



1.2A GUIDANCE ON A CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR CHURCH PERSONNEL

The Code of Behaviour for church personnel has been categorised under the following headings:

- child-centred approach
- inappropriate behaviour
- physical contact
- relationships

All church personnel must comply at all times with the Code of Behaviour, as set out below.

CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH:

- Treat all children equally.
- Listen to and respect children.
- Treat all children as individuals and respect diversity.
- Lead by example.
- Respect a child's personal space.
- Involve children in decision-making, as appropriate.
- Provide encouragement, support and praise (regardless of ability).
- Use appropriate language (verbal and non-verbal).
- Have fun and encourage a positive atmosphere.
- Discuss boundaries on behaviour and related sanctions, as appropriate, with children and their parents/carers.
- Offer feedback and challenge as appropriate.
- Encourage feedback from children.
- Agree a group contract at the beginning of each year/session.
- Use age-appropriate teaching aids and materials.
- Be aware of a child's other commitments when scheduling activities, e.g. school or exams.
- Be cognisant of a child's limitations, for example, due to a medical condition.
- Encourage a trusting environment.
- Observe appropriate dress.

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR:

- Avoid spending unnecessary time alone with children.
- Do not use or allow language or behaviour that is offensive, abusive or sexually suggestive.
- Do not single out a particular child for unfair favouritism, criticism, ridicule, unwelcome focus or attention.
- Do not allow/engage in inappropriate touching of any form.
- Do not hit or physically chastise children.



- Do not socialise inappropriately with children, e.g. outside of structured organisational activities.
- Do not allow an inappropriate relationship to develop with any child.
- Ensure that any contact with children through social/digital media is in line with any relevant Policies.
- Do not be passive in relation to concerns, i.e. 'don't do nothing'.
- Maintain awareness around your communication, either verbal, written or digital (including social media). If you have said or done something that has caused offence or upset, then try to address it in an apologetic, sensitive and timely manner, with a view to reconciliation.

PHYSICAL CONTACT:

- Should be in response to the need of the child and not the need of the adult.
- Should be open and not secretive.
- Should be with the consent of the child.
- Should be appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the child.
- Check with children about their level of comfort when doing activities that might involve physical contact.
- Avoid rough play or inappropriate touch.

As a general principle, church personnel are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with children and should exercise a high level of caution in relation to any engagement in physical competitive games/contact sports with children.

Church personnel who have to administer first-aid should ensure wherever possible that other children or another adult is present and that the administration of any first aid of medication has consent in place.

Following any incident where an adult thinks that his/her actions have been, or may be, misconstrued, every effort should be made to communicate with the offended party to resolve any misunderstandings. All incidents should be recorded, and where there is concern, the person in charge should be informed.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Church personnel should ensure that their relationships with children are appropriate. Church personnel must not allow a romantic/intimate relationship to develop with a child.

In Northern Ireland anyone who abuses their position of trust with children, even those over the age of consent, may be prosecutable by law. This pertains to people involved in the areas of religion and sport. As regards religion, those responsible for young people in this setting can command very high levels of trust, influence, power and authority. They have significant influence over a young person's spiritual and religious development, often against a background of emotional vulnerability or immaturity. They can often be well established and respected in the community.

An abuse of trust of this kind is a breach of the Child Safeguarding Policy and is also potentially prosecutable.