

Chapter 1: Introduction to the procedures for safeguarding children

Aim of chapter

- i. To connect with Joymount Presbyterian Church policy statements
- ii. To explain absolute actions and good practices
- iii. To advise on how to use these procedures
- iv. To outline roles and responsibilities
- v. To outline what Joymount Presbyterian Church can expect with regard to timescales for responses from the central Safeguarding Team

Policy statements and procedural arrangements

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland General Assembly 2025 passed resolutions approving new policies in regard to children and adult safeguarding within the denomination. Joymount Presbyterian Church as part of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland have adopted these policies.

Policies are the broad statements of belief and intention, foundational to our safeguarding strategies.

Procedures are the thorough working out of those policy statements.

"It is the policy of Joymount Presbyterian Church to safeguard all children and young people interacting with its ministry in any form. This includes actively protecting children from all forms of harm or abuse ... Safeguarding is imperative for our denomination and a central component to our mission; when we do it well, we are proclaiming the excellencies of our Lord Jesus."

The following procedures advise Joymount Presbyterian Church on how to achieve this.

Absolute actions and good practice guidance

Procedures are comprehensive and detailed, designed to ensure that Joymount Presbyterian Church complies with legal requirements and best practice.

They also contain explanatory commentary.

Absolute actions

Absolute actions are procedures that cannot be deviated from. They are rooted in legal responsibilities and our denomination's Code.

For example, the chapter 'Recruitment and Selection of Leaders' is a mandatory procedure, and an absolute set of actions with which we all must engage.

Good practice guidance

Following good practices is not always a legal requirement. However, it is based on practices that are understood as a strong way to manage something.

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As a church we set out in these procedures strong recommendations for good practice that underpin the qualities we strive for in safeguarding.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland is one denomination across two jurisdictions; we have a wealth of opportunity to share good practice and learning across our ministry family from both the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and Northern Ireland (NI).

We seek to use the best practice from both jurisdictions to inform our work with children. Our denomination works around and across the border. Members, volunteers and staff can attend church on one part of the island and live on the other. Which set of procedures to use will depend on a number of things:

- Where the incident or concern arose
- Where the child is domiciled
- Where any alleged abuser resides

These procedures have been adopted from the PCI Safeguarding Children (NI) Procedures.

Should a member of our congregation seek to work in the Republic of Ireland, the PCI Safeguarding Children (RI) Procedures should be understood. Advice can be sought from the PCI Safeguarding Team but this should not cause any delay to speaking with statutory bodies and where necessary a report should be made to PSNI or An Garda Síochána/Tusla and social services.

Good practice is based on evidence of safeguarding practices that have been tried and tested.

Sometimes good practice is simply established regional practice and guidance.

Sometimes good practice is specific to our church and how we work in our own culture on a biblical basis.

In the case of good practice, humility is always required because we are all always learning, and safeguarding is complex and constantly changing.

Good practice is always going to be recommended by the central Safeguarding Team as it is evidence based.

Where Joymount Kirk Session chooses not to follow good practice, it must ensure that it records that decision-making.

For example, the chapter 'Online Safety' contains some elements of good practice and some elements of absolute action. Joymount Kirk Session may not deviate on some points; however, it can make alternative arrangements in others which will be detailed in our guidance in the chapter on 'Online Safety'.

How to use these procedures

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- All safeguarding policy and procedures for Joymount Presbyterian Church are available on our website
- Each policy has its own section: children and adults separately. Access the relevant section to your setting or query.
- We will also apply the best practice e.g. we will complete Risk Assessment in Joymount Presbyterian Church as good practice
- Each section contains the associated broad church-wide policy statement
- This is followed by a series of 'chapters' on the individual aspects of carrying out that policy
- Each chapter includes the procedures for a specific area of safeguarding
- Each chapter will explain its aim
- Each chapter will signpost other parts of the procedures that are relevant
- Each chapter will include links to any relevant resource you may need (for example, a link to a form)
- There is a separate area to access a variety of safeguarding resources to help implement the procedures (e.g., templates and forms, or contacts for relevant statutory bodies)
- The Presbyterian Church in Ireland website includes an 'alert' function that will highlight if there has been a change to any procedure or an update in legislation; once alerted, the responsible individual will need to adjust Joymount Presbyterian Church's policy and procedure. In line with good practice, we intend to update online the policy and procedures as they develop
- Joymount Kirk Session has reviewed and adapted the Presbyterian Church in Ireland Safeguarding Children (NI) procedures to ensure that they are suitable for our setting.

