

Gospel Hall, Victoria Street, Banbridge

*Child Protection Policy & Codes of Practice for Working with
Children*

September 2026

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Policy Statement
3. Roles and Responsibilities
4. Code of Behaviour
5. Dealing with Incidents/Accidents
6. Dealing with Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse
7. Record Keeping
8. Transport Policy
9. Minimising Risk
10. Data Protection (GDPR)
11. Miscellaneous General Safety Issues

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Consent, Contact Details, and Medical Conditions Form
- Appendix 2 – Procedures for Reporting
- Appendix 3 – Recording Allegations Form
- Appendix 4 – Contact Numbers
- Appendix 5 – Information/Declaration Form for Teachers and Workers
- Appendix 6 – Self-Disclosure Form for Teachers and Workers
- Appendix 7 – Accident and Incident Report Form
- Appendix 8 – Risk Assessment Form
- Appendix 9 – Policy Review Record

1. Introduction

This document has been introduced to establish a framework of principles and guidelines of good practice for working with children in connection with the assembly of Christians which meets in the Gospel Hall at Victoria Street, Banbridge.

The main aim of this work is to teach children the Word of God as in the Holy Bible. This is based upon clear instruction found in the Bible (Deuteronomy 6:7, Proverbs 22:6). In adherence to biblical principles children are highly valued and in providing facilities for teaching the Word of God the welfare of children is paramount. The assembly recognises that those who entrust children to their care expect that everything possible will be done to ensure their safety. Likewise, those who have responsibility for oversight of the assembly (elders) wish for transparency and integrity in those who work with children.

It is also recognised that there are legal obligations placed upon those who accept children into their care to keep them safe. The U.N. Convention on the Rights of Children stipulates that 'children must be kept safe from harm'. The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 also safeguards and promotes the welfare of children.

For the purposes of this document a child is defined as a person under the age of 18 years.

2. Child Protection Policy Statement

The primary objective of both the Sunday School and Children's Meeting is to teach the truth of the Word of God. The assembly of Christians which meets in the Gospel Hall, Victoria Street, Banbridge is fully committed to the practice which protects children from harm. All teachers and workers recognise and accept their responsibilities to develop an awareness of the issues which cause children harm.

We will endeavour to safe guard children by:

- Providing a safe environment where children are protected from harm and valued in every respect as God intended.
- Adopting child protection guidelines through 'Child Protection Policy & Codes of Practice for Working with Children'.
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with relevant parties.
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies that need to know and involving children and parents appropriately.
- Ensuring the proper selection of teachers and workers.
- Reviewing the policy at least once a year.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The elders should have a working knowledge of the 'Child Protection Policy & Codes of Practice for Working with Children'. It is the responsibility of the elders to ensure that there is adequate insurance to cover personal accident, public liability etc. The insurance must cover all activities associated with children's work.

Roles

Child Protection Co-Ordinator (CPC)

The elders have appointed a CPC who will be assisted by an Assistant CPC.

Role	Name
Child Protection Co-Ordinator	
Assistant CPC	

Superintendent

The elders have appointed a Superintendent to oversee the Sunday School and Children's Meeting.

Role	Name
Superintendent	

What the role is:

- Overseeing the day-to-day running of the Sunday School and Children's Meeting.
- Providing support, advice, and supervision to teachers and workers, particularly during their probationary period.
- Facilitating induction and training for new teachers and workers.
- Monitoring that the Code of Behaviour is being followed.

What the role is not:

- Health and Safety Officer.
- First Aider.
- Overall leader of all children's and youth work within the assembly.
- The person with overall responsibility for the safety of children during an activity — this

remains the responsibility of the teachers/workers in charge at the time.

Teachers and Workers

All those who teach and work with children will be given a copy of the 'Child Protection Policy & Codes of Practice for Working with Children'.

On appointment, a new teacher or worker will serve a probationary period of 6 months, during which the Superintendent will provide additional support and supervision.

All teachers and workers will undergo safeguarding training, which will be updated at regular intervals.

Parental Responsibility

A person with parental responsibility will be asked to sign a consent form and provide contact details and information regarding relevant medical conditions.

