Clare Presbyterian Church

*To magnify Christ by making disciples in Clare and beyond*

# Safeguarding Adults Procedures

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# Chapter 1: Introduction to the Procedures for Safeguarding Adults

***Aim of the Chapter***

i. To introduce procedures for keeping adults safe when engaging in our ministries

ii. To connect the procedures with our Safeguarding Adults Policy

***Our Commitment to Safeguard***

We aim in these procedures overall to promote confidence that Clare Presbyterian Church is safe for all.

We want to state clearly the arrangements for adult safeguarding, including preventative and protective measures.

We will establish effective working structures to respond to concerns.

Following PCI advice, the Kirk Session will ensure that the policy and these procedures remain in line with both current regional legislation and policy and *The Code: The Constitution and Government of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.*

**Clare Presbyterian Church promotes a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, wherever it occurs or whoever is responsible.**

***Scope of the Procedures***

The policy and associated procedures are applicable to all ministers, elders, staff and volunteers working within our church.

This policy outlines the expectation for behaviour for all those who come into contact with our church and its ministries.

This policy applies to all aspects of ministry and work within our church, whether this be on our premises or in an individual's own home or workplace.

We accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues that cause adults harm, and to establish and maintain a safe environment for all.

We are committed to practices that promote the welfare of adults and prevent harm.

Therefore, we will:

- Adhere to these adult safeguarding procedures
- Follow the procedures laid down for the recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers
- Provide effective management for staff and volunteers through support and training

- Implement clear processes for raising awareness of and responding to abuse within the church in a compassionate and timely manner
- Report concerns to statutory agencies that need to know, while involving adults at risk and their carers appropriately
- Ensure that general safety and risk management procedures are adhered to
- Promote full participation and have clear procedures for dealing with concerns and complaints
- Manage personal information, confidentiality and information sharing
- Implement a code of behaviour for staff and volunteers

***Outline of the Legislative Context***

The rights of adults to live a life free from neglect, exploitation and abuse are protected by the Human Rights Act 1998.

Their right to life is protected (under Article 2); their right to be protected from inhuman and degrading treatment (under Article 3); and their right to liberty and security (under Article 5).

Additional areas of legislation that inform this policy and procedures include:

- The Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967
- The Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Orders and the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009
- The Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986
- The Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997
- The Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998
- The Family Homes and Domestic Violence (Northern Ireland) Order 1998
- The Northern Ireland Act 1998, Section 75
- The Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1999
- The Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012)
- The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008
- The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- The Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 and Human Trafficking and Exploitation Regulations 2025
- Mental Capacity Act 2016
- Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021

Northern Ireland does not currently have explicit adult safeguarding legislation. The Adult Protection Bill (NI) is currently completing its legislative passage at the NI Assembly.

*Regional Policy Context*

The regional adult safeguarding policy 'Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership' was launched in July 2015. The policy was jointly developed and published by the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive.

https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/adult-safeguarding-prevention-and-protection-partnership

This sets out how the Northern Ireland Executive intends adult safeguarding to be taken forward across all Government departments, their agencies and in partnership with the voluntary, community, independent and **faith organisations**.

A key objective is to reduce the incidence of harm of adults who are at risk, to provide them with effective support and, where necessary, protective responses and access to justice for victims and their families.

***Awareness and Implementation***

The Adult Safeguarding Policy Statement and these Procedures are displayed on our church premises and will be available on our website.

Everyone involved with leadership in any of the ministries of our church must receive or have access to a copy of the full safeguarding policy and procedures.

Provision of alternative formats when necessary – for example, large print or easy read versions – can be obtained by contacting the Designated Person.

***Approval, Governance and Review***

The Kirk Session will review the wide-scope policy, procedures, code of behaviour and practice at least once every two years, according to PCI advice.

**CHAPTER END**

## Chapter 2: Recruitment and Selection of Leaders and Volunteers (Leaders)

***Aim of the Chapter***

To outline recruitment, selection and management procedures that will:

i. Minimise the opportunity for unsuitable people to work or volunteer with adults who may be at risk

ii. Give consistency of approach

iii. Reassure those engaging with our church that all possible measures are taken to recruit suitable leaders

***Role Descriptions***

The first step is to define the leadership or pastoral role. This involves thinking through what exactly our Kirk Session considers the role to be, identifying what skills will be required and being clear about the qualities required to fill the post.

The qualifications (if any), skills and qualities required of the leader will be described in a specification for a leader.

It is the responsibility of our Kirk Session to draw up its role descriptions for our church if they do not already exist in Presbyterian language.

*Examples of Relevant Roles*

| **Role** | **Status** | |
|---|---|---|
| Elder | As already defined by PCI (not recruited as per other roles*) | |
| Leader of an adult disability group | Write a role description based on the specific activities of the group | |
| Pastoral Support Team member | Write a role description based on the scope of the pastoral support | |

* Please see *The Code: The constitution and government of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (2026)*

***The Recruitment Process***

1. There is an application form for all volunteers and leaders of adult ministries for adults at risk. Information about the organisation will be included, as well as a copy of the church's Safeguarding Statement. All information received will be dealt with confidentially.
2. There is a declaration form requesting information on previous convictions and cautions that are not exempted by the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978, and any current investigation processes.

   The applicant will also be asked to provide any information on any investigation carried out in relation to adult or child abuse in which they have been the alleged perpetrator, and to agree to further enquiries being made, relevant to the declaration.

   The Kirk Session will make it clear that such information will be dealt with in a confidential manner and not used unfairly to disadvantage the applicant. The declaration form must be returned to the Kirk Session in a sealed envelope marked 'confidential' and only opened when the preferred applicant has been identified. See also PCI's Access NI and Criminal Vetting Procedures.
3. There will be an interview process suitable to the role and task. Usually, this will be conducted by at least one member of Session and the Leader in Charge of the relevant organisation.

   This is also a good opportunity to understand the individual's understanding of safeguarding.
4. Written references will be sought for all roles and posts.
5. Where a post involves a professional or regulatory qualification as part of its essential requirements a check will be made of the professions' public register (for example, social work/social care roles and NISCC).
6. Where required, an appropriate Access NI disclosure check is carried out. The requirements for this are set out in the:

   - Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012)

     Enhanced checks will be carried out.
7. The post is finally approved by the Kirk Session on all occasions.

**It is important to note that new people joining our congregation may not be admitted to a leadership role immediately.**

**Staff/volunteers will not begin their role until the Access NI check is completed.**

***Supporting Volunteers and Leaders***

Supporting our volunteers and leaders (leaders) contributes to safer activities for all. Leaders will feel supported, reducing anxieties and this will lead to an increase in confidence, which will in turn lead to more timely identification of any safeguarding concerns.

Our Kirk Session therefore will include:

- *Introduction and Induction to the Role*

  For example, meeting with the individual and discussing information on our church's policies, procedures, guidelines, activities and ethos.

  Talk about the expectations of their role and how this fits within the wider work of our church.

  Ensure that they are aware of how to raise an issue and ensure that they have undertaken training on the recognition, recording and reporting of abuse.

  Ensure that staff and volunteers receive an induction appropriate to their role and experience.

  For contracted roles, i.e., those that are paid under a job description, a six-month probationary period will be included before confirmation in post.

- *Training*

  All staff and volunteers (including Adult Safeguarding Champions, Kirk Sessions, staff) will receive adult safeguarding training relevant to their role and the nature of the contact they will have with adults at risk.

  This training will be reviewed and updated regularly in line with changing legislation and practice.

  In accordance with the policy of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, it is the policy of Clare Presbyterian Church that the update training take place at least every three years.

  **It is the responsibility of the Kirk Session to ensure that a contemporaneous list of active volunteers/staff is kept and to ensure that they are adequately trained.**

  See also procedures and expectations regarding training.

- *Supervision and Support*

  Support and supervision are essential to ensure that leaders feel reinforced in the ministry in which they are engaged, and that the Kirk Session is confident that individuals are carrying out their roles to the required standard.

  Leaders will be facilitated to discuss their roles at regular intervals.

  This will, in turn, assist the Kirk Session to become aware of and deal with any issues that may prevent the work being carried out effectively, or quickly to identify any behaviour or attitude that may be contrary to the teaching of our church.

