

Ballynahinch Gospel Hall

Safeguarding Policy & Code of Conduct

(last update 4th September 2025)

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SECTION A: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Ballynahinch Gospel Hall Assembly is fully committed to providing a safe and positive environment, where children are valued in every respect as God intended. Provision is made by us for the physical as well as the spiritual wellbeing and development of every child in accordance with the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. We do appreciate your confidence in sending your child/children to our meetings and we would take this opportunity to assure you that we teach from the Word of God the Way of Salvation through faith in The Lord Jesus Christ.

We have a Sunday School most Sundays between September and May commencing at 2.45pm and ending at 3.30pm.

We also have a weekly gospel meeting each Sunday evening at 7.00pm in the Gospel Hall on the Crossgar Road to which we give you a very warm invitation.

This document sets out the policy and procedures adopted by the Christians who meet in Ballynahinch Gospel Hall in relation to Safeguarding. An explanation of the terms used in this document (such as "we", "Assembly" etc) is contained in Appendix 2. This policy will be reviewed annually. The latest version will be dated less than 14 months before the current date.

Who we are

We are a local church formed of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who meet in accordance with principles laid out in the New Testament.

Our Purpose

Our principal purpose is to honour the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and to this end we meet regularly for worship, prayer, bible study, ministry from God's word and to spread the gospel message. In this regard evangelism is an important part of what we do both among children and adults.

Our Beliefs

Our members, as individual Christians, seek at all times to be guided by the Bible, the Word of God. The values and ethos of the assembly in Ballynahinch are similarly a reflection of the teaching contained in the Bible. Our commitments under this Policy are the right things to do because they are also based on clear teaching contained in the Bible. For example:

*'Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones.
For I say unto you that in heaven their angels do always
see the face of my Father who is in heaven',
Matthew 18v10*

'Abstain from every form of evil', 1 Thessalonians 5v22

*'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,
longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
gentleness, self-control', Galatians 5v22*

SECTION B: SAFEGUARDING AND OUR COMMITMENT TO IT

What is Safeguarding?

In the UK, Safeguarding means proper protection of people's health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

Our Commitment

Everyone has a right to live their life free from abuse and neglect. We have a **zero tolerance** to all forms of abuse. We will not tolerate abuse and exploitation and therefore we are committed to Safeguarding as an integral part of all of our activities. This Policy lays out the commitments made by us and the principles we will follow to achieve this. Every member of the Ballynahinch Assembly is committed to this policy but it also applies to visiting volunteers and helpers from outside of the Assembly.

Our Objectives

Our objectives in preparing this Policy are to:

- safeguard the welfare of children and vulnerable adults
- work to prevent abuse from occurring
- seek to protect and respond well to those that have been abused.

SECTION C: WHAT WE WILL DO & WHAT WE EXPECT

What We Will Do

Undertake Our Activities in a Way that Protects People

- We will, so far as reasonably possible, design and undertake our activities in a way that protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with us. This includes the way in which information about individuals involved in our activities is gathered and communicated.
- We will aim to ensure that Responsible Individuals adhere to safe and conducive working practices and are supported when challenging unacceptable behaviour.

Safely support all those with any responsibilities related to children and adults

- We will work to ensure that Responsible Individuals have the confidence and skills they need to care and support children and young people and to recognise and respond to abuse (acting proportionately in relation to the role of each Responsible Individual). This will be done by supporting the roll-out of consistent and accessible safeguarding training in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy, and making this available to all Responsible Individuals.

Respond promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation

- Anyone who brings any safeguarding suspicion, concern, knowledge or allegation of current or historic abuse to us will be responded to respectfully, promptly and actively and in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy.
- All safeguarding work will be recorded in line with this Policy. All suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations will be reported via the designated safeguarding officer to the relevant statutory authorities, where this is considered appropriate. This will be done irrespective of the status of the person. All allegations of criminal behaviour will be reported to the relevant law enforcement authorities.
- The Assembly and its representatives will cooperate with regulators and law enforcement authorities in all cases. Where appropriate the Assembly will instigate its own inquiry into any suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations made.