Selection of Teachers and Workers

Applicants for assembly fellowship are interviewed by the elders and received into the fellowship with the acquiescence of the existing members. A godly life and adherence to the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God are prerequisites for reception to membership. The same conditions apply to those received from other assemblies.

The constitution of an assembly is such that there are no appointed officials or positions, however, the elders will appoint a Superintendent and a CPC.

Each member of the assembly has a responsibility to ensure that unsuitable persons are prevented from teaching or working with children.

Teachers and workers are ordinarily members of the assembly. Where a non-member — for example a visiting speaker or an occasional helper — is asked to assist, the same selection, vetting, and Code of Behaviour requirements apply to them as to any other teacher or worker.

The role of teachers and workers is to teach the Word of God in an environment which is safe.

The assembly is fully committed to working within current safeguarding legislation, including the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 [POCVA] and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007, and to adhering to any legislation which protects and safeguards children.

Vetting and Disclosure Checks

Before an appointment is made, anyone who wishes to work with children must complete the 'Information/Declaration Form' (Appendix 5) and the 'Self-Disclosure Form' (Appendix 6).

The elders will assess these forms and a personal interview may take place.

Anyone working directly with children in a role involving substantial, unsupervised contact is engaged in regulated activity and will be asked to apply for an Enhanced Disclosure check through Access NI.

No person may take up a role working with children until the outcome of the Access NI check has been considered by the elders.

A criminal record will not necessarily be a bar to appointment; this depends only on whether the nature of any matter revealed could be considered to place children at risk.

Where a teacher or worker has harmed a child or placed a child at risk, that person will not be permitted to work with children, and the CPC will make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) where appropriate.

Under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007, as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, it is an offence for the assembly to allow anyone to work with children who has been convicted of certain specified offences, or who is included on the DBS Children's Barred List.

4. Code of Behaviour

A safe environment for children means that at all times they will be protected from:

- Degrading physical behaviour
- Violent behaviour
- Threatening behaviour

The following guidelines will encourage a safe and caring environment in which to teach the Word of God:

Supervision and Physical Contact

- Teachers/workers should not spend excessive time alone with an individual child. One of the major safeguards to the work among children is that it is very open and public. A number of adults are usually present.
- When children arrive at the Gospel Hall it is good practice that they are supervised by two teachers/workers, preferably one male and one female.
- Teachers/workers should not meet with children outside organised activities unless it is with the knowledge of the parents and the CPC.
- Unnecessary physical contact with children is not advised. It is recognised, however, that there are occasions when physical contact is unavoidable, such as providing comfort and reassurance to a distressed child.
- Physical contact of a comforting or reassuring nature should only ever take place with the consent of the child. Teachers/workers should be mindful of how and where they touch a child, and the child must feel comfortable with the contact.
- Nothing of a personal nature should be done for a child that he/she cannot do for himself/herself.
- Should a child take ill or need help at the toilet, two adults should be involved in providing assistance.
- Physical horseplay such as running, climbing, wrestling or tickling is to be avoided. If this is observed the child should be told that it must cease.

Relationships and General Conduct

- Threatening, provocative, degrading, bullying, violent behaviour and/or bad language amongst children is unacceptable and must be challenged.

- Prejudice, sectarianism, sexism or racism must not be tolerated.
- Teachers/workers must never form a relationship with a child or young person which is a breach of trust.
- Teachers/workers must not make sexually suggestive comments to or about a child, even in fun.
- Impartiality should be displayed when giving out prizes.
- All children should be encouraged to participate but none should be forced to do so.

Photography and Electronic Communication

- Permission should be obtained from parents/guardians before taking photographs or video of children, and parents/guardians should be told what the images will be used for.
- Special caution is required when communicating with children or young people by computer, mobile phone or social media. Such communication should only take place with the knowledge of the parents/guardians and the CPC.
- Teachers/workers should not keep children's personal telephone numbers, email addresses, or social media details on file or on personal devices; any necessary contact arrangements should be made through the parents/guardians.

