

Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy Dundonald Baptist Church

Dundonald Baptist Church recognise that having a criminal record does not, of itself, prevent someone from contributing meaningfully to the life and ministry of the Church. We also recognise our overriding duty to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults in our care.

1. Scope

This policy applies to all paid staff and volunteers, including those in roles that involve regulated activity with children or vulnerable adults.

2. AccessNI checks

We undertake AccessNI criminal record checks for roles where this is permitted or required by law, in accordance with the **AccessNI Code of Practice**. The level of check (basic, standard, or enhanced, with or without barred list check) will be determined by the nature of the role.

A criminal record check is only one part of our recruitment process. It does not replace references, interviews, or our wider safeguarding procedures.

3. Openness with applicants

We will:

- Make this policy available to every applicant, on request.
- Make clear in role descriptions, application forms and safeguarding policy whether a check will be required.
- Encourage applicants to disclose any relevant unspent convictions at an early stage, in confidence, so they can be discussed openly.
- Ensure that anyone called to interview is given a fair opportunity to discuss any matter that may arise from their AccessNI certificate before a decision is made.

We will not refuse to consider an applicant solely on the basis that they have a criminal record.

4. How we assess disclosed information

Where an AccessNI certificate reveals convictions, cautions, informed warnings, or other relevant information, we will consider:

- The relevance of the offence to the role applied for.
- The seriousness of the offence.
- How long ago the offence occurred and the applicant's age at the time.
- Whether there is a pattern of offending.
- The circumstances surrounding the offence and any explanation offered.
- Evidence of rehabilitation or changed circumstances.
- Any safeguarding concerns specific to the role.

A decision will be made by the Elders in consultation as appropriate. The applicant will be informed of the decision and the reasons for it.

5. Roles involving regulated activity

For roles involving regulated activity with children or vulnerable adults, the Church will not knowingly appoint anyone who is on a barred list, or whose disclosed information indicates that they pose a risk to those groups. This applies regardless of any other consideration.

6. Confidentiality

All disclosure information is treated as confidential and handled in accordance with our **Policy on the Secure Handling, Use, Storage and Retention of Disclosure Information**, the AccessNI Code of Practice, and UK Data Protection Act 2018.

Disclosure information is shared only with those who need it to make the recruitment decision. It is not discussed with or revealed to anyone else without the applicant's consent.

7. Rehabilitation of Offenders

We comply with the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 and only ask about, or take into account, convictions that are not protected or filtered, as defined by current legislation and AccessNI guidance.

8. Complaints and disputes

An applicant who believes they have been treated unfairly under this policy, or who disputes information shown on their AccessNI certificate, may:

- Raise the matter with Safeguarding Coordinator.
- Dispute the certificate directly with AccessNI.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if legislation or AccessNI guidance changes.

Signed: _____ **Position:** _____ **Date:** _____

Next review due _____