First Presbyterian Church, Saintfield
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY
Northern Ireland

POLICY STATEMENT

First Saintfield is a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. We believe that every child matters and that everyone has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and to keep them safe. We believe that children should never experience abuse of any kind.

It is the policy of this congregation to safeguard all children and young people who interact with our ministry in any form, actively protecting them from all forms of harm or abuse, in line with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Safeguarding Children (NI) Policy.

This policy is displayed in our congregation and is available to all members, leaders, volunteers, and parents.

1. Biblical Basis

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland holds that safeguarding is a biblical imperative and a central component of our mission. Scripture calls us to:

- Love our neighbour as ourselves (Lev 19:18; Luke 10:27)
- Treat others as we would want to be treated (Matt 7:12)
- Seek justice and correct oppression (Psalm 89:14; Isaiah 1:17; Micah 6:8)
- Protect the weak and those in need (Psalm 82:3–4; Matt 18:10)

2. Scope

This policy applies to all children and young people (under 18) who engage with any activity, event, or ministry of this congregation, however brief. It applies to all ministers, elders, paid staff, volunteers, and anyone acting on behalf of the congregation: we believe safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

3. Core Principles

- The Presbyterian Church in Ireland engages with children and young people throughout the island of Ireland and welcomes those from households where there is no Presbyterian or other denominational connection.
- All children have the right to equal protection from all forms of harm or abuse
- Some children are additionally vulnerable due to previous experiences, communication needs, disabilities, or adverse environments, and require particular care.
- We value the voices of children and young people
- We want to support parents and families, believing that parents and families are a gift of God
- We partner with the statutory agencies to ensure effective safeguarding

4. Legal Framework

This policy has been developed in accordance with:

- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (October 2024)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007
- The Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

5. Congregational Commitments

In fulfilment of this policy, this congregation is committed to:

1. Appointing at least one Designated Person for Child Protection, registered with PCI Safeguarding.
2. Ensuring robust procedures for the safe recruitment, checking (including AccessNI), and monitoring of all staff and volunteers working with children.
3. Ensuring all those working with children are trained in how to recognise, respond to, and report abuse, at least once every three years.
4. Maintaining clear and accessible processes for reporting concerns — both internally and to statutory agencies (PSNI / Gateway / Social Services).
5. Assessing and managing identified risks to children and young people.
6. Safely managing, monitoring, and supporting any person of known risk engaged in our ministries.
7. Handling all disclosures — including non-recent abuse — in a timely, effective, and sensitive manner.
8. Managing all safeguarding information confidentially and securely.
9. Displaying this policy in our congregation and making it available on request.

DESIGNATED PERSON FOR CHILD PROTECTION

Name: _____Hazel Cuene-Grandidier_____
Contact: _____07713 400 712_____
PCI Safeguarding Team: 028 9041 7308 | safeguarding@presbyterianireland.org

6. Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Kirk Session every two years, or sooner if legislative changes require it, in line with the PCI denominational policy review cycle. Significant changes will be reported to the congregation.