Recommended Adult/Child Ratios

As a guide, the following minimum adult-to-child ratios are recommended:

Age of Children	Recommended Ratio
Under 3 years	1 adult to 3 children
3–7 years	1 adult to 8 children
8 years and over	2 adults (preferably one male and one female) to up to 20 children

An additional adult should be present for every 10 children beyond these numbers.

On outings away from the Hall, ratios should be increased: a minimum of 1 adult to 5 children for those aged 3 and over, and the standard Hall ratio of 1 adult to 3 children (or better) for those under 3, so that no child is less supervised away from the Hall than at it.

5. Dealing with Incidents/Accidents

An Incident & Accident Book will be maintained. Details of all incidents/accidents occurring in the Hall or during transportation must be communicated to the CPC and recorded in this book. The person having parental responsibility should be informed as soon as possible.

A group of disruptive children should be separated as soon as possible by the teachers/workers sitting among them.

Where a child is disrupting others, he/she should be asked to move to another seat. If after moving a child continues to be disruptive, he/she should be asked to leave the main hall and wait in the foyer. A clear verbal warning should be given of the intention to move the child if he/she continues to be disruptive, and care should be taken to ensure that at least two other teachers/workers hear the warning. At least two teachers/workers should accompany the child to the foyer and remain with them until suitable transportation has been arranged. This removal must be recorded in the Incident & Accident Book.

Where a child is disruptive and refuses to cooperate with instructions to move to another seat or leave the main hall then the person with parental responsibility must be contacted.

When a child has to be restrained, for any reason, an entry should always be made in the Incident & Accident Book. Restraint is only ever justified to prevent a child from injuring themselves or another person. Restraining a child solely to prevent damage to property is not justified on its own, and may be interpreted as assault.

The overriding principle in all of these matters is the use of minimum force.

General Complaints

If a child or a person with parental responsibility has a general complaint, unrelated to a suspicion or allegation of abuse, they should direct the complaint to a teacher/worker or the Superintendent.

The complainant should be assured that the matter will be dealt with in a timely and appropriate way, and should be informed as soon as possible of the decision, and any action, that will be taken.

An entry should be made in the Incident & Accident Book, and a copy given to the Superintendent.

6. Dealing with Allegations or Suspicions of Child Abuse

If a teacher/worker is concerned that a child has been abused or becomes aware of abuse (via the child or a third party) the one thing that they must never do is **nothing**. They **must not**, however, try to investigate the matter but immediately report it to the CPC. The CPC will be responsible for liaison with the Social Services, PSNI or the NSPCC and will seek appropriate advice.

If a child tells a teacher/worker about personal abuse the following action must be taken:

- Do not promise to keep secrets. The child must know that others may have to know. Ask the child if another adult (preferably the CPC) could be present during the discussion. Listen carefully to what the child has to say rather than questioning them directly. Do not ask leading questions. Offer the child assurance without making promises and take what the child says seriously.
- Never stop a child who is freely recalling events.
- Do not make a child repeat events unnecessarily. Do not question or interrogate the child.
- Stay calm and do not overreact.
- Explain to the child what you have to do: 1) Make a written record of the discussion 2) Inform the CPC and relevant authorities. Ideally make a record in writing as the child is speaking, using the Recording Allegations Form (Appendix 3). The record must be made even if the information is not understood or is personally difficult to record. The information is important and must be recorded.

If the CPC is not already aware of the matter, they should be informed, so that the relevant authorities can be told where appropriate.

If a teacher/worker has dealt with the matter by themselves because the allegation is against the CPC then that person should make contact with the relevant authorities listed above and inform the elders. For contact numbers see Appendix 4.

In all these matters confidentiality is absolutely essential. Only those who need to know should be given access to information. There are situations where confidentiality needs to be broken, for example if there is a concern that a child is in danger.

All action taken and details of discussion with the CPC, Social Services, PSNI and NSPCC must be recorded within 24 hours. These records should be filed and kept in a secure place. The CPC is responsible for safekeeping and access.

Procedures for reporting are illustrated in Appendix 2.

