

# Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland

## Health and Safety Policy

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Although this policy has been developed by the General Purposes Committee this could be adopted for use in each congregation, who should appoint a Health and Safety Lead. They should ensure that they have appropriate recording in place for incidents or accidents, have appropriate fire and general risk assessments along with first aid and display screen equipment policies (if required).

#### **1. About this policy**

- 1.1 We are committed to ensuring the health and safety of clergy, volunteers, members and employees, contractors and anyone affected by our denominational activities, and to providing a safe and suitable environment for all those attending our premises.
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to set out our arrangements in relation to:
  - (a) assessment and control of health and safety risks arising from activities.
  - (b) preventing accidents and activity related ill health.
  - (c) consultation with those affected on matters affecting their health and safety.
  - (d) provision and maintenance of a safe workplace and equipment.

- (e) information, instruction, training and supervision in safe operating methods and procedures.
  - (f) emergency procedures in cases of fire or another major incident.
- 1.3 This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and we may amend it at any time.
- 1.4 This policy has been agreed by General Purposes Committee and adopted by the General Synod at their Pro Renata meeting 31<sup>st</sup> January 2026.
- 2. Who does this policy apply to?**
- 2.1 This policy applies to all clergy, members, volunteers, employees, office bearers, consultants and self-employed contractors. It also applies to anyone visiting our premises.
- 3. Who is responsible for this policy?**
- 3.1 General Purposes Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. The GPC has delegated the oversight for its implementation to the Health and Safety Lead. Suggestions for changes to this policy should be reported to the Health and Safety lead. The post of Health and Safety lead for the denomination is held by The Rev Alister Bell and they can be contacted at 07546117811 email [Alister.bell@outlook.com](mailto:Alister.bell@outlook.com) each congregation should appoint its own Health and Safety Lead.
- 3.2 Any questions you may have about the day-to-day application of this policy should be referred to The Health and Safety Lead in the first instance.
- 3.3 This policy is reviewed bi-annually by the Health and Safety Lead in consultation with the General Purposes Committee. Or in the case of a congregation its church committee.
- 4. Your responsibilities**
- 4.1 All clergy, volunteers, members and employees share responsibility for achieving safe working conditions. You must take care of your own health and safety and that of others, observe applicable safety rules and follow instructions for the safe use of equipment as per the Health and Safety at work (NI) order 1984.
- 4.2 You should report any health and safety concerns immediately to the Health and Safety Led Rev Alister Bell at denominational level or your Health and Safety lead at congregational level.

4.3 You must co-operate with The GPC or congregational committees on health and safety matters, including the investigation of any incident.

4.4 Failure to comply with this policy may be treated as misconduct and dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure or other sanctions.

## **5. Information and consultation**

5.1 We will inform and consult directly with all clergy, volunteers, members and employees and regarding health and safety matters.

5.2 We will ensure any health and safety representatives receive the appropriate training to carry out their functions effectively. This will be arranged by GPC for Health and Safety Leads at periodic intervals.

5.3 The Health and Safety Lead is responsible for informing and consulting clergy, volunteers, members and employees about health and safety matters.

## **6. Training**

6.1 We will ensure that you are given adequate training and supervision to perform your duties and activities competently and safely.

6.2 Clergy, volunteers, members and Employees will be given a health and safety induction and provided with appropriate safety training. This may include manual handling, control of substances hazardous to health (COSHH), Congregations may consider additional specialist training in working at height, asbestos awareness, gas safety, electrical safety and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

## **7. Equipment**

7.1 You must use equipment in accordance with any instructions given to you. Any equipment fault or damage must immediately be reported to The Health and Safety Lead at local level.

7.2 No member of clergy, volunteers, members and employees should attempt to repair equipment unless trained to do so.

7.3 The Health and Safety Lead is responsible for ensuring equipment safety and maintenance.

## **8. Accidents and first aid for denominational premises and church buildings**

- 8.1 Details of first aid facilities and the names of trained first aiders should be displayed on the notice boards.
- 8.2 All accidents and injuries, however minor, should be reported to your Health and Safety Lead and reported on the incident forms which the Health and Safety lead has, or in the relevant forms for the building in question.
- 8.3 The Health and Safety lead is responsible for investigating any injuries or work-related diseases, ensuring that incident/accident records are kept, and for submitting reports to the relevant authorities if required under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (*SI 2013/1471*) (RIDDOR).