  It is important that at least annually there is a leader meeting and that all volunteers and/or staff associated with an organisation are gathered to review the activity for the past period, and to review how each member of the team is engaging their role. At least one representative of Kirk Session should be present to oversee this meeting and support that team.

  Paid staff (employees) in a church will have a personnel file, and training and supervision records/appraisals are recorded in this.

- *Oversight*

  It is central to the role of the Adult Safeguarding Champion (designated safeguarding person) to have oversight of the individual leaders' Access NI checks, attendance at training and an accurate recorded date if they come out of a role.

  (See Chapter 4 for more information on this specific role.)

**CHAPTER END**

# Chapter 3: Recognising Abuse in Adults

***Aim of the Chapter***

i. To describe forms of abuse and indicators of the same

ii. To provide specific cultural and faith-based considerations

Good safeguarding practice means that our church must ensure that all staff and volunteers understand how to recognise abuse, and how to pass on any safeguarding concerns to the relevant people.

This does not mean that our Kirk Session, staff or volunteers are responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred, but they do have a responsibility to be alert to the signs, actions and/or behaviour by adults that suggests that something may be wrong.

***A Broad Look at Abuse***

Abuse is a 'single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to another individual or violates their human or civil rights' (*Action on Elder Abuse: Definition of abuse 1993*, which can be accessed at https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph50/evidence/report-5-elder-abuse-pdf-430409341).

Abuse is the misuse of power and control that one person has over another. It can involve direct and indirect contact and can include online abuse.

Abuse is described in regional policies under the following terms:

**P** Physical

**P** Psychological

**F** Financial

**I** Institutional

**N** Neglect

**E** Exploitation

**S** Sexual

Additionally, there are three related definitions (each have their own separate safeguarding procedures in place):

- Domestic violence/abuse
- Human trafficking/modern slavery
- Hate crime

**Abuse can happen anywhere** – for example, in someone's own home, within day care, residential care, nursing care or other institutional settings, at work or in educational settings, in church property at church organisations, or in public.

**Anyone can be an abuser** – Our Kirk Session, staff and volunteers must be aware that those who cause harm come from all sections of society, all professions and all races and can be male or female, of any age.

As painful as it may be, we must remain open to the fact that people may join our congregation and become trusted parts of our church community in order to get easier access to abuse people. In our situation we must remain aware that abusers can also be, for example, those in positions of leadership and trust.

***A Focused Look at Definitions of Abuse***

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is physical force or mistreatment of one person by another, which might or might not cause physical injury. This type of abuse includes:

- hitting
- pushing
- rough handling
- exposure to heat or cold
- force feeding
- improper administration of medication
- denial of treatment
- misuse or illegal use of restraint
- not being allowed to go where you wish, when you wish

Signs of physical abuse are:

- fractures
- bruising
- burns
- pain
- marks
- not wanting to be touched

Psychological (or Emotional) Abuse

Psychological or emotional abuse is harmful behaviour that can cause mental distress. It can involve both verbal and non-verbal abuse, which can scare, humiliate and isolate a person.

This may include:

- threats
- humiliation or ridicule
- provoking fear of violence
- shouting, yelling and swearing
- blaming
- controlling
- intimidation
- coercion

Signs of psychological abuse are:

- being withdrawn
- being too eager to do everything that they are asked
- showing compulsive behaviour
- not being able to do things they used to
- not being able to concentrate or focus

Financial Abuse

Financial abuse happens if someone tries to steal, steals or defrauds you of your money, goods or property. This includes:

- exploitation
- embezzlement
- withholding pension or benefits
- exerting pressure around wills, property or inheritance

Signs of financial abuse are:

- having unusual difficulty with finances
- not having enough money
- being too protective of money and things they own
- not paying bills

- not having normal home comforts

Institutional Abuse

Institutional abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of an adult at risk by a regime or individuals. It takes place within settings and services that adults at risk live in or use, including any organisation, in or outside the Health and Social Care sector.

Institutional abuse may occur:

- when routines, systems and regimes result in poor standards of care
- when poor practice and behaviours are in place
- within strict regimes and rigid routines that violate the dignity and human rights of the adults and place them at risk of harm
- within a culture that denies, restricts or curtails privacy, dignity, choice and independence

Possible signs are:

- the person has no personal clothing or belongings
- there is no care plan for them
- they are admitted often to hospital
- professionals having treated them badly or unsatisfactorily or acting in a way that cause harm to the person

Neglect

Neglect occurs when a person deliberately withholds, or fails to provide, suitable and adequate care and support needed by another adult. It may be through a lack of knowledge or awareness, or through a decision not to act when they know the adult in their care needs help. It may impair the health or well-being of an adult.

Possible signs are:

- having pain or discomfort
- being very hungry, thirsty or untidy
- failing health

Exploitation

Exploitation is the deliberate maltreatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over another person. It is taking advantage of another person or situation usually, but not always, for personal gain.

Exploitation comes in many forms, including:

- slavery
- being controlled by a person or a group

- forced labour
- domestic violence and abuse
- sexual violence and abuse
- human trafficking

*Recognising Signs of Harm or Abuse*

You might become aware that an adult is at risk of harm when:

- you see or hear something
- they tell you about abuse, exploitation or neglect happening to them
- a friend, family member or somebody tells you something that causes you concern
- you notice injuries or physical signs that cause you concern
- you notice the victim or abuser behaving in a way that alerts you to thinking something may be wrong

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is unwanted sexual activity or sexual behaviour that happens without consent or understanding.

Sexual violence and abuse can be physical contact or non-contact sexual activities, such as:

- indecent exposure
- stalking
- grooming
- forced to look at or be involved in producing sexually abusive material
- forced to watch sexual activities

Possible signs are:

- genital itching, soreness or having a sexually transmitted disease
- using bad language
- not wanting to be touched
- behaving in a sexually inappropriate way
- changes in appearance

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse isn't always physical. Coercive control is at the heart of domestic abuse. It is a pattern of controlling behaviours and acts that may include threats, humiliation and intimidation, assaults or other abuse, which is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim *(Women's Aid NI)*. This controlling behaviour is designed to make a person dependent on their abuser by isolating them from family,

friends and support services, exploiting them, humiliating and degrading them and regulating their everyday behaviour. It can be a gradual process that over time can lead to a total loss of confidence and sense of self.

Examples of coercive behaviour include:

- Love bombing, e.g., being showered with gifts and compliments, wanting the person's undivided attention, calling and texting frequently, or getting upset when boundaries and limits are put up. Abusers lavish the person with attention or affection, in order to influence or manipulate them
- Gaslighting, e.g., lying to the person, discrediting them, minimising their thoughts and feelings, shifting the blame or an abuser retelling stories/events in ways that are in their favour
- Isolating from friends and family
- Depriving the person of basic needs
- Monitoring the person's time
- Monitoring via online communication tools or spyware
- Taking control over aspects of everyday life, such as where the person can go, who they can see, what they can wear and when they can sleep
- Depriving the person of access to support services
- Repeated put downs, humiliating, degrading or dehumanising the person
- Controlling finances
- Threats and intimidation

Hate Crime

Any incident that constitutes a criminal offence perceived by the victim or any other person as being motivated by prejudice, discrimination or hate towards a person's actual or perceived race, religious belief, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion or gender identity.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking involves the acquisition and movement of people by improper means, such as force, threat or deception, for the purposes of exploiting them. It can take many forms, such as domestic servitude, forced criminality, forced labour, sexual exploitation and organ harvesting. Victims of human trafficking can come from all walks of life; they can be male or female, children or adults, and they may come from migrant or indigenous communities.

Related Definitions

*Female genital mutilation* (FGM) involves procedures that include the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life. FGM is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland.

*Forced marriage* is marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. Forced marriage is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland.

*Honour based violence* (HBV) is the term used to refer to a range of violent practices used to control behaviour within families or other social groups to sustain or promote perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative or another has shamed, or may shame, the family and/or community by breaking their 'honour code'. The punishment can include assault, abduction, restrictions of liberty, confinement, threats and murder.

