

SAFEGUARDING (CHILD PROTECTION) IN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

At the General Assembly of 1997 Kirk Sessions were instructed to implement the Church of Scotland's Code of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People in the Church. The Code of Good Practice offers the Church of Scotland a framework to build on the good practice which has been part of the Church for many years. Kirk Sessions are responsible for ensuring that the 13 articles of the Code are implemented.

The Code's 13 articles are:-

1. Adopt the Policy Statement agreed by the General Assembly on safeguarding the welfare of children and young people.
2. Plan the work of the organisation so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children and young people may occur.
3. Appoint a suitable person as a Co-ordinator for the Safety and Protection of Children and Young People.
4. Apply agreed procedures for protecting children and young people to all paid staff and volunteers.
5. Give all paid staff and volunteers clear roles.
6. Use supervision as a means of protecting children and young people
7. Treat all applicants for any position involving contact with children and young people in the same way.
8. Gain at least one reference from a person who has experience of the applicant's paid work or volunteering, if any, with children or young people.
9. Explore all applicants' experience of working or contact with children or young people in an interview before appointment.
10. Find out whether an applicant has any conviction for criminal offences against children or young people.
11. Make paid and voluntary appointments conditional on the successful completion of a probationary period.
12. Issue guidelines on how to deal with the disclosure or discovery of abuse, and advise on the risk of false and malicious claims of abuse.
13. Train paid staff and volunteers, their co-ordinators or supervisors and policy makers in the prevention of child abuse.

Here in Peebles Old Parish Church with Eddleston we have implemented the Code of Good Practice by electing Safeguarding Panels involving the Minister, the Safeguarding Co-ordinator Graeme J. Murray and for Peebles Old, Session Clerk Barbara Crawford and for Eddleston, Session Clerk Margaret Love. The main function of the panels is in recruiting and supporting our voluntary workers who lead and teach the various groups attached to our Churches.

We are required to attempt to ensure that those we entrust to work with children and young people will be capable of acting "in loco parentis" i.e. exercising the same level of care as would be expected from reasonable caring parents. Our voluntary workers have been issued with job descriptions and each has received a card outlining the guidelines for implementing the code.

Most of our voluntary workers have attended courses of training in the Safeguarding of Children and Young People in the Church. Peebles Old Parish Church with Eddleston arranged training courses in 1999, 2002, 2005 and 2010 where each course has been led by a qualified trainer from the Safeguarding Office of the Church of Scotland.

In addition to offering training our recruitment of voluntary workers incorporates police checks conducted through Disclosure Scotland and we follow the disciplinary code covered by the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003. The checks ensure we will not recruit anyone disqualified from working with children.

It is also part of our policy to safeguard the Health and Safety of all users of our Church premises.