

CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT OF DONABATE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

:: 1. ADOPTION OF PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland reaches out to children and young people throughout Ireland and welcomes those from households where there is no Presbyterian or other denominational connection. We have a legal duty of care to look after all children and provide a safe environment for them as best we can. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in 2016 agreed the following statement: 'Christ calls us to love, care for and value everyone.' This gospel imperative of loving our neighbour as ourselves leads us to respect all as individuals, treating each with dignity and empowering them to reach their full potential. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland seeks to reflect Christ's compassion for everyone and to safeguard all those who come into contact with the mission and ministries of the Church, by preventing harm and protecting those at risk.

The kirk session of Donabate Presbyterian Church has adopted the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's child protection guidelines, Taking Care, approved by the General Assembly and revised in 2011, and agreed the Child Safeguarding Statement set out in this document. This has been reviewed in compliance with recent changes in legislation:

- :: Children First Act 2015
- :: Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017
- :: Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012
- :: The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons Act 2012, revised 2016)

Parents/carers expect the church to have and enforce a child protection policy. Taking Care Two is aimed at creating an environment where children and young people may enjoy social contact, personal and spiritual development and where they and the leaders and helpers working with them will be kept safe.

All congregations and organisations must adhere to these guidelines as agreed by the General Assembly in 2008. The kirk session will review the policy every two years and keep safeguarding on the agenda of the kirk session meetings.

The designated person

The kirk session has appointed the following designated person – Ann Reid

The designated person(s) will give advice and support to church 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.

The designated person will be the 'relevant person' for the purposes of this Statement. (See [Taking Care Two, section 4 and fact sheet 12.17](#)).

2. NATURE OF SERVICE

Donabate Presbyterian Church engages with children in a variety of ways which include the following:

- ∴ Attendance by children in church services usually, but not always, accompanied by their parents or guardians;
 - ∴ Participation of children in choirs and worship;
 - ∴ Participation in uniformed organisations, youth groups and programmes;
 - ∴ Participation in residential (overnights) and camps.
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3. SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLES

Donabate Presbyterian Church endeavours to provide an environment for children (persons up to the age of 18 years) that is welcoming, nurturing and safe. We believe that:

- ∴ Our priority to ensure the welfare and safety of every child and young person who attends our church is paramount;
- ∴ Our guiding principles and procedures to safeguard children and young people reflect national policy and legislation and we will review our guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures every two years;
- ∴ All children and young people have an equal right to attend a church that respects them as individuals and encourages them to reach their full potential, regardless of their background;
- ∴ We are committed to upholding the rights of every child and young person who attends our church, including the rights to be kept safe and protected from harm, listened to and heard;
- ∴ Our guiding principles apply to everyone in our church;
- ∴ Workers/volunteers must conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of our church.

We demonstrate these principles through the following procedures:

3.1. Recruitment

The kirk session believes that the recruitment and appointment process outlined in the Taking Care guidelines greatly assists the assessment of a person's suitability to work with children and young people. As a result of implementing such procedures, leaders and helpers within this congregation will be more assured of their position and of the confidence placed in them by the kirk session.

The following procedures must be followed for the appointment of leaders who are 16 years and over:

- ∴ All leaders will be required to complete an application form for leaders;
 - ∴ The application pack includes the vetting process according to legislation and good practice;
 - ∴ The kirk session will appoint up to two interviewers to meet informally with the applicant. At the interview the child protection policy will be provided and explained, 'We Care 4 U Too!' will also be provided;
 - ∴ Applicants will be required to provide two references by persons who are not relatives;
 - ∴ When Garda clearance is received a letter of approval will be sent to the designated person from the Taking Care office. (See Taking Care Two, sections 5.1 and 5.2).
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3.2. Training

Leaders and helpers who work with children and young people should attend Taking Care training on a regular basis (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 specifically deals with church activities within a church environment. This training includes the identification of occurrence of harm. (See Taking Care Two, section 5.3).

3.3 Organisational leaders

Leaders must ensure that they have home contact numbers, parental consent and medical information regarding the children in the organisations with whom they are working. Special consent forms will be issued for any 'off the premises' activity and residential programmes.

3.4 Good standards of practice

Each organisation will be expected to comply with good standards of practice as outlined in the Taking Care guidelines. This includes: physical contact, recommended ratios, transport, residential programmes and outings, church sleepovers, photographs and working with children who have special needs. (See Taking Care Two, section 7).

3.5 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. (See Taking Care Two, section 6).

3.6 Reporting of concerns

The leaders in each of our organisations will be fully conversant with the reporting procedure to Tusla where there is a concern about the welfare of a child, as outlined in the Taking Care guidelines, and comply with mandatory reporting under Children First 2015 as mandated persons where relevant. Leaders must not hesitate to report a concern about a child if they are, at any time, worried about their welfare. This includes the procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child while availing of our service. (See pocket guide to 'Reporting a Concern').

The procedure for producing a list of mandated persons will rest with each congregation who will send this to the respective Clerk of Presbytery where it will be maintained. The list will be sent to the Taking Care office on an annual basis. (See Taking Care Two, section 3.2).

3.7 Technology

Leaders should limit the direct electronic 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 to do so.

Leaders involved in youth and children's work should only have children's mobile numbers if the nature of their involvement requires them to phone or text children and, if this is the case, contacting children through the use of mobile phones should be done in line with the Taking Care guidelines. (See Taking Care Two, section 8).

3.8 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 must be informed of fire and first aid procedures.

3.9 Record Keeping

Good records will be kept that fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters. (See Taking Care Two, section 3.4).

3.10 Pastoral Care

The church, at local level and at presbytery, will seek to provide pastoral care for complainants, respondents and all other affected persons.

A copy of this Child Safeguarding Statement is available on request and online. It also forms part of Donabate Presbyterian Church's adoption of the Taking Care Two policy. Both are available in full at

www.presbyterianireland.org/takingcare/Forms-Policies-and-Fact-Sheets.aspx

Minister: 

Clerk of session: 

Designated Person: 

Date: 16/12/19