*Online abuse* can happen on any device connected to the web. Adults, like children, often use text messaging, email, apps, online chats and gaming sites regularly to communicate, and abuse can occur via any of these means. It can include adults being persuaded or forced to send sexually explicit images of themselves, or take part in sexual activities or conversations. It also includes exposing or showing pornography to another person.

***Cultural and Faith-Based Considerations***

There are several additional risk factors that must be considered in recognising abuse in a faith context, like ours.

These risks can cause barriers to disclosure or reporting and include but are not limited to:

- strong beliefs can prevent adults from reporting concerns
- a sense of honour or shame can prevent adults from seeking help or reporting concerns
- strong cultural or religious belief in the sanctity of marriage may dissuade adults from reporting concerns
- opinions expressed by faith communities around young adults especially, regarding sex outside marriage, can cause a barrier for people to speak up about abuse
- social isolation can occur if an individual or family are seen to have acted outside of the community of faith in some manner
- religion or faith can be used as an explanation for abusive behaviours or can be used as a distraction, for example, used to accuse professionals of discrimination
- some professionals lack knowledge about specific cultures and religions and do not feel confident in challenging harmful practices.
- professionals want to be respectful of families' cultural and religious practices but the desire to be culturally sensitive can result in professionals accepting lower standards of care *(Culture and faith: learning from case reviews, June 2014, NSPCC)*
- some extreme cases mean people who are seen as 'disobedient' or 'different' are believed to be possessed by a spirit controlling their behaviour. Individuals can be physically and emotionally abused in an effort to 'exorcise' the spirit
- harmful or unhealthy cultures or ministry practices can be created around the character and personality of a charismatic leader, giving opportunity to abuse a position of trust

- individuals can believe the reputation of the church is the most significant risk so do not respond appropriately to knowledge of abuse

**CHAPTER END**

# Chapter 4: Adult Safeguarding Champion (Designated Safeguarding Person/s)

***Aim of the Chapter***

i. To describe the role of the Adult Safeguarding Champion or appointed Designated Safeguarding Person/s

Clare Presbyterian Church has nominated one person with responsibility for dealing with adult safeguarding concerns, disclosures or allegations about actual or suspected abuse. This is the Adult Safeguarding Champion (ASC).

***Key Points***

- The ASC is a volunteer. The Kirk Session will fully support this individual.
- As with the Designated Person role, the full responsibility for safeguarding in the local congregation remains with the Kirk Session.
- A team approach has been adopted. A small team managing all safeguarding, children and adults is in place. It includes separate roles for the Designated Person (child safeguarding) and the Deputy Designated Person / ASC (adult safeguarding). All involved will be recruited and vetted as appropriate.
- PCI Safeguarding training will be enhanced for Designated Persons to include ASC; the one training programme will be suitable for both roles.

***The Role of the Designated Person (for Adults, ASC)***

The ASC provides oversight in relation to adult safeguarding for our church and is responsible for implementing our Adult Safeguarding Policy Statement.

The ASC will ensure that, at a minimum, our church safeguards adults at risk by:

- Recognising that adult harm is wrong and must not be tolerated
- Being aware of the signs of harm from abuse, exploitation and neglect
- Reducing opportunities for harm, abuse, exploitation and neglect to occur
- Knowing how and when to report adult safeguarding concerns to HSC Trusts and/or the PSNI

*What are the Key Responsibilities of an ASC?*

- To provide information, support and advice for leaders on adult safeguarding in the church.
- To oversee the adult safeguarding training needs in the church.
- To support leaders to ensure that any actions take account of what the adult wishes to achieve. (This must not prevent information about any risk of serious harm being passed to

the relevant Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust Adult Protection Gateway Service for assessment and decision-making.)

- To establish contact with the HSC Trust Designated Adult Protection Officer (DAPO), PSNI and other agencies as appropriate.
- To ensure that accurate and up to date records are maintained detailing all decisions made, the reasons for those decisions and any actions taken.
- To compile and analyse records of reported concerns to determine whether several low-level concerns are accumulating to become more significant.
- To be accountable to the Kirk Session regarding any issues in our church.

**CHAPTER END**

# Chapter 5: Responding to, Recording and Reporting Concerns about Abuse

***Aim of the Chapter***

i. To describe arrangements for responding to concerns of abuse or risk of harm to adults

*How Staff and Volunteers Respond to, Record and Report Adult Safeguarding Concerns*

**Adults have the right to take risks and the church recognises the need to provide support to enable them to identify and manage potential and actual risks to themselves.**

Where there are concerns raised about an adult at risk, however, or where a disclosure or allegation is made, people often feel anxious about passing on the information. Often there can be delay in passing on vital information.

Leaders who have concerns do not need any evidence of wrongdoing, nor are they responsible for conducting an investigation; they simply need to pass on their concerns through the church's reporting procedures, as soon as possible.

It is important to remember that it is not the responsibility of one person in our church to evaluate information regarding an adult at risk and any safeguarding concerns.

Timely sharing of information is one of the most important ways to prevent and detect adult abuse.

**Recognise**

There are a number of ways in which you may become aware that an adult is at risk:

- They may tell you
- Someone else may tell you
- You may witness something that gives you cause for concern
- You may see signs of physical injury that have no credible explanation
- An individual's behaviour or demeanour may change or give you cause for concern
- The behaviour of another individual around an adult may be inappropriate

**Be aware at all times that there may be a link between adult safeguarding and child protection, i.e., victims and those who harm are part of wider networks and communities including families.**

**This link should be part of any considerations and where there is a connection the child protection procedures and mandated reporting must also be followed.**

***Respond***

*Confidentiality*

When a leader has a concern about an adult, that concern needs to be recorded and reported only to statutory authorities and the Adult Safeguarding Champion in our church.

Leaders and the Kirk Session must be clear that information relating to a concern, disclosure, allegation or suspicion must only be passed on to the relevant people whose task it is to decide what action to take.

Do:

- Stay calm
- Listen carefully
- Express concern and acknowledge what has been shared
- Reassure the individual
- Advise the individual what will happen next, of all actions you will take
- Explain the limits of confidentiality (see below)
- Ensure the immediate safety of the person
- If emergency assistance is required (medical/PSNI), call emergency services
- If there has been potentially a crime committed be aware that medical forensic evidence may be required, so act without delay

Do not:

- Panic
- Ignore – if you are at all unsure about what is occurring, report to those responsible for safeguarding in our church immediately
- Stop someone from disclosing
- Promise to keep secrets
- Press for more details or ask investigatory questions – allow for free recall
- Gossip or discuss with anyone who does not have a legitimate need to know, which includes for the purposes of prayer
- Contact the alleged perpetrator
- Leave details with anyone on voicemail or email
- Delay

***Recording***

Please see the sample recording form.

- Record in writing a report of what you have heard or witnessed
- Note any action taken
- If a disclosure was made, at all times use the individuals' own words, do not paraphrase
- Sign and date your record
- Give your record to the Adult Safeguarding Champion
- Do all of this within 24 hours of the concern

***Report***

As a church we have a responsibility, without delay, to involve statutory services, even if it does not involve church personnel directly, when we are concerned about the safety of an adult at risk.

Ensure at all times that you are keeping the adult raising the concern informed. Be clear about who will be made aware of the information.

You must not delay; therefore, it is not always appropriate to wait to speak with someone from the central PCI Safeguarding Team, which is only operational Monday to Friday. The team is there to support the denomination with all safeguarding situations; however, **you must not delay in involving statutory services if there is an immediate risk.**

***Reporting Adult Safeguarding Concerns to the Appropriate Authorities***

As per recording procedures, there must be no delay in reporting to statutory authorities any concerns about an adult in need of protection.