7. Record Keeping

The following records will be maintained:

- An Attendance Register, stating the names and dates of attendance of children and teachers/workers.
- The Incident & Accident Book (Appendix 7), recording all significant incidents occurring in the Hall, car park, or during transportation.
- A Worker/Teacher Register, containing the names of all who teach or work with children, and confirming that they have received and read the 'Child Protection Policy & Codes of Practice for Working with Children'.
- Consent Forms (Appendix 1), recording parental/guardian consent for a child to attend, together with relevant contact and medical information.
- A record of any allegation or suspicion of child abuse (Appendix 3).

The CPC has overall responsibility for record keeping.

Attendance registers and consent forms should be retained for 5 years after a child has left the Sunday School or Children's Meeting.

Records relating to any concern, allegation, or suspicion of abuse should be retained until the child's 30th birthday, in line with current safeguarding guidance.

All records must be held securely. Day-to-day access is restricted to the CPC; ultimate control of all records rests with the elders. Access beyond this should only be given where there is a specific need, for example an Assistant CPC acting in the CPC's absence, or a statutory body during a referral.

8. Transport Policy

Children should not be transported without the consent of a person with parental responsibility. Verbal consent may be appropriate initially, but written consent should be obtained as soon as possible (Appendix 1).

Anyone who transports children on behalf of the assembly must ensure that their vehicle is roadworthy, fit for purpose, and covered by adequate passenger liability insurance. Drivers subject to a restricted licence should not transport children.

All who use vehicles should be aware that failure to wear seatbelts, overcrowding, or speeding may invalidate insurance.

The driver is responsible for ensuring that all passengers under the age of 14 wear a seatbelt or, where required, an appropriate child restraint. Children under 3 years of age must use an appropriate child restraint in any vehicle. Children from 3 years of age up to 135cm in height, or 12 years of age (whichever occurs first), must use an appropriate child restraint, such as a booster seat.

These child-restraint requirements — not the general duty to wear a seatbelt — do not apply where a suitable restraint is not available in a licensed taxi or private hire vehicle, on an unexpected short journey where fitting one is not practical, or where two occupied child restraints already fill the rear seat and prevent a third from being fitted. Even where one of these exceptions applies, a child under 3 must still travel in a rear seat, never the front, and teachers/workers should use the most appropriate restraint available in every case.

Teachers/workers should, where possible, plan lifts so that they do not transport a single child alone. Where this cannot be avoided, the child should be placed on the rear seat. Where multiple lifts are planned, a number of children should be collected together before any individual child is left alone with a driver, and the reverse order should apply on the return journey.

It is the responsibility of the person transporting children to ensure that they are returned to the pick-up point.

If for any reason a person is unable to fulfil an agreed transport arrangement, only an approved substitute driver should act in their place.

Should buses be used, two adults (excluding the driver) should normally supervise the children.

9. Minimising Risk

Minimising risk to children is addressed throughout this policy rather than as a single set of rules. In particular:

- The Code of Behaviour (Section 4) keeps teachers/workers' contact with children open and public, and sets clear boundaries around physical contact, supervision ratios, photography, and electronic communication.
- Dealing with Incidents/Accidents (Section 5) sets out how disruptive or dangerous situations are de-escalated using minimum force.
- The Transport Policy (Section 8) requires suitable, insured vehicles and licensed drivers, sets child restraint requirements, and avoids a child travelling alone with a single adult.
- Vetting and Disclosure Checks (Section 3) ensures that only suitable people are appointed to work with children.
- Risk assessments (Section 11, Appendix 8) identify and control hazards specific to a particular activity, outing, or use of the premises.

10. Data Protection (GDPR)

The privacy and right of control of parents/guardians' personal data, and their children's personal data, is respected.

The personal data collected is that recorded on the consent form (Appendix 1).

Personal data shared with the assembly is used to:

- communicate with parents/guardians;
- provide appropriate care; and
- for administration purposes.

Personal data is kept securely and will only be shared when necessary, for example with the Statutory Authorities.

Personal data is not rented or sold to any third party.

