

# Muckamore 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 Muckamore Presbyterian Church.

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

The Kirk Session of Muckamore 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.

### 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 are 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 Designated Person, see Point 6);
- iii. The Kirk Session has given the Designated Person the role to furnish any individual who seeks to serve our church with an Application Form. Upon completion, this will be returned to the Designated Person for processing and training information;
- iv. All leaders must read the *'We Care 4 U Too'* leaflet and access the **Taking Care** guidelines at [www.takingcareguidelines.org](http://www.takingcareguidelines.org) or [www.presbyterianireland.org/takingcare](http://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 every 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**

The Kirk Session has appointed a Designated Person (Jess Kirk) 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. 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.

## **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.

## **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.

## **11. Residentials**

Guidance on residential trips is provided in the Child Protection Guidelines and will be followed on all residential trips organised by the leadership of each organisation.

## **12. 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.


**13. 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 by contacting the Taking Care Office of PCI, as well as accessing an electronic version from the Taking Care Website:

www.takingcareguidelines.org and [www.presbyterianireland.org/takingcare](http://www.presbyterianireland.org/takingcare)

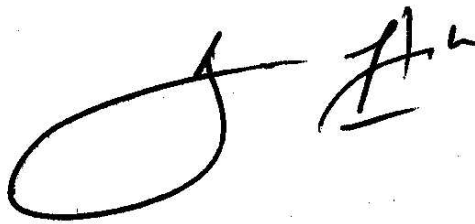
**14. Date of authorisation by Kirk Session**

This policy was adopted by the Kirk Session at a meeting on \_\_\_\_\_19<sup>th</sup> September 2023\_\_\_\_\_



Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (Moderator)



Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (Clerk of Session)