When a concern is raised about an adult at risk or in need of protection the Adult Safeguarding Champion must:

- Where immediate danger exists or the situation warrants immediate action, ensure any medical assistance has been sought and refer to the HSC Trust Adult Protection Gateway Service or PSNI
- Ensure that any actions take account of the adult's wishes
- When practicable, contact the Safeguarding Lead at PCI or the Safeguarding Department for advice and support (do not let this be a source of delay – the Safeguarding Office operates Mon–Fri 9.30am to 4.30pm only and is not an emergency response service)
- Where it has been deemed that it is **not a safeguarding issue**, other alternative responses must be considered such as monitoring, support or advice to leaders or the Kirk Session, signposting to external agencies for specific support

- A record must be made of the concern and the details kept on file, including any action taken or the reasons for not referring
- If it is decided that **it is a safeguarding issue**, a referral will be made to the HSC Trust Adult Protection Gateway Service. The HSC Trust will then conduct a risk assessment and decide what response is appropriate
- If a crime is suspected or alleged, contact the PSNI and HSC Trust Adult Protection Gateway Service directly
- Act as the liaison point for any investigative activity that is required and will ensure easy access to relevant case records or leaders/Kirk Session
- Ensure that accurate and timely records and any adult safeguarding forms required have been completed

**Where there is any doubt or uncertainty about whether there is a safeguarding issue this must be discussed with the HSC Key Worker (if known) or HSC Trust Adult Protection Gateway Service.**

Please find the relevant contact details for the statutory authorities here:

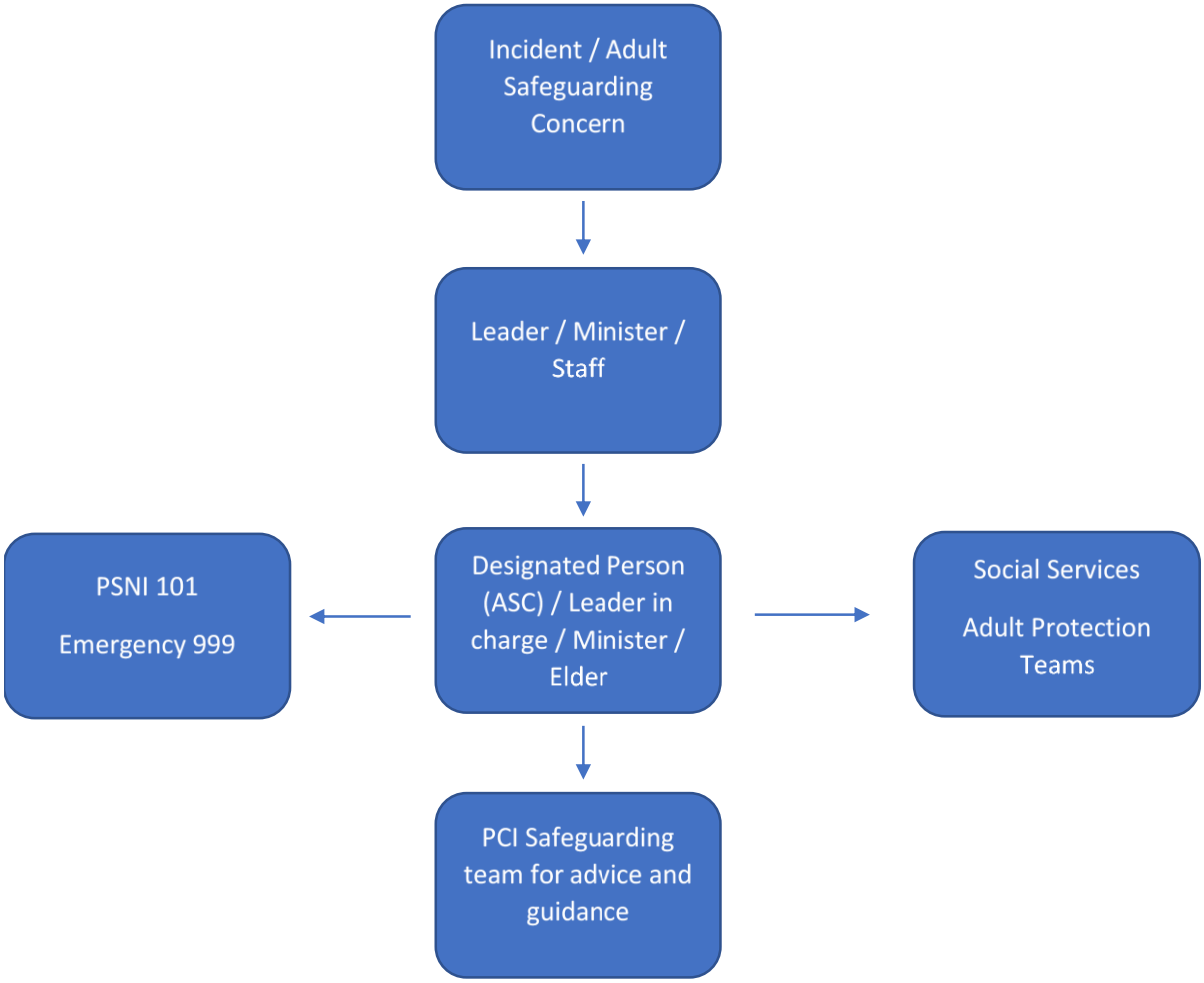
- During office hours 9-5pm Monday – Friday: Adult Protection Gateway Service 028 3756 4423
- Out of hours (5pm-9am, weekends and bank holidays): Regional Emergency Social Work service – 0800 197 9995

The Adult Safeguarding Champion must hold the relevant Adult Protection Gateway contact details.

Each church will fall within one of the Trust areas.

***Flow Chart for Reporting***

Northern Ireland




**CHAPTER END**

# Chapter 6: Safeguarding Risk Assessment and Management

***Aim of the Chapter***

General safety for all will be best managed when assessed for risk – the process of examining if activities, events or individuals could possibly be a source of harm, and reducing that harm.

Risk assessment is essential for determining potential incidents and accidents, assessing their likelihood, our tolerance to cope with them and the potential consequences.

Risk management gives us an opportunity to predict the likelihood for any potential future events that could adversely impact those attending our church and organisations, and to assess whether these are tolerable and if we can take any action to prevent or minimise the impacts.

**Risk assessment in terms of safeguarding is as important as risk assessments around general health and safety issues, like fire safety.**

**It is, however, different from general health and safety.**

***Responsibilities***

**The Kirk Session** and Congregational Committee are responsible for any congregation-wide risk assessments (fire safety, water safety, food hygiene, etc.).

In terms of these procedures, they must also consider any safeguarding risks and manage those reasonably.

The Kirk Session is responsible for the oversight of all aspects of our church's ministry. It must appoint adequately skilled individuals to conduct the safeguarding risk assessments.

It must ensure that everyone who needs access to the policy and procedures has it, and that the procedures are followed in its local activities and ministries.

It must take actions to protect from any immediate harm if individuals are not compliant with the procedures it has put in place.

**The Leader in Charge** of each activity is responsible for the rolling out of policies and procedures to keep adults safe from harm. They must advise the Kirk Session of any concerns and give feedback as to the procedures' actual impact.

The Leader in Charge of each organisation that works with adults at risk within our church must undertake a set of relevant safeguarding risk assessments for the activities it is facilitating. These must be shared with the Adult Safeguarding Champion.

**All leaders** have a responsibility to ensure that they understand and work within the set policies and procedures. They must let the Leader in Charge know if they have any concerns.

***Accidents and Incidents (Adults)***

All accidents and incidents must be recorded in writing. All those in a position of leadership must know our church's procedures for making a record and where those are stored.

Where the accident, incident or near miss is in some way connected to a safeguarding matter, it must be drawn to the attention of the Adult Safeguarding Champion for appropriate action.

***Risk Assessment Process***




***Top Tips for Risk Assessment***

1. *Identify the Risks*

Who or what may cause harm to the adults at risk in our church?

- Involve all persons engaged in particular ministries; it is important to talk to leaders delivering the activities, the adults themselves and family members
- Consider your recent history; what have increasingly become any areas of concern?
- Consider the community in which you minister; are there wider community factors to consider?
- Consult the PCI denominational procedures for examples of common areas of risk that need attention; translate to your local area
- Are you delivering a new ministry? This is an area for special consideration as it is new ground

2. *Evaluate the Risks*

In other words, decide what are low, medium and high risks.

- How often does the activity occur?
- What is the likelihood of the risk?
- What would the consequences of the risk be if it occurred?

**High risk**: Significant likelihood of occurrence of harm and potentially severe consequences. Requires immediate attention.