Support those affected by abuse

- We will seek wherever practical, either directly or indirectly, to offer appropriate pastoral care and support to those who have been affected by abuse, who have direct contact with the Assembly or its Responsible Individuals.

Respect the rights of those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons

- In our response to suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations of abuse we will respect the rights under criminal and civil law of a Responsible Individual.

Investigate external complaints

- We will investigate any complaints from external sources such as members of the public and official bodies.

What We Expect:

Responsibilities in relation to children and young people

Responsible Individuals are expected to maintain the highest standards of personal holiness and probity in accordance with the Biblical expectations of Christian behaviour, upholding the sanctity of marriage at all times.

‘But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness let it not even be named among you’, Ephesians 5v3

Responsible Individuals are therefore expected to:

- Read, be familiar with and fully implement our Safeguarding policy.
- Contribute to creating and maintaining an environment that prevents safeguarding violations and promotes the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy.
- Respect all children and young people and promote their well-being.
- Report any concerns or suspicions regarding safeguarding violations to our Safeguarding Officer.
- Be aware of situations that may present risks and manage these. Plan and organise events so that risks are minimised or mitigated

‘As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone’, Galatians 6v10

Responsible Individuals **must not**:

- In any way abuse or exploit children or young people or otherwise subject a child or young person to physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect.
- Develop relationships with children or young people at risk which could in any way be reasonably deemed exploitative or abusive;
- Engage in any exploitative activities, commercially or otherwise with children or young people entrusted into our care.

Reporting and Responding

We undertake our Safeguarding responsibilities and obligations carefully, diligently, biblically and proportionately. Our priority is the wellbeing of the child or young person. We expect all members of the Assembly to fully support the policy and follow the procedures in every case where abuse has been reported or is suspected. Respect confidentiality where possible but DO NOT prioritise this over the child's welfare and NEVER give a guarantee of confidentiality.

SECTION D: HOW WE IMPLEMENT THIS POLICY

Responsible Individuals

We require Responsible Individuals to:

- Read carefully the Assembly's Safeguarding Policy, including the Code of Conduct in Appendix 1. This sets out our approach to Safeguarding and our expectations on this matter.
- Attend Safeguarding awareness training annually.

We educate and provide guidance to our volunteers and review and refresh them annually or more frequently.

At the discretion of the Assembly we may seek to obtain reassurance by means of a criminal record check and/or child protection disclosure from the relevant authorities.

We keep a register of all Responsible Individuals

Respond promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation

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- All safeguarding work will be recorded in line with this Policy. All suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations will be reported via the designated safeguarding officer to the relevant statutory authorities, where this is considered appropriate. This will be done irrespective of the status of the person. All allegations of criminal behaviour will be reported to the relevant law enforcement authorities.
- The Assembly and its representatives will cooperate with regulators and law enforcement authorities in all cases. Where appropriate the Assembly will instigate its own inquiry into any suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations made.

Support for those affected by abuse

We will seek wherever practical, either directly or indirectly, to offer appropriate pastoral care and support to those who have been affected by abuse, who have direct contact with the Assembly or its Responsible Individuals.

Duty towards those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons

In our response to suspicions, concerns, knowledge or allegations of abuse we will respect the rights under criminal and civil law of a Responsible Individual.

What to do when you suspect alleged abuse:

- It is important that anyone directly or indirectly associated with the Assembly has the confidence to come forward to speak or act if they have concerns.
- Actual, potential or suspected incidents of abuse **MUST** be reported immediately. Any reports should be made to the Safeguarding Officer in the first instance. If there is a conflict of interest, a report can be submitted to the Elders.

- The Safeguarding Officer will always refer and discuss all complaints with the Elders and they will ensure that any matter is responded to appropriately and in a prompt manner.
- It is important to note that where those associated with the Assembly report concerns, it is **NOT** their responsibility to decide if abuse is taking place but it **IS** their responsibility to pass these concerns on to the Safeguarding Officer.

