

## Muckamore Presbyterian Church ADULT SAFEGUARDING POLICY June 2026

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has produced its Guidelines on Adult Safeguarding, highlighting our 'zero tolerance approach' of all forms of harm, abuse and exploitation – and that adult safeguarding is 'everybody's business'. At the very heart of what it is to be a Church is that clear priority to be people who look out for one another. And that's not an optional extra – the Lord Jesus calls us to love one another - it is a gospel imperative. The apostle Paul tells us in Romans to 'Be devoted to one another in love [and] honour one another above yourselves.' At its best Adult Safeguarding is just that: it is about the one another, it is about looking out for one another and it is especially about all of us striving to prevent harm to adults from abuse, exploitation or neglect. It is at the very core of what it is to live in community as everyday disciples of Jesus Christ.

All adults have the right to be safe and to live a life free from abuse. All persons are entitled to this right, regardless of their circumstances. It is the responsibility of all service providers, statutory and non-statutory, to ensure that, service users are treated with respect and dignity, have their welfare promoted and receive support in an environment in which every effort is made to promote welfare and to prevent abuse.

With policies in place we, Muckamore Presbyterian Church, believe that it is vital that individuals and congregations know how to recognise the signs of abuse, how and when to refer someone to social services for support and assistance. As Christians we need to reach out, we need to listen, understand and act when needed. We need to think about how we voice our concerns to prevent abuse and exploitation from happening.

This document informs us of our duty and practice in relation to the safeguarding and protection of adults.

### **1. ADULT AT RISK AND IN NEED OF PROTECTION**

A person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- Personal characteristics and/or life circumstances;
- and, who is unable to protect their own wellbeing, property, assets, rights or other interests;
- and, where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing or is likely to cause him/her to be harmed.

### **2. ABUSE, NEGLECT & EXPLOITATION**

There are a number of different types of abuse which can show themselves easily (physical, emotional, relational, behavioural signs) or more secretive/subtle.

#### **Physical Abuse**

- Misuse of medication;
- Bruising;
- Burns;
- Marks;
- Not wanting to be touched;

- FGM;
- Inappropriate or unlawful restraint;

**Expanded note:** *Physical abuse is the use of physical force or mistreatment of one person by another which may or may not result in actual physical injury. This may include hitting, pushing, rough handling, exposure to heat or cold, force feeding, improper administration of medication, denial of treatment, misuse or illegal use of restraint and deprivation of liberty.*

### Sexual Abuse

- Changes in appearance;
- Behaving in a sexually inappropriate way;
- Not wanting to be touched;
- Unusual physical symptoms;

**Expanded note:** *Sexual abuse is any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature which is unwanted or takes place without consent or understanding.*

*Sexual violence and abuse can take many forms and may include non-contact sexual activities, such as indecent exposure, stalking, grooming, being made to look at or be involved in the production of sexually abusive material, or being made to watch sexual activities. It may involve physical contact, including but not limited to non-consensual penetrative sexual activities or non-penetrative sexual activities, such as intentional touching (known as groping).*

*Sexual violence can be found across all sections of society, irrelevant of gender, age, ability, religion, race, ethnicity, personal circumstances, financial background or sexual orientation.*

### Financial Abuse

- Unusual difficulty with finances;
- Not having enough money;
- Not paying bills;
- Unusually defensive about money;
- Not having adequate food or heat;

**Expanded note:** *Financial abuse is actual or attempted theft, fraud or burglary. It is the misappropriation or misuse of money, property, benefits, material goods or other asset transactions which the person did not or could not consent to, or which were invalidated by intimidation, coercion or deception.*

*This may include exploitation, embezzlement, withholding pension or benefits or pressure exerted around wills, property or inheritance.*

### Institutional Abuse

- No care plan;
- No personal possessions;
- Frequent admissions to hospital;
- Unprofessional conduct by staff;
- Inflexible routines;
- Restricted access to residents;