**Medium risk:** A moderate likelihood of occurring and potential consequences. May cause significant disruption or harm.

**Low risk**: Unlikely to cause significant harm.

Keep the assessment simple.

3. *Control and Manage the Risks*

What will now be done to manage the identified risks?

- Who is responsible for managing the risks? (The Kirk Session holds overall responsibility for our church. However, it cannot be present on-site during activities at all times. Therefore, the Leader in Charge of an organisation usually needs to manage the risks.)
- What current controls are in place already? (What policies and procedures does PCI already have that can be highlighted?)
- What else needs to be done to manage the risks?
- Written policies and procedures guide and set out the expectations for safe activities.

4. *Review the Risks*

How are the policies and procedures working out?

- All policies and procedures must be reviewed at least once every two years, signed off by the Kirk Session and re-issued to relevant people.

***Examples of Safeguarding Risks***

Some risks to consider are but are not limited to:

| **Example of Risk** | **Examples of Mitigations** |
|---|---|
| Inappropriate behaviour of leaders | PCI denominational procedures, especially:<br>Chapter 2: Recruitment and Appointment of Leaders<br>Chapter 9: Codes of Conduct |

| | |
|---|---|
| Inappropriate behaviour between adults | PCI denominational procedures, especially:<br>Chapter 3: Recognising Abuse<br>Chapter 9: Codes of Conduct |
| Lost/missing adults at risk of harm | Prepare a clear and short statement for all leaders and parents as to actions that will be taken immediately in all circumstances of an adult at risk missing or leaving an activity; make this publicly available.<br>Security measures are part of general health and safety of the congregation. |
| Concerns about grooming | PCI denominational procedures, especially:<br>Chapter 3: Recognising Abuse<br>Chapter 5: Responding to and Reporting Abuse |
| Strangers on the premises during or after activities | Security measures are part of general health and safety of the congregation. |

**The point of risk assessment in safeguarding is to identify and evaluate potential risks to vulnerable individuals, ensuring their safety and well-being, and to put reasonable actions in place to mitigate risks.**

**CHAPTER END**

# Chapter 7: The Management of Safeguarding Concerns, Complaints and Comments

***Aim of the Chapter***

i. To describe the arrangements for the management of safeguarding concerns, safeguarding complaints and safeguarding comments

It is critical to note that general concerns, complaints and comments about our church, its ministries, activities, leadership and public worship are **not the remit** of the support provided by the PCI Safeguarding Department.

It is not the responsibility of the Safeguarding Team to manage general complaints.

General complaints about congregational life must be directed to our Kirk Session, usually in writing.

***Safeguarding Specific Concerns***

A concern is an issue that is causing worry to someone

Any specific concerns related to safeguarding must be brought to the attention of our Adult Safeguarding Champion (or Designated Person), to be managed as a safeguarding issue.

If the concern is about the ASC or DP, then it must be raised with the Minister or Clerk of Session. They must manage this as a safeguarding issue.

The ASC/DP or the Minister/Clerk of Session must proceed to address the concerns and ensure that they respond to the individual raising the concerns.

Advice can be taken from the central PCI Safeguarding Team by those managing the concerns.

**If the safeguarding concern is about the immediate risk of harm or need for protection of an individual, please ensure that the procedures are followed as stated in Chapter 5 without delay.**

Concerns must be treated with confidence and only on a need-to-know basis.

***Safeguarding Specific Complaints***

A complaint is a statement that something is unsatisfactory or unacceptable

It is not appropriate to use a complaints system to raise safeguarding concerns.

**It is important that urgent or immediate safeguarding risks are not clouded by a complaints system.**

*Steps*

1. Regarding the management of any safeguarding issue, if there is a complaint that the process has been unsatisfactory, please make the complaint in writing and send it to the Kirk Session.

   It is the responsibility of the Kirk Session to describe our processes for the management of complaints, in accordance with The Code of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

2. If the complaint is not resolved satisfactorily for all parties, the individual can escalate to the Presbytery of Armagh.

   It is the responsibility of the Presbytery to describe its processes for the management of complaints, in accordance with The Code of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

3. Advice can be taken from the central PCI Safeguarding Team by those managing the concerns.
4. If the complaint is about the Kirk Session or Presbytery management of safeguarding, then this can be made in writing to the Safeguarding Lead of PCI.

Complaints must be treated with confidence and only on a need-to-know basis.

***Safeguarding Specific Comments***

A comment is a verbal or written remark expressing an opinion or reaction

All safeguarding personnel, including the Kirk Session and PCI's central Safeguarding Team welcome comments from anyone with regard to safeguarding practices and procedures.

Feedback is important for learning and developing.

Comments must not be viewed as negative.

Anyone wishing to make a comment must do so in writing when possible.

Comments generally must not contain any confidential information so they can be shared and considered in general safeguarding practices.

Comments on safeguarding can be taken by the ASC/DP, the Kirk Session or the Safeguarding Team in PCI.

**CHAPTER END**

# Chapter 8: Management of Safeguarding Records, Confidentiality and Sharing of Information

***Aim of the Chapter***

i. To outline the parameters of confidentiality

ii. To outline the principles for the management of safeguarding records

iii. To outline the processes for sharing information

***Confidentiality***

Key principles:

- Personal and sensitive details about the lives of adults with whom they work and their families will never be the subject of gossip
- In a church context, it is important that confidentiality applies within a prayerful space; it is never appropriate publicly to pray for or ask for prayer for a situation that must be treated with confidentiality
- We all have a fundamental right to privacy of information and confidentiality
- Our church will only hold a very limited amount of data that is applicable and relevant only to the activity and frequency of the activity

***Management of Safeguarding Records***

All written records must be stored in a secure location and accessed by authorised personnel only, namely, the appointed Safeguarding Team.

Electronic records held on computers must also be appropriately secured by way of password protection and restricted access.

Information must be disposed of within timescales that are in keeping with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018. It contains guidance in factors to consider when deciding whether or not to share personal data.

The PCI's central Safeguarding Office does not manage data protection guidelines.

***Sharing of Information***

- Information cannot be passed on to another party without good cause or reason. Information of a confidential nature must only be communicated when appropriate and necessary for the protection of others and, in most circumstances, with the consent of the adult

- In circumstances where there are concerns about an individual's safety and welfare or the safety of others, information must be passed on to the relevant statutory authority as per Chapter 5
- Where the decision is made to share information without consent, the organisation must ensure that the adult is clearly informed of what information will be shared, why it will be shared, and with whom it will be shared, providing this does not increase risk to the adult
- As per Chapter 5, it is usually the ASC or the Minister who will be sharing information; they must ensure that they make a record of this information sharing and why consent was not secured

***Access to Information***

Adults at risk must normally expect to see any information held by the organisation about them and must be so informed.

This applies to paper and electronic records and must extend to access of a care record, unless any of the reasons for limiting access apply.

With specific regard to safeguarding information, consider the following before sharing any information with an individual.

It may be necessary to limit access if:

- any part of the record contains confidential information about other people
- any information that was provided by another person or agency (such as doctor or other professional) and for which you have not been able to obtain their permission to share must not be shared
- there is any possibility that access would cause serious harm to the adult's or someone else's physical or mental well-being. If you are not able to make that assessment, ensure that you seek advice from a relevant individual who can assess the impact of potential harm

**CHAPTER END**

# Chapter 9: Code of Behaviour

***Aim of the Chapter***

i. To outline the purpose and place of codes of behaviour within the church

Codes of behaviour provide protection for everyone, including adults at risk of harm.

It is important that everyone involved has guidelines on what is expected, and what is not acceptable, with respect to their behaviour.

The codes of behaviour will create supportive environments to provide a person-centred approach for all involved in our church's ministries.

The codes of behaviour will help to provide rules for the leaders and participants to agree to and abide by.

***Overarching Governance***

The expectations of behaviour for all church leaders, and all disciplinary processes for the denomination are outlined in:

***The Code: The book of the Constitution and Government of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*** Published by the Authority of the General Assembly.

https://presbyterianireland.org/resources/general-assembly/the-code

***Congregational Code of Behaviour***

In accordance with PCI Guidelines, our church must have a code of behaviour in place for the leaders of all organisations – for both those of our church and external bodies using our premises.

