

The Church of St. Patrick Drumbeg

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the wellbeing of all children and vulnerable adults at heart we aim to create and maintain the safest possible environment for all children, vulnerable adults and workers. All reasonable steps are taken to prevent all parties from harm.

The Church of St Patrick Drumbeg carries out activities, which bring our employees and people working on behalf of our organisation into regular unsupervised contact with children and vulnerable adults. This includes Girls Brigade, Boys Brigade, JAM (Jesus and Me-Sunday School), Little Lambs (Sunday-Crèche), Youth Club, Thursday Little Lambs-Mothers and Toddlers group, Messy Church, Holiday Bible Club and Family Fun day.

This policy is non-contractual but indicates the way in which the Church of St Patrick Drumbeg intends to deal with such matters. It should be read in conjunction with any further guidelines we issue on working with children and vulnerable adults.

2. SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

This policy applies to all employees, workers or volunteers whose duties bring them into contact with children and vulnerable adults.

3. AIMS OF THIS POLICY

This policy aims to create and maintain the safest possible environment for the children and vulnerable adults with whom we deal with in a spiritual, educational and recreational capacity, as well as for our employees and workers, and all reasonable steps will be taken to prevent all parties from harm. We aim to encourage safe practice for those who work with children and vulnerable adults and to set out appropriate responses and procedures in the event of an incident of abuse taking place.

4. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Safeguarding Trust has been developed in line with the following legislation and guidance documents which seek to protect and safeguard children:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948.
- European Convention on Human Rights 1953.
- The Children (Northern Ireland) order 1995.
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991.
- Safeguarding Board Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007.
- Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008.
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.
- Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967.
- Section 75 Northern Ireland Act 1998.
- Relevant government guidance on safeguarding children.

There is a considerable body of legislation designed to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are protected, and it is important to understand that everyone is responsible for their safety. The main pieces of legislation that affect this policy are:

- The Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978.
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1978
- The Police Act 1997.
- The Working Time Regulations 1998.
- The Health & Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001.
- The Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003/The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007.
- The Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Business (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008.
- The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In addition, special rules apply to the working time and breaks for any young people who work for us.

5. DEFINITIONS

A "child" is anyone under the age of 18. (Excluding a person who is or has been married).

A "vulnerable adult" is a person aged 18 years or over who is:

- In residential accommodation provided in connection with care or nursing or receiving care or nursing at home.
- Receiving health care.
- In lawful custody or under the supervision of a probation officer.
- Receiving a welfare service of a prescribed description or direct payments from a social services authority.
- Receiving services, or taking part in activities, aimed at people with disabilities or special needs because of his/her age or state of health.

It may be a person who is unable to take care of him/herself, or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or exploitation. He/she may be elderly or frail, have learning disabilities, suffer from mental illness, have a physical disability, be a substance misuser, be homeless or in an abusive relationship.

6. CRIMINAL RECORDS & CONVICTED CHILD SEX OFFENDERS

Those who are involved in work situations where they have sustained or prolonged unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders legislation. This means that prospective employees, self-employed contractors and volunteers must declare all criminal convictions, however long ago; and these will be taken into account when deciding on their suitability for working with children or vulnerable adults. **No-one will be permitted to undertake a role which involves regular contact with children or vulnerable adults without a satisfactory AccessNI check.**

However, a criminal record may not prevent a person from working for the Church in any other capacity: if that person is then asked to undertake tasks which will bring him/her into unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable adults, such as work experience placements, any record must be declared to the Safeguarding Panel who will take appropriate advice where necessary and will decide whether this task should be allocated to another member of staff.

Convicted Child Sex Offenders:

Best safeguarding practice by the Church in respect of convicted child sex offenders requires that they should not hold representational roles as this can be perceived to convey a position of authority by other members of the Church, both children and adults. This can be particularly sensitive and potentially hurtful for anyone who has been harmed by a sex offender.

An individual who has been the victim of a sexual offence may have to manage lifelong consequences arising from that harm and their needs should be prioritised. It is therefore regarded as inappropriate that someone with a conviction for a sexual offence would hold any role on a decision making body in the Diocese or in Church leadership of any sort, even when that role does not involve contact with children.

