

Designated Person for Safeguarding (DP) **(Northern Ireland)**

Purpose of the Role

The Designated Person (DP) is responsible for receiving, recording, and acting on child safeguarding concerns within the church, in accordance with the provisions of the Children (NI) Order 1996 and the policy framework Co-operating to safeguard Children and Young People (2017).

The DP ensures that concerns are managed promptly, appropriately, and in line with statutory and church safeguarding procedures, and that reports are made to social services and the police where required.

They play an important role in the congregation's safeguarding and leadership through promoting safe recruitment, training and in liaising with and reporting to the Kirk Session.

They will act as a link with the PCI Safeguarding team where this is necessary.

Key Responsibilities

1. Receiving Safeguarding Concerns

- Act as the first point of contact for safeguarding concerns, disclosures, or allegations relating to children.
- Receive concerns from church members, volunteers, staff, or children themselves.
- Listen carefully, provide reassurance where appropriate, and take all concerns seriously.
- Avoid questioning beyond what is necessary to clarify basic information.

2. Recording Safeguarding Information

- Record safeguarding concerns promptly, accurately, and factually using the church's safeguarding recording procedures.
- Ensure records distinguish clearly between fact, opinion, and hearsay.
- Store all safeguarding records securely and confidentially, in line with data protection requirements.

3. Assessment and Reporting

- Consider concerns in line with the definitions of harm as set out in guidance
- Determine whether a concern meets the threshold for reporting to social services or the police and make reports without delay where required.

- Where unsure, seek advice from social services without disclosing identifying information.
- Inform the church leadership in line with internal safeguarding procedures, while maintaining confidentiality.

4.. Liaison and Communication

- Act as the liaison between the church and social services/PSNI regarding safeguarding matters.
- Cooperate fully with social services and the police where appropriate.
- Ensure that safeguarding concerns are not handled internally in a way that delays or obstructs statutory reporting.

6. Advice and Support

- Provide advice to church leaders, volunteers, and staff on safeguarding procedures especially in relation to reporting and assurance to Kirk Session on safeguarding matters.
- Be part of the congregation's safeguarding team along with the Minister, Safeguarding Elder and other DPs.
- Promote safe practices and respond to safeguarding queries within the congregation.
- Support those affected by safeguarding concerns, while maintaining professional boundaries.
- Seek advice from the PCI team as necessary.

7. Safeguarding Culture and Compliance

- Promote a culture of vigilance and child-centred safeguarding within the church.
- Assist with the development implementation and review of the church's policies and procedures.
- Support safeguarding risk assessments of church activities involving children.
- Take a lead in ensuring AccessNI vetting requirements and safeguarding training is up to date.

8. Training and Knowledge

- Complete safeguarding training relevant to the DP role and refresh this training as required.
- Maintain an up-to-date understanding of child protection framework and relevant legislation.
- Keep informed of changes to statutory or church safeguarding requirements.

What the Designated Person Must NOT Do

- Investigate safeguarding concerns.
- Promise confidentiality.
- Delay reporting concerns.
- Decide outcomes independently of statutory authorities.

Skills and Attributes

- Integrity, discretion, and sound judgement.
- Ability to remain calm and objective in sensitive situations.
- Strong communication and record-keeping skills.
- Understanding of safeguarding thresholds and statutory duties.
- Willingness to follow policy and legal guidance strictly.

Accountability

- Accountable to the Kirk Session who is responsible for safeguarding governance.
- Works in cooperation with church leadership and statutory authorities.

Safeguarding Commitment

The Designated Person must always act in the best interests of the child, ensuring that child safety and welfare are paramount in all safeguarding decisions.