**Expanded note:** *Institutional abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of an adult by a regime or individuals in settings which adults who may be at risk reside in or use. This can occur in any organisation, within and outside the HSC sector. Institutional abuse may occur when the routines, systems and regimes result in poor standards of care, poor practice and behaviours, inflexible*

*regimes and rigid routines which violate the dignity and human rights of the adults and place them at risk of harm. Institutional abuse may occur within a culture that denies, restricts or curtails privacy, dignity, choice and independence. It involves the collective failure of a service provider or an organisation to provide safe and appropriate services, and includes a failure to ensure that the necessary preventative and/or protective measures are in place.*

### **Psychological/Emotional Abuse**

- Withdrawn;
- Not able to concentrate;
- Overly compliant;
- Restricted activities;
- Decline in self-esteem;
- Increase in self-doubt;

**Expanded note:** *Psychological / emotional abuse is behaviour that is psychologically harmful or inflicts mental distress by threat, humiliation or other verbal/non-verbal conduct. This may include threats, humiliation or ridicule, provoking fear of violence, shouting, yelling and swearing, blaming, controlling, intimidation and coercion.*

### **Exploitation**

- Deliberate maltreatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over another person;
- To take advantage of another person or situation usually, but not always, for personal gain from using them as a commodity;
- Slavery;
- Servitude;
- Forced or compulsory labour;
- Domestic violence and abuse;
- Sexual violence and abuse;
- Human trafficking.

### **Human Trafficking/Modern Slavery**

- Delay in seeking treatment;
- Never left by themselves;
- Lives with groups of people of same gender but not related;
- No official papers

**Expanded note:** *Human trafficking involves the acquisition and movement of people by improper means, such as force, threat or deception, for the purposes of exploiting them. It can take many forms, such as domestic servitude, forced criminality, forced labour, sexual exploitation and organ harvesting. Victims of human trafficking can come from all walks of life; they can be male or female, children or adults, and they may come from migrant or indigenous communities.*

### **Domestic Abuse**

- Sudden changes in appearance;
- Avoids contact with family and friends;
- Spends all free time with abuser;
- Cries a lot: moody;
- Very distressed with physical symptoms;
- Sudden changes in behaviour;

- Defends abuser and his/her actions.

### 3. PREVENTION, PROTECTION & PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Martin Luther King Jr stated: "A Church that has lost its voice for justice is a Church that has lost its relevance in the world."

#### Prevention

- Community initiatives
- Reducing social isolation
- Peer support and education
- Early intervention

#### Protection

- Victim focused
- Alternative interventions
- Personalisation
- Least restrictive options
- Effective

#### Partnership Agencies and Groups

- National Policies under the Social Care Division of the HSE Trust
- Garda and PSNI
- Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority
- Independent contractors
- Other Government departments
- Service users and carers

### 4. RECOGNISING, RESPONDING & RECORDING ADULT SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

There are a variety of ways that you could be alerted that an adult is experiencing harm:

- They may disclose to you as a Minister, Elder, Pastoral Worker or Friend;
- Someone else may tell you of their concerns or something that causes you concern, following a visit or conversation;
- They may show some signs of physical injury for which there does not appear to be a satisfactory or credible explanation. Their demeanour/behaviour may lead you to suspect abuse or neglect;
- The behaviour of a person close to them makes you feel uncomfortable (this may include other members of the congregation or organisation, a volunteer, peer or family member) or through general good neighbourliness and citizenship.

Being alert to potential abuse plays a major role in ensuring that adults are safeguarded and it is important that all concerns about possible abuse are taken seriously and appropriate action is taken.

- **Responding:** Staff / Volunteers who find themselves dealing with an abusive setting may well have different reactions. Some may feel anger towards the abuser; others may block it out and may even deny it has happened, while some may become withdrawn and difficult to communicate with. Therefore, it is vital that staff/volunteers are supported.
- **Reporting:** Staff or volunteers who are concerned about someone who may be experiencing harm or abuse must report promptly these to the Minister of the congregation in which they

are working (or convener of vacancy if applicable). The Presbytery Adult Safeguarding Champion should then be contacted. If they are concerned that it is a safeguarding issue then the PCI Adult Safeguarding Champion should be contacted who will make a report to the police or social services if appropriate.

