



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

USEFUL CONTACTS

Minister	Andrew Thompson	T: 028 9267 5579
Deaconess	Roberta Irvine	T: 07814 653376
Clerk of Session	Mark Noble	T: 07768 723940
Assistant Minister	Graeme Read	T: 07933 558186
Church Administrator	Lynne Campbell	T: 07754 195885 E: admin@elmwoodpresbyterian.com
Designated Person	Patricia McAuley Stanage	T: 07739 047660
PCI Taking Care	Office Out of Hours	T: 028 9047 1103 T: 028 9041 7235 E: takingcare@presbyterianireland.org

CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE, LEADERS AND STAFF

POLICY STATEMENT

Elmwood Presbyterian Church reaches out to children and young people throughout our local community and welcomes those from households where there is no Presbyterian or denominational connection. We have a legal duty of care to look after all children and provide a safe environment for them to the best of our ability.

This policy statement is aimed at creating a safe 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 safe.

ADOPTION OF PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND (PCI) CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES

The Kirk Session of Elmwood Presbyterian Church has adopted The Presbyterian Church in Ireland's child protection guidelines, **Taking Care 2**, approved by the General Assembly and revised 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.

2. THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES MUST BE FOLLOWED FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF LEADERS WHO ARE 18 YEARS AND OVER:

- i. All leaders will be required to complete an application form for leaders.
- ii. The application form includes the Access NI vetting process, which according to legislation and good practice, is required for all leaders over 18 years of age and who are involved with in voluntary work with children in the church more than four times per month.
- iii. Applicants will be required to provide two references by persons who are not relatives, but who have known them for more than two years. Three types of photocopied ID are required (as per Access NI) which will be sent to the Taking Care Office along with the application form.
- iv. The Kirk Session will appoint up to two interviewers to meet informally with the applicant. The child protection policy will be provided along with "We Care 4 U Too" leaflet.
- v. A letter of approval will be sent to the Designated Person from the Taking Care Office.
- vi. All helpers must be 15 years of age or over. Helpers under 18 years old do not require an Access NI Check but must have parental consent and not have unsupervised access to children at any time.

3. TRAINING

PCI Taking care Training is led by a PCI designated trainer and is specifically designed to deal with church activities in a church environment. Local training will be organised as required by the Designated Person in conjunction with the Taking Care Office.

Two levels of training are currently available:

- PCI Taking Care Foundation training must be completed by all new leaders/helpers irrespective of their previous knowledge and involvement with children and child protection.
- Leaders and helpers are then required to complete PCI Taking Care Refresher training once every three years, or as church policy or legislation demands.

4. REPORTING OF CONCERNS

The leaders in each of our organisations are fully conversant with the reporting procedure where there is 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. Concerns should be handled in a confidential manner.

Persons who might be approached to handle a problem in a confidential manner would be one of the following:

- **Minister:** Andrew Thompson (028 9267 5579)
- **Deaconess:** Roberta Irvine (07814653376)
- **Clerk of Session:** Mark Noble (07768723940)
- **Designated Person:** Patricia Stanage (07739047660)

5. THE DESIGNATED PERSON

The Kirk Session has appointed the following Designated Person: PATRICIA STANAGE

The Designated Person will provide consultation, 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 the Designated Person. Any matter brought to the attention of the Designated Person will be treated in the strictest confidence. Information will be divulged only where there is a legitimate need to know.

6. PARENTAL CONSENT FORMS.

Organisational leaders must ensure that they have home contact numbers, parental consent and medical information regarding the children in the organisations with whom they are working. Special consent forms will be issued for any 'off the premises' activity and residential programmes. Parental consent is required for all young people under the age of 18 for any activity/event organised by Elmwood Presbyterian Church. Consent forms will be held in strict confidence in compliance with GDPR regulations.

7. 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 educational needs.

Leaders are reminded that the safety and wellbeing of each individual young person are paramount.

8. 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 each year's activities in each organisation. A clearly defined line of accountability should be in place, whereby all leaders and helpers report to the appointed leader in charge. The leader in charge reports to the Kirk Session with which ultimate responsibility lies.

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

9. TECHNOLOGY

Leaders should limit the direct internet communication they have with individual children and young people in the organisation in 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 contact young people under the age of 14 by phone, text or social media unless parental consent is given. The use of inappropriate images or language on mobile phones is not tolerated at Elmwood Presbyterian Church.

Social Media is widely used amongst young people and can be a great tool for organisations to share information. Leaders should be mindful about adding young people as friends on various forums such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or Snapchat. Leaders are expected to be a good example to young people both in person and when using social media.

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. Under no circumstances should a leader post pictures of children or young people to their own personal profile. Group photographs are advised at all times BUT can only be taken with parental consent. Leaders should pay careful attention to children/young people taking pictures of each other without 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**. Group texts are advisable where possible.

10. BULLYING

All kinds of bullying are wrong and should not be tolerated within organisations of Elmwood Presbyterian Church. Our organisations should be safe and welcoming places, inclusive of all children. All organisations should develop an environment of openness where children and leaders feel able to say if they or their friends are being bullied. The government defines bullying as, "deliberately hurtful behaviour repeated often over a period of time". Bullying can happen anywhere to anyone; anyone has the potential to bully others. Leaders should try to prevent bullying by adequately supervising children and young people, addressing issues early and not ignoring them.

Be mindful of cyberbullying (the use of the internet to hurt, harass or embarrass another individual).

11. TRANSPORT

Organisations are expected to adhere to the guidance of the **Taking Care Guidelines** relating to the use of private cars and minibuses for transporting children to and from youth activities. Care should be taken in using recently qualified drivers and car insurance must be suitable for transporting young people.

12. RESIDENTIALS

Guidance on residential trips is provided by **Taking Care Guidelines** and will be followed on all residential trips organised by all organisations of Elmwood Presbyterian Church. A list of relevant contact details must be left with the minister, the designated person or a person approved by the designated person during the period of the residential.

13. HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Kirk Session expects organisations to adhere to the guidance on 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 the Fire Safety and First Aid procedures. Annual risk assessment forms must be completed and given to the Health and Safety officer. A Basic First Aider will be trained for each organisation.

14. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

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

SIGNED:

DATE:

A Thompson

Minister

23rd March 2023

M Noble

Clerk of Session

P McAuley Stange

Designated Person

This document was approved by Session on the above date and signed by above persons.