatsApp and Messaging Forums

Organisation leaders MUST NOT use WhatsApp groups to communicate with young people under 16. Communication should be with parents via WhatsApp or email.

Any communication with young people should only be done after discussion with the Designated Person. For further information on online safety please refer to **PCI Safeguarding Guidelines** **Chapter 11-online-safety**

MANAGEMENT OF SAFEGUARDING AGREEMENTS

HRPC will comply with requirements on development and management of safeguarding agreements, as outlined in **PCI Safeguarding Guidelines** **Chapter 14 management of safeguarding agreements**

CODES OF BEHAVIOUR

A copy of HRPC Codes of Behaviour will be given to every leader and parent within our organisations.

The Codes of Behaviour will create supportive environments to provide a child-centred approach for the children involved in HRPC ministries.

The Codes of Behaviour will help to provide rules for the leaders, parents and children to agree to and abide by.

RECORD KEEPING

As a Congregation we will keep accurate, signed and dated records that are stored securely and retained in line with PCI and UK GDPR requirements.

IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

The Kirk Session will review this Policy every three years, or sooner if changes in legislation or PCI requirements make a review necessary.