Parents/guardians have the right to access their own and their children's personal data, and to request that any inaccurate data be corrected.

11. Miscellaneous General Safety Issues

A first aid kit should be kept on the premises, and a number of teachers/workers should be able to give basic first aid.

The premises must meet appropriate health and safety standards, including heating and ventilation.

Emergency evacuation procedures should be explained to children and teachers/workers periodically.

Risk assessments should be carried out before any outing, or activity that is not part of the normal routine at the Hall, and periodically for the premises themselves (Appendix 8).

Appendix 1. Consent, Contact Details, and Medical Conditions Form

A person with parental responsibility should complete this form before a child first attends, and should inform the CPC or Superintendent as soon as possible of any changes to the details given.

Field	Response
Child's Full Name	
Date of Birth	
Address	
Postcode	
Parent/Guardian Name(s)	
Contact Number	
Emergency Contact Name (if different from above)	
Emergency Contact Telephone (if different from above)	

Please give details of any medical conditions, allergies, or additional needs the teachers/workers should be aware of.

--

I give consent for the above child to attend, and to be transported in connection with, the Sunday School/Children's Meeting at the Gospel Hall, Victoria Street, Banbridge. I understand that this information will be held in accordance with the policy set out in Section 10 (Data Protection (GDPR)).

Field	Response
Signed	
Print Name	
Date	

Appendix 2. Procedures for Reporting

This appendix summarises the reporting procedure set out in full in Section 6.

1. If you are concerned that a child has been abused, or a child tells you about abuse, do not investigate and do not promise confidentiality.
2. Listen, reassure, and make a written record as soon as possible, using the Recording Allegations Form (Appendix 3).
3. Report immediately to the CPC.
4. The CPC liaises with Social Services, the PSNI, or the NSPCC, and seeks appropriate advice.
5. If the allegation is against the CPC, report directly to the relevant authorities (Appendix 4) and inform the elders.
6. All action taken must be recorded within 24 hours and kept securely (Section 7).

Appendix 3. Recording Allegations Form

This form should be completed as soon as possible after a child discloses abuse, or after becoming aware of a suspicion or allegation of abuse. Record what was said and observed as accurately as possible, using the child's own words.

Child's name and date of birth
Name of the person the concern or allegation is about, and their relationship to the child (if known)
Date, time, and place of the discussion or observation
Exactly what the child said, or what was observed (use the child's own words)
Any questions you asked, and the child's replies
Who else was present
Action taken, and who was informed (CPC, Social Services, PSNI, NSPCC)

Field	Response
Signed	
Print Name	

Field	Response
Date	

Appendix 4. Contact Numbers

Contact	Number
Police (non-emergency)	101
Police (emergency)	999
Social Services Gateway Team (Southern Trust, Craigavon/Banbridge)	0800 783 7745
Social Services Out of Hours Emergency Service	0800 197 9995
NSPCC Helpline	0808 800 5000

These are the general Northern Ireland and Southern Health and Social Care Trust contact numbers current at the time of writing. The elders should add any further local or assembly-specific contacts alongside these.

Appendix 5. Information/Declaration Form for Teachers and Workers

All prospective teachers and workers are asked to complete this form. If there is insufficient room to fully answer any question, please continue on a separate sheet. The information will be kept confidential, unless requested by an appropriate authority.

1. Personal Details

Field	Response
Full Name	
Address	
Postcode	
Daytime Telephone	
Mobile Telephone	
Evening Telephone	
Email Address	
How long have you lived at the above address?	
Previous address(es), if less than 5 years, with dates	

Please give details of any previous experience of looking after or working with children and young people. *(continue on a separate sheet if necessary)*

Have you ever had an offer to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults declined? Yes/No. If yes, please give details.

Do you suffer, or have you suffered, from any illness which may directly affect your work with children or young people? Yes/No. If yes, please give details.

2. Other Care Positions

Are you currently working in any other care position, in either a voluntary or paid capacity? If yes, please give the name of the organisation, a contact person, address, telephone number and details of your duties.

3. References

Please give the details of two people, who are members of an assembly, who would be willing to provide a personal reference. The elders reserve the right to take up character references from any other individuals deemed necessary.