It must include but is not limited to:

- Overarching statement
    - leaders occupy a position of trust in our church community; we expect all leaders to act appropriately and in keeping with that trust
    - we expect all adults taking part in our activities to display appropriate behaviour at all times. That includes both behaviour that takes places within our ministries and behaviour online
    - the Kirk Session is responsible for establishing the codes of conduct in keeping with its ethos and the aims of its Christian service and as part of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. As such, it is clear about the standards expected to keep all safe from harm and will take immediate action if it is concerned

- Outline of areas of responsibility
    - for example, working within the law and policies, modelling good behaviour at all times, working with the welfare of all being the paramount consideration, speaking up about any concerns of abusive or harmful behaviour
- Expected behaviours
    - for example, avoid favouritism, working in an open and transparent manner, being mindful of the use of language, signing up to safe communication online, expectations in emergency situations
- Outlining inappropriate behaviours
    - for example, ignoring concerns, being sarcastic or demeaning, any type of punitive or humiliating behaviour, use of substances or alcohol, any kind of sexually inappropriate behaviour
- Actions in the event of inappropriate behaviours
    - for example, the Kirk Session will stand a leader down until further investigation has occurred, updating training, internal church disciplinary, removal from leadership
- To whom the code applies
    - for example, noting which organisations it covers, noting that it includes senior leaders and elders helping at an organisation, that reputation and length of membership in our church do not exclude individuals

Codes of behaviour must be reviewed in line with the regular review of local policies and procedures and are the responsibility of the Kirk Session to uphold.

**CHAPTER END**

# Chapter 10: The Management of Safeguarding Agreements (Offenders & Serious Allegations) in our Congregation

***Aim of the Chapter***

i. To support the Kirk Session to know when a Safeguarding Agreement must be put in place

ii. To support the Kirk Session with the management of all serious offenders returning to worship

iii. To support the Kirk Session to know how to manage serious allegations

***What is a Safeguarding Agreement?***

A Safeguarding Agreement (Agreement) is a written agreement between an individual and the appointed representatives of our church, outlining conditions under which they can attend church services and activities and be part of church life.

***When does an Agreement Need to be Put in Place?***

- When an individual has an allegation of inappropriate or abusive behaviour towards children, young people or adults at risk made against them
- When someone is convicted of offences relating to harm caused to children, young people or adults at risk
- When someone is cautioned for offences relating to harm caused to children, young people or adults at risk
- If information is received from the statutory authorities (PSNI/PBNI/Trusts) that they have concerns about the behaviour of an individual in relation to children, young people or adults at risk

***Why are Agreements Important?***

Agreements help to safeguard everyone involved in church life.

An Agreement also helps those who are subject to it by ensuring that they have supportive and accountable relationships within our church.

These accountable relationships help minimise the risk of them reoffending or behaving inappropriately.

**This process of reformation and restoration will be supported and monitored through our risk management process – Agreements and mentoring.**

**The Agreement has a dual purpose – the first is to assure all victims of abuse and the families of children and adults at risk in our church that precautions and safeguards are in place to ensure safety from harm in our ministries.**

**The second is to provide structure and support for the offender who seeks to make his/her life characterised by forgiveness and pursues the opportunity to participate in the worshipping life of our church.**

***Who Needs to be Involved in Putting an Agreement in Place?***

A small group of people will be identified to confidentially oversee the agreement and support the offender/alleged offender in church life. Details will not be shared with other people within the church.

This group will usually include:

- Minister
- Designated Person
- Clerk of Session
- Mentor
- Responsible Elder(s)
- Representative of PCI Safeguarding Team

The appointed team is responsible for putting the Agreement in place and ensuring that it is implemented and sustained.

At times, an external statutory body will want to be part of the Agreement process (for example, a probation officer or a designated risk manager).

***The Role of Kirk Session***

This can often become an area of complexity, balancing the requirements of confidentiality with the role of the leadership of the church.

Confidentiality is a legal requirement. All Agreements need to be agreed and managed on a need-to-know basis.

It is therefore the advice of PCI Safeguarding Office that Agreement details are not discussed with the whole Session.

The Kirk Session has nominated one elder as a safeguarding link elder.

This is helpful because often the Designated Person is not a member of Session.

It is also normal for the Clerk of Session to have all of the information as he will be responsible in the absence of the Minister for overseeing the Agreement.

It is critical that safeguarding is a standing agenda item at Session meetings; this can usually be led by a nominated elder and must serve as reassurance to the Session that all safeguarding matters are in hand, and all relevant information is being appropriately shared.

It would be normal for the Safeguarding Team to give general feedback to the Session on safeguarding, giving assurances, but not to share the confidential detail.

***Role of the Mentors***

There must always be at least four mentors involved in supporting an offender to worship in a local congregation. This includes the Minister, the Clerk of Session and the Designated Person/Adult Safeguarding Champion alongside one other, usually an Elder.

This group of people will act as a support for the individual and will ensure some practicalities are overseen.

For example, the individual may be asked to sit within the observable area of a mentor during Sunday morning worship.

The mentor role must be carefully considered and must not be held by any person who themselves would be considered an adult at risk.

**The central Safeguarding Team must always be involved in putting in the management of any offender returning to worship or the management of any serious allegations.**

**The Safeguarding Team holds information on all subjects of an Agreement; this is critical for information sharing with statutory services for reasons of public protection.**

**It is often the case that one subject to an Agreement moves around the denomination and leaves and returns regularly. It is important that this is traced.**

***Review of an Agreement***

The Agreement will usually be reviewed at least annually, and potentially more frequently, to check that it is being adhered to and that the individual remains accountable to the appointed team.

A regular review will also ensure that any updates in the case are reflected within it (e.g., the individual being charged by the police or found guilty by the court).

There may be occasion when the Agreement requires review on a more regular basis.

It is the responsibility of the representative from the PCI Safeguarding Team to identify the first date of review at the original Agreement meeting, and the rolling reviews thereafter.

***What is the Process for Putting an Agreement in Place?***

i. Contact the PCI Safeguarding Office to discuss the need for an Agreement and to ensure that all relevant information is exchanged

ii. A sample Agreement has already been drawn up in PCI. This can be adapted for each individual situation

iii. There may be a need to involve statutory (PSNI/PBNI/Trust) teams. Often, they will want to review and check the Agreement and will give direction if amendments are required

iv. Meet with all relevant parties and talk through the Agreement

v. Meet with the individual subject to the Agreement and talk them through it

vi. Ensure that the Agreement is signed and dated by all parties and that a review date is established

***What Happens at the Meeting?***

The process for approving an Agreement can invoke strong emotions and the individual may feel nervous or angry and may get upset or defensive about the process in hand.

Agree in advance who is leading the meeting.

If possible, start the meeting with a time of prayer.

It is helpful to outline at an early stage the ways in which you are able to support the individual and take this time to remind them that they are a valued part of our church.

It can also be helpful to provide reassurance that this is normal procedure for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, that it is consistently followed in the same way across our denomination.

Talk through the specifics of the Agreement.

Take any questions.

Sign and date the Agreement – making sure that both the individual and the team present all sign and date.

A review date must also be agreed and recorded on the Agreement at that time.

***If an Individual Won't Sign an Agreement***

If an individual won't sign the agreement, then our church is left in a position of potentially unmanaged risk.

It is crucial that our church is as safe a place as possible for everyone involved in church life.

It is the advice of the PCI Safeguarding Office that the individual is not allowed to attend our church unless a signed Agreement is put in place.

It is important to advise any statutory body involved as they will have a view on this and may support monitoring of this situation.

***What if an Individual Breaches the Terms of the Agreement?***

It may be that as a result of a breach of this Agreement the individual is asked to stop attending our church, as we are no longer in a position where potential risks are being managed.

The church must always alert any statutory body involved of a breach of the Agreement.

The PCI Safeguarding Team should be contacted for advice if there are any concerns about a breach of an Agreement.

***Ending an Agreement***

Individuals convicted of an offence will be subject to an Agreement while attending our church, which will remain under review at least annually.