Consent and Confidentiality

- If a Responsible Individual, has concerns regarding actual or potential abuse, they should **never** give an assurance of confidentiality. Instead, they should explain that they are worried about a risk of abuse and would like the actual or potential victim's consent in order to discuss the matter discreetly with the Safeguarding Officer.
- The Assembly aims to obtain consent to share information. We prefer for the person or people involved in a referral to be engaged with it being made.
- However, Safeguarding issues present major challenges to consent and confidentiality; it is likely that someone being abused will fear information being passed on to others, possibly including law enforcement agencies.
- The need to break confidentiality is rare but applies where the welfare of another person is at risk and where it is deemed appropriate to make a referral to the Safeguarding Officer regardless of consent, in order to protect the wellbeing, safety and human rights of a person or people.
- Allowing for the caveats above, it is essential that, wherever possible, confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management should be shared on a need to know basis only, and should be kept secure at all times.
- Personal details do not have to be provided when reporting concerns. However, such information will assist the Assembly in taking forward any concerns and enable the Assembly to provide a response on the outcome. If you ask the Assembly not to disclose your identity we will not do so without your consent, unless required by law or such information would be required to make a referral to the appropriate authorities and one is required.

Reports and Records

- Any information passed to us will be written up in a Report by the Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible after the concern is raised (within three working days if possible).
- Any written records taken will be kept securely in a locked place or in a confidential and encrypted electronic folder.

Contacts

The Safeguarding contact details for Ballynahinch Gospel Hall are as follows:

Mr Bruce Tinsley (07841 974452)

Email: ballynahinchgospelhall@gmail.com

The Support and Training contact details are as follows:

Mr Peter Lees - Admin

Mrs Gwynneth Tinsley – Safeguarding Officer

Phone numbers are available on request to all the workers at Ballynahinch Gospel Hall.

Appendix 1 : Code of Conduct

The behaviour of every Christian should be guided by the Bible, the Word of God. It is required that the conduct of all Responsible Individuals, should willingly and diligently adhere to the following principles and be governed by the corresponding Scriptures. These guiding principles, that should be exemplified personally, are also core values of the Assembly.

1. I will ensure that my personal and professional conduct is, and is seen to be, of the highest standards and in keeping with the Assembly's beliefs, values and aims.

'Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ', Philippians 1v27

2. I will treat all people fairly and with respect and dignity

'Show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ', James 2v1

3. I will ensure that my personal conduct does not compromise the Assembly's values and does not impact on or undermine my ability to undertake the role for which I am appointed.

'Be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you', Ephesians 4v32

4. I will not say or do anything that would damage the reputation of the Assembly or which may bring the Assembly into disrepute.

'Let your speech always be gracious.....so that you may know how you ought to answer each person', Colossians 4v6

5. I will not abuse my position as a representative of the Assembly by requesting any personal service or favour, including physical or sexual favours from others in return for any assistance by the Assembly or from the Assembly's resources.

'For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honour', 1 Thessalonians 4vs3-4

6. I will maintain purity in accordance with the teaching of the Bible in relation to the sanctity of marriage and appropriate Christian conduct, avoiding all inappropriate sexual behaviour and sexual relationships.

'As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct', 1Peter1v15

7. I will abide by the Assembly's Safeguarding Policy.

'But all things should be done decently and in order', 1 Corinthians 14v40

8. I will ensure that my individual behaviour and relationships with others are not exploitative, abusive, corrupt or irresponsible in any way and will make an appropriate report of any such individual behaviour of others to the Elders of the Assembly and to the Safeguarding Officer (as set out in the Safeguarding Policy of the Assembly)

***‘As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone’,
Galatians 6v10***

9. If I become aware of any form of illegal activity relating to the Assembly, its beneficiaries or Responsible Individuals or where there is a safeguarding risk, I will make it known immediately to the Elders of the Assembly and to the Safeguarding Officer (as set out in the Safeguarding Policy of the Assembly). I will also ensure law enforcement authorities are notified as appropriate if criminal behaviour is involved.

***‘Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what
is honourable in the sight of all’, Romans 12v17***

10. I will refrain from any form of harassment, discrimination, physical or verbal abuse, intimidation or exploitation, both in and out of my capacity as a Responsible Individual.

***‘But set the believers an example in speech, in conduct,
in love, in faith, in purity’, 1 Timothy 4v12***

This Code should be read in conjunction with the Assembly's Safeguarding Policy.