Referee 1

Field	Response
Name	
Address	
Postcode	
Telephone	
Relationship	

Referee 2

Field	Response
Name	
Address	
Postcode	
Telephone	

Field	Response
Relationship	

Please also complete the attached 'Self-Disclosure Form' (Appendix 6), place it in a sealed envelope, and address it to the person responsible for processing Access NI checks, with whom you are welcome to discuss any aspect of this procedure.

I confirm that the submitted information is correct and complete, and I understand and agree to the conditions involving an Access NI check.

Field	Response
Signed	
Date	

Appendix 6. Self-Disclosure Form for Teachers and Workers

Strictly Confidential

As an assembly we undertake to meet the requirements of all relevant data protection legislation. All applicants are asked to complete this form and return it in a separate sealed envelope.

Field	Response
To (name of person processing Access NI checks)	
Address	
Position applied for	

Have you ever been charged with, cautioned in relation to, or convicted of any criminal offence; or are you at present the subject of a criminal investigation or pending prosecution? Yes/No. If yes, please give details, including the nature of the offence(s), the dates, the court(s) where any conviction(s) were heard, the type of offence and sentence(s) received, and the circumstances that led to the offence(s).

Police Investigations

This should include relevant police non-conviction information; please complete this section if the position applied for requires an Enhanced Disclosure check.

Have you ever been the subject of a police investigation that did not lead to a criminal conviction? Yes/No. If yes, please give details, including the date of the investigation, the police force involved, the reason for it, and the outcome if known.

To your knowledge, have you ever had any allegation made against you which has been reported

to, and investigated by, Social Services/Social Work Department (Children's or Adult Social Care)? Yes/No. If yes, please provide details; this will need to be discussed with you.

Has there ever been any cause for concern regarding your conduct with children, young people or vulnerable adults, including any disciplinary action taken by an employer in relation to your behaviour with adults? Yes/No. If yes, please give details.

Declaration

I confirm that the information given above is accurate and correct, and that I am not subject to any of the disqualifications set out in the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, or the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012), including inclusion on the DBS Children's Barred List.

I consent to an Access NI check if appointed to the position for which I have applied, and I am aware that details of pending prosecutions, previous convictions, cautions, or bindovers against me will be disclosed, along with any other relevant information which may be known to the police.

I agree to inform the CPC if I am convicted of an offence after taking up any position in connection with children's work in the Gospel Hall. I agree to inform the CPC if I become the subject of a police and/or a Social Services/Social Work Department investigation. I understand that failure to do so may lead to the immediate suspension of my work with children and/or the termination of my involvement.

Field	Response
Signed	
Date	

Appendix 7. Accident and Incident Report Form

This form should be completed immediately after any accident, complaint, or significant incident. It should also be completed following any allegation or suspicion of child abuse. The teacher/worker should discuss with the Superintendent and/or the CPC what follow-up action is necessary.

Day, date and time of the incident
Where did this incident take place?
Names, addresses and ages of those involved
Who witnessed the incident? (names, addresses, telephone numbers, and ages if under 16)
Describe the accident/incident (include injuries received and any first aid or medical treatment given)
In cases of allegations or suspicions of child abuse, describe the sequence of events, actual words used, and observations
What action has been taken to prevent a recurrence?

Are the premises still safe for children and teachers/workers to use?
Who else needs to be informed, and have they been informed?

Field	Response
Signed (Superintendent)	
Print Name	
Date	
Form seen by (e.g. elders, CPC)	
Signed	
Print Name	
Date	

Appendix 8. Risk Assessment Form

Field	Response
Risk assessment for	
Address	
Postcode	
Assessment by (print name)	
Assessment date	
Signed	

Significant Hazard	Potential Injury	People at Risk	Existing Controls	Action Needed	Priority	Review Date

Appendix 9. Policy Review Record

This policy should be reviewed at least once a year (see Section 2). Each review, and any changes made as a result, should be recorded below.

Date Reviewed	Reviewed By	Summary of Changes	Next Review Due