If an individual chooses to leave our church, the Agreement will end.

A new Agreement will be required if an individual moves to a different Presbyterian church.

The Agreement is specific to a congregation and is not interchangeable among congregations within the denomination.

The Agreement is specific to our denomination and anyone leaving the denomination must advise their new denomination of their situation. If an individual moves to a different denomination, information should be sought from the central Safeguarding Team about the sharing of any relevant information with that denomination from a safeguarding perspective.

On ending an Agreement, a written letter must be sent to the individual and the Minister of our church, and held on file, explaining the same, noting the reason and dating the cessation of the Agreement.

This letter must come from the PCI Safeguarding Office representative.

Should such an individual return to our church, a new Agreement will be required.

If an individual has not attended church for a period of three months, the Agreement will be ended.

***Managing the Records***

A copy of the signed agreement must be given to the PCI Safeguarding Team representative, the church representative and the individual subject to the Agreement.

Centrally, Agreements will be scanned and held on a secure online file. Paper copies will be shredded.

The church representative must ensure that they store the Agreement in a safe place where only the specified people (the Safeguarding Team) have access to it.

This is a confidential document and must be treated as such.

***What Support is there for the People who are Managing the Agreement?***

The circumstances leading to an Agreement being put in place often create a strong emotional response.

It may be that the individual who is subject to the Agreement has been in our church for a long time or is a well-liked member.

Sometimes, this makes it difficult to believe that they could be a risk to others within our church, particularly if they have not yet been to court or convicted.

The subject of the Agreement may also be given explanations for their past behaviour or deny that the behaviour took place.

People involved in offending are usually very plausible and can groom those around them.

The people managing the agreement are just as vulnerable to grooming as other members of the congregation.

It is important that those people who are responsible for managing the Agreement also receive support.

While it is important that confidentiality is maintained (including not sharing information about the Agreement for prayer purposes), people involved in this Agreement must feel able to talk and reflect on their thoughts and feelings in a safe and supportive environment.

It is important that this support is offered outside of our immediate church environment to maintain confidentiality, and to ensure some objectivity in the discussions.

The PCI Safeguarding Office must be that support, and can also access other avenues of support.

***Any Other Business***

- It is recommended that our church not facilitate more Agreements than it is resourced to manage; Agreements are resource heavy and Session must make a reasonable consideration on its ability to manage more than one.

  It may be appropriate in this scenario to recommend that a second individual attends another local church, in our denomination, in the area. This congregation will be supported in the same manner to put all the safeguards in place.

- Statutory services may at times contact a local church or PCI Safeguarding Office and ask for an offender, usually leaving prison or regulated accommodation, to be able to attend a local church.

  On those occasions, the Minister must alert the core group of Session and make a decision on their ability to accommodate such a request.

- There may be occasions in which an offender worships in a church with his/her family. We cannot assume that a spouse or other family members are aware of the offending behaviour or allegations. Confidentiality applies.

Pastoral support for the family in these situations can be complex, and advice and support can be sought for each individual situation, via the Safeguarding Office.

- It is not appropriate for an offender to worship in the same congregation as their victims.

***Finally***

You are not alone.

These situations can be complex and not easily responded to.

The management of offenders/alleged offenders in churches never sits with one person.

If you ever want to ask a question, discuss a concern or work through a situation the PCI Safeguarding Office is happy to take your call.

Continued on next page

***Sample Agreement***

***EXAMPLE***

**Safeguarding agreement between (X) and Clare Presbyterian Church**

A meeting was held on (date) to agree written agreement date for (X) to attend Clare Presbyterian Church.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland believes that within the context of grace and forgiveness, attendance at worship services is open to everyone. At the same time, the protection of our children must always remain paramount.

This agreement is to ensure both the protection of children and adults at risk and (X).

The meeting was attended by (list Rev/PCI Safeguarding Office/Clerk/DP/(X) etc.)

This agreement will be shared with the Designated Person and the Clerk of Session.

This agreement will be held in a safe location with access only to the Minister, Designated Person and Clerk of Session.

The conditions of this written agreement are as follows:

1. (X) can attend church services at Clare Presbyterian Church.
2. (X) will sit with _____during worship at Clare Presbyterian Church.
3. (X) will not be permitted to attend any organisation with children.
4. (X) will not be permitted to attend any church event that is primarily for children or a family event.
5. A mentor will be appointed within the congregation who will be the main point of contact for (X).
6. (X) will inform his mentor if he wishes to attend any church events other than Sunday services.
7. (X) will not form a relationship with or be in the sole company of any persons under the age of 18 years. This would include offering or providing any lift in a car as young people make their way to or from church.
8. (X) will not be permitted to hold a position of authority or responsibility within the church.
9. Must (X) need to make use of the toilet facilities on the church premises, he will use the communal toilet for males or use the single accessible toilet.
10. Managing ad hoc invitations to congregants' homes
11. Managing technology brought to church (mobiles etc.)
12. Managing technology in church – livestreaming help with media team etc.

13. This agreement applies to attendance at Clare Presbyterian church only. Should (X) wish to attend any other Presbyterian church, a new agreement needs to be agreed beforehand.
14. If (X) chooses not to keep to the above conditions, he is choosing not to attend worship and will not be permitted to do so.

Should there be any concerns regarding (X) behaviour contact must be made with Rev _____ or xxxxxxxx, Safeguarding Office, PCI.

*Duration and Reviews of the Agreement*

There is no time limit for how long this agreement will last. It will apply for as long as (X) wishes to worship at Clare Presbyterian Church.

This agreement can be reviewed at the request of any of the involved parties mentioned above.

The details of the next review are:

Time and Date: ……..

Venue: ……..

(X) :

…… Date:……..

Rev:

…… Date:……

xxxxxx, Safeguarding Office, Presbyterian Church:

…… Date:……

Designated Person (or ASC) / Mentor / Clerk of Session etc.

…… Date:……

**CHAPTER END**

## Chapter 11: Standards, Accountability and Review

***Presbyterian Church in Ireland Standards for Safeguarding***

As a congregation within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Clare Presbyterian Church seeks to reflect Christ's compassion for everyone and to safeguard all those who come into contact with the mission and ministries of our church, by preventing harm and protecting those at risk, and by working in partnership with its organisations.

***The Aim of the Safeguarding Standards***

i. To promote confidence that our church is safe for all

ii. To provide evidence of the arrangements for child and adult safeguarding

iii. To affirm to all those in a position of trust (volunteers and staff) that they are doing the right things well

iv. To give assurance to the governing bodies of our church and external advisors that these standards are being consistently upheld

v. To develop opportunities for learning and create momentum for change

*Standard One: Creating and Maintaining Safe Environments*

Our church will provide an environment for all that is welcoming, nurturing and safe. Demonstrable ethos of zero tolerance of abuse at congregational through to governance levels.

*Standard Two: Creating and Maintaining Safe Record Management*

Record management will reflect evidence of contemporary case management, partnership working with information sharing regarding risk management.

*Standard Three: Procedures for Responding to Child/Adult Protection Suspicions, Concerns, Knowledge or Allegations*

Our church must have clear procedures and guidance on what to do when suspicions, concerns or knowledge of allegations arise regarding a child's or adults' safety or welfare that will ensure that there is a prompt response.

They also enable our church to meet all regional legal and practice requirements and guidance.

*Standard Four: Care and Support for Victims/Alleged Victims*

All will receive a compassionate response. They, and their families, are offered appropriate support, advice and pastoral care.

*Standard Five: Care and Management of the Respondent*

Our church has in place a fair process for investigating and managing safeguarding concerns.

When the threshold for reporting has been reached, a system of support and monitoring for respondents is provided.

*Standard Six: Training and Support for Keeping Children and Adults who are Vulnerable Safe*

All staff and volunteers are trained and supported in all aspects of safeguarding relevant to their role, in order to develop and maintain the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to safeguard and protect children and adults.

*Standard Seven: Communicating the Church's Safeguarding Message*

Our church appropriately communicates the PCI's safeguarding messages.

To keep under review the effectiveness of the safeguarding panel, to identify areas of good practice and potential improvements.

Sharing good practice and learning with other churches.