## **9. National health alerts**

- 9.1 In the event of an epidemic or pandemic alert we will organise our denominational operations and provide advice on steps to be taken by everyone concerned, in accordance with official guidance, to reduce the risk of infection as far as possible. Any questions should be referred to Clerk or the Health and Safety Lead
- 9.2 It is important for the health and safety of all our clergy, volunteers, members, employees and others named that you comply with instructions issued in these circumstances.

## **10. Fire safety – This will be dependent on the buildings used**

- 10.1 All clergy, volunteers, members, employee's and others named should familiarise themselves with the fire safety instructions, which should be displayed on notice boards and near fire exits in the places of worship or other church premises.

For Denominational events please follow the instructions for the particular venue, the person in charge of the event should understand what these instructions are and how to manage these in the event of a fire.

For congregations who may wish to include this as part of their health and safety policy:

- 10.2 **If you hear a fire alarm, leave the building immediately by the nearest fire exit and go to designated assembly point. Do not stop to collect belongings or use any lifts. Fire wardens will assist in the evacuation of the building, and you must follow their instructions. Do not re-enter the building until told to do so.**

- 10.3 If you discover a fire do not attempt to tackle it unless it is safe and you have been trained or feel competent to do so. You should operate the nearest fire alarm and, if you have sufficient time, call reception and report the location of the fire.
- 10.4 Nominated individuals will be trained in the correct use of fire extinguishers.
- 10.5 You should notify the person in charge of the meeting or event if there is anything (for example, impaired mobility) that might impede your evacuation in the event of a fire. A personal evacuation plan will be drawn up and brought to the attention of the relevant fire wardens and colleagues working in your vicinity.
- 10.6 At Denominational events if anything could impede a participant's evacuation in the event of fire the person leading the event should be informed before the event commences.
- 10.7 Fire drills should be held at least every 12 months and must be taken seriously and should be recorded.
- 10.8 The Health and Safety Lead in each congregation is responsible for ensuring fire risk assessments are undertaken and implemented, and for ensuring regular checks of fire extinguishers, fire alarms, escape routes and emergency lighting.

## **11. Risk assessments and measures to control risk**

- 11.1 The Health and Safety Lead in each congregation will ensure that general workplace risk assessments have been carried out periodically. The purpose is to assess the risks to health and safety of clergy, volunteers, members, employees, visitors and other third parties because of our activities, and to identify any measures that need to be taken to control those risks.
- 11.2 Measures will be taken to avoid or reduce the need to lift or carry items which could cause injury (manual handling) and to provide training on manual handling as necessary.
- 11.3 The use of hazardous substances at church buildings should be avoided wherever possible and less hazardous alternatives will be used where available. Training on the control of substances hazardous to health (COSHH) should be provided as necessary.
- 11.4 Personal protective equipment (PPE) is provided where there are risks that cannot be adequately controlled by other means.

- 11.5 The Health and Safety Lead is responsible for ensuring general and specialist risk assessments have been carried out and that any measures to control risks are actioned, these should be reviewed annually or after an incident.

## **12. Computers and display screen equipment**

- 12.1 If you use a computer screen or other display screen equipment (DSE) habitually as a significant part of your role or other activities.

The agreement on the amount of time spent and if the DSE regulations apply to your role should be agreed with the health and safety led following the required legislation to decide the next course of action as outline below.

- (a) You should try to organise your activity so that you take frequent short breaks from looking at the screen.
  - (b) You are entitled to a workstation assessment.
  - (c) You are entitled to an eyesight test by an optician at the denomination or congregations expense.
- 12.2 You should contact your Health and Safety Lead to request a workstation assessment or an eye test. Eye tests should be repeated at regular intervals as advised by the optician, usually every two years. However, if you develop eye problems which may be caused by DSE work (such as headaches, eyestrain, or difficulty focusing) you can request a further eye test at any time.
- 12.3 We will not normally pay for glasses or contact lenses, unless your vision cannot be corrected by normal glasses or contact lenses and you need special glasses designed for the display screen distance. In such cases we will pay the cost of basic corrective appliances only.
- 12.4 Further information on the use of DSE can also be obtained from the Health and Safety Lead.