7. PLANNING AND SUPERVISION

All activities or work involving children or vulnerable adults should be planned in advance to ensure that the age and ability of the participants is taken into account. Employees, volunteers or freelancers supervising activities or work involving children or vulnerable adults should be competent and trained to do so. Supervision should take account of the age, gender, nature of the activity and any special needs of the individuals. Where appropriate, a risk assessment will be undertaken and documented.

All workers should avoid working alone with a child or vulnerable adult wherever possible. If it is not avoidable they should plan their work so that at least two adults are present at any time, where possible including a Church employee. The worker should preferably use a workstation where he/she and the child and vulnerable adult can both be seen by other colleagues or other adults. This guidance applies also to transport in vehicles - workers should not offer to transport a child or vulnerable adult anywhere unless accompanied by a further person or as part of a formal, authorised arrangement.

Minimum adult/child ratio:

- Children aged 0-4 minimum of 2 adults and a ratio of 1:3
- Children aged 5-12 minimum of 2 adults and a ratio of 1:8
- Children aged 10-18 minimum of 2 adults and a ratio of 1:10

8. PHYSICAL CONTACT

On no account should any employee, worker or volunteer have any physical contact with a child or vulnerable adult unless it is to prevent accident or injury to themselves or anyone else (e.g. to prevent a fall), or in the case of medical assistance being needed (e.g. to administer first aid), or to provide nursing or other general care, in which case the prior consent of the affected person should be requested where possible. Where appropriate, consent from parents or those with parental or caring responsibility should be obtained.

If a child or vulnerable adult is hurt or distressed, the worker should do his/her best to comfort or reassure the affected person without compromising his/her dignity or doing anything to discredit the person's own behaviour.

9. COMMUNICATION

Communication with children or vulnerable adults is vital in establishing relationships built on trust. Those working with children or vulnerable adults should listen to what they are saying and respond appropriately. Children and vulnerable adults are entitled to the same respect as any employees, workers and volunteers. It should also be made clear to them what standards of behaviour and mutual respect are expected from them.

Those working with children or vulnerable adults should behave appropriately, ensure that language is moderated in their presence and should refrain from adult jokes or comments, which are clearly unsuitable. Workers should also note that what may be acceptable language to their friends may not be regarded as such by those of an older generation.

The Parish of St Patrick Drumbeg will ensure Parents/Guardians /Children will be informed of all activities. We will commit to working with Parents/Guardians.

10. BEHAVIOUR AND ABUSE

We should all aim to promote an environment of trust and understanding. Those working with children or vulnerable adults should not tolerate anti-social behaviour but should try to ensure good working relationships.

All staff, workers and volunteers at the Church have a strict duty never to subject any child or vulnerable adult to any form of harm or abuse. This means that it is unacceptable, for example, to treat a child or vulnerable adult in any of the following ways:

- To cause distress by shouting or calling them derogatory names.
- To slap them.
- To hold them in such a way that it causes pain, or to shake them.
- To physically restrain them (except to protect them from harming themselves or others).
- To take part in horseplay or rough games.
- To allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind.
- To do things of a personal nature for the person that they can do for themselves (this includes changing clothing, or going to the toilet with them unless another adult is present).
- To allow or engage in sexually suggestive behaviour within a person's sight or hearing, or make suggestive remarks to or within earshot of the child/vulnerable adult.
- To give or show anything which could be construed as pornographic.
- To seek or agree to meet them anywhere outside of our normal workplace without the full prior knowledge and agreement of the parent, guardian or carer.
- To engage with them online in an unacceptable manner.

11. SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

Any worker who witnesses or suspects abusive behaviour towards a child or vulnerable adult should record the details and report it to the Rector or member of the Safeguarding Panel. If a worker has suspicions, he/she must act on these and not ignore a potentially very serious situation. It is NOT the individual's responsibility to decide how serious the matter might be nor to investigate his/her suspicions - this requires expertise he/she is not expected to have.

Any allegations of abuse made against anyone working for the Church will be thoroughly investigated and dealt with through our disciplinary procedure. Serious breaches may lead to dismissal.