Appendix 2: Practical guidance for Responsible Individuals

Responsibility

We all need to take responsibility for our own actions or lack of action in the care of children and young people. Ask yourself what can I do to mitigate the risk?

Undertake Our Activities in a Way that Protects People

- In all our activities, we should give children and young people the appropriate time to express their opinions. All children and young people should be valued and respected as individuals and we should be available to listen to them whenever necessary.
- Workers are encouraged to praise children for good behaviour and show consistency in their approach to each child or young person. They should encourage both children and young people to participate in all the activities, which are available, and their achievements should be recognised.
- Workers should always work openly with children and young people taking responsible precautions to ensure that any worker is not left alone with a child or a young person completely unobserved.
- All workers are expected to be good examples to both children and young people, working together with their co-workers for the safety and benefit of all children and young people.
- Workers should ensure that activities are carefully planned in advance and that children and young people are adequately supervised at all times.
- The Ballynahinch Gospel Hall does not permit the consumption of alcohol, or the misuse of drugs/substances or the wilful destruction of property at any of its activities.

Guidelines for the Protection of Children/Young People and Leaders/Workers

In order to reduce the likely situations for abuse of children/young people and thus protecting child and worker alike leaders/workers should mitigate risks as much as possible...

- Avoid or at least minimise time alone with children away from others.
- Do not take children alone on car journeys, however short. Where this is unavoidable, it should be with the full knowledge and consent of the parents, and someone in charge of the event. When only one child is in the car with the driver they will be in the back seat at all times. Seatbelts should be used.
- Do not Take unaccompanied children to your home unless part of a wider organised event eg BBQ where multiple Responsible Individuals are present.
- Never...
- Engage in sexually provocative or rough physical games, including horseplay - apart from structured sports activities
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- Make **unnecessary** physical contact with a child or young person
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments about, or to, a child/young person - even in fun
- Let allegations made by a child/young person go without being addressed and recorded
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves

- Form a relationship with a young person that is an abuse of trust
- Use physical punishment or discipline out of anger

Physical contact with children

- Be mindful of how and where you touch a child - the child must feel comfortable with the contact.
- There may be contact during sports or games, but remember your size and strength, and so restrict your involvement for the safety of the children.
- Physical contact of a comforting and reassuring nature is a valid way of expressing your concern and care. However, it is only appropriate if it is meeting the need of the child.
- Physical contact of a comforting nature should only ever take place with the consent of the child.

Protecting children from harming themselves

- Sometimes restraint may need to be applied to a child in order to protect him/her from harming themselves or others, or seriously damaging property. It should never be used to inflict pain or as a general means of control.
- The proper use of restraint requires skill and judgement. Only the minimum force necessary to prevent injury or damage should be applied. Leaders should never try to restrain a young person on their own. Another leader may act as an assistant or as a witness.
- Remember that restraint should be an act of care and control, not punishment.
- Following an incident when restraint has been used, a report should be inserted in the Accident/Incident Report book.

Meeting with individual children for counselling/guidance

- Meeting with individual children should take place as openly as possible
- If privacy is needed, the door should be left open and other leaders/workers informed of the meeting
- Ensure there is another leader/worker on the premises for the duration of the counselling/guidance session.
- If counselling/guidance are taking place other than at a Ballynahinch Gospel Hall event, then it may be advisable to not go alone. The worker should agree an appointment date, time and venue, confirm all details with the appropriate leader-in-charge and gain parental consent.

Personal relationships

- Workers involved in relationships with other workers should ensure that their personal relationships do not affect their role within the ministry or put children in a potentially harmful situation.

Guidelines for the Supervision of children/young people

- Children should **never** be left unsupervised while in our care.
- Leaders-in-charge must be satisfied that those workers who supervise children and young people are fully competent to do so.
- Bus drivers should not be left to supervise children.
- Children will always be safer when supervised by two or more adults.