## 5. UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

All Adult Safeguarding activity must be guided by five underpinning principles:

- i) **A Rights-Based Approach:** To promote and respect an adult's right to be safe and secure; to freedom from harm and coercion; to equality of treatment; to the protection of the law; to privacy; to confidentiality; and freedom from discrimination.
- ii) **An Empowering Approach:** To empower adults to make informed choices about their lives, to maximise their opportunities to participate in wider society, to keep themselves safe and free from harm and enabled to manage their own decisions in respect of exposure to risk.
- iii) **Person-centred Approach:** To promote and facilitate full participation of adults in all decisions affecting their lives taking full account of their views, wishes and feelings and, where appropriate, the views of others who have an interest in his or her safety and well-being.
- iv) **Consent-driven Approach:** To make a presumption that the adult has the ability to give or withhold consent; to make informed choices; to help inform choice through the provision of information, and the identification of options and alternatives; to have particular regard to the needs of individuals who require support with communication, advocacy or who lack the capacity to consent; and intervening in the life of an adult against his or her wishes only in particular circumstances, for very specific purposes and always in accordance with the law.
- v) **Collaborative Approach:** To acknowledge that adult safeguarding will be most effective when it has the full support of the wider public and of safeguarding partners across the statutory, voluntary, community, independent and faith sectors working together and is delivered in a way where roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability are clearly defined and understood. Working in partnership and a person-centred approach will work hand-in-hand.

## 6. ADULT PROTECTION SERVICES

**Health Service Executive:** A Safeguarding and Protection Team (Vulnerable Persons) will be established in each Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO). The Safeguarding and Protection Team will work collaboratively with services and professionals in promoting the welfare of vulnerable persons and act as a resource to personnel and services having concerns regarding vulnerable persons.

As a church, we seek to listen, understand and act in respect to the dignity, protection and risk aversion in the lives of adults. We direct you to the Council of Social Witness and Taking Care Office in Assembly Buildings for more information or helpful contact details.

For further information call 028 9032 2284 or email [csw@presbyterianireland.org](mailto:csw@presbyterianireland.org)

### Adult Safeguarding – Northern Ireland

Health and Social Care Trust: Telephone (Monday to Friday between 9.00am and 5.00pm)

Belfast: 028 9504 1744

Northern: 028 94413659

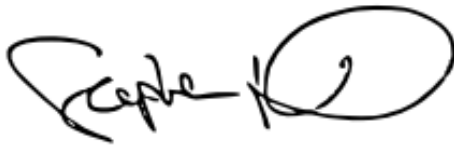
South Eastern: 028 9250 1227

Regional Emergency Social Work Services  
Monday to Friday between 5.00pm and 9.00am, plus Saturday and Sunday (24hrs)  
Telephone: +44(0)28 9504 9999

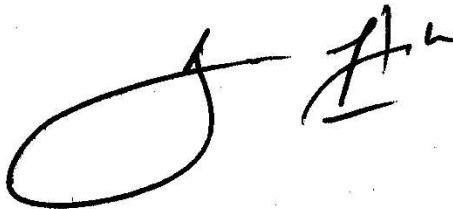
Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI)  
In an emergency call: 999  
To report your concerns, call: 101

**Date of authorisation by Kirk Session**

This policy was adopted by the Kirk Session at a meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023



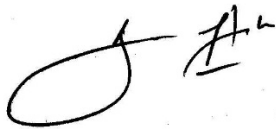
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ (Moderator)



Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ (Clerk of Session)

**INTERNAL REVIEW**

Kirk Session will periodically review this Policy and its procedures to ensure that the congregation is in full compliance with relevant new or amended regulations.


Signed: _____
Position: _____ Clerk of Session _____
Date: _____ 16th June 2026 _____
Review Date: _____ 16th June 2027 _____