The Rector or member of the Safeguarding Panel will appropriately record an allegation or reported incident. He/she will be responsible for contacting the statutory child protection agency such as the Local Safeguarding Children Board or the police if necessary.

We will aim to maintain any request for witness anonymity, where appropriate and possible, and to provide support if required.

12. SAFETY

The safety of the people we work with is paramount and we are committed to providing a safe environment within which to work. Those working with children or vulnerable adults should ensure all appropriate risk assessments and security checks have been carried out prior to any assignment. This could include first aid cover and accident reporting.

If transporting children or vulnerable adults, the transport should be checked to ensure it is roadworthy and adequate for the purpose. Any equipment used must be safe and only used for the purpose for which it is intended. Users should be adequately trained. Appropriate insurance should be up to date and adequate to cover such assignments.

13. CONFIDENTIALITY

All personal information regarding children or vulnerable adults is highly confidential and should only be shared with appropriate people on a need to know basis. Information will be stored in the Church safe, access limited to the Safeguarding Panel and will only be kept for as long as is needed.

Anyone who is likely to have access to confidential material regarding children or vulnerable adults, or any of the bodies on behalf of whom Church is working, will be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement. The requirement for confidentiality is emphasised.

14. CONTACT OUTSIDE OF WORK

Contact should not be made with any of the children or vulnerable adults with whom we are working for any reason unrelated to the particular work. In particular, our employees are required to maintain our reputation for integrity and responsibility in dealing with such people, and should not enter into any social or other non-work related arrangements with them.

15. GIFTS AND INDUCEMENTS

On no account should anyone from the Church give a child or vulnerable adult a gift or buy refreshments etc. which could in any way be considered a bribe or inducement to enter into a relationship with the Church person or give rise to any false allegations of improper conduct against the individual.

Neither should anyone from Church accept any gift or favour from a child or vulnerable adult unless this is of nominal value and is declared to his/her manager. For further details on this topic, see our policy on gifts and hospitality.

16. COMMUNICATING THIS POLICY AND CONCERNS

All employees, workers and volunteers at the Church will be made aware of this policy and a copy will be available in the Church Office.

Furthermore, a copy of this policy will be given to all relevant bodies with whom we work and will be made available to parents and carers and families of children and vulnerable adults with whom we plan to work.

Any concerns about the assignment or people involved should be addressed with the Rector or a member of the Safeguarding Panel.

Any serious incident involving vulnerable beneficiaries must be reported to the Commission immediately.

The Parish has Code of Behaviour for all employees and volunteers working with children

17. BREACH OF THIS POLICY

Failure to follow the guidelines in this policy is considered a serious offence and will be investigated thoroughly and dealt with through our disciplinary procedure. Serious breaches may lead to dismissal (for employees) and termination of any agreement (for workers or volunteers).

18. OTHER RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Code of Behaviour for Adults Working with Children.
- Code of Behaviour for Children Participating in Parish Activities.
- Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Working in partnership with Parents/Guardians Policy.
- Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures Policy.
- Grievance Procedure.
- Social Media Policy.
- H&S Smoking Policy.
- H&S Alcohol Policy.
- Health and Safety Policy

19. CONTACT NUMBERS

The duty social worker or local area manager may be contacted at the local Gateway Team.

- **Gateway-South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust** (covering local council areas of Newtownards, Down, North Down and Lisburn):
Tel: 0300 100 0300 (9am-5pm) or 0800 197 9995 at all other times.
- **PSNI 028 7186 1355** In an emergency, contact the PSNI by dialling **999**

20. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

This policy has been approved by the Select Vestry and will take effect from **1st December 2016**

The **Rector** and **Parish Safeguarding Trust Panel** has overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring this policy, which will be reviewed on **an annual** basis following its implementation and additionally whenever there are relevant changes in legislation or to our working practices.

Any queries or comments about this policy should be addressed to the **Rector** or a **member of the Parish Safeguarding Trust Panel**.

POLICY REVIEW DATES

18th February 2018	17th May 2019	10th March 2023	29th August 2024