

Knock Presbyterian Church Child Protection Policy

“Ensuring a safe environment for children, young people and leaders”

Policy Statement

This policy statement is aimed at providing a safe environment where children and young people may enjoy social contact, personal and spiritual development. Adults selected to work within youth ministries and who abide by the Guidelines should be secure in the knowledge that they have the full support of the Kirk Session of Knock Presbyterian Church.

1. Adoption of Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) Child Protection Guidelines

The Kirk Session of Knock Presbyterian Church has adopted The Presbyterian Church in Ireland's Child Protection Guidelines approved by the General Assembly and revised 2011. All organisations are expected to adhere to these Guidelines as agreed by the General Assembly 2008. The Kirk Session will review the policy every three years and keep Taking Care on the Agenda of the Youth Sub Committee meetings and inform the Kirk Session on a regular basis.

2. Leadership

The Kirk Session believes that the selection procedures outlined in the Child Protection Guidelines greatly assist the assessment of a person's suitability to work with children and young people and that those appointed therefore will be more assured of their position and of the confidence placed in them by the Kirk Session and members of the congregation.

The following procedures must be followed for the appointment of leaders/helpers who will be 18 years or over.

- i) All leaders will be required to complete an Application Form.
- ii) Applicants will be required to provide 2 references, by persons who are not relatives. (All confidential records e.g. applications and references will be stored safely by the Minister).
- iii) The Kirk Session will appoint up to two interviewers to meet informally with the candidate. Interviewers will normally be the organisational leader, youth director, children's director, designated person and/or a Minister/Elder.
- iv) At the interview the Child Protection Policy will be provided and explained. All leaders must read the 'We Care 4 U Too' leaflet and access the Taking care guidelines at www.takingcareguidelines.org or www.presbyterianireland.org/takingcare
- v) A letter of approval will be sent to the Designated Person from the Taking Care Office and stored securely on church premises.

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

4. Reporting of Concerns

The leaders in each of our organisations will be fully conversant with the opportunity for consultation and of the referral procedure where there is concern about the welfare of a child, as outlined in the Child Protection Guidelines.

5. Parental Consent Forms

Organisational leaders must ensure that Parental Consent Forms are completed at the commencement of each session for each child attending organisations. Special consent forms will be issued for any 'off the premises' activity and residentials. Leaders in charge will store these forms in a safe place, and copies will be held in the church in compliance with the Taking Care policy requirements.

6. Designated Person(s)

The Kirk Session has appointed a Designated Person (**Mr Keith Glasgow**) and a Deputy Designated Person (**Mrs Julie Watts**) who 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 of the Designated Person(s). Any matter brought to the attention of the Designated Person will be treated in strict confidence. Information will be divulged only where there is a legitimate need to know.

Additional advice and consultation can be accessed from the Taking Care Office in Assembly Buildings.

Child Protection will be a standing item in the Youth Sub Committee's monthly reports to the Kirk Session.

7. Working Together

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

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

8. Technology

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

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

Leaders involved in Youth and Children's work should only have children's mobile numbers if the nature of their involvement requires them to phone or text children and if this is the case, contacting children through the use of mobile phones should be done in line with the KPC Youth Good Practice – Use of Mobile Phones, the Internet and technology in Children's and Young People Organisations.

9. Health and Safety

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

10. Transport

Organisations are expected to adhere to the guidance of the Child Protection Guidelines relating to use of private cars and minibuses for transporting children to and from youth activities.

9. Residentials

Guidance on residential trips is provided in the Child Protection Guidelines and will be followed on all residential trips organised by the KPC Youth.

10. Implementation and Review

The Kirk Session is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy, and will review it every three years with the leaders in charge of youth organisations.

11. Taking Care Guidelines

A copy of "Taking Care – Creating a Safe Environment for Children, Young People and Leaders" will be available for study and reference in the Church Office and the church library as well as on Taking Care Website www.takingcareguidelines.org and www.presbyterianireland.org/takingcare.

12. Date of authorisation by Kirk Session

Date: *21st Oct 2013*