- When only two adults are present in the room, it is preferable they should be one male and one female.
- Workers should know at all times where children are and what they are doing.
- Any activity using potentially dangerous equipment should have constant adult supervision;
- Dangerous behaviour by children should not be allowed.
- Young people (those under 18 years of age) who are helping leaders should not be left alone in a supervisory capacity with children.
- In a "meeting" situation, a minimum ratio of 1 adult to 8 children should be aimed at, and on outings this ratio should be increased to a minimum of 1 adult to 5 children.

The standard recommended adult/child ratios are:

Under 2 years	1 adult to 3 children
2-3 years	1 adult to 4 children
4-7 years	1 adult to 8 children
8 years and over	2 adults (preferably one of each gender) for up to 20 children.

There should be one additional adult for every 10 extra children and/or young people.

The ratio of workers to persons with disabilities is dependent upon the needs of the individual.

Supervision of children/young people on journeys/outings/trips where parents/guardians are not in attendance.

- The organisers of journeys/visits should plan and prepare a detailed programme of activities for the children who are involved in the project.
- Organisers are responsible for the welfare and safety of the children/young people for the **whole time** they are away from home.
- All children/young people should be adequately supervised and engaged in suitable activities at all times.
- In circumstances when planned activities are disrupted, e.g. due to weather conditions, then organisers should have a number of alternative activities planned.
- Organisers should obtain, in writing, parental consent to children joining an organised trip.
- Parents should be given information about a trip, including details of the programme of events, the activities in which the children/young person will be engaged.

Appendix 3 : Do's and Don'ts

If there are suspicions that someone is at risk of harm or abuse, the following guidance should be considered.

DO

- Be supportive
- Take what the child or young person says seriously.
- Reassure them that it was right to tell someone.
- Explain what will happen next i.e. that you will refer to the Safeguarding Officer
- Write down word-for-word immediately afterwards what was said (time, place, other observations): Sign and date this record
- Pass the referral to the Safeguarding Officer
- Seek support from the Safeguarding Officer
- Ask the individual to clarify anything you might have misunderstood – you could try reflecting back what you think you have heard.

DON'T

- Be dismissive
- Delay
- Promise to keep secrets
- Express any of your own opinions
- Discuss with anyone else what was told to you, other than the Safeguarding Officer
- Start to investigate
- Contact the alleged abuser or other people mentioned
- Ask closed questions or repeatedly question the individual

Appendix 4 : Glossary

The following words and phrases are likely to arise in any matter within this subject area some may be included in this policy and have the meanings set out here: Any examples given are illustrative rather than exhaustive.

- **Abuse** is the intentional or unintentional misuse of power and control that one person has over another; it does not matter whether the perpetrator intended the abuse to take place or not.
- **Assembly** is a collective noun for the group of individuals who meet in Ballynahinch Gospel Hall.
- **Code of Conduct** the standard of behaviour we require from our members.
- **Elders** are those who are responsible for spiritual guidance and well being of the members.
- **Emotional abuse** where harm is done by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection, such as degrading punishments, threats and not giving care and affection, resulting in adverse effects on behaviour and emotional developments of a person.
- **Financial abuse** is the use of a person's property, assets, income, funds or any resources without their informed consent or authorisation; it may include theft, fraud, internet scamming, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, or the misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- **Leadership** are those responsible for guiding and managing the work with children and young people.
- **Neglect**, where basic needs such as food, warmth and medical care are not met, or when there is a failure to protect a person from exposure to any kind of danger, resulting in serious impairment of a person's health or development.
- **Physical abuse** or physical injury, such as evidence of hitting, kicking or shaking, where there is definite knowledge or reasonable suspicion, that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented.
- **Policy** The statements & policies contained within this document, including the Code of Conduct.
- **Representatives** are those persons acting on behalf of the Assembly whether members or not.
- **Responsible Individuals** are those persons working with children or young people who have any kind of supervisory role including teaching or leading any of the activities.
- **Sexual abuse** where **exploitation** of a person occurs. This includes rape, incest and all forms of sexual activities including pornography. Exchanging of benefits, for example goods, food and money in exchange for sexual favours.
- **Sexual Harassment** is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature which: violates your dignity, makes you feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated or creates a hostile or offensive environment.
- **"we", "us", "our"**, refers to the Assembly