

Safeguarding Children Policy

First
Presbyterian
Church
ARMAGH



Safeguarding Children Policy

i. Policy Statement

First Presbyterian Church Armagh believes that everyone has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and to keep them safe.

We believe that children should never experience abuse of any kind.

We are committed to safeguarding all children and protecting them from harm.

It is the policy of the First Presbyterian Church Armagh to safeguard all children and young people interacting with the ministries of the congregation.

This includes actively protecting children from all forms of harm or abuse.

First Presbyterian Church Armagh demonstrates and achieves this by providing this Policy and by adopting the associated Procedures of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland for all involved in youth and children's work and any form of children or youth ministry within its bounds, to ensure that children and young people enjoy their engagement with our congregation, free from the threat of abuse and in a safe environment.

ii. Biblical basis for Safeguarding

First Presbyterian Church Armagh determines primarily that we have a biblical imperative for safeguarding.

Safeguarding is imperative for our church and a principal component to our mission; when we do it well, we are proclaiming the excellencies of our Lord Jesus.

It is therefore our duty to use the Bible as our reference point. There we find guidance in how to safeguard others, not only as part of our legal and ethical duty but also as who we are at heart.

For example.

- love our neighbour as ourselves, (Lev 19:18 / Luke 10:27 / Gal 5:13-15)
- treat others as we would want to be treated (Matt 7:12)
- meet the needs of others (Romans 15:1-2 / Philippians 2:3-4)
- seek justice and correct oppression (Psalm 89:14 / Isaiah 1:17 / Micah 6)
- protecting the weak and those in need (Psalm 82:3-4/ Matt 18:10)

iii. Legal Context

This Policy and the associated Procedures of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland adopted by First Armagh Presbyterian Church have been developed with the following legislation and guidance documents considered, which all seek to protect and safeguard children.

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
- European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)
- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland, October 2024
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007
- The Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015

iv. Core Principles

First Presbyterian Church Armagh oversees the engagement of its congregation with children and young people in our communities and welcomes those from households where there is no Presbyterian or other denominational connection.

The welfare of any child is paramount, no matter how brief their engagement with our congregation or how small the organisation they attend.

All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all forms of harm or abuse.

We recognise that some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, communication needs, disabilities, adverse environments and other issues.

The voices of children and young people are crucial to our learning and development, so we seek to always improve our engagement with them.

The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, highlights the following key principles:

- The child or young person's welfare is paramount.
- The voice of the child or young person should be heard.

- Parents should be supported and families helped to stay together.
- Children should be safe from harm at all times, including when a parent is not meeting their needs.
- Partnership with statutory services is required to ensure effective safeguarding.
- Prevention and our role therein should be a focus for all organisations working with children.
- Responses to issues should be proportionate and decision making should be well informed.

In First Presbyterian Church Armagh we will therefore:

1. Ensure that we have a Safeguarding Lead who will be the Designated Person.
2. Maintain robust procedures in our congregations for the recruitment, checking and monitoring of staff and volunteers working with children and young people.
3. Ensure that ministers and elders are vetted before their installation, as required.
4. Ensure that anyone engaging with children and young people in our congregations is trained at least once every three years in how to recognise, respond to and report abuse as well as understand their role in the prevention of abuse.
5. Ensure that our minister maintains their safeguarding training.
6. Ensure that our Kirk Session attends safeguarding training at least once every three years.
7. Ensure that we have timely, effective procedures for the reporting of abuse and the risk of harm, both externally to statutory services and internally through a clearly identified chain of responsibility.
8. Ensure that identified risks for children and young people are assessed and managed in our congregation.
9. Ensure that any person of risk engaged in ministries within our congregation (for example those with a history of serious offending behaviour) is safely managed, monitored, and supported (the name of the person being not disclosed).
10. Ensure by annual return that our congregation has a timely, effective, and sensitive approach to managing non-recent abuse disclosures.
11. Ensure by annual return that children and young people from other countries are protected and cared for while engaging in the ministries and missions of our congregations.
12. Ensure that our congregation has appropriate methods for children and young people to voice their opinions and concerns and be listened to and responded to.
13. Ensure that our congregation has safe and confidential methods for managing information.
14. Ensure that any safeguarding concerns brought to the attention of the Designated Lead, Minister, member of the Kirk Session, leaders of volunteers are addressed according to the Protocol for the Immediate Management of Safeguarding Concerns.

This Policy will be executed in First Armagh through the associated Procedures of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

This Policy will be circulated to all members of the Kirk Session, Leaders and Volunteers and

will be available on the Church website and Safeguarding Information Board.

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

v. Review

This Policy 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 period, First Armagh will ensure that this update or review takes place, in accordance with advice from the Safeguarding Department of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

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

Presented at the Kirk Session on 11th June 2026

Adopted and minuted by Kirk Session on 11 June 2026

Review date June 2028

PCI Procedures can be found on the PCI website

<https://presbyterianireland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-for-northern-ireland/northern-ireland->