

Brookside Presbyterian Church

Child Protection Policy

September 2025

Creating a safe environment for children, young people, leaders and staff

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.

Parents/carers expect the church to have and enforce a child protection policy. This policy 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.

Adoption of Presbyterian Church in Ireland Child Protection Guidelines

The Kirk Session of Brookside Presbyterian Church has adopted and developed on the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's child protection guidelines, Taking Care, approved by the General Assembly and revised in 2011. All organisations must adhere to these guidelines as agreed by the General Assembly in 2008. The Kirk Session will review the policy every three years and keep Taking Care on the agenda of the Kirk Session meetings.

1. Leadership

The Kirk Session believes that the recruitment and appointment process outlined in the Taking Care guidelines greatly assist 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 18 years and over:

- a) All leaders will be required to complete an application form for leaders.
- b) The application form includes the vetting process according to legislation and good practice.
- c) Two members of Kirk Session along with the Designated Person will meet with the applicant for an informal interview. At the interview the child protection policy will be provided and explained, the "We Care 4 U Too!" booklet will also be provided.
- d) Applicants will be required to provide two references by person who are not relatives.

e) A e-mail of approval will be sent to the Designated Person from the Taking Care Office.

2. Training

Leaders and helpers who work with children and young people should attend Taking Care training every three years as agreed by the General Assembly. 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.

3. Reporting of Concerns

The leaders in each of our organisations will be fully conversant with the reporting procedure where there is a concern about the welfare of a child, as outlined in the Taking Care guidelines (Annex 1) Leaders must not hesitate to report a concern about a child if they are at any time worried about their welfare.

4. The Designated Person

The Kirk Session has appointed the following Designated Person – Richard Morrow.

The Designated Person will give 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.

5. Parental Consent Forms

Organisational leaders must ensure that they have home contact numbers, parental consent and medical information regarding the children in the organisations which they are working with. Special consent forms will be issued for any “Off the premises,” activity and residential programmes.

6. Good standards of Practice

Each organisation will be expected to comply with good standards of practice as outlined in the Taking Care guidelines (Annex 2). This includes: physical contact, recommended ratios, transport, residential programmes and outings, church sleepovers, photographs and working with children who have special needs.

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. Where the leader in charge discerns that it is appropriate, a code of conduct for children and young people will be drawn up at the

commencement of the year's activities for that organisation. A code of conduct will help create a safe, secure environment and an atmosphere where children will feel that they can relate to the leaders and helps. **All leaders must abide by the discipline guidelines as set out in Taking Care.**

8. Communication with young people via mobile phones / Social Media

When used properly, mobile communication / social media is an excellent way to communicate with groups of parents or children / young people in order to provide information or make them aware of upcoming events and activities. There are a variety of platforms that leaders and parents need to be aware of, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Whatsapp and YouTube. Some will be suitable for communication with parents and children / young people and some will not. This list of platforms is not exhaustive, and we advise that you use the same principles for any platforms not mentioned here. All contact must be seen to be open and transparent. Social media can be great for promoting a group or event communication. The following guidelines are best practice:

- Communicate with parents / carers on social media rather than children where possible.
- Consider turning off replies in messaging groups to facilitate one way communication around important announcements.
- Whatever platform you choose, be aware of age limits for downloading and do not condone going against these e.g. the legal age for Whatsapp is 16 years old.
- Ensure group profiles are private and only members who attend the group can join.
- Leaders should not communicate with children (under 18) via personal social media or email accounts or via SMS text messages. They should not instigate or accept friendship requests.
- Messages should be sent in a group format with more than one leader where all communication is visible.
- Ensure consent forms are fully up to date in relation to posts and photos of children.
- If any consensual posts, photos or videos mention names, ensure they are first names only.
- 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.
- Be aware of GDPR obligations when operating any social media account or group on behalf of your organisation.
- If a young person contacts you and appears to be in need of urgent help or be at immediate serious risk, contact 999, social services or their parent / carer (where appropriate). Also inform your leader in charge and the church designated person.

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. Implementation and Review

The Kirk Session is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy and will review it every three years.

Signed

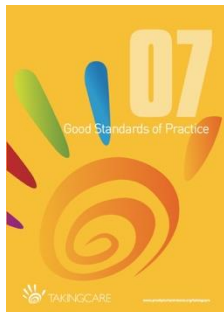
<u>William Moody</u>	(Minister)
<u>Liam McFetridge</u>	(Clerk of Session)
<u>Richard Morrow</u>	(Designated Person)

Annex

Annex 1 - Taking Care Safeguarding Guidelines

<https://www.presbyterianireland.org/takingcare/Policy-Procedures.aspx>

Annex 2 – Taking Care Good Standards of Practice



[Taking-Care-Two-Section-07.pdf.aspx](#)