Joymount Presbyterian Church is registered with Charity Commissioners as a stand-alone organisation.

This means that Joymount Presbyterian Church must have its own local child protection arrangements. That is, a Child Protection Statement, associated risk assessments, a policy and a suite of procedures.

These must be reviewed at least once every two years.

Joymount Presbyterian Church Kirk Session should ensure that it is fully aware of all changes to be implemented

This procedure will be shared with all leaders of our youth organisations and is available on the Joymount Presbyterian Church Website.

It is the responsibility of Presbytery to ensure compliance in individual churches.

Roles and responsibilities

When it comes to the protection of children, everyone has a responsibility. This is outlined throughout the procedures.

The text below outlines our specific duties with regard to the policy and procedure arrangements specifically.

Joymount Kirk Session

1. Must have in place a written risk assessment, policy and procedure for the safeguarding of children engaged in our mission and ministries
2. Must review these documents at least once every two years
3. Must ensure that its actual practices adhere to its policy and procedures
4. Must have safeguarding as a standing agenda item for Kirk Session
5. Must support the Designated Person in their role pastorally, and with their administrative responsibilities
6. Must attend safeguarding training at least once every three years
7. Must be accountable to Presbytery for its arrangements and give assurances that these are in place

Designated personnel

1. Must keep their training up to date
2. Must review Joymount's policy and procedures for safeguarding and update Kirk Session on any changes required at any time
3. Must keep an active list of volunteers, their AccessNI vetting and training dates
4. Must ensure that all volunteers have access to the policy and procedures, and have attended training
5. Must ensure that they are keeping Kirk Session apprised of any safeguarding issues
6. Must raise concerns if they believe Kirk Session is not attending to its safeguarding policies and procedures: firstly, with Kirk Session, then escalated to PCI's central Safeguarding Team if necessary

Leaders in charge

1. Must keep their own training up to date
2. Must understand the policy and procedures and their responsibilities as stated within
3. Must ensure that all of the leaders in their organisation/activity are adhering to the policy and procedures

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4. Must raise a concern if a leader does not adhere to the policy and procedure: firstly, to the designated person and Kirk Session, and escalated to PCI's central Safeguarding Team if necessary

Leaders and volunteers

1. Must keep their own training up to date
2. Must understand the policy and procedures and their responsibilities as stated within
3. Must adhere to those policies and procedures at all times
4. Must raise any concerns they have with the Leader in Charge of their organisation/activity

Members

1. Individual members of Joymount Presbyterian Church, even if they have no role with children or young people, have responsibilities as members of this denomination to ensure that children are protected at all times from harm and/or abuse
2. All members should be aware of the child safeguarding policy and procedures, and as a member understand that they too should behave in a manner that cooperates with the procedures
3. All members should know how to raise a concern and to whom

Individuals who attend

1. It is incumbent upon every member of society to regard the welfare of children as paramount. Therefore, we all have responsibilities, even if we do not belong to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland
2. Anyone visiting or engaging with our ministries, even on a temporary or one-off basis, should be aware that we have child safeguarding policy and procedures and that these help form our ethos and approaches to keeping children and young people safe
3. All individuals should be aware of our open and transparent approach and that we will act if we have any reasonable grounds for concern, even if someone is not a member
4. All individuals should be aware of our open and transparent approach and know to whom and how they can raise any concerns they have about child safeguarding when they engage in our mission or ministries

Presbytery

1. Will ensure that Joymount Presbyterian Church has an up to date set of policies and procedures for child protection
2. Will ensure that each Joymount Kirk Session has attended safeguarding training at least once every three years

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3. Will consider appointing a Presbytery Safeguarding Lead, to work alongside the Moderator and Clerk of Presbytery to manage the safeguarding oversight within its remit
4. Will respond to escalated concerns from the central Safeguarding Team and work alongside it to take remedial actions

The role and responsibility of the PCI central safeguarding team are detailed in the PCI Safeguarding Children (NI) Policy