*Standard Eight: Quality Assuring Compliance with the Standards*

The denomination develops a plan of action to quality assure compliance with the safeguarding standards. This action plan is reviewed annually.

***Review of the Policy and Procedures for Adult Safeguarding***

The Policy and Procedures will be reviewed every two years by the Kirk Session. If there is a legislative change that requires the Policy to be updated or reviewed within that time period, the Kirk Session will ensure that this update or review takes place, in accordance with advice from PCI.

Accompanying procedure will be reviewed at least every two years by the Kirk Session, as well as at any point there are legislative/good practice updates required, in accordance with advice from PCI. Procedural changes will be approved by the Kirk Session.

It is the responsibility of the Kirk Session to ensure changes are communicated in a timely and effective manner to the congregation.

**Approved by the Kirk Session at its meeting on 11 May 2026.**

**CHAPTER END**

## Glossary of Definitions

**The policies and procedures for safeguarding in Clare Presbyterian Church are written so that they are accessible to as many as possible.**

**They are written in 'layman's terms' as much as we are able to ensure that all can engage as closely as possible with the ethos and values of our approach.**

**The policy and procedures are written in line with, and under the spirit of, the regional legislation of NI, Human Rights approaches and other good practice guidance.**

**Reference:** *Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership, July 2015 (DHSSPS & DOJ)*

The risk of harm occurs in all socio-economic, racial and ethnic groups, regardless of gender, age or sexual orientation. All adults at risk must be supported and empowered to minimise their own exposure to risk and to find their own balance between taking risks and making the most of the strengths in their own life circumstances.

The definition of an 'adult at risk of harm' takes account of a complex range of interconnected personal characteristics and/or life circumstances, which may increase exposure to harm either because a person may be unable to protect him/herself or their situation may provide opportunities for others to neglect, exploit or abuse them. It is not possible to definitively state when an adult is at risk of harm, as this will vary on a case-by-case basis.

The following definition is intended to provide guidance as to when an adult may be at risk of harm, in order that further professional assessment can be sought.

An **'adult at risk of harm'** is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

a) personal characteristics

AND/OR

b) life circumstances

Personal characteristics may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain. Life circumstances may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors and environmental living conditions.

An **'adult in need of protection'** is a person aged 18 or over whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

a) personal characteristics

AND/OR

b) life circumstances

AND

c) who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests

AND

d) where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, him/her to be harmed.

In order to meet the definition of an 'adult in need of protection' either (a) or (b) must be present, in addition to both elements (c) and (d).

**Harm** is the impact on the victim of abuse, exploitation or neglect. It is the result of any action whether by commission or omission, deliberate or as the result of a lack of knowledge or awareness that may result in the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional or mental health or well-being.

The full impact of harm is not always clear from the outset, or even at the time it is first reported. Consideration must be given not only to the immediate impact of harm and risk to the victim, but also the potential longer-term impact and the risk of future harm.

Harmful conduct may constitute a criminal offence or professional misconduct.

A number of factors will influence the determination of the seriousness of harm. A single traumatic incident may cause harm or a number of 'small' incidents may accumulate into 'serious harm' against one individual, or reveal persistent or recurring harm perpetrated against many individuals.

**Abuse** is 'a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to another individual or violates their human or civil rights.

'Abuse is the misuse of power and control that one person has over another. Abuse may be perpetrated by a wide range of people, including those who are usually physically and/or emotionally close to the individual and on whom the individual may depend and trust. This may include, but is not limited to, a partner, relative or other family member, a person entrusted to act on behalf of the adult in some aspect of their affairs, a service or care provider, a neighbour, a health or social care worker or professional, an employer, a volunteer or another service user. It may also be perpetrated by those who have no previous connection to the victim.'

**Statutory authorities** in Northern Ireland refers to local Trust areas and PSNI.

**The Presbyterian Church in Ireland ('the denomination')** is part of the universal Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. As such, He is the King and Head of the Church. It consists of congregations of persons who are associated for the administration and observance of ordinances according to the Bible, under a common government. It was established in 1840 with the coming together at that time of different strands of Presbyterianism, and has congregations across the island of Ireland.

**The Minister**, also known as teaching Elder, exercises oversight of the church in conjunction with the ruling Elders. The special calling of the Minister is the ministry of the Word, in public and in private, the conduct of public worship, the administration of the sacraments, the instruction of the young and the pastoral care of souls. The Minister's calling is exercised in the service of others. The Minister is not an employee, but a remunerated, called office-holder in the Church.

**The Presbytery** is primarily responsible for corporate oversight of the congregations and causes assigned to it by the General Assembly, and of the Ministers and Elders connected with it, and the advancement of Christ's kingdom generally within the geographical area for which it is responsible. The Presbytery shall observe the laws and directions of the Assembly and, so far as lies within its powers, ensure that those subject to its jurisdiction and within its fellowship do likewise. There are 19 presbyteries in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

**Elders, also known as ruling Elders**, acting together as the Kirk Session, work together with the Minister (teaching Elder) in the oversight and government of the congregation, for the upbuilding of God's people in spiritual fruitfulness and holy concord, and for the extension of Christ's kingdom among all people.

**The Clerk of Presbytery** is appointed by the Presbytery from among the Ministers or ruling Elders under its jurisdiction, and is responsible for the administration of the Presbytery, especially the recording of minutes of the meetings of Presbytery – in a minute book kept by the Presbytery for that purpose – and for the safe custody of the minute books of the Presbytery and its other records.

**The Clerk of the General Assembly** is appointed by the General Assembly as one of its officers. The Clerk of Assembly is responsible for the administration of the Assembly, especially the recording of minutes of the meetings of the Assembly. The Clerk of Assembly also acts as General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

**The Moderator of Presbytery** is a Minister who is a member of the Presbytery, and presides over the meetings of Presbytery as first among equals. The Moderator normally serves for one year.

**The Kirk Session** is the name given to the body of Elders [teaching and ruling] who together oversee and govern a congregation in its Christian calling. The Elders [teaching and ruling] are the charity trustees of the congregation. Each Kirk Session is under the immediate jurisdiction of the Presbytery.

**GLOSSARY END**

## Adult Abuse Report Form

**Please answer all relevant questions as fully as you can**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Congregation** | |
| **Name of adult at risk** | |
| **Age/Date of birth** | |
| **Gender** | |
| **Home address (if known)** | |
| **Names of carers (if any/known)** | |
| ***In the event of a disclosure:***<br>**To whom did the adult make the disclosure?** | |
| **When was the disclosure made (dates and times)?** | |
| **What did the adult actually say?** | |
| **Describe any signs or indicators of abuse (with times and dates)** | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Has the adult alleged that any particular person is the abuser (if so, please record details and the relationship, if any, to the adult below)** | |
| ***Concerns expressed by another person about an adult at risk:***<br>**Record the concerns that were passed to you (with dates and times)** | |
| **Details of any immediate action taken, e.g., First Aid, etc.** | |
| **Has the adult expressed any reservations about you talking to your Adult Safeguarding Champion?** | |
| **Does the adult have any particular needs, e.g., communication, etc.?** | |
| **Date and time you advised the Adult Safeguarding Champion/appointed person about the matter?** | |
| **Signatures** | |
| ***To be signed by the person reporting the concern*** | |
| **Name** | |
| **Signed** | |
| **Date** | |
| ***To be signed by congregational Adult Safeguarding Champion*** | |
| **Name** | |
| **Signed** | |
| **Date** | |
| **Action taken by Adult Safeguarding Champion (including dates)** | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Action taken by PCI's central Safeguarding Team (including dates)** | |

**USEFUL INFORMATION**

**ADULT PROTECTION GATEWAY NUMBERS**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Belfast** | 028 950 41744 |
| **Western** | 028 716 11366 |
| **Southern** | 028 375 64423 |
| **Northern** | 028 944 13659 |
| **South Eastern** | 028 925 01227 |

**REGIONAL EMERGENCY SOCIAL WORK SERVICE**

0800 197 9995

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE PSNI**

999

**NON-EMERGENCY PSNI**

101

**PCI CENTRAL SAFEGUARDING TEAM**

safeguarding@presbyterianireland.org

028 90417237