

It is important, this morning, to recognise the events of this week, where our denomination has acknowledged that, following the report of an internal investigation, there have been 'serious and significant failings' in the central safeguarding functions of PCI.

This was something we discussed at length, at Thursday's night's Kirk Session meeting. There is clearly a lot of information we don't yet know, but we are mindful of the people who have been harmed as a result of these failings, whoever they are, and wherever and whenever hurt was caused.

We also took the opportunity to discuss our current safeguarding procedures in Fitzroy. We have almost 80 volunteers working with children, young people and newcomer families. We insist that our volunteers undergo background checks through Access NI, and we have had a large number of our volunteers engage in recent safeguarding training. These two aspects are always ongoing, and we are grateful for the congregation's assistance with this.

We also made two additional decisions. In the short term, we are going to review our safeguarding practice with the leaders of our youth and family programmes. We will check in with them, in the next couple of weeks, to ensure we are doing all that we can as a congregation to keep our Fitzroy family safe. In the longer term, we have decided to expand our safeguarding team. This group will then help Kirk Session and Committee consider the wide range of safeguarding issues that exist in any church context, as well as in Fitzroy's community and location specifically.

If there are any safeguarding issues you have concerns about, or questions you would like to ask, then please speak to either myself, Steve, or to David McNeill who is the supporting elder for safeguarding.

We are also very grateful that our Safeguarding Designated person is Marion Dempsey whose experience in